



# **Can youth make a difference ?**

**Youth Policy Facing Diversity and Change**

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The opinions expressed in this work are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Council of Europe

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   | Page       |
|---|------------|
| <b>FOREWORD .....</b>   | <b>5</b>   |
| <b>CHAPTER 1 - YOUTH IN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY .....</b>   | <b>7</b>   |
| I. Changing lifestyles of youth .....   | 8          |
| II. Identity search and participation in the cyberworld.....  | 13         |
| III. Cyberworld – an instrument in late modern identity work.....                                   | 15         |
| IV. Participation and politics.....   | 16         |
| V. Conclusion.....  | 18         |
| <b>CHAPTER 2 - NON-FORMAL EDUCATION, CITIZENSHIP AND PARTICIPATION - DECIPHERING RHETORIC .....</b> | <b>23</b>  |
| I. Non-formal learning.....   | 23         |
| II. Citizenship.....  | 34         |
| III. Participation.....   | 38         |
| IV. Citizenship – a conceptual grid .....   | 41         |
| V. Conclusion.....  | 44         |
| <b>CHAPTER 3 - CHANGING FORMS OF PARTICIPATION.....</b>   | <b>53</b>  |
| I. “All Passive – All Guilty”.....  | 53         |
| II. Some reflections on modern forms of participation.....  | 54         |
| III. Towards post-modern forms of participation .....   | 56         |
| IV. Identification and expression through culture .....   | 59         |
| V. Identification and expression through cyber space.....   | 60         |
| VI. Conclusion.....   | 65         |
| <b>CHAPTER 4 - THE NON-FORMAL EDUCATION BOOM.....</b>   | <b>71</b>  |
| I. Defining non-formal education .....  | 71         |
| II. A family picture .....  | 77         |
| III. A battlefield of interests .....   | 83         |
| IV. Future challenges for the youth sector .....  | 87         |
| <b>CHAPTER 5 - SCHOOL AND YOUTH.....</b>  | <b>93</b>  |
| I. The difference of approach .....   | 93         |
| II. Areas of co-operation.....  | 100        |
| III. Developing teaching and working methods .....  | 102        |
| IV. Community involvement.....  | 104        |
| V. Political and social awareness raising.....  | 104        |
| <b>CHAPTER 6 - LINKING KNOWLEDGE AND ACTION.....</b>  | <b>109</b> |
| I. Identity problems of youth research.....   | 109        |
| II. From isolation to alliance?.....  | 110        |

III. Non-formal learning – bridging knowledge and action?.....113  
IV. Going beyond rhetoric .....116

**CHAPTER 7 - TRENDS IN EUROPEAN YOUTH POLICIES .....120**

I. Youth in Europe .....120  
II. What should youth policy do? .....123  
III. Promoting knowledge and understanding of youth phenomena and youth issues .....125  
IV. Integrated youth policy – is it possible?.....126  
V. Promoting youth participation.....128  
VI. “There is as yet no European people” .....131

## ***FOREWORD***

The chapters of this volume comprise speeches and documents presented at international conferences and Council of Europe meetings. The contributions cover the main items of the current Council of Europe youth policy agenda: non-formal education, participation, citizenship, integrated youth policies, co-management and the situation and life-styles of young people in Europe.

Having my professional background in the research world I have tried to link two elements: concepts, theories and empirical findings from recent sociological, educational and cultural research with Council of Europe youth policies. The intention was to explore new avenues for the future for an international youth service with a good reputation but, as with any organisation, in need of change. In my understanding the situation and life-styles of young people, in the East and West, are drastically changing and becoming very complex. There are a myriad of ways in which individual life experiences in local settings interact with social, political and economic changes at the national and global level. If theories and conceptualisations can make the nearly chaotic youth diversity understandable, theories become practical. The volume suggests, for example, that the ways in which young people are today developing and expressing their identities and citizenships is taking new forms and, that the knowledge of these is necessary to involve a larger variety of young people in Council of Europe activities and to better respond to the aspirations and the resourcefulness of youth in Europe.

Traditionally, the Directorate of Youth and Sport has a long standing history in bringing together the governmental and non-governmental youth partners in planning, deciding and implementing youth programmes and policies. Through representatives of international youth organisations and senior civil servants from the ministries responsible for youth in the member states, the sector has had good access to youth work and youth policy concerns. What the chapters of this volume essentially suggests is that this format of governance should be further developed and modified within the light of better knowledge about youth realities and co-operation with a broader set of partners than before. This conclusion is not specific to the Council of Europe – it applies to the ways that local, national and even global youth policies are today governed and run. The articles do not give recipes or organisational models, but they invite youth policy actors to reflect on the ways they could face what is evident – increasing diversification and change of youth realities.

The chapters also raise other youth issues such as the effects of urban segregation, internal polarisation of Europe and the post-communist countries, adverse effects of globalisation, alcohol and drug problems, issues which do not easily appear on the agenda of European youth policies. Current youth policies are criticized for their lack of courage to attack such controversial political issues. Is there, as Guy Standing has said, “unwillingness to think, speak or act radically?”

True, writing and criticizing is easier than doing things. But in this respect one may also try to believe in the positive spirit that one of my contemporary youth rebels has expressed:

*Come writers and critics  
Who prophesise with your pen  
And keep your eyes wide  
The chance won't come again  
And don't speak too soon  
For the wheel's still in spin  
And there's no tellin' who  
That it's namin'.  
For the loser now  
Will be later to win  
For the times they are a-changin'*

*Bob Dylan: “The Times They are A-changin’”, 1963*

25 August 2001 Strasbourg

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## ***CHAPTER 1 - YOUTH IN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY<sup>1</sup>***

It is not always clear what we mean by the expression ‘information society’. Basically there are two ways to look at it.

According to a *technological approach* economic, cultural and social structures of society will be drastically changed by technological innovations; in this case by computers and computer mediated communication. This new type of society, called the “Information Society”, is believed to be inherently driven by technological development providing ever better chances of increasing prosperity and solving a variety of social problems.

According to a *sociological approach* there is no new type of a society, but rather a modification of the old one. The industrial society, sometimes called the ‘modern society’ has transformed into a ‘post industrial society’ or a ‘late modern society’. This latter conceptualisation does not so much emphasise the technological element of the change (like the internet), but rather the positive and negative economic, cultural and social changes of society such as the change towards increased risks and potentialities, the increased promises and threats of globalization and the change from collective truths, norms and values to more individual ones.

In the latter scenario, young people’s life becomes a process of searching, reflecting and ‘negotiating’ with oneself in a society with increased contradictions, uncertainties but also possibilities – many of them already embedded in the ‘modern society’. The life of contemporary young people cannot be understood without reference to the continuity of the ‘modern society’.

In addition, the ‘late modern society’ has contributed with new conditions and means for young people. Modern information technology is one of them. The acceptance of the new media is greatest among young people. Furthermore youth seems to be at the same time the front runner of the innovative use of the new media and the main target group of aggressive marketing and uncontrolled dissemination of media messages. Accordingly, the research community and public opinion seem to be divided into those who see youth as the critical and innovative users of new information technology (NIT), mass media and mass culture and those who look at youth as helpless victims of media indoctrination with references to media-illiteracy and ‘the digital divide’. This chapter goes on to put these

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<sup>1</sup> The chapter is based on a key-note speech at the European Conference on Youth and Multimedia 17<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> June 1999 in Dusseldorf under the German EU-Presidency



approaches into a broader picture of changing life-styles of contemporary youth.

## **I. Changing lifestyles of youth**

### **Continuity: the core of modernity**

Frequent media reports on drugs, rave parties, love parades, rap and graffiti cultures, violent manifestations in Seattle, Gothenburg, Genoa, spectator violence in football matches, etc., all suggest that youth has radically changed. However, empirical research on youth clearly indicates that the continuity of 'old' lifestyles, ways of thinking, values and even political orientation is more common than change. It seems that the main life-orientations and ideologies of the old industrial society still strongly label the life of present day youth – even if new life styles emerge.

A Finnish cultural researcher Riitta Jallinoja maintains that three mainstream ideologies characterise modern industrial societies: 'rationalism', 'hedonistic consumerism' and 'liberalism'.

Firstly, **rationalism** is the idea that it is rationally possible to plan production, democracy, social welfare and even individual life courses. This is how most young people relate to life, believing that it is possible to plan one's life through rational long term career planning. First being a diligent school student, then making thoughtful choices of vocational education, gathering systematically relevant work experiences and finally entering expected work careers, family lives and leisure patterns. Rational organisation of democracy assumes that individual interests can be reflected in collective decision making through representative democracy. One dimension of this belief is the idea that collective movements like youth NGOs can represent young people. This element of rationalism is taken very far in the decision making of the Council of Europe youth field where it is encoded in the co-managed structures.

The second modern mainstream ideology is **hedonistic consumerism**. Meaningful things in life are related to individual enjoyment, impulsiveness, adventure and consumption. Youth studies indicate high levels of individual value orientations, interest in new experiences, travelling abroad and the importance of following the trends of commercial youth cultures.

The third mainstream ideology is **liberalism**, which refers to the liberation from traditions and established ways of life: sexual norms, family-life, traditional forms of participation, religion etc. This ideology was particularly highlighted during the end of 1960s.

In this sense there is a strong core of modernity among youth. Some researchers have suggested that between 70% to 80% of young people are strongly labelled by these core orientations.

### **Change: the ambivalent margin of late modernity**

There is an emergence of new lifestyles and cultures of youth. Young people are increasingly reaching out from the modern core to explore and develop their identities and life-chances. As youth researchers have put it: today's young people are navigating on an ocean of increased possibilities and risks. Often the two are intertwined; the more one wants to achieve the bigger the risks. Social growth of young people starts to resemble business logic; both maximizing life-chances and maximising profits presuppose risk-taking – even to the extent that often the biggest winners are those who take the greatest risks.

The dual image of contemporary youth is a combination of success stories and social exclusion. At the same time the criteria of success become diffused. The life-styles and life orientations become increasingly heterogeneous and subjective – it is more and more difficult to reach a shared opinion on whether it is good for the individual young person and/or society that he/she is a graffiti artist, takes part in anti-globalization demonstrations, plays a guitar in a punk band, is an internet freak, belongs to a sexual minority, or prefers voluntary work in Africa to finishing his/her studies, etc, etc.. Thus the field of experimentation of new life-styles and life orientations is necessarily *ambivalent*.

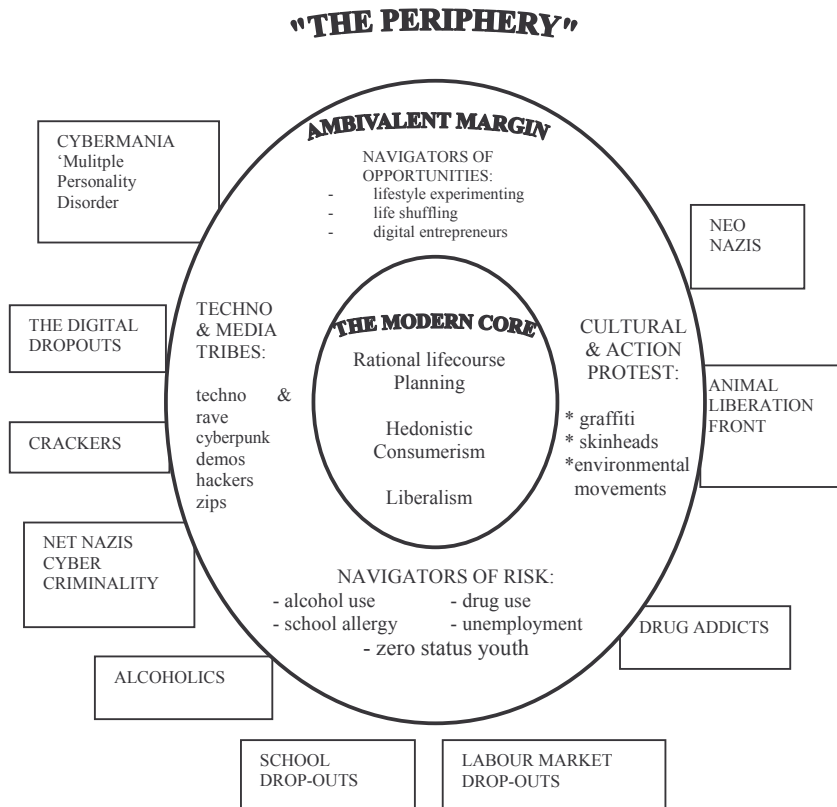
### **The ambivalent youth phenomena**

A tentative descriptive account is given in the picture which follows. 'Life-style communities' may be based on a hobby, sport, sexual preference, diet, etc. 'Cultural expression and participation' refers to the ever diversifying and changing forms of cultural, subcultural and popular cultural expression of young people. 'Action and protest' include a large variety of youth movements, subcultures, organisations, action groups and individual acts expressing themselves on social concerns - most recently through anti-globalisation manifestations. There are also a number of youth groups expressing themselves through the modern information technology: individual level computer freaks ('Nerds', 'nettravellers'), net game players (MUD, MUSH, etc.), usenet activists, chatters and participants in net based civic action groups explore the potentialities of cyberspace, while there are also collective movements or subcultures ('techno tribes') created or inspired by computer mediated communication (cyberpunks, demos, zippies, hackers,

crackers, ravers). The ambivalent margin furthermore includes 'youth at risk' (related to unemployment, drug experimentation, problems at school and working life, etc) and young people in a vulnerable state between institutions like 'the zero status youth' who do not attend any educational institution, who lack work and who are outside social security provisions.

These youth phenomena situated at the 'ambivalent margin of late modernity' resist clear definition and assessment; do they represent avantgarde, trendsetting and innovating forces of society or are they just young people to be 'straightened up' or 'helped' to become 'normal citizens'? One partial answer is that the history of youth problems advises us of the danger of unjustifiably labelling these types of phenomena which most probably will lead only to their further escalation.

**THE 'HEALTHY CORE' OF MODERNITY, THE 'AMBIVALENT MARGIN' OF LATE MODERNITY AND MARGINALISATION**



## Youth at the periphery

Indeed, one may find a variety of escalated youth phenomena, ‘youth at the periphery’. They include mental disorders due to a too heavy exposure to the cyberworld (‘multiple personality disorder’ (Sherry Turkle) and ‘cybermania’ (Philippe Queau)), ‘the digital drop-outs’ (the 95% of young people without access to the internet), extremist movements (such as the neonazis) and the various forms of cybercriminality. The political alienation of young people has reached the point where increasing numbers of young people are either completely disinterested and ignorant of politics or who have gone over to extremist political movements (neonazis, skinheads, the Animal Liberation Front, Gangsta Rap, etc.). Problems at school, prolongation of unemployment, regular drug use and petty criminality may lead to exclusion from educational systems and the labour markets, to drug addiction and delinquency.

The reasons for marginalisation are many and this chapter will only make one reference to them. As many of the new youth phenomena are ambivalent and subject to dramatisation, emotional interpretation and harsh judgements – particularly via mass media reporting - there is a real danger of labelling followed by social exclusion. A certain element of tolerance and understanding is needed – a task for the youth field. This challenge to be sensitive, fair and tolerant towards youth phenomena coincides with one of the mission statements of the Council of Europe youth policy, which is to understand youth rather as a resource than a problem.

One might argue that this description of youth only applies to youth in western Europe as it is based on the ideas of the continuity of the ideals and life styles of early capitalism (modern life-styles) and the emergence of new youth cultures (late modern life-styles) conspicuous in the western Europe. In this respect it is interesting to look at a recent youth research report from Slovenia by Mirjana Ule and Tanja Renner (1998). A multivariate analysis of representative data on the life-styles of Slovenian youth produced the following four life-style orientations:

1. **Adapted adult-oriented youth** (with traditional values, good hobbies and a strong orientation towards adult roles)
2. **Hedonistically oriented youth** (with interest in entertainment and pleasure, emphasis on material goods and ‘to have fun’)
3. **Libertarian oriented youth** (who reject traditional and authoritarian claims, emphasize civil society, democracy, human rights and openness to differences)

4. **Alternative youth-oriented youth** (searching for the meaning of life, emphasizing autonomy and freedom and sympathising with activities of alternative movements)

This result has a striking similarity with the author's classification. It includes the modern core: rationalism (adapted adult oriented youth), hedonistic consumerism (hedonistically oriented youth) and liberalism (libertarian oriented youth). Furthermore, the author launched the idea of the emergence of alternative life-styles and identity seekers (the ambivalent margin of late modernity) which also finds its counterpart among Slovenian youth (alternative youth-oriented youth). It seems that the postcommunist countries have a similar ideological background in their period of industrialisation and through their advent into capitalism. Moreover, youth cultural trends clearly cross state borders all over Europe.

The findings of the above anatomy of current youth life-styles and life orientations can perhaps be summarized into following four buzzwords<sup>2</sup>:

- Diversity,
- Ambiguity,
- Mobility (constant change of the youth scene) and
- New forms of involvement

From the viewpoint of the Council of Europe youth structures, based on the modernist belief in representative democracy and non-governmental youth organisations' (NGYO) representation, the challenge is to find the ways to reflect the increasingly diverse, ambiguous and mobile forms of the new (late modern) youth involvements.

## **II. Identity search and participation in the cyberworld**

### **General guidelines**

How can new information and communication technology help in the identity search and participation of young people? A Council of Europe declaration on "European Policy for New Information Technology" emphasises the following four ideals<sup>3</sup>:

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<sup>2</sup> To facilitate memorising of the buzzwords the first letter of each buzzword forms the word 'DAMN' – as it is all about the 'DAMN youth'.

<sup>3</sup> Committee of Ministers Declaration in Budapest, 7 May 1999  
(see: <http://cm.coe.int/ta/decl/1999/99dec4.htm>)

**Access** - equal possibilities for all social and ethnic groups and pan-european countries to use the new technologies “to enable all individuals to play a more active role” in society

**Competence** - to use and make active, critical and discerning use of the NIT

**Diversity** - of content and language to provide space for the development of individual and collective identities

**Protection** - of freedom of expression, from cybercrimes, use of international standards, safeguards and ethical principles

From the point of view of youth policy this declaration says that young people should have access to NIT, should know how to use it and – within shared ethical principles – be able to use it in identity building and participation.

### **Is human interaction possible on the internet?**

It is commonplace to argue that Internet, cyberspace or ‘virtual reality’ are antithetical ‘to real life’. The virtual world is said to detach and alienate us from the real world. Accordingly, the network is devoid of genuine human interaction.

However, much of the talk about ‘virtual reality’ is populist and unclear. The argument that we should have nothing to do with ‘virtual reality’ because it is a fake world is based on a misuse of the words ‘virtual’ and ‘reality’. To say that *virtual* reality is a pseudoreality, a non-reality or something opposite to reality, is to misuse the word ‘virtual’. In the English language, saying that something is ‘virtually true’ does not mean that it is not true, but that it is ‘almost true’ or even ‘almost absolutely true’. As to the word ‘reality’ it is important to understand that cyber reality is essentially a simulation of reality, which, first of all, can provide fairly good simulations of realities<sup>4</sup> which, secondly, can be useful. Virtual reality is, after all, a simulation like any media message; a movie, a soap opera or even a documentary and a news broadcasting. In this perspective the question should not only be: “how well do these ‘fictions of reality’ or ‘simulations of reality’ correspond to the ‘real world’?”, but also: “how useful are they for

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<sup>4</sup> At the moment of editing this text we can already watch films where it is almost impossible to say whether they are filmed in real life settings or in simulated ones (“Jurassic Park”), whether the actors are real life persons or skillful simulations (“Final Fantasy”).

people to elaborate their values, lifestyles, identities, world views?”<sup>5</sup>. To conclude, the author is in agreement with the media researcher Brenda Laurel, when she defines virtuality as follows: “Virtual reality is almost like real, but something different”. And the question follows: how could young people make use of the good simulations of reality (in the net) for their identity search?

In a recent article on ‘virtual communities’ Wellman and Gulia (1999, p.186) conclude: “the relationships that people develop and maintain in cyberspace are similar to the ones they develop in their real-life communities”. Cyberspace may be a social world where human interaction and development is possible, but how do young people use this simulated human interaction in their identity development?

### **III. Cyberworld – an instrument in late modern identity work**

*“Virtual communities offer a dramatic new context in which to think about human identity in the age of Internet”*

*Sherry Turkle in “Life on the Screen” 1997*

In her classic study *Life on the Screen* (1997) Sherry Turkle opened up the possibility of looking at the internet as a positive growing context for young people. Growing up is essentially about searching for an individual identity. During the late modern times personality or the Self is not so much determined by the parents, social class, gender or geographic origin, but rather something that should be actively and individually created. Anthony Giddens (1991) sees "The self as a project to be constructed, rather than as a psychological given".

Neither is there a clear finishing line for this construction process: "The task of youth in post-modern times is a continuous identity work" (Thomas Ziehe, 1989). Indeed as Kenneth Gergen (1991) maintains: “We exist in a state of continuous construction and reconstruction; it is a world where anything goes that can be negotiated. Each reality of self gives way to reflexive questioning, irony and ultimately the playful probing of yet another reality. The Center fails to hold.”

‘The Center’ refers to the concept of the fully unified, completed, secure and coherent identity which we have been used to. According to Stuart Hall (1992) that “...is a fantasy. Instead, as the systems of meaning and cultural

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<sup>5</sup> From the viewpoint of cultural relativism this point can be taken even further: “Cyberspace is an online metaverse that’s now more real than what’s outside your window” (Cyberpunk Handbook, 1996)



representation multiply, we are confronted by a bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities, any one of which we could identify with - at least temporarily".

The arena of this "bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities" is clearly offered by the NIT: "Cyberspace is the ultimate environment for the nourishment of the fragmented, multiphrenic, contradictory postmodern self. Visual anonymity and lack of social status -allows the user to experiment with different aspects of selfhood, as well as to 'disguise' him/herself completely". (Denise Dalaimo, "The simulation of selfhood in cyberspace", 1995)

The netbased computer role games (MUSH, MUD, etc.) offer an ideal opportunity to develop, explore and test new dimensions of self in 'a disguised form'. Anke Bahl (1997), in her sharp eyed empirical study has used the term 'self actualization' to describe how young people use the virtual reality of role games to build their identities. Bahl makes an illustrative reference to a 19 year old MUD player who says: "the more I played, the more I found it was easier to be that person in real life".

Cyberworld can be a serious place for identity development.

#### **IV. Participation and politics**

*"Digital technology offers a new democracy dominated either by the vested interests of political parties nor the mob's baying howl"*

*'Manifesto for a Digital Society' Wired (UK), 1996*

In an age of declining interest and trust by young people in voting, political parties and politicians, the new information technology is often seen as a promise of a new political culture, new forms of participation and a new opportunity for civil society to be heard. These 'technophiles'<sup>6</sup> of the free

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<sup>6</sup> The terms 'technophiles' and 'neoluddites' are used to describe the two basic attitudes to NIT. The technophiles look at the internet as having great potential for human progress and which will drastically change our ways of thinking and behaving. The neoluddites think that the internet is a threat, a backlash in human progress and essentially a passing phenomena. The word "luddites" originally refers to a band of rioters who broke spinning machines in England in the 1810s. They thought that the new technology was the reason for their unemployment and malcontent. Probably the most famous modern 'machine-breaker' is Unabomber with his violent protest against technology: "The technophiles are taking us all on an utterly reckless ride into the unknown"(http//vip.hotwired.com/special/unabomb).

world of the individualised cyberspace' do not like politics run by 'old-fashioned intriguing politicians and noisy mobs' – they want politics which are based on a vast, diverse and openminded transmission of ideas without the constraints of old structures and authorities. Cyberspace is thought to be the location for a new civil society in which centrism is replaced by diversity and old collective dogmas with new forms of individual participation and grass root resistance. In this sense the Internet is seen as a medium to change the political culture – the way our societies are governed.

As the old collective ideologies and their secretive decision making loose their credibility, is it possible to use the new information technology to find the information one needs, to find a community which supports ones ideas and to find new means of action (digital democracy, cyber civic resistance)? Is there a possibility for a new form of bottom up civil society action?

Or, should we rather believe in “the Dystopian Warning”, which foresees further individualisation, specialisation and the narrowing down of the discussion fora of the internet leading to ‘narrowcasting’ rather than to ‘broadcasting’. In the early days of massmedia it was believed that as key social and political information could be available to a large number of people (broadcasting) truly democratic discussion and decision making would be possible. Today, the internet is split into increasingly divided fora (narrowcasting) which seems to lead rather to ‘tribalised dystopia’ than broad democracy and concern for common affairs.

In short, will the internet improve or degrade participation? Will it promote ‘new resistance’ or enhance old top down politics?<sup>7</sup>

According to empirical research on citizen activism on the internet, carried out by Kevin Hill and John Hughes (1998), “Internet activists are politically better informed and more active than the general public”. Does this mean that the internet - with increased possibilities for finding information and using it for political purposes - has improved knowledge of politics and increased political activity? Or, is it the other way around: internet activities are conducted by a very select group of people, those who – already prior to their use of the internet – were knowledgeable about political affairs, interested in political participation, quick sources of information and immediate mediums of participation? After a careful analysis the authors conclude that new media like the internet tend to appeal to active and

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<sup>7</sup> The options have been simplified as formulas:

Utopian Formula: Post Modern Possibility + Computer Mediated Communication = New Resistance Dystopian Warning: Specialisation + Tribalisation = Narrowcasting

resourceful individuals and that the “Internet does not change people, it simply allows them to do the same things in a different way”.

To what extent is the internet used by ‘the political establishment’ and to what extent by non-mainstream groups? Hill and Hughes (1998) define ‘non-mainstream groups’ as ‘left- or right-wing fringe’ outside main political parties, mainly those responsible for ‘governmental policies’. Content analysis on political web-sites, Usenet newsgroups and Usenet discussion groups showed that:

21% of web-sites were classified as either right-wing or left-wing fringe sites, which is much more than their respective share within the general political spectrum;

Usenet newsgroups and chat rooms are more anti-governmental than the mainstream media;

- A comparative look at Usenet discussion groups in the more and less democratic countries around the world revealed that as the level of democratisation decreases, the anti-governmental Usenet discussion increases.

The conclusion is that the internet has been (at least by the mid 1990s) more open to non-mainstream groups than to the political mainstream. The authors leave it open whether the established political grouping will gradually catch up with the lead of the fringe groups.

To sum up the findings:

The internet does seem to open possibilities to « New Resistance », non-mainstream politics;

The internet does not fundamentally alter the political landscape nor our civil societies;

The motivation to become politically active remains outside the technology; Virtual reality does offer promising possibilities to enhance young people’s participation but there is a strong need to promote democracy and involvement within traditional youth realities of youth: schools, work place and at other social and cultural settings.

## **V. Conclusion**

Again, one may see that the discussion on the information society easily becomes too technical, too much internet driven. New instruments, like the NIT, are promising, but the decisive thing is how they are used. This takes us back to the fascinating avenues that the Cybersociety opens for late modern identity work. This article tried to promote the approach that today’s young people can make innovative use of the new media. This also highlights the

key issue of the information society, the difference between information and knowledge – or rather the difference between useless information and meaningful knowledge. The huge amount of information in the Internet only becomes meaningful knowledge when it is anchored in what the users find important in their life – like the virtual role games for young people experimenting with their identities.

In a similar manner, even if the internet provides us with endless information on social and political life and even if, in principle, it can be used as an effective means of expressing one's opinions, voting, forming pressure groups, lobbying, protesting and even displaying civic disobedience, it is however useless if users do not have the interest and motivation to use it.

Virtual reality must be nurtured through the 'traditional reality'. To become active cyber citizens young people must be given education and experiences in being an active real life citizen. The Council of Europe youth sector is active in both of these fields; exploring the potentialities of the digital world and particularly in the field of enhancing young people's participation, to which aim it is using its two educational centres, professional staff, an extensive educational programme, the European Youth Foundation and the networks of governmental representatives, youth NGOs, youth researchers and youth information centres.

Young people searching for their identities through modern information technology give us an interesting insight into new youth trends and into the innovative ways young people make use of the new opportunities. However, one should not be blinded by the emergence of the avantgarde youth. This paper started with an overview, which rather emphasized the traditional features of current youth. Most young people still pursue the 'conventional' modernist beliefs of their parents in rational life-style planning, consumerism and liberalism. 'Conventional' youth problems still persist. The old industrial order has left young people segregated by social class, gender, ethnic and rural origin. Young people are still badly hit by the 'old' division between the employed and the unemployed, between those living in well-off and deprived urban areas, between those in higher education and those outside it, and so on.

This chapter promotes a balanced look at today's youth: traditionalism of modernity is the dominating mode and the persistence of a variety of problems of youth and the interesting emergence of new, ambivalent, youth phenomena.

The persisting and even increasing problems of youth lead us to 'the illusion of modernity': it seems that, contrary to the optimism of 1960s and early

1970s, there is no clear inborn, automatic, linear development towards a better society. Not to underestimate the benefits of the advance of capitalism and globalisation, they, however, tend to create more problems than they can solve. Political interference is needed. This calls for public sector contributions where the role of international organisations becomes more and more important. The Council of Europe's youth sector should also relate itself to the changing realities of European youth. This chapter suggests that there are huge changes going on in terms of increased diversity, ambiguity, pace of change and increased contradictions among youth calling for:

- (1) better knowledge about these phenomena (through research, governments and NGOs)
- (2) an updated youth policy action plan
- (3) opening up to the emergent new youth phenomena.

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## **CHAPTER 2 - NON-FORMAL EDUCATION, CITIZENSHIP AND PARTICIPATION - DECIPHERING RHETORIC**

### **I. Non-formal learning<sup>8</sup>**

*“Probably the single most important finding of this study is that we know amazingly little about non-formal education practices in general, and even less about those occurring within the youth organisations.”*

*“The unstable theoretical background may jeopardise the overall development of non-formal education [and thus] the strategies and underlying beliefs [of non-formal education] should be updated to match contemporary ideas on human development, learning and social change”*

Building Bridges for Learning. The recognition and value of non-formal education in youth activity. Pasi Sahlberg. European Youth Forum, 1999.

As the quotation says: there is the rhetoric, but it lacks meaning. In particular there is the need to develop a conceptual and strategic framework which is based on contemporary knowledge on social change, on youth and on a theory of learning.

#### **The challenge of social change**

*“Education of the future must be related to a vision of a society of the future”.*

*Michael D. Young, The Curriculum of the Future, 1998*

A concise textbook overview on contemporary social change emphasises;

- *Cultural change:* increased pluralism, fragmentation, absence of universal authorities, de-hierarchisation and the relative nature of truth,

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<sup>8</sup> This chapter is based on a discussion document presented at an internal training seminar of the educational staff of the Council of Europe Directorate of Youth and Sport in January 2000.



- *Social change*: erosion of collective norms and grand narratives, globalisation, “glocalisation”, NIT and flexible, consumer-centred production, neo-liberalism
- *Lifestyle change*: increasing independence of collective control, individualisation, inner-directness, reflectivity, lifestyle experimentation, emphasis on the aesthetic and expressive, continuous identity development, but also narcissism, apathy, isolation, pessimism and social exclusion

The key challenge of young people growing up in postmodern conditions is to ‘navigate’ – with decreasing guidance of collective norms – ‘on the ocean of increased risks and potentialities’. This phenomena has often been captured using the concept of *individualisation*.

The postmodern account emphasises ‘identity search’. This may take a varied form ranging from identification with parents, teachers, local culture, NGOs, parties to identification with transnational youth cultures and subcultures, global issues, new social movements and cyber communities. The common denominator of this phenomena is perhaps *multiple identification*.

These changes have an impact on ‘learning’ and ‘youth’; on the theory and strategies of learning and the role and situation of young people. The educational challenge is to develop a learning theory or approach which matches with ‘the relative nature of truth’, ‘de-hierarchisation’, ‘inner-directness’, ‘expressiveness’ and ‘continuous identity development’. In terms of learning theory, the closest match is **constructivism** and in terms of educational policy it is **life long learning**.

This chapter discusses how **individualisation, multiple identification, constructivism and life long learning** relate to the development of non-formal learning as the key educational asset of the Council of Europe youth sector.

### **Individualisation and multiple identifications – assessing and reconsidering non-formal learning**

#### **Individualisation**

Recent discussion on social change has emphasised the phenomena of *individualisation*. This is seen to be a result of an increasing tendency of ‘erosion of traditions’ or the liberation of the individual from the guidance of

collective norms, values and attitudes. The process of growing-up has become individualised; everyone has to negotiate with himself/herself his/her identity and life. A *normal biography*, which used to be structured by social class, parents, church, nationality, teachers, youth workers etc, is going to be replaced by a *self-made biography* through a process of individual reflexion of the increased risks and potentialities which youth face in today's society. Manuela Du Bois-Raymond (1998), in her empirical study of young people's life concepts in the Netherlands, uses the term *choice biographies* to refer to those 'trendsetters' whose life becomes a self-designed project. This is the postmodern interpretation.

There are three questions:

- To what extent is this actually taking place?
- Is the development 'good or bad'?
- How is this related to non-formal learning?

Firstly, empirical research seems to indicate that the majority of young people and their orientation is still traditional, structured by class, gender, ethnic origin, national identity and existing value, norms and practices. However, the postmodern theory seems rather to describe a *tendency*, a tendency which is particularly clear among young people of today. Perhaps the term '*individualisation*' should be replaced by the term '*structured individualisation*' to admit that social class, ethnic and regional background and separate male and female cultures still guide the socialisation process and mediate traditions, and that educational, consumption and leisure choices are largely made in accordance with these background factors.

The second question was whether the development is 'positive or negative'. Here it will suffice to refer to the contradiction of current authorities of the discussion. Anthony Giddens, one of the most prominent speakers on the individualisation trend sees individualisation as something positive; increased freedom of choice and increased possibilities allow the citizens to fulfil their true personality, to create their own life and ultimately to create a new moral order. At the same time, Giddens (1998, 2000) is the British spokesman on neoliberalism<sup>9</sup> according to which the emphasis is on the personal responsibilities of individuals, their families and their communities for their own future and well being and upon their own obligation to take active steps to secure this.

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<sup>9</sup> Giddens himself maintains that he is a proponent of "the Third Way", a form of 'renewal of social democracy', while his commentators argue that his thinking is not much different from standard neoliberalism and that rather than a Social Democrat Giddens is "Mrs Thatcher without the handbag"

Ulrich Beck (1986) also thinks that individuals have more to decide on for themselves, but what the individual is facing is not possibilities but rather risks. In a *risk society* young people search for their individual identities and life styles through carefully choosing educational and professional careers, investing in a social life, often undertaking a long process of searching for a marital partner, cultural expression, sport, consumption, use of new media, travelling around, etc. Young people may make wrong decisions or, rather, do not have the necessary resources to make the right choices. The result is often unemployment, labour market insecurity, increased economic dependency, polarisation, 'status zero'- youth (youth not in education, training or work), overall weakened social security, use of alcohol and drugs, psychic and psychosomatic symptoms. This is the darker side of the neoliberalist doctrine where the risk reduction becomes an individual responsibility rather than a collective or state responsibility.

Accordingly, to Giddens individualisation means a fortunate opportunity to freely make the best choices, but for Beck it is rather a stressed situation, where the individual is confronted with difficult options in a chaotic world. To Giddens the postmodern world appears as 'a life-style shopping centre', while to Beck it rather means 'navigation in rocky waters'. Whichever might be true, both, however, agree that life-careers and biographies are increasingly a result of an unpredicted series of individual reflections and decisions on risks and possibilities. The popular term to describe this phenomena is 'life politics'.

The development of individualism means more tolerance towards a variety of values, norms, lifestyles and cultures, but there are also reactions and counter-reactions. One reaction – going even beyond radical liberalism - is extreme constructivism which leads to 'the hopeless relativism' of understanding any norms, values and identities as good as any others. A counter-reaction is 'fundamentalism' which praises absolute certainty of science, time-honoured traditions, non-negotiable beliefs and fixed identities. Recently this is believed to have resulted in the success of extreme right wing parties, increased racism and – in the youth field – popularity of the skinheads and the neo-nazis.

### **Fragmentation**

As seen above 'the postmodern turn' has been interpreted to have contributed to two opposing tendencies; that of *pluralisation and individualisation* and that of *fragmentation and isolation*. Beck thinks that modernity, as a development of fragmentation, is increasingly difficult for the individual to handle. There are more and more signs of the severity of these difficulties for citizens and youth, in particular: educational failure,

illiteracy, unemployment, labour market insecurity, increased economic dependency, political alienation, normlessness, isolation, problems in social relations, housing problems, use of alcohol and drugs, psychic and psychosomatic symptoms, severe psychic disorders, suicides etc. This is where proponents of non-formal education come in. Tom Bentley argues in his book on “Learning beyond the classroom” (1998) that young people are not able to transfer or apply the knowledge they acquire from school to the pressing problems of their everyday life. According to him formal education has a too narrow conception of the cognitive capacities of the individual and he

goes on to show “how education can be transformed using resources that we already possess, by connecting it to the knowledge, experience and creative potential which often surround schools in local communities and workplaces”.

From this point of view non-formal learning becomes a unifying instrument to combat the various forms of fragmentation and isolation: social exclusion, erosion of norms and values and detachment of young people from social and political participation. Non-formal learning is a method (1) to empower youth at risk and (2) to learn about norms, values and ethical principles and transfer them into practice. Furthermore, out-of-curriculum activities should be a way (3) to involve young people in the societal decision making processes.

Another element of this ‘global’ nature of non-formal learning is that it should be involved in a large variety of social activities; authors like Bentley emphasise the role of the school as a catalyst and a co-ordinator of all the learning relationships in and around the school. The school should act as a *neighbourhood learning centre* co-ordinating the learning opportunities of the community. The local NGOs, youth groups, youth projects in the field of culture, youth, employment and sport, as well as youth, social and cultural centres should be involved in this concept. The Council of Europe’s Directorate of Youth and Sport, and more widely the Council of Europe’s Directorate General of Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport (DGIV) should perhaps consider how to contribute to this development?

### **Multiple identifications**

This picture painted by “reflexive-modernisation theorists” (Giddens and Beck) is probably over-individualistic and exaggerates rational discourse. There are still a considerable number of young people who like to involve themselves in traditional collective forms of activities (like the school, the church, sports and youth organisations, etc.). In particular, it seems that

ecological, gender, ethnic, peace and single issue movements appeal to young people.

There are also new kinds of expressive and emotional communities and lifestyles through which young people articulate their interests. These defy exact definition, because they “are messy, contradictory, diverse and heterogeneous” (Hetherington, 1998). They are situated somewhere between those forms of identification which are, on the one hand, well organised, hierarchical, efficiently managed, based on rationally stipulated goals and norms and on the other hand forms of identification which are individual, sporadic, transient and based, at most, on ‘emotional togetherness’. It seems that many of the new social movements, youth cultures and lifestyle experimentations of today’s youth fall within these extremes: they are forms of social life which appear to combine organisational form with ‘the expressive’ and ‘the emotional’ (this will be further discussed in chapter 3).

To conclude, young people try to develop their identities through forms of activities which are increasingly heterogeneous, multiple and diverse.

### **Implications for non-formal learning**

The individualisation of the youth field with increased modes of identification seems to emphasise the importance of non-formal learning as educational thinking which cherishes the multiplicity of learning environments, a learner-centred approach and an openness to new forms of learning relationships. (There will be no attempt to assess non-formal learning through those numerous qualifications and skills which young people learn from these contexts, as this has been well documented elsewhere (Bentley, 1998; Sarason, 1997; Sahlberg, 1999).)

Firstly, there is a quest for alternative, multiple and non-institutional contexts for identity development. The standardised educational forms (formal education) are limited to provide young people with the possibilities to reflect on the highly diverse, often individual and quickly changing issues of their identity development. The variety of their concerns tend to find responses outside the formal structures, particularly outside the class room - NGO activities, less established social movements and action groups, youth cultures and subcultures, municipal youth work, sports, social, employment and cultural projects, the cyber world, peer groups, other everyday contexts, etc..

Secondly, the contradiction is not always between formal education and NGO activities, but between those learning environments which apply non-formal learning philosophy and those which do not. Sometimes NGOs

function similarly to ‘formal education’ with hierarchical top-down structures which give too little room for individual choice and innovation. In this sense the constructivist non-formal learning approach is something that the NGOs themselves should carefully reflect.

Thirdly, the multiplicity of learning environments is accompanied by qualitative changes from ‘rational-traditional’ identifications to new forms of identification. In addition to the rational individualised forms of identity search, and the traditional identifications (to parents, school, church, established organisations etc.) there is an upsurge of expressive, emotional and aesthetic forms of identification, which also call for a broadening of the concept of learning.

Fourthly, there is a demand for actor centred activities. Clearly the top-down objectivist approach of the formal education and some of the NGOs no longer meets the expectations of the ‘individualised’ young people with their divergent, quickly changing and concrete daily concerns. Thus young people need, and in fact use, a large variety of the learner-centred non-formal learning contexts to reflect and construct their individual ‘life politics’.

Fifthly, the concept non-formal learning should be open to the multiplicity and new forms of identification and learning. In this respect non-formal learning cannot be limited to learning in traditional youth organisations. Youth organisations have promoted their own definition, a definition which is also reflected in the report of the Council of Europe Committee on Culture and Education ‘Non-formal education’ (Parliamentary Assembly Doc. 8595, 15 Dec.1999). According to them we should make a difference between informal and non-formal education. Informal education is the unorganised, non-voluntary and mostly passive learning that takes place in the various contexts of daily life, while non-formal education refers to organised, voluntary-based active learning, particularly that of the youth organisations. However, it is not empirically correct to maintain that learning which takes place outside the classroom and the NGOs would be “unorganised, non-voluntary and mostly passive”.

Nevertheless, the definition of the concept ‘non-formal’ (as any concept) is dependent on its social context and the particular interests of the definer. Thus there is always room for definitional wars to conquer concepts (Appendix 1).

It is crucial to support the NGOs to find a better recognition for the important work they are doing, but why should we conceptually limit ourselves to this particular definition?

### **Non-formal learning in a learning society**

At the heart of the idea of a 'learning society' there are three basic arguments: the *constructivist conception of knowledge*, a *broad conception of learning environments* and *the concept of life long learning*.

### **Constructivism**

*"An important challenge for educational reform is to begin to question and come to a greater understanding of the philosophy, theory and epistemology that presently informs educational practice."*

*Elizabeth Murphy & Jacques Rheaume, 1997*

As the concise introduction to postmodernism states, the absolute nature of knowledge has increasingly been questioned, not only in the field of political ideology, but also in social, humanist and natural sciences. The controversy is between *objectivism* and *constructivism*. To be brief, objectivism believes that knowledge refers to something which is in a 'real world' which exists independently and separately from the knower. The knowledge we have is true if it corresponds to the real world. The constructivist's view argues that knowledge or reality do not have any objective value independently of the knower. The knower interpretes and constructs a reality based on his experience and interactions with his environment. Rather than thinking of *truth* in terms of 'match to reality', the constructivist speaks of *viability* or *usefulness*: "concepts, models, theories, etc., are viable if they prove adequate in the context in which they were created" (von Glaserfeld, 1995).

In terms of learning theory, objectivism believes "in the existence of reliable knowledge about the world. As learners, the goal is to gain this knowledge; as educators, to transmit it. Objectivism further assumes that learners gain the same understanding from what is transmitted. The role of education is to help students learn about the real world. The role of teachers is to interpret events for them. Learners are told about the world and are expected to replicate its content and structure in their thinking" (Jonassen, 1991). Constructivists do not believe in objective, universally true or applicable knowledge, but rather in knowledge which relates to the student's framework of meanings, to his/her cognitive growth and ability to interpret and master the world. Within this viewpoint learning must be a self-steered communicative process which aims at critical reflection producing knowledge which the student experiences as useful. The teacher is a 'guide' and the student a 'sense maker'. Constructivist theories often emphasise the

emancipatory nature of the knowledge and action that should follow it (such as the case of Paolo Freire and Jack Mezirow).

The constructivist approach fits in the challenges of contemporary social change and in the mental landscape of postmodern youth. Firstly, constructivism is responsive to the increasing multiplicity, multiculturalism and transience of today's Europe. There is a need for an educational approach which is sensitive to intercultural differences. One good example is the Council of Europe's youth sector emphasis on *intercultural learning* - a constructivist approach to work within a multicultural setting. Secondly, the constructivist approach is sensitive to the individual and 'innerdirected' interests of young people. This is why a learner-centred pedagogy is better fitted to the needs and aspirations of young people than the teacher-centred approach of formal education. As the European Youth Forum report says "this conceptual difference between education and learning is the key to understanding the major shifts in the educational thinking which has taken place" (Sahlberg, 1999). Thirdly, with respect to the increasing social problems of young people today, the constructivist approach has a strong emancipatory dimension; learning should lead to critical reflection and action to solve the concrete problems at hand. Concerning all the increased social inequalities that Europe's youth is more increasingly likely to encounter, it is vitally important to connect curriculum to current real-life problems. A paramount example is the Council of Europe's Directorate of Youth and Sport Long Term Training Course on minority youth projects.

### **Learning relationships**

Michael D. Young, (1998), a British educational sociologist has said "A learning society is the idea of giving the priority to individuals developing *learning relationships*<sup>10</sup> throughout their lives in any work, study or other activity in any institution or community in which they are involved". Perhaps we should not speak of formal, in-formal, post-formal and non-formal education, or the clear demarcation lines between them, but rather of a set of learning relationships which individuals need during the course of their life?

To develop the learning relationships outside formal education an input from formal education could be useful. Perhaps educational professionals should step out from their formal institutions (schools and universities) and cooperate with actors in workplaces and other non-formal learning sites to create curricula together. In this sense non-formal projects in the youth field

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<sup>10</sup> Sometimes the word 'learning environments' is used in this context. For example the European Youth Forum report on non-formal education talks about "the creation of productive and meaningful learning environments" (Sahlberg, 1999)



should not be developed *outside* formal education, but *in co-operation with* it.

### **Towards lifelong learning**

The expert report on Swedish Youth Policy (1999) lists a few building blocks for European youth policy. One of them is the proposal that the educational approach of the Council's youth sector should be involved with the modernisation of European education. The authors feel that the educational systems of all European countries face similar problems; motivation problems, irrelevant and/or outdated curricula, failure to meet the needs of labour markets, etc..

For many educational sociologists educational modernisation means acknowledging that there are a variety of learning sites outside the classroom and *interconnecting* these ultimately into a lifelong educational offer. This is very much in line with the recent (draft) recommendation of the European Youth Forum on non-formal education when it talks about creating an integrated model of education; - "Probably the single most important principle in improving education in the third millennium is to establish co-operation. We recommend that youth organisations focus on an integrated model of education in which co-ordination, co-operation and identification of new resources are the core processes. This could also act as an invitation to all other parties to participate in the dialogue on the new Crossing Boundaries Paradigm that aims to create better education for all" (Sahlberg 1999, p.36).

### **Implications**

To conclude, one could go further than just to find practical measures to recognise the work that is carried out in youth organisations - which as such is vitally important - and consider a broader strategy that:

- (1) *abandons the expression 'non-formal education' and replaces it by 'non-formal learning'*. Constructivism makes a crucial difference between teacher and learner centred approaches. The expression 'education' strongly refers to the teacher centred paradigm while the word 'learning' refers to a learner centred one,
- (2) *widens the concept of non-formal learning*, in order for the Council of Europe's youth sector to develop the concept and pedagogical approach of non-formal learning. It is vital to use a concept which broadly describes the empirical and

theoretical field of non-formal learning. Another thing is to make priorities and strategic choices within that concept,

- (3) *promotes the creation of a diversity of learning relationships and co-operates with formal education* at local level (like schools as ‘neighbourhood learning centres’), at national level (like the acknowledgement of ‘a non-formal learning study book’) and international level (like the Council of Europe’s youth sector programme on non-formal learning),
- (4) *aims at interconnecting the learning sites into ultimately a life-long-learning process;* and
- (5) *emphasises the emancipatory role of non-formal learning.*

## Questions

- Is the postmodern account of individualisation, fragmentation and multiple identification feasible and/or useful?
- How do the Council of Europe’s youth policies and its Directorate of Youth and Sport’s programme reflect these tendencies?
- How should the Council of Europe’s Directorate of Youth and Sport relate itself to the broad conception of non-formal learning (outlined above)? What are the benefits, drawbacks, and possibilities?
- If we can broadly agree on the approach, does it correspond to our educational practices? Should we modify them? (See, for example Appendix 2: Characteristics of constructivist learning and teaching.)
- If we want to develop non-formal learning creating ‘learning relationships’ and ‘interconnecting’ them to ‘an integrated model of education’ (as the European Youth Forum report calls it), how should we more exactly define these concepts?
- How to implement the idea of ‘learning relationships’ to the development of the Council of Europe’s educational strategy?
- According to the European Youth Forum report the NGOs are also at a loss in relation to the new challenges of non-formal learning – How should we integrate our educational offer into the NGOs’ discussion on the new learning paradigm (constructivism, non-formal learning, learning society) and social change in the curricula?
- How to promote the conceptual and pedagogical development of non-formal learning in the Council of Europe’s Directorate of Youth and Sport and its pool of trainers? Is there a need to revise the pool of trainers according to the new educational demands?

- How to promote evaluation of non-formal learning (in the Council of Europe's Directorate of Youth and Sport and the NGOs): "we have to go beyond the verbal rhetoric of the pedagogy" (Sahlberg 1999, p.28). "We know too little about which young people participate in non-formal education, we know even less about the nature of the process or results of such participation, and we know next to nothing about the validity of such activity in general" (idem).
- How to promote the integrated model/interconnected learning relationships? To what extent could this be done in co-operation with formal education? How could we promote and develop local level initiatives, like the *neighbourhood learning centre* model? How could the Council of Europe's Directorate General IV for Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport contribute?
- Should we relate non formal learning to the promotion of the third sector (see Appendix 3). Should the Council of Europe's youth sector involve itself in a wider discussion of the role of the third sector and civil society in today's Europe? Could there be a shared interest between youth NGOs and other actors of civil society to be jointly elaborated and promoted?

## II. Citizenship

*"The modern nation-state and its sovereignty are being challenged by the rise of new groups and classes, the post modernisation and globalisation of politics, economy, culture and society, and the rise of new technologies; these transformations effectively problematise the meaning of citizenship."*

*"The challenge we face today is to conceive a new way of governing ourselves, a new way of being political under advanced capitalism"*

*Citizenship and Identity, Engin Isin & Patricia Wood, Sage 1999*

### 1. Defining citizenship

Citizenship is normally defined as:

- (1) The rights and duties (civil, political and social) of the individual in a nation state

This is the standard legal definition based on the idea (of liberalism) that the individual and his/her rights and responsibilities precede everything: the bearer of rights is the individual and the granter is the nation-state. Citizenship should not, however, be reduced to merely a legal concept. It should also be understood as a sociological concept including:

(2) The practices (cultural, symbolic and economic) of the individuals

Sometimes the legal structures do not meet with the demands of the practices of citizens. Practices of, for example, gay and lesbian communities are not at all completely coded in the legal frameworks of nations and states. This makes it plausible to include it in the definition of citizenship also:

(3) The relationship between the first two elements of citizenship

The legal definition of citizenship is a definition of status. The sociological emphasis on practice and the third amendment to see citizenship as a relation or tension between the practices and the legal rights adds a dynamic element - the individual as an active subject. This is where the terms 'active citizenship' and 'deep citizenship' come in. The Council of Europe normally uses the term "democratic citizenship", which is a legalistic and largely static concept. It does not pay much attention to the dynamics created by the tension between the state and the civil society. In fact, as James Wimberley, from the Council of Europe's Directorate of Education and Higher Education, says "the guiding concept of the Council of Europe has been 'democratic' rather than 'civil society'" and that "in its actual dealings with the third sector, the Council of Europe has been fairly conservative". It has not taken NGOs very seriously. (An exception is, of course, the Directorate of Youth and Sport, but it is understood as something so special that it is very seldom even mentioned when the relations between NGOs and the Council of Europe are officially discussed.) The emphasis of the Council is on establishing legal frameworks for constitutional structures and legislation on the security of individual rights and equality rather than promoting self-organisation or creating conditions for a spontaneous collective action and a vivid, mutable, critical, heterogeneous civil society which it would then carefully listen to.

These definitions above still have the problem that they do not meet some of the new challenges and changes of citizenship. Our era is marked by large social changes like increasing fragmentation and differentiation of culture and lifestyles. The decentred and fragmented subject is more interested in group and individual rights and responsibilities than national or global rights and responsibilities. "Instead of regarding themselves as citizens of sovereign nation-states, much less citizens of the world, many people have come to see themselves primarily as members of racial, ethnic, linguistic, religious or gender groups. Rather than pursuing the common interest of humanity – equality of rights, the satisfaction of material needs, universal respect for the dignity of the individual – their efforts are directed mainly at

asserting the rights of their own group” (James Littleton, 1996). A proper definition of citizenship should then include:

(4) Group rights and responsibilities

This ‘second wave’ of citizenship politics has been linked to *communitarianism*, the idea that individuals are members of communities, which define their rights and responsibilities. This is thought to be the solution to the limitations of the conception of liberalism, which disregards group identities. The problem with the communitarian conception is that it seems to be followed by extreme pluralism which leads, on the one hand, to strong group identities which becomes ‘hegemonic’ and try to define their position classifying others and themselves, and, on the other, to a situation which does not leave any room for ‘common’ identity. This communitarian tendency has been replaced by “a third wave of cultural politics” which tries to go beyond the ‘hegemony of differences’. In theoretical terms it builds on the idea of continuous identity work. In this sense it is not feasible to talk about fixed, coherent and lasting identities but about *identification*, which is “a process [which] continues throughout the life of the individual and is never stable, fixed or unified” (Isin & Wood 1999, p.16). Thus the concept of citizenship should emphasise;

(5) The multiplicity of the identities and differences and the connections or articulations between the fragments and the differences rather than a singular, fixed identity.

This trend from citizenship – as something universal – to identity – as something particular – is part of ‘the post-modern turn’ – the increased pluralisation and continuous change of identifications.

However, to remind us of the hubris of post-modernism, “it is inadequate to focus on one aspect (fluidity and multiplicity) of identity at the expense of the other (solidity and relative permanence)” (Isin & Wood, 1999).

## 2. Changing identifications

Basic sociological wisdom, like that of Bourdieu, understands collective group identifications as an instrument through which individuals articulate their identity and fight for their social, political and cultural capital and make their claims. It is indeed illogical to discuss citizenship without reference to group identifications. Basic psychological wisdom, like that of Axel Honneth (1996), says that the key factors of identity-formation: self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem, can only be acquired and maintained intersubjectively, through being granted recognition by others

whom one also recognises. Thus, identification with groups is a key notion of modern citizenship. These identifications – or citizenships - are in continuous change. To take a few examples from “Citizenship & Identity” by Isin and Wood, 1999:

**Diasporic Citizenship.** There are about 20 million refugees and 30 million internally displaced persons in the world. There are increasing flows of migrating people. This raises the question of ‘multicultural citizenship’ (Will Kymlicka, 1995). How to provide a concept of citizenship which would mediate dominant and dominated group interests to a higher (state) level, based on acceptance of differences. Often the rhetoric of liberalism of ‘minority rights’ is only a façade to hide the political interests of capitalism to maintain hierarchies and ethnic groups subordinate to dominant cultures. Diasporic citizenship shows how difficult it is to discuss citizenship without reference to power and politics.

**Sexual citizenship.** The diversity of gender and sexual citizenships indicates the expansion of new forms of identification, “new forms of attachment, loyalty and identity”. The fight of women, gay and lesbian movements, indicates the strength and meaning of group identifications and also their difficulties in achieving full citizenship.

**Cosmopolitan citizenship.** Globalisation is a challenge to the sovereignty of the nation-state: information, pollution, migrants, arms, ideas, images, news, crime, drugs, and disease etc., easily cross national boundaries. It expresses new types of relations not between states but between transnational organisations, associations, and corporations as well as between individuals, movements, regions and cities. There are new types of social differentiation and new types of interest groups, and thus new types of global citizenships.

**Urban citizenship.** Much of the discussion of post-modernity revolves around ‘the rise of a new political economy driven by new forms of capital that are transferable across the globe, the rise of new classes that appropriate these forms of capital, and the new modes through which these classes organise power and engage in politics’ (Isin & Woods, 1999, p.99). Two types of differentiation arise: a widening gap between (1) the cosmopolis and its hinterland and (2) those professional groups that use the cultural and economic capital and those that do not. The question of citizenship is:

- What are the rights and responsibilities of the inhabitants to their city?
- What is urban citizenship?

**Cyber citizenship.** Is it possible to use and develop the NIT to promote group identities and citizenship and avoid its use as a modulator of behaviour and identity?

**Ecological citizenship.** Ecological citizenship refers to obligations and responsibilities towards nature. Ecological identity denotes all the highly varied ways people construe themselves in relationship to the earth as manifested in personality, values, and sense of self. Nature becomes a key object of identification.

**Cultural citizenship.** Cultural citizenship is “a field in which the rights to access to production, distribution and consumption of culture become a field of struggle and conflict. In this context ‘culture’ refers to a field in which symbols, ideas, knowledge, images and sounds are produced, exchanged and consumed.” (Isin & Woods, 1999, p.123). Cultural citizenship is about “rights to produce and consume symbolic goods and services”, and about “becoming active producers of meaning and representation and knowledgeable consumers under advanced capitalism.” (Isin & Woods, 1999, p.152). In this case citizenship is not associated with the state but rather with the markets, as individuals are constituting themselves through consumption. To what extent is this a class dominated activity? Where is the class-based mastery of cultural capital most significant in accessing citizenship rights? Is there a new citizenship between ‘the ordinary people’ and the new consumer identities and lifestyles of ‘the new cultural intermediaries’ (as Bourdieu calls them) or ‘the new intellectuals’ (as Featherstone calls them)? These new forms of interest, new types of groupings and new instruments of action call for “a new way of governing ourselves, a new way of being political under advanced capitalism”. What does it mean to be political in terms of globalisation, being digital, being a consumer, being a citizen of a global city, being ethnic, a man, woman, gay, lesbian, experiencing environmental threats etc.?

### **III. Participation**

‘Participation’, as a way of expressing oneself on matters of concern, is probably a too technical and simplified term to capture the essence of the activity. This conceptualisation presupposes that young people have identities, which only need an instrument to be channelled to the established political decision making processes. The problem is that identities – particularly those of the young people – often are ambivalent, complex, hybrid, fragmented, contingent and under constant change. Furthermore, the forms through which young people express their identities (whatever they are) are more varied than the standard participation instruments. In this sense it would be more feasible to think of participation as a larger process of

exploring and expressing identities. Perhaps one could rather talk about ‘forms of identification and expression’?

The forms of identification and expression are changing. Some of the key elements are:

- from fixed identities and commitments to changing, overlapping and even contradictory identities and commitments;
- from rational discourse and its traditional participation formats (established structures of the representational democracy) to emotional, expressive and aesthetic forms of engagement;
- from long-term commitments in organised activities to looser forms of identifications;
- increased diversity of the forms of identification; from cultural activities, youth cultural and sub-cultural forms to consumer behaviour and cyber communities.

The search for ‘new forms of participation’ should concentrate on outlining new types of identification which might take new forms of expression. Among other things, we should open our minds from the old dogmas of thinking that only rational communities are effective, moral and supportive to identity growth. Sometimes we seem to be the prisoners of the old dualism (of Tönnies, Weber and Durkheim) between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, between the pre-modern small communities knit together through traditions and emotions and the modern large communities which are based on effective division of labour and rational organisation. The latter has become to denote a rational, intentional and conscious form of organisation while the former affectual, irrational and unconscious social organisation (Weber makes the distinction between instrumental and value rational vs. affectual and traditional).

Current studies on new social movements and new lifestyles argue that various kinds of expressive communities have gained popularity among youth. Melucci talks about “emotional communities” and Maffesoli (1996) about “neo-tribal lifestyles”. Both of them maintain that emotional and expressive communities can be moral communities.

“Ethical beliefs are not expressed discursively simply through speech and text, but through the aesthetic marks, or masks of group identification. Feeling and emotion, the expressive realm, is a realm of belief and value that expresses itself through stylistic forms of communication and signification.” (Maffesoli, 1996).



Kevin Hetherington has tried to reintroduce the concept of *Bund*, originally coined by a German sociologist Schmalenbach in 1922. *Bund* or *Communion* is a concept which bridges the above mentioned dichotomies: it is a social form or organisation which is affectual, but also conscious and value rational. *Bund* is also elective and promotes individual self-reflection. Hetherington shows that it is an organisational form of the new social movements and new lifestyles and, what is most important, shows that “the expressive is not antithetical to the organisational” (Hetherington, 1998, p.99).

Thus we should be encouraged by these recent studies on new social movements and life styles to look for new forms of identifications and expression – and reflect to what extent they would be relevant to the Council of Europe’s youth policies.

Europe has many realities. To some extent the social, cultural and economic situation of central and eastern Europe is so different from the west that the search for ‘new forms of participation’ should be accordingly modified. The Council of Europe’s Directorate of Youth and Sport Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) Working Group on Youth Participation has published a study on ‘Youth Participation in Eastern Europe’ by Siyka Kovacheva (CDEJ (99) 9 rev., 1999). The report describes the situation of youth and youth participation and analyses a large variety of successful youth participation projects. A short summary of this research includes following observations:

First of all, young people in post-communist societies face the following four alarming problems:

- poverty and polarisation (as to career prospects, relation between majorities and minorities (particularly Roma youngsters), regional differences, etc.);
- prolonged economic dependence on their parents (‘infantilisation’ as the Slovakian youth researchers Miriana Ule and Tanja Renner would call it);
- consumerism;
- low levels of participation.

According to research reports in post-communist countries:

- there is a low and declining interest in representative politics and in participation in elections;
- declining trust in parties and politics;
- declining trust of young people in NGOs in general;
- unwillingness to participate in youth organisations with registered memberships and regular routine activities, in particular.

This negative development is further exacerbated by:

- underdeveloped legislation;
- lack of proper state youth policies towards NGOs;
- lack of tradition, experience, technology and information bases;
- a negative attitude by the public towards NGOs.

Nevertheless, at the same time the successful projects which the study analyses also give a more positive picture: participation is possible. The study summarises the keys of success as follows:

- there has to be autonomy (self-determination) for young people in carrying out their projects;
- a project type activity (with concrete and diverse themes) seems to be a successful format;
- networking: alliances have to be found with
  - youth work professionals,
  - other NGYOs – mostly those run by adults,
  - local and central level authorities,
  - the media
  - youth research

Kovacheva's study indicates that participation is not just a question of young people lacking motivation and instruments for participation. It is a larger issue of basic social, economic and cultural conditions of a given society. Furthermore, there must be a basic infrastructure for civil society to function, including relevant legislation and public support of NGOs. It is very encouraging that under certain conditions (explained by Kovacheva) active participation of young people is possible. Perhaps the results of the study and the experience of the Council of Europe's Directorate of Youth and Sport on working in these circumstances should be put together to outline a policy?

#### **IV. Citizenship – a conceptual grid**

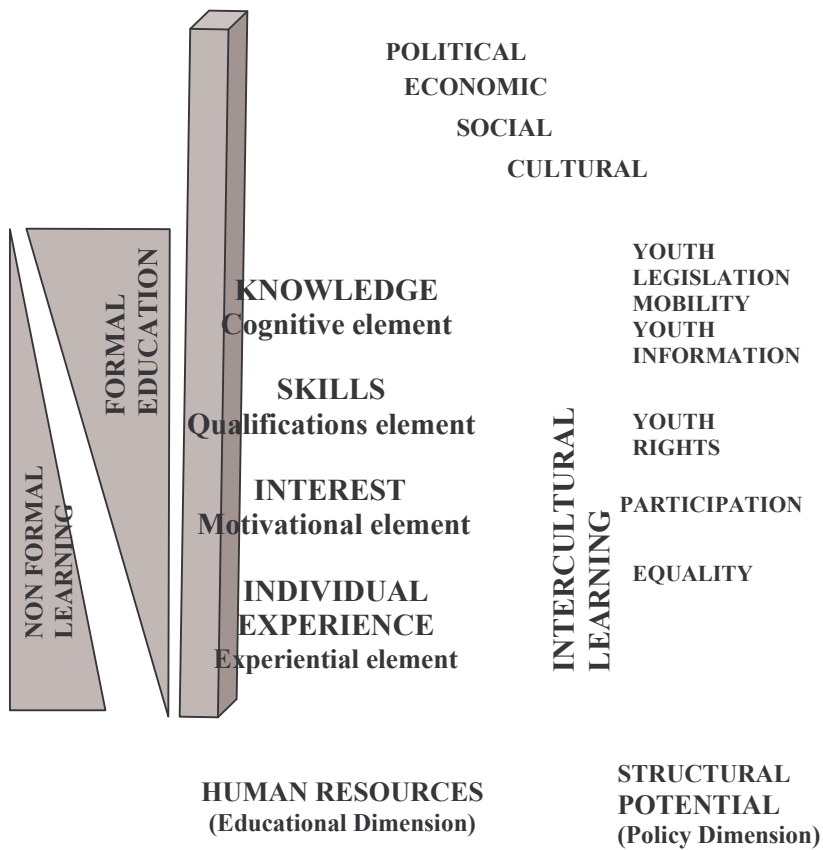
'Citizenship', 'non-formal learning' and 'participation' are closely related concepts. The graphic presentation below defines citizenship as follows: for young people to become active citizens in the political, economic, social and cultural areas of the society (arenas of citizenship), an educational input combining formal and non-formal learning (an educational dimension) and policy measures to remove obstacles from active citizenship (a policy dimension) are required.

This grid understands citizenship not only as the political rights and responsibilities of the citizens but also as their status and role in the economic, social and cultural arenas of life. This definition is concomitant with the broad (new) conception of citizenship promoted earlier in this paper. It also serves well the integrated youth policy approach, which wants to design measures for youth in all walks of life, across all social sectors and not limit itself to leisure time, NGO activities or political participation of young people.

The Council of Europe's youth sector is an educational and youth policy actor. Its educational philosophy emphasises that it is important to provide young people with the necessary cognitive input (knowledge) on citizens rights, responsibilities and the means to take action but that this is not enough. An even more important educational task for the young people is to create the motivation (interest), to acquire the qualifications and competences to be aware, reflect and act (skills) and to personally apply in a real life situation (individual experience) this knowledge, interest and skills. Intercultural learning – a cornerstone of the educational package offered by the Council of Europe's youth sector - is one paramount example of such an educational approach. In education for citizenship both formal education and non-formal learning is needed. However, any cognitive input is useless if the learner does not have the personal (or group based) motivation, the skills and the individual real life experience. Within this constructivist framework the non-formal learning input appears vital.

The policy dimension includes measures to lower barriers to active citizenship. This is why the promotion of participation has been such a central priority of the Council of Europe youth policies. Other measures in the field of human rights, youth rights, equality, health, youth information, mobility, youth legislation, promotion of civil society and so on have also contributed to active citizenship.

## ARENAS OF CITIZENSHIP



## V. Conclusion

**Non-formal learning, citizenship and participation** are our basic rhetoric and have been for quite a long time. Their abstractness makes them useful: everybody can use them and agree on their importance. Problems arise when one tries to find more precise and concrete contents to the concepts. Some have even proposed that the cultural differences in the field are so great that it might not even be fruitful to enter into elaborate exercises of reaching common understanding. However, if the concepts should guide our policies they should be concrete enough to serve as priorities which necessitate certain strategies and activities and exclude others. Such concepts should further reflect key knowledge on youth, social change and educational thinking. This paper has tried to indicate that there are marked changes going on in the life of young people, in the society at large and in contemporary educational thinking, which then should have an effect on the way we understand non-formal learning, citizenship and participation.

It seems that the forms and context through which young people grow up, the structural constraints, the socialisation patterns and the *rites de passage* have become more fluid, complex and risky. The identity development – with its potentialities and risks - is left increasingly to the individual and his/her family. There are new forms of identification and new forms of expression. The identity growth has become a fluid and multiple process with increasing importance on ‘identification through groups’. These changes have coincided with a new learning paradigm inspired by constructivism. A relativist, learner- and practice oriented educational thinking, that looks at learning relationships outside the classroom and wants to integrate them into an integrated model of education – or learning.

The Council of Europe’s youth sector with its long history in co-operating with NGOs and building a civil society, will have to modify its thinking and strategies to these new realities. The main areas of activities might be as follows:

- Support to the identification process of today’s young people. This means conscious and constant development of non-formal learning – with a wide range of partners - as an educational method keeping in mind its scope in NGO activities and in other forms of identification activities of young people;
- Creation of a civil society and its “social trust”. The potentiality of non-formal learning to empower youth at risk, to reflect and transfer into practice norms, values and ethical issues and to promote participation in

the creation of 'social trust' ("social capital, shared norms of trust, collaboration, mutual goals and expectations" (Fukuyama, 1995);

- Develop structures which respond to fluid, multiple and group-based identifications. This is the challenge of the new types of citizenships, whereby one has to find a way to mediate the new forms of young peoples' identifications to acknowledged rights and duties of nations, states and international bodies;
- Explore new forms of identification and expression. How can the Council of Europe facilitate the visibility of changing patterns of youth involvement?
- Identify social, economic, cultural and legislative obstacles and keys of success to participation, in the new member countries in particular. Perhaps the National Youth Policy Survey instrument could be used in a more targeted manner for this purpose and perhaps a system of follow-up and consultancy should be established.

## Appendix 1

### “Neformaly” – non-formal education as a social construction

In 1987 Gorbachev suggested at the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party that the question of internal party democracy and the balance of institutions in the national political sphere should be discussed. This was followed by a promotion of “pluralism of opinions” and a sudden activation of non-governmental organisations, social movements and youth subcultures. These were called *neformaly*.

The social reaction to *neformaly* was very different among the various political and social actors.

For Gorbachev *neformaly*, the activation of various civic groups, became a symbol of the attack on the one-party system, a symbol of the democratisation process.

For the Komsomol *neformaly* presented a threat to its legitimacy. It immediately started to carry out research on these groups. The Komsomol researchers classified *neformaly* into a typology of ‘positive’, ‘neutral’ and ‘negative’ *neformaly* and designed its policy accordingly. As to the ‘positive’ *neformaly* (organisations *not against* Komsomol), the Komsomol tried, with considerable success, to incorporate them into its own structures, the ‘neutral’ *neformaly* (punks, heavy metal fans, hip hoppers, etc.) were to be mobilised into ‘socially useful activities’ and the ‘negative’ (anti-socialist movements, bikers, urban gangs, karate clubs, etc) were defined as a threat to socialist democracy and called for control policy measures.

For the public and the media most groups of the *neformaly* became to mean ‘marginalised youth’ (which were then labelled ‘outsiders’ and put under the jurisdiction of social work and the police).

- *Neformaly* meant different things for different actors; for Gorbachev it denoted a welcomed sign of a pluralist democracy, for Komsomol it presented a threat to its legitimacy and for the public it increasingly meant a social problem
- Many of these conceptualisations were very different from the current (Western) understanding of ‘non-formal’: The Western countries tend to think that non-formal activities take place *in* the youth organisations, while in Russia it was the activity which took place *outside* the youth organisation.

- We think pluralist democracy needs a non-formal sector because it is 'outside the state', but in Russia neformaly was not only 'outside the state' but also 'outside the law'.

Clearly, the definition of 'non-formal' is dependent on its social context and the particular interests of the definer.



## **Appendix 2**

### **Characteristics of constructivist learning and teaching (Murphy & Rheame, 1997)**

1. Multiple perspectives and representations of concepts and content are presented and encouraged.
2. Goals and objectives are derived by the student or in negotiation with the teacher or system.
3. Teachers serve in the role of guides, monitors, coaches, tutors and facilitators.
4. Activities, opportunities, tools and environments are provided to encourage metacognition, self-analysis - regulation, -reflection and -awareness.
5. The student plays a central role in mediating and controlling learning.
6. Learning situations, environments, skills, content and tasks are relevant, realistic, authentic and represent the natural complexities of the 'real world'.
7. Primary sources of data are used in order to ensure authenticity and real world complexity.
8. Knowledge construction and not reproduction is emphasised.
9. This construction takes place in individual contexts and through social negotiation, collaboration and experience.
10. The learner's previous knowledge constructions, beliefs and attitudes are considered in the knowledge construction process.
11. Problem-solving, higher-order thinking skills and deep understanding are emphasised.
12. Errors provide the opportunity for insight into students' previous knowledge constructions.
13. Exploration is a favoured approach in order to encourage students to seek knowledge independently and to manage the pursuit of their goals.

14. Learners are provided with the opportunity for apprenticeship learning in which there is an increasing complexity of tasks, skills and knowledge acquisition.
15. Knowledge complexity is reflected in an emphasis on conceptual interrelatedness and interdisciplinary learning.
16. Collaborative and cooperative learning are favoured in order to expose the learner to alternative viewpoints.
17. Scaffolding is facilitated to help students perform just beyond the limits of their ability.
18. Assessment is authentic and interwoven with teaching.

### **Appendix 3**

#### **Non-formal learning and the third sector.**

Non-formal learning takes place in the third sector – the sector between private sector, public sector and households. This sector has experienced a remarkable upsurge and is accompanied by a political debate on the role it should play in society. As Lester Salamon (1996) said in a recent review of the non-profit making sector: “The rise of the non-profit making sector may well prove to be as significant a development of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as the nation state-state was of the nineteenth century”. The third sector is an increasingly important part of national economy and employment, it is a vital provider of social services, it is a prominent political factor, it is the arena for education to citizenship, providing a deeper social identity and a vivid relation to culture and community, etc. Jeremy Rifkin, the famous spokesman of the third sector, goes even further and believes that vitalisation of the sector is the only way to combat increasing unemployment and commercialised lifestyles. Only through people’s involvement in paid and voluntary work in the third sector can we promote a new social philosophy and a new way of life which is not dominated by ‘the unrealistic ideal of full time paid jobs for all and consumerism’, but instead, a rich cultural and social life and a respect for sustainable development. Rifkin further argues that the whole third sector, all the NGOs, trade unions, etc., should become more political, elaborate a common social vision and become a prominent political factor. The politics of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, according to Rifkin, will be tripartite: governments, markets and the third sector.

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## **CHAPTER 3 - CHANGING FORMS OF PARTICIPATION<sup>11</sup>**

### **I. “All Passive – All Guilty”<sup>12</sup>**

One of the main Council of Europe objectives of ‘building a Europe without dividing lines’ is to strengthen active citizenship. This is, today, a particular challenge because of so many alarming signs towards an undesired direction. There is a low and declining interest in representative politics, declining trust in politicians and declining participation in elections in the new member countries and especially among young people. There is the rise of the extreme right with a concomitant increase in attitudes of passive resignation to authoritarian leadership. It seems that the current political structures do not meet the expectations of young people, and accordingly, there is room for extreme parties with authoritarian and intolerant connotations to appeal to a large part of the electorate.

The European Union of Jewish Students ‘recycled’ the old “All different – All equal” logo text when they prepared themselves for an anti-Heider demonstration at the Council of Europe in February 2000. The result was the black and white logo with slightly changed text: “All passive – All guilty”. This message calls for a common solidarity to construct a civil society, which takes an active responsibility of society. Considering the current state of affairs the way ahead is to have a serious look at how the present forms of participation could be developed and what the ‘new’ forms of participation would be?

But what are the ‘old’ and what are the ‘new’ forms participation? The problem with the word new is that new becomes old very quickly and people have a different understanding of what the ‘new forms’ are, for instance, are youth parliaments new or old forms of participation? Furthermore, the definition of participation should have a link to the society in which it occurs; the changes of forms of participation should reflect changes in society. Within this framework it is possible to make a difference between ‘established and current’ forms *vis-à-vis* ‘emerging and future’ forms of participation. Following on from this one can refer to on the one hand, ‘modern’ forms of participation - representative participation and direct

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<sup>11</sup> The paper is based on an introductory lecture at a Round Table on “New Forms of Participation” in Biel, Switzerland, 4-6 May 2000, organised by the Council of Europe’s Directorate of Youth and Sport and the Swiss Authorities L’Office fédéral de la Culture, Service de la Jeunesse.

<sup>12</sup> A poster text of an anti-Heider demonstration of the European Union of Jewish Students at the Council of Europe, 23 February 2000.

participation with all their current variants, such as NGO based structures, co-management, youth parliaments, school councils, youth hearings, demonstrations, etc., and on the other hand, to ‘post modern’, emergent and future forms of participation - various types of expressive, emotional, aesthetic, cultural, casual, virtual and digital participation.

The intention is not to create a gap between the modern and post-modern forms of participation, saying that the former should be abandoned in favour of the latter. Of course, the modern forms of participation can be developed to meet the needs of today’s youth, a prime example would be in schools. The aim of education in all European schools is to prepare pupils for democratic citizenship and to take responsibilities. But in most countries there are no structures for the pupils to start learning about citizenship and to start taking responsibilities within the schools themselves! However, while developing these modern forms of participation, it is also necessary to look at the post-modern forms of participation identifiable as emergent and different from the established forms of participation.

## **II. Some reflections on modern forms of participation**

A summary of some of the key modern forms of participation is followed by a discussion of post-modern forms of participation with comments on their key benefits and main lines of criticism. Political participation has not been included as it is dealt with elsewhere for example in “Youth Voter Participation”, 1999 nor is there a discussion on the state of affairs of participation in central and eastern Europe, because that too has been treated elsewhere (see Kovacheva, 2000).

### **NGO-based participation**

The basic strategy is to support youth organisations and provide them with structures through which their voice can be heard. On a national level the most developed structures are the *national youth councils* (composed of NGOs) and *youth committees* (advisory governmental bodies). On a European level the *European Youth Forum* is the most influential lobby organisation comprised of international youth organisations and national youth councils. The Council of Europe youth sector represents a unique structure called *co-management*, where youth representatives decide, on an equal footing with the governments, on the priorities, main budget envelopes as well as on the implementation of the priorities and allocation of the budget of the Council of Europe’s Directorate of Youth and Sport. In this case youth participation is real, not theatrical.

Co-management is a way of making a good match between the Council of Europe youth programme and the expectations of the partners involved. It is also an efficient learning experience for future decision makers. The problem with this structure is that youth organisations *de facto* represent only a small part of young people. Furthermore, their diverse and heterogeneous composition may make it difficult to arrive at common position on controversial policy and political issues. Another question is how can one at the same time be a political decision maker of an intergovernmental structure and have the role an independent and critical civil society representative.

### **Youth and school councils, youth parliaments**

Another parallel trend has been the establishment of municipal youth councils and local, regional and national youth parliaments, as well as school councils. There are a large variety of applications of these models.

As a rule youth parliaments, youth and school councils are controversial models. There are reports of their success, particularly in small municipalities and small schools where they have been able to draw the attention of the decision makers and the teachers to youth priorities and youth issues. Furthermore, the sense of responsibility of pupils in the schools and young people in their municipalities has increased. Negative experiences concern a lack of real participation (limited scope of issues to decide on), their lack of connection to the electorate and difficulties in recruiting active participants. Many school council experiences also report a negative attitude on the side of the teachers and headteachers. Some conferences arranged to include youth participation have not taken young people seriously and there has been little follow up of their proposals (see for example: <http://www.ecouncil.ac.cr/rio/focus/report/english/peace-ch.htm>)

### **Youth hearings**

Youth hearings are another recent form of participation. The Dutch authorities convene annually a National Youth Debate bringing together different types of young people and their organisations and networks to discuss current youth policy issues. The French Minister of Youth and Sport has organised various forms of youth hearings to spark off discussions on the concerns of youth themselves. This minister was also a strong actor behind a European youth hearing called the European Youth Parliament held in 1999 in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The European Commission extensively used national and European youth hearings in the preparation of its forthcoming White Book on Youth Policies.



This strategy raises public awareness on youth issues and provides a forum for youth policy discussion. It also reaches to some extent young people outside “organised youth”. The problem with this type of democracy is the lack of debate and the difficulty of involving the variety of current youth lifestyles and the voices of the marginalized. There is often a strong element of top-down management in these popular consultations: Silvano Mockli (1996) goes as far as saying that “popular consultation continues to be an instrument for the exercise of power by the authorities rather than an instrument for the limitation of that power”.

### **Key points to be developed – a summary**

- 1) **The link to the electorate:** how to strengthen the communication of these bodies with those they represent, young people, the students and the pupils casting their vote? How to recruit active participants?
- 2) **Real participation:** Bernard Roudet (2000) concludes his overview on youth participation in France, “Participation is more rhetoric than reality. There is something inherent in our political culture which doubts everything which is not originated by the actual political actors”. This situation most probably concerns all the other member states of the Council of Europe, as well.
- 3) **The social inequality of participation:** the Council of Europe’s Directorate of Youth and Sport Expert Group on Dutch Youth Policies noted that “Participation structures do not reach genuinely disadvantaged groups”. How to involve ‘youth at risk’ or those most in need with society’s decision making structures?
- 4) **How to reflect the variety of youth?** The Council of Europe’s Directorate of Youth and Sport Expert group on Swedish Youth Policies found that current youth is becoming increasingly diverse and heterogenous. Given that the above-mentioned forms of participation only reach a part of this diversity, how should one take into consideration these new types of youth phenomena?

### **III. Towards post-modern forms of participation**

It is assumed that young people know what they want – and all that is needed is to find the right instruments and structures to channel these expectations. The discussion on youth participation is often concentrated on instruments and structures, perhaps it should concentrate on asking whether young people have identities and a set of views of society which they then want to express through structures? In many cases young people do not have such

identities. Rather their identities seem ambivalent, complex, fragmented and under constant change. The issue is complex and goes beyond structures and instruments, making the important questions: How do young people develop their identities? How do they express them? How should we react to this scene of diffuse and changing identities?

Instead of seeing participation as a set of standard solutions to the match between youth needs and the structures through which they could be expressed, participation could be viewed as having two elements instead of one:

- (1) participation as a diverse process of *exploring identities*
- (2) participation as a form of *expressing identities*

Instead of discussing the structures of participation it is the '*processes of identification*' and '*forms of expression*' which should be investigated. Of course the concept of participation includes the process of developing identifications, then learning, particularly non-formal learning, is being integrated into the discussion. In this case the 'development of identifications' (learning about one's relationship to a community) becomes inseparable from 'expressing the identification' (learning is also about change). Non-formal learning is about creating a personal relationship to a community and involving oneself in changing it. Much of the discussion about participation has become too instrument- and structure-oriented demagogy, having lost its roots in those processes through which the reasons and motivation for participation are created. How does the common young person, perhaps a member of an organisation, become emotionally and cognitively conscious of his or her relation to a community? How is this consciousness worked out?

## **1. Emergent forms of identification and expression**

Not only are the emergent forms of identification becoming complex, ambivalent, fragmented and fluid but also the forms of expressing them are changing. Some key dimensions of these changes are:

- From fixed identities and commitments to changing, overlapping and even contradictory identities and commitments?
- From long-term commitments in organised activities to looser forms of identifications?
- Increased diversity of the forms (of identification and expression) ranging from cultural activities, youth cultural and sub-cultural forms to cyber communities, cyber citizenship?

- From rational discourse and its traditional participation formats to emotional, expressive and aesthetic forms of engagement?

## 2. From rational discourse to emotional, aesthetic and expressive engagement?

Are we perhaps too dogmatic in thinking that only rational communities are effective, support moral growth and identity development? Sometimes we seem to be the prisoners of the old dualism (of Tonnies, Weber and Durkheim) between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, between the pre-modern small communities knit together through traditions and emotions and the modern large communities, which are based on effective division of labour and rational organisation. The latter has become to denote a rational, intentional and conscious form of organisation while the former effectual, irrational and unconscious social organisation.

Current studies on New Social Movements and new lifestyles argue that various kinds of expressive communities have gained popularity among youth. Melucci (1996) talks about 'emotional communities' and Maffesoli (1996) about 'neo-tribal lifestyles'. Both of them maintain that emotional and expressive communities can also be moral communities. "ethical beliefs are not expressed discursively simply through speech and text, but through the aesthetic marks, or masks of group identification. Feeling and emotion, the expressive realm, is a realm of belief and value that expresses itself through stylistic forms of communication and signification." (Maffesoli, 1996).

Kevin Hetherington has tried show that affectual social forms can also be conscious and value rational and promotes individual self-reflection. He maintains that this is the organisational form of the New Social Movements, youth cultures and new lifestyles and, what is most important, shows that "the expressive is not antithetical to the organisational" (Hetherington, 1998, p.99).

Where does this ambivalency, lack of long-term commitment, experimentation, search for aesthetic expression come from? The phenomena seem to be related to **insecurity** and, as Alberto Melucci (1996) has put it, to **changeability** and **transience**.

The growing economic and social insecurity and polarization has contributed to a perceived lack of control over the future. There is also a growing insecurity and lack of trust of the capacity of the political structures to guide us to a safer future. This leads to increased individualism and disinterest in

long-term commitments. Whereas the term 'insecurity' refers to increased 'risks', the term 'changeability' refers to the experience by young people of drastically increased awareness of 'possibilities': everything can be known about, everything can be tried, everything can be changed and everything can be imagined. The term 'transience' refers to the transitory nature of the modern world; as a result of quick changes, the knowledge, skills and practices of the past lose their meaning, while at the same time the future becomes uncertain and unpredictable - the present becomes the most meaningful thing. The overall consequence is that (1) today's youth lack future perspectives and concentrate on (2) constant experimentation of one's individual capacities within the new field of possibilities and on (3) experiencing the present. Thus the interest in collective movements, work with 'the system' and the engagement in traditional organisations and organisations with longer-term aims is decreasing. The most important thing for today's youth is *now* and *room for individual manoeuvrability*.

Manuela du Bois-Raymond said that there is "a decline of moral, political and ideological citizenships". In terms of Melucci's *changeability* and *transience* moral, political and ideological citizenships represent structures that change too slowly and which presuppose commitment to fixed values and ideas. Instead young people express themselves increasingly in other types of communities, like cultural and electronic communities.

#### **IV. Identification and expression through culture**

*"Young people are artists of life specialising in the artistry of growth"*

*Roger Hill*

Youth is about growth. Growth is about exploring one's potentialities. Arts, culture and subcultures are sites for such innovative explorations. A recent publication of the Council of Europe's Cultural Policies Research and Development Unit "Culture, creativity and the young: developing public policy" (Robinson, 1999) summarizes the relationship between culture and identity development of young people:

- The arts can have a crucial role in the strive for independence, hunger for new experiences and struggle for the sense of identity;
- Cultural activities are instruments to achieve social and political goals;
- Popular culture is the key innovative field of the identity search of today;

Thus arts and cultural activities, particularly that of popular culture, of youth are important arenas of identification (developing an identity) and expression (participation).

The Swedish youth culture researcher Johan Fornäs (1994) maintains that body, sound and image are the three key vectors of youth identification and expression. One can easily see how important the body, sport, dance, music, visual culture and their combination are to young people today. Of course there are people who maintain that this field of activity is totally overtaken by commercial cultural production and that the only role for young people is that of the passive consumer. Others, like Paul Willis (1990), argue that it is youth who are manipulating the media and the commercial youth cultures rather than the other way around. It is not so much passive consumption as an active use of them in realizing one's own personality.

Another critical voice has been to point out that popular youth cultures are apolitical and devoid of political messages. In the youth cultures only style matters not the meaning. The Council of Europe's Directorate of Youth and Sport Expert Group on Dutch Youth Policy report maintains that "a gap between style and ideology" has arisen (Mitev, 2000). For R. Shusterman (1996) this is not so, he claims that in most of youth cultural phenomena there are social and political messages, to take an example, rap music is essentially political and educative – if you can read the message.

One might go even further to say – like Richard Shusterman does – that 'ethics – the form of good life – becomes an aesthetic project' or, to put it in other words, people may become morally and politically conscious citizens through artistic activities, even through their daily lives. What you eat, how and where you travel, what you buy and what you do with your rubbish are often morally and politically defined choices, increasingly popular with young people. Importantly, this is a position in action, not only in words.

## **V. Identification and expression through cyber space**

Is it possible to develop identity and express it in the cyber world? Are there social communities – in the net - with which one can identify oneself and through which one can express oneself, endorse changes? What does it mean when young people spend hours and hours in virtual role games (like the MUD)? Is this virtual reality just a game or just an escape from reality, or is it something seriously useful? Does cyber space increase political participation? Does the internet create new types of political activism?

**To briefly comment on the above questions:**

### **Virtual reality, identity development and art**

The popular question is: Is virtual reality a good place for your children to grow up? The literature is divided in response to this question, but this author believes that “yes” is the correct answer. Sherry Turkle, the pioneering psychologist of internet research, says “Virtual communities offer a dramatic new context in which to think about human identity in the age of Internet” (Turkle, 1997). According to her the internet is a fruitful environment to develop the post-modern identity. Denise Dalaimo (1995) goes even further: “Cyberspace is the ultimate environment for the nourishment of the fragmented, multiphrenic, contradictory post-modern self.” So it is all about the hectic search for identity, where virtual reality, like VR role games (MUD, MUSH, etc), can be an important arena to develop, explore and test new dimensions of self.

But what are the virtual reality things like MUD games about? Aren't they 'just games'? Aren't they 'just an escape from reality'? What kind of reality is virtual reality?

Games are needed and different types of 'world-making' are needed. Through these alternative or additional worlds one may overcome loneliness, make friends, experience excitement, expand new horizons, see things differently, develop and test one's identity, etc. Sometimes it is not relevant that the virtual world corresponds to “the real world”, but rather how successfully it helps one to reflect one's own identity. The soap operas are not watched because of their “reality”, because they should reflect reality, but because they are *useful* fictional images of reality, against which one can elaborate and reflect one's own values, identity, life-style and world views. More important than the question of *reality* is the individual *use* and *usefulness* of these images of worlds.

Following this logic virtual reality can be useful to young people to become better real-life persons. As a 19-year-old MUD player says “The more I played, the more I found it was easier to be that person in real life” (Anke Bahl, 1997a & b). Virtual reality can be used to test and develop identities, which can then be more easily transferred to real-life. Much of early childhood socialisation is learning social roles through games – virtual reality provides another (more developed) version for youth to learn roles and identities.

The above discussion on the nature of virtual reality has sparked off another interesting discussion between the role of virtual reality and art. Why are we interested in art? We are not interested in art because it would necessarily reflect the reality, but rather because it shakes our perception of reality,

because it presents a different kind of ‘world-making’ which can help us see things differently, something that can in the end transform ordinary reality (Cooper, 2000). In this sense virtual reality comes very close to ‘Real Art’. Virtual Reality is about redeeming and transforming our awareness of reality. Like Michael Heim (1998), a pioneer in virtual reality, says: “Virtual worlds are works of art as much as they are feats of engineering”.

Virtual world activities are forms of identification, which have repercussions to the so called ‘real world’. Through virtual reality and its games we can see the world differently, develop our identities in them and – maybe – change the ‘traditional reality’ accordingly. If this is not participation, what is?

### **Digital Democracy**

There seem to be two major concerns which give the new information technologies (NIT) a possibility to change democratic practices. The first concern is the growing perception of mistrust towards political institutions and politicians, the second is the perception that economic and cultural change is so rapid that the current structures are too rigid and not well informed about what is going on. Perhaps NIT can help us create democratic models that ensure efficient flow of information and a combination of representative and participatory forms of democracy. Perhaps, a better access to good quality information, establishment of digital networks to reinforce local communities, ‘communities of interest’ and models through which NGOs, political parties, municipalities, governments and international organisations can communicate with citizens will lead to as Hague and Loader, (1999) say “to rethink and, if necessary, radically overhaul or replace [current] institutions, actors and practices”?

Experiments and models to promote digital democracy are so far very new and it is too early to draw any final conclusions. However, certain experiences seem to come up constantly.

### **Will the internet change political participation?**

Does better access to information and a quick means of expressing ones opinions create new types of activism? Does the internet particularly promote the participation possibilities of non-mainstream actors?

In the short run non- and anti-governmental and non-mainstream groups have been more effective than governments and established political actors to make use of Usenet Newsgroups, chat rooms, e-mails and web-pages. In the longer run the Imperium is expected to strike back hard (Hill & Hughes, 1998).

Furthermore it seems that the internet as an instrument does not as such create new political activism nor does it fundamentally alter the political landscape. Politically active people also use the internet actively. Thus the motivation to become politically active remains outside technology. "The ICTs will serve the cause of democratisation only if a prior will for strong democracy is established" (Malina 1999, p.16). To conclude, although virtual reality offers promising possibilities to enhance young people's participation, the primary need is to promote democracy and involvement at the rational reality of youth - family, community, schools, work place and other social and cultural settings.

### **Governmental and municipal initiatives**

Governments have tried to create information and communication technology (ICT) structures to facilitate the information flow from governments to citizens and to create citizen feedback and participation models. Hague & Loader (1999) who have recently studied these initiatives sum up, "practical initiatives to date have largely failed to live up to the rhetoric". The main failures have been the one-dimensional flow of information - from the governments to the citizens. Asking for feedback has been rare and citizens are not invited to set the agendas and participate in the planning phases. There is "the need for governments to develop techniques for 'mass listening'" (Richard, 1999).

The same conclusions seem to go for the municipalities as well. There is not much interactivity, there are very few efforts to activate the citizens to modify the information, to make it easily found, to present it in an understandable manner and in such a form as to evoke interest to participate.

### **Political parties**

Nixon and Johansson (1999) have studied the internet strategies of Dutch and Swedish political parties and found that political parties have a very centralised information strategy that does not favour interaction or dialogue with the local level and the electorate. They "need to adapt the ways in which they interact with the public and indeed with their own members". The authors suggest that the parties should reform their entire strategy in the information society. They should move towards a 'discursive democracy' Peter Waterman (1999) has analysed the strategies of the labour movement maintaining that there must be a radical change from *representing a clientele* (ever diminishing) to *communicating to a global public* the concerns of the labour movement. With this strategy ICT can be useful.



### **“Electronic Agora”**

There have been numerous attempts to create in the cyberspace citizens’ fora, ‘electronic agora’, ranging from electronic town halls, citizen channels to local community networks. Perhaps the most famous of them has been Cyber Ville, a New York online society (Horn, 1998), which has been able to activate people to discuss on- and offline the affairs of their community. Other fora of less structured and managed format have not been so successful. In the open agorae like Usenet newsgroups political discussions have not been very encouraging. According to a recent empirical study they are “home to an array of overlapping, short-lived conversations, usually among like-minded individuals” (Wilhelm, 1999).

All these initiatives are promising, like the Finnish ‘Netparliamnet’ presented at the Biel Round Table 4-6 May 2000, they need to be further developed and applied. Perhaps a tri-partite strategy should be followed: first, work on the motivation, skills and competencies (net-pedagogy, netiqets) of the users, second, the technical instruments and their accessibility and, third, find ways of making the political decision makers and administrators responsive to the outcomes of these initiatives.

### **Online activism**

The net has also become a site for civic action and even civic disobedience. One of the prime examples of online activism is the US based *Electronic Frontier Foundation*, which is specialised in promoting the liberty of the Internet ([www.eff.org](http://www.eff.org)). Despite its success, Jon Lebkovsky – one of its veterans, is well aware of the limitations of such an activism (Cybersociology: <http://www.socio.demon.co.uk/magazine/5/5jon.html>):

1. In cyberspace, it’s easy to avoid commitment and accountability  
- expression of opinion and real action are two different things.
2. It’s logistically difficult to organize online  
- it is difficult to run a meeting that lacks the visual cues and the immediate feedback that you have in ‘flesh meet’. Furthermore, it is difficult to make decisions online.
3. The promise of global effectiveness is misleading  
- thinking globally is easier than acting globally.
4. Sooner or later you have to take a stand  
- online you can afford to be inconsistent in expressing yourself, but to get results, you must decide on what you believe in and stick to it.

5. Money changes everything
- action needs funds, but when money is involved it usually changes everything

To sum up, digital democracy is a potentiality but not a miracle:

- the governments, municipalities, political parties, NGOs and civic action movements must develop a 'communicative strategy' towards NIT,
- public authorities, in particular need to develop 'mass listening',
- models with strong involvement of local and grass root level are essential, and
- it must be kept in mind that any models are useless unless there is a functional civil society beneath.

## **VI. Conclusion**

There seem to be two parallel reasons for looking at 'new forms of participation'. One is that the current structure of representative politics lacks legitimacy in the eyes of young people. Another reason is that the forms of moral and political engagement among young people are changing. Thus, at the same time, we should develop new forms of participation which would revitalise the interest of young people into democratic decision making processes, and also sensitise ourselves to the emergent forms of participation, new ways of developing and expressing identities.

The current forms of participation - youth councils, youth parliaments, and youth councils at educational institutions, co-management and youth hearings at local, national and international level – have been an undisputable success and increased their popularity, but there is also room for further development. One of the problems to be looked at is related to representative democracy in general – the missing links between the representatives and the electorate. Another issue is the credibility of the forms of youth participation - is participation for real?

At the same time the forms of youth involvement are changing from fixed long-term commitments to an ever wider variety of looser, ambivalent and even contradictory commitments, and from 'rational discourses to emotional, expressive and aesthetic forms of engagements'. These changes are anchored in current cultural, economic and social changes of increased risks, potentialities and the increased pace of change. Young people must concentrate more and more to continuously develop, reflect and experiment their life styles, values and

identities. The emphasis is more on individual ‘processes of identification’ than on the instruments of collective expression of them. Young people are looking for arenas of individual every-day development of identities. It seems that cultural and subcultural activities and the digital worlds are such arenas. Young people are mass users of cultural activities like physical culture (sports, dance, etc.), visual and music cultures – sometimes as innovators, sometimes as passive consumers. Furthermore, the cyber world, virtual reality and virtual reality games can be contexts in which to simulate identities, that are then transferred to ‘real life’.

It is necessary that the Council of Europe’s youth sector reflects its role in these new arenas of identification and expression. How can we promote the awareness and transparency of the ways young people use arts, culture, subculture, the virtual worlds and their every-day life to become moral and political citizens? How can we develop these instruments in youth work? How can we combat the negative effects (like commercialisation, Americanisation, ‘cyber mania’ etc.) of mass culture and the internet on youth?

New information technology has the potentiality to improve information dissemination, citizen feedback and direct democracy. The experience so far indicates that this potentiality still needs further development. And it is not only a question of developing the technology, but more so a question of adapting the strategies of governments, municipalities, political parties, NGOs and civic action movements to reciprocal communication with audiences than cascading down decisions – “communicative strategies’ and competencies of ‘mass listening’.

Finally, citizen channels, electronic town halls, community networks, net parliaments and civic action websites are meaningless unless there are motivated and conscious citizens to use them. The Council of Europe’s youth sector’s main task of vitalising active citizenship remains fundamental.

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## **CHAPTER 4 - THE NON-FORMAL EDUCATION BOOM<sup>13</sup>**

This chapter aims at defining non-formal education, giving it an historical and political context, as well as providing guidelines on how it could relate to the programme of activities of the Council of Europe's youth sector.

### **I. Defining non-formal education**

*“Probably the single most important finding of this study is that we know amazingly little about non-formal education practices in general, and even less about those occurring within the youth organisations.”*

*Building Bridges for Learning. The recognition and value of non-formal education in youth activity. Pasi Sahlberg. European Youth Forum 1999.*

Non-formal education is one of those terms about which we all have a rough idea, yet these ideas often differ from one another. Reaching a common understanding might be difficult, but it is certainly useful to have a better understanding of what the different interpretations are.

#### **Short tentative definitions**

Much of the confusion of the term ‘non-formal education’ is caused by its relation to, or distinction from, other neighbouring concepts like ‘formal education’, ‘informal education’ and ‘post formal education’. Some short tentative definitions of the above:

**Formal education:** *curriculum of the formal educational institutions* (school, university)

With this definition formal education becomes characterised by education which is structured, hierarchical and chronologically graded and putting emphasis on the importance of the teacher, objective knowledge and competence of memorising and ‘classical subjects’.

**Informal education:** *learning that takes place in everyday life outside the curriculum* (family, peer-groups, media, youth cultures, other everyday contexts)

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<sup>13</sup> The paper is based on the key-note speech at the Council of Europe ‘Symposium on Non-formal Education’ in Strasbourg, 12-14 October, 2000.



This is the realm outside the curriculum of formal education. It is the less acknowledged and perhaps at the same time the fastest developing field of learning. It is particularly cultural youth research, during the period following World War II, which has maintained that young people learn their cultural codes, lifestyles and social orientations through the informal contexts at school, during their leisure time, within youth cultures and subcultures and through the media.

**Non-formal education:** *out-of-school education, based on intrinsic motivation*

(NGO activities, community work, training in companies, trade unions)

Non-formal education is often placed somewhere between formal and informal education. It is not as structured nor equally clearly oriented towards certificates as formal education and it is more intentional and organised than informal education. These demarcation lines are not as evident as they might at first appear. Within the concept of non-formal education various actors put the emphasis differently; some want to link it to formal education, some to labour market integration, some to empowering youth at risk and some to civil society and NGO promotion.

**Post formal education:** *educational trend to introduce a pupil/student centred curriculum on formal education*

This concept refers to 'alternative educational thinking' with roots in the works of Grundtvig, Paolo Freire, Maria Montessori, constructivists of the seventies and finally today's educationalists like Patrick Slattery (1995) and Kincheloe, Steinberg and Hinchey (1999). The common element is to put emphasis on the learner, learning as a process and as a contradiction to formal education.

This is very vague. Non-formal education still appears as a very wide concept and it is not at all clear what its relation is to the neighbouring concepts of formal and informal education. Even if it is impossible to give a clear-cut definition as to what non-formal education might be, it perhaps could be more clearly understood through its key characteristics.

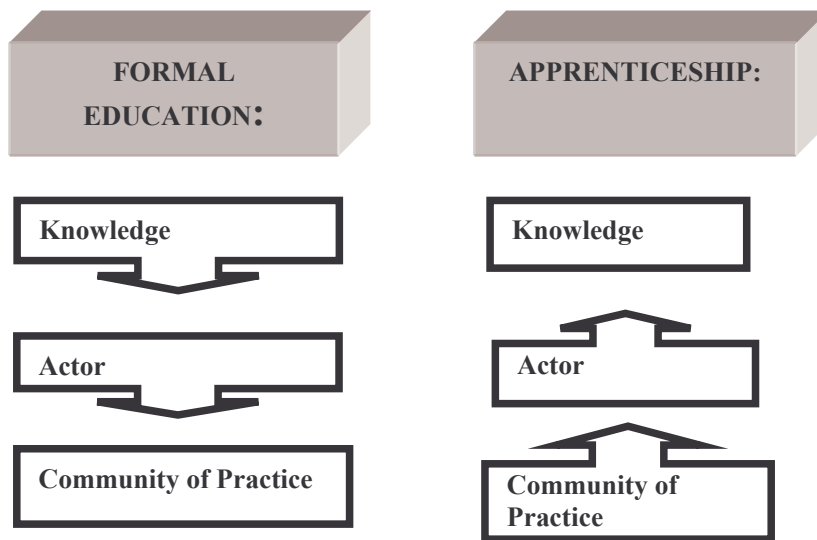
### **The key characteristics**

*"Learning is a mental disposition to interact constructively with change"*

*Jan Visserl, "Learning Communities", Oxford 1999*

A schematic approach (inspired by Lave & Wenger 1991) is to understand non-formal education as something between formal education and apprenticeship. In *formal education* knowledge is ‘poured’ into the pupils/students through teachers/professors/textbooks. This knowledge is then used, or put into practice, in the working places and in the community life. This basically top-down model of knowledge transfer is based on the ‘objectivist conception of knowledge’, which assumes that there is objective and generally applicable knowledge, which can be most efficiently transmitted through specialised staff called teachers and professors.

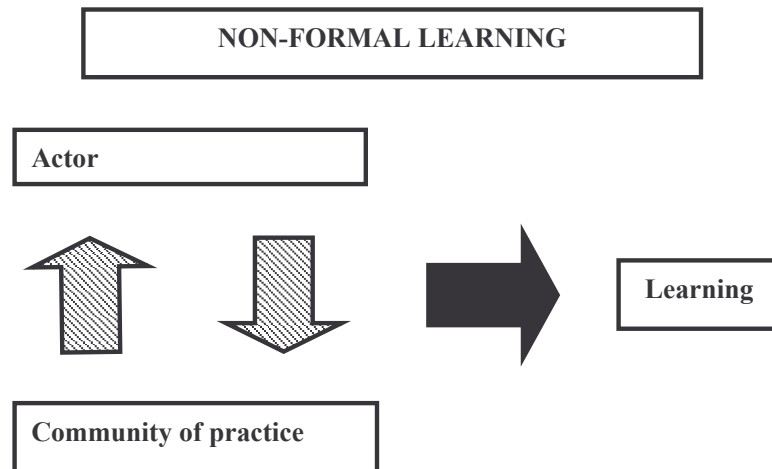
**Diagram 1: Learning through formal education and apprenticeship**



The **apprenticeship approach** maintains that knowledge is inherently practical and situational. It is most efficiently gained from the practices of real life work situations under the supervision of a master of the competence. In this conception, knowledge is produced bottom-up; from the real-life working practices the learner acquires his/her skills and competence.

To continue a simplified presentation, **non-formal learning** may be seen as an approach which does not concentrate on delivering knowledge which is decided beforehand to be useful nor does it emphasize the end product of the delivery process (certificates), but rather promotes knowledge as a process. As the diagram below describes, non-formal education looks at knowledge as a process of interaction between the actor and the real life situation.

**Diagram 2: Non-formal learning**



A Finnish educational researcher Yrjo Engestrom (1994) has coined the term “expanded learning” to highlight the specific meaning of learning in a post-industrial society. According to him, learning is not only about understanding the society and acquiring skills and competences to integrate into it, but also – and increasingly importantly – learning to change it. Thus, according to Engestrom, learning is essentially a process in a real life situation, which starts with criticism, followed by discovery and finally by the application of the new ideas in practice. According to this broader conception, non-formal learning refers to a learning process in a social context, in a community of practice, where the learner is an active participant of the knowledge production. The actor is at the same time defined by the social relations of the community of practice as he/she defines them. The knowledge and competences, which are created in this process, are ‘socially negotiated’. They do not come ‘from above’, from the realm of ‘objective facts’ or ‘universal truths’. This process of social negotiation is also a process of identity construction. In this sense ‘non-formal learning’ cannot be separated from the notions of ‘participation’ and ‘active citizenship’. *Non-formal learning is a participatory learning process where the actors’ identities are developed and where these identities, or citizenships, change the social world.*

Clearly, this line of thinking means that non-formal education is not simply an educational method; it is rather a multifaceted approach to learning. But can it be characterised more precisely?

### **Social and moral issues are inside the curriculum**

Formal education is often criticised for lacking connections to the social issues of real life and the concerns of young people themselves. At school the learner is said to be in a social vacuum devoid of social problems, political conflicts, moral and value-laden issues. By definition non-formal learning is situated in real life situations within the context of social power relations and their moral dimensions. In a typical youth field example NGO activities necessarily link participants/learners to social issues, and, as the choice of the nongovernmental youth organisation (NGYO) is voluntary, the social issues in question relate to the personal concerns of young people themselves.

### **One cannot escape power relations**

As real life is a part of the learning process, power relations are also involved - those between the gender groups, ethnic groups, social classes, religions, urban and rural areas, consumers and producers, industrial and developing countries, etc..

### **Non-formal learning is a participatory learning process**

At the same time as the learner is defined and affected by power relations, he/she is also supposed to actively participate in changing those relations. Non-formal learning becomes inseparable from 'participation' or 'active citizenship'.

### **Learning takes place through meaningful situations**

Following the pragmatic and constructivist conception of knowledge, the relevance of knowledge is dependent on its usefulness to the user. Educational psychology furthermore stipulates that successful learning is dependent on intrinsic individual interest and motivation. This leads to the necessity that the situations where young people learn must be experienced by them to be meaningful.

### **Learner centred approach**

The significance of meaningful learning situations necessarily takes us from a teacher centred approach to a learner centred approach. The teacher, youth worker or the leader of a youth organisation or a youth club should not be one that provides the knowledge, tells the facts or gives the orders, but rather one that is sensitive to individual concerns, facilitates individual learning processes and negotiates discourses.

### **Replacing the concept ‘non-formal education’ by ‘non-formal learning’**

The essence of the non-formal learning approach is its contradiction to the teacher centred approach now prevalent in formal education. According to this key characteristic it is more sensible to use the term ‘non-formal learning’ than ‘non-formal education’. The critics argue that ‘non-formal education’ is an established notion with a higher reputation than ‘non-formal learning’ and that there are problems in translating ‘non-formal learning’ into some of the Council of Europe languages. The counter argument is that as non-formal learning is, indeed, in the mainstream educational policy and practice, a relatively new and under-recognised concept, this would be the perfect moment to launch and rename it. Why not use the momentum of the recent top-level political back up of the Parliamentary Assembly and the European Commission to recognise non-formal education as a complementary approach to formal education?

### **“Currere” – learning as a process**

According to the prototype of the curriculum of formal education, learners passively acquire certain objectively defined outcomes (in the end in the form of certificates). This is often said to be the result of a misunderstanding of the Latin verb *currere*, which means, ‘to run a racecourse’. The formal education has reduced this word to a noun, thus meaning the racecourse itself: passing examinations, receiving the credits and certificates. Understanding *currere* as a verb means that learning is the activity, the process.

Understanding learning as a process has implications in its management. In principle it should be very difficult to manage, monitor and certify an open-ended learning process. This puts limits to the planning, structuring and formalisation of non-formal learning. One example is the difficulty in trying to measure the results of non-formal learning. There are educationalists like Angelika Kruger (2000) who maintain that “learning is a process as essential as life itself. Measuring it in terms of its outcomes, without recognising its dynamic nature, risks reducing it to something similar to representing life through a display of pinned-up butterflies”.

### **A form of active citizenship**

Another way towards agreeing on what we understand by non-formal education or learning is to look at its uses. Non-formal learning can be used for a variety of purposes. On the one hand it is seen as an instrument in social change, on the other, as a method in social integration.

Non-formal learning is about analysing reality, situating oneself in it, developing an identity in relation to it and trying to change it accordingly. In this sense non-formal learning is about active citizenship.

### **A method of social integration**

The advent of neoliberalism has contributed to the use of non-formal education as a method of social integration. Neoliberalism emphasises individual responsibility for one's welfare and, consequently, the public sector has been under constant budgetary cuts. At the same time the public sector has been looking at civil society to share tasks with it or delegate them under the concept of partnership. Within this framework non-formal education has been used, in the United Kingdom, in particular, as an instrument to increase employability and combat social exclusion. Broadly, non-formal education has come to denote a method of social integration. The same applies to much of the vocabulary of the large international organisations and the Council of Europe in particular. Non-formal education is a method to combat unemployment, social conflicts, intolerance, violence and social exclusion.

In the efforts to reach a common understanding on what non-formal education or learning means, this is perhaps as far as one can get. It is possible to agree on certain of its key elements or main characteristics and notify the current fields of its use. This chapter continues to search for the intellectual and disciplinary roots and links of non-formal education to its neighbouring approaches and also to analyse some of the interests behind the increased attention at non-formal education. This is a discourse where shared understanding is far from evident.

## **II. A family picture**

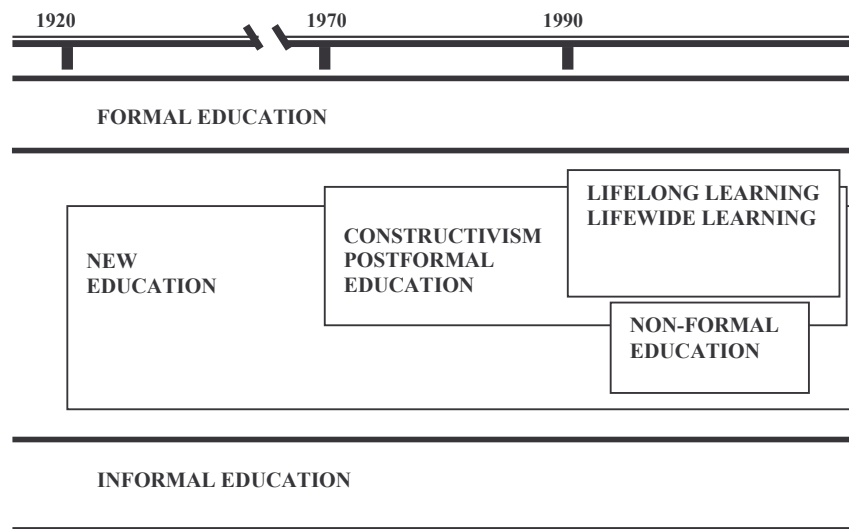
However clearly we try to distinguish non-formal learning from other types of learning, it would, at the same time, be helpful to look at the 'disciplinary roots' of non-formal learning. An intellectual 'family picture' of non-formal education is presented in diagram 3.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Diagram 3 is a very rough description of the inter-relations between the educational approaches and their "golden ages", identifying their 'booms', although they first appeared earlier: 'New Education' first appeared in the 19c. (Grundvig), 'Constructivism' dates from the pragmatist and phenomenological philosophers of the pre-war period, 'Life long learning' was introduced in the 1970s and 'Non-formal education' since 1990.

The prototype of *formal education* with a commitment to organised goals, a hierarchical curriculum, measurable objectives, a specified educational outcome, classical subjects, memorizing skills, value neutral empirical-analytical methods, competition, etc., has its origin at the beginning of the century, basically in Frederick Taylor’s scientific management and B.F.Skinner’s behaviourism. Indeed, uncontested success has been achieved in effectively organising mass education. The question for non-formal education is: how far can it make use of the success of formalising a curriculum? How non-formal should non-formal education remain to retain its integrity? Is, for example, the Directorate of Youth and Sport’s Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) Working Group on Non-formal Education definition of non-formal education taking it too far in the direction of formal education, when it defines non-formal education as a “planned programme...carried out by trained leaders...systematically monitored and evaluated...[and which] might also be certificated”?

**Diagram 3: A family picture of non-formal education**



Alongside formal education an alternative field of education has arisen, often called **new education**. In principle it already had its roots in the work of the Danish educationalist Grundvig in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but became more widespread during the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Educationalists such as John Dewey (USA), Maria Montessori (Italy), Celestine Freinet (France), Paulo Freire (Brazil), A.S. Neil (The Summerhill School, UK) serve as main examples. Their starting point was the child’s own frame of reference,

learning as a process, importance of practice, learning social skills and social emancipation. As can already be seen from these short characterisations, the pedagogical approach of non-formal learning is very close to that of the “New Education”.

An influential philosophical trend behind many of the current reforms of education is **constructivism**. The key issue is the controversy between **objectivism** and **constructivism**. To be brief, objectivism believes that knowledge refers to something which is in a ‘real world’ and which exists independently and separately from the knower. The knowledge we have is true if it corresponds to the real world. The constructivist view argues that knowledge or reality do not have an objective value independent of the knower. The knower interprets and constructs a reality based on his experiences and interactions with his environment. Rather than thinking of *truth* in terms of ‘match to reality’, the constructivist speaks of *viability* or *usefulness*: “concepts, models, theories, etc., are viable if they prove adequate in the context in which they were created” (von Glaserfeld 1995).

In terms of learning theory objectivism believes in the existence of reliable knowledge about the world. As learners, the goal is to gain this knowledge as educators, to transmit it. Objectivism further assumes that learners gain the same understanding from what is transmitted. The role of education is to help students learn about the real world. The role of teachers is to interpret events for them. Learners are told about the world and are expected to replicate its content and structure in their thinking. Constructivists, however, do not believe in objective, universally true or universally shared knowledge, but rather in knowledge which relates to the student’s framework of meanings, to his/her cognitive growth and ability to interpret and master the world. Within this viewpoint learning must be a self-steered communicative process which aims at critical reflection producing knowledge which the student experiences useful. The teacher is a ‘guide’ and the student a ‘sense maker’. Constructivist theories often emphasise the emancipatory nature of the knowledge and action that should follow it (as in the case of Paolo Freire and Jack Mezirow).

**Post formal education** is a constructivist educational approach, which gives more emphasis on internal experiences than external objectives. Learning is essentially a method of learning by oneself; how is one’s identity constructed within the social power structures of gender, ethnicity, class, capitalist production, global economy, sustainable development, etc. The main aim is to “uncover the role of power in shaping the way the world is represented” (Steinberg et al., 1999). The outcome of learning is a perception of how these structures can be changed. Constructivist thinking made its first offensive on formal education in the early 1980s but did not have any



discernible effect in curriculum or in teaching practices. The late 90s witnessed a revival, which now seems to be looking for alliances through the discourses on citizenship (Isin & Wood, 1999) and lifelong learning. As an educational philosophy, constructivism backs up the key characteristics of non-formal learning.

**Informal education** was defined to refer to learning which takes place in everyday life outside the curriculum, in the family, peer-groups, media, youth cultures or in other every-day contexts. This is a very diffuse field of learning which is gaining a more and more important role in young peoples' lives. Young people spend more time together, watch more media, spend more time in the cyber space, involve themselves in youth cultures and subcultures to the extent that, for instance, British youth researchers maintain that "participating in dance cultures (raves) is a necessary part of growing up in contemporary Britain" (Thornton, 1997). Clearly these contexts are also learning environments. Some of this type of learning is formalised or legitimated and becomes part of the mainstream (like a computer driver licence, computer art, rap music, techno, punk mode etc.). Some elements retain their informal character. However, as it is a seemingly very dynamic and innovative realm, non-formal education should perhaps keep its doors open to informal education.

The Council of Europe's Expert report on Swedish Youth Policy (1999) lists a few 'building blocks for European youth policy'. One of them is the proposal that the educational approach of the Council of Europe's youth sector should be involved in the modernisation of European education. The authors feel that the educational systems of all European countries face similar problems: motivation problems, irrelevant and/or outdated curricula, failure to meet the needs of the labour markets, etc..

What does 'educational modernisation' entail? The knowledge society discussion on the social and economic reasons for educational re-thinking will not be considered as it is well presented elsewhere.<sup>15</sup> Instead, an outline

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<sup>15</sup> Teaching and learning, towards the learning society, European Commission White Paper, Luxembourg 1995,  
Accomplishing Europe through education and training, European Commission, Luxembourg, 1996,  
Leclercq, J-M in Strategies for educational reform: from concept to realisation, Council of Europe, 2000  
Chisholm, Lynne, The educational and social implications of the transition to knowledge societies, 2000 (forthcoming).

of the key challenges as they appear in the current debate on lifelong learning will be presented.<sup>16</sup>

Firstly, there are strong pressures to redefine and modernise ‘basic skills for all’, ‘teaching methods’ and ‘learning contexts’. There is a need to define more broadly what citizens need to learn, with increased emphasis on ‘citizenship competences’ (instead of only labour market skills, qualifications to improve ‘competitiveness’ etc.). There is a strong need to changing the teaching paradigm towards learner-oriented ‘participatory teaching’. There is the need to recognise and promote non-formal and informal learning on the side of and in co-operation with the formal education.<sup>17</sup> Also, teacher training is expected to be thoroughly reformed so that “it genuinely caters for the full range of learning contexts and target groups”.

Furthermore, there is the tendency of ‘bringing education to people’, ‘opening up of the school to the community’ (with even a recent Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly recommendation, 1437 (2000) and Doc. 8595 (1999)) which includes the idea of pupil/student participation and new institutional solutions such as ‘learning centres in everyday locations’. Finally, there is the new policy of combining social and educational objectives and working with partnerships; that is, more emphasis on political and social awareness raising of education, responsibility of the school for social exclusion and increased work with ‘social partners’, communities, civil society and the NGOs.

In short, formal education is opening up to new types of competences (citizenship skills, human rights), to the civil society (NGOs), to participatory teaching methods (non-formal education), to public governance (participation), to social issues (human rights, combating social exclusion), to the community (where youth NGOs have their roots, other youth work structures), to partnerships (with youth work and youth policy structures) etc.. There is a new and wide area of potential co-operation between non-

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<sup>16</sup> A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning - working document, European Commission services, SEC(2000) 1832

<sup>17</sup> This is very much in line with the recent (draft) recommendation of the European Youth Forum on non-formal education which refers to creating ‘an integrated model of education’: “Probably the single most important principle in improving education in the third millennium is to establish co-operation. We recommend that youth organisations focus on an integrated model of education in which co-ordination, co-operation and identification of new resources are the core processes. This could also act as an invitation to all other parties to participate in the dialogue on the new Crossing Boundaries Paradigm that aims to create better education for all” (Sahlberg 1999, p.36).

formal learning on the one hand, and formal education and lifelong learning, on the other.

The intellectual family picture of non-formal education shows important links within the family. Perhaps, there is even an expression of togetherness, of a happy family reunion in the picture?

Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century formal education developed formalisation to its extreme. Since the late 1980s it has started to turn back and increase flexibilities and individual choices within the curriculum and between various types of educational institutions (for example, linking vocational and university education). Most recently, as we have seen, new agendas - bringing formal education back to civil society, to the community, emphasis on learner-centred methods, on social objectives, on participation and partnerships - take formal education even closer to lifelong learning, non-formal and in-formal education and to constructivism. One clear example is that current educational policy has, in fact, sent an invitation for co-operation to non-formal education through its lifelong learning programme. Another example is the emergence of constructivism-inspired educational thinking in school education (Slattery, 1995; Steinberg et al., 1999), in university education (Mezirow, 2000), in teacher education (Young, 1998), in adult education (Engestrom, 1994) and in out-of school education (Bentley, 1998), to mention only a few cases.

The family picture shows that the family members want to do things together. To the Council of Europe's youth sector this means an opportunity to develop activities in non-formal education, which are of a complementary interest to the formal education sector (in the Council of Europe's Directorate General IV – Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport, to start with). Bearing in mind that the youth sector has a partnership agreement with the European Commission, this working instrument could also be used to enlarge the co-operation with the formal education structures of the Directorate of Education and Culture of the European Commission.

The family picture also reveals that informal education, the black sheep of the family, has now come back full of vitality. What youth and cultural researchers have tried to show for decenniums has now become more widely acknowledged. Young people learn more and more outside the formal and non-formal learning contexts. These, often cultural and digital contexts, are also the most quickly developing areas of learning. It would not be wise to make too rigid demarcation lines towards informal learning. It should rather be seen as a complementary arena of learning among current youth, and, perhaps, also as a source of inspiration and innovation to be implemented in non-formal education.

### **III. A battlefield of interests**

Non-formal education has become popular. As the family picture indicates many actors show an interest in non-formal education. But what are the individual interests of the family members in their efforts to do things together? What are they expecting from non-formal education? What do they understand by it? Do these interests coincide with those of the Council of Europe youth policies?

The analysis (see diagram 4) is equally as rough as the family picture above. Its aim is to start a discussion on the political and ideological uses and understandings of non-formal education.<sup>18</sup>

#### **Promoting participatory learning processes**

One large interest group is the educationalists. This group consists of academic educationalists (educational philosophers, educational sociologists, educational scientists) and applied youth and social work methodologies, like 'sozialpedagogi', community education, intercultural learning, etc. More concisely, their interest is to promote participatory learning processes in real-life situations.

#### **Nurturing alternative learning**

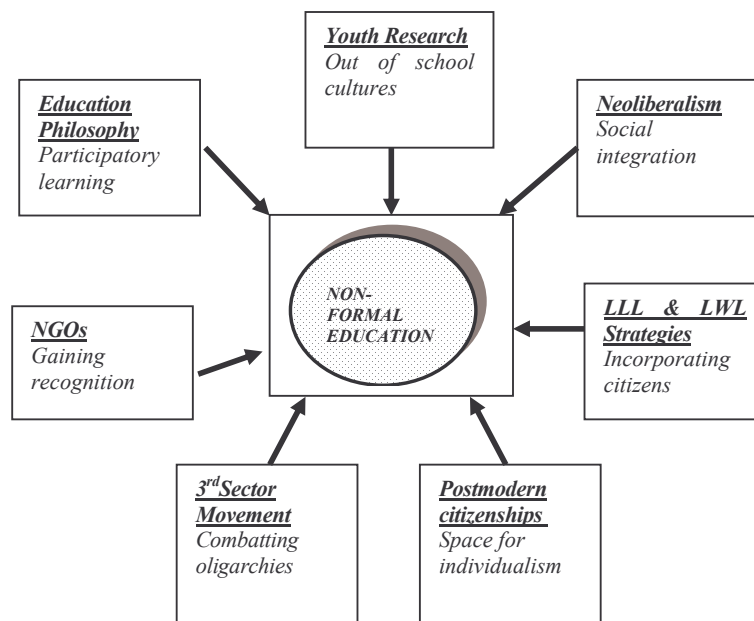
Then we have youth and cultural researchers such as Thomas Ziehe and Paul Willis who have analysed young peoples' reactions to formal education. There is a large amount of 'unconventional learning' taking place outside the curriculum and to a large extent as a reaction to the deficiency of the formal educational system to respond to young peoples' real needs. According to

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<sup>18</sup> A recent example is the Greek intervention on the European Commission's recommendation document on non-formal education. The Greek Minister of Education was strongly against a recommendation on the recognition of non-formal education because in his country non-formal education referred to the grey market of uncontrolled small businesses providing 'alternative' formal education and formal education diplomas.

these authors non-formal learning in 'out of school cultures' is an important and innovative forum for growing up for many youth groups.

**Diagram 4: the battlefield of interests**



### **A neoliberalist integration instrument ?**

Moving over to politics, the cutting down of the public sector and the advent of the neoliberalist dogma of individual responsibility have contributed to new models of organising public services. It has been realised that non-formal education run by voluntary workers is a way to make citizens and their groups responsible for some of the social services. Under the attractive banner of ‘partnership’ it is also a cheap method of providing services. Within this interest, non-formal education becomes a method of social integration improving employability, empowering youth at risk and combating social exclusion through measures which transfer public sector responsibilities to the third sector and the individual.

### **Gaining governance of ‘citizens running out of control’**

A larger political interest to non-formal education arises from the (post modern) perception that citizens tend to develop their identification outside formal education and express themselves outside the established political systems (parties, elections, representative political structures). It has recently been visible that these movements have developed very different ideals from those of city council, governments, the European Commission, the World Trade Organisation, the G8 etc.. This has created a worry of ‘citizens running out of control’ (Chisholm, 2000). Is this one of the reasons why the uncontrolled realm of non-formal education has faced efforts to be ‘incorporated’ into formal education through the strategies of lifelong learning and lifewide learning?

### **A new space for postmodern citizenships**

The hard-core postmodernists claim that after the ‘collapse of the collective structures’ only the individual is left. The ‘old’ conception of citizenship as a relationship between the individual and the state has gone, because there is no state. Instead, new types of citizenships emerge which are very individual, fluid, multiple and group based. Such citizenships are not created in established collective contexts (formal education, family, church, NGOs, youth work), but nurtured in non-formal learning contexts. The field of developing and expressing post-modern individual and group based citizenships becomes non-formal. Committed postmodernists would argue that the space of non-formal (and in-formal) learning is a necessary and useful result of the ‘postmodern turn’.

### **Combating oligarchies**

The so called third sector debate argues (using the militant voice of Jeremy Rifkin) that the non-profit sector should be developed into a political counterforce to the public sector and the private sector in order to combat the adverse effects of globalisation, consumerism, environmental damage, political apathy and the oligarchies of the private and public sector (Rifkin, 1995).

### **Lobbying for the NGOs**

Finally, youth NGOs have been, and justly so, very active in trying to find recognition to the important work and vital learning that takes place within youth organisations. This approach also forms the basis of the Council of Europe's youth sector strategy and understanding of non-formal education. Even if the NGOs are not always clear themselves on what they mean by non-formal education and even if they do not always systematically practice it in their own activities, fighting for the recognition of non-formal education is still a reasonable objective and also a politically feasible lobby-strategy underlining the importance of the existence of the NGOs as a whole.

To sum up, the ideological and political interests behind the promotion of non-formal education are numerous. There are actors who endorse non-formal learning because it is an essential instrument in participation, intercultural learning and community action (educationalists, youth and community workers). For others (neoliberalists) it is an instrument in employability, in social integration and in the public sector reform. Some see it yet again as an alternative citizenship site in relation to the school (Ziehe, Willis) or in relation to other established collective structures (post-modernists). There might be actors, who want to gain better control of citizens through formalising the non-formal education field ('governing citizens'). Others defend non-formal learning to promote themselves (NGOs) or to create a political counter force to the public and private sector (Rifkin).

The first lesson from this analysis is that the term 'non-formal education' does not have a clear-cut, universally shared, objective definition. It is an ideologically loaded term. Secondly, it might be useful for the youth sector to be aware of the ideological and political interests, meanings and assumptions of the actors – family members - with which it is supposed to co-operate with in promoting non-formal education.

#### IV. Future challenges for the youth sector

*“To make a meaningful European Youth Policy means opening Europe as a cultural learning field”*

*Manuela du Bois-Raymond, 5 May 2000,  
Round Table on New Forms of Youth Participation, Biel*

The promotion of non-formal education is one of the four priorities of the Council of Europe’s youth sector. It has not, however, been clear what is actually meant by ‘non-formal education’. This chapter has tried to clarify the concept by explaining its key characteristics, by indicating its relationships to the ‘neighbouring concepts’ of formal, informal and postformal education and by deciphering the ideological and political assumptions behind the various uses of non-formal education. It seems that non-formal education, or non-formal learning, is not as much an educational method than a *disposition to learning*, which emphasises learning as a critically reflecting process in “a social reality which recognizes tensions and conflicts” (Greene, 1995) aiming at social change. In the context of developing European youth policies this would mean – as Manuela du Bois-Raymond states - “opening Europe as a cultural learning field”. How could the Council of Europe’s Directorate of Youth and Sport’s non-formal education strategy promote ‘Europe as a cultural learning field’? The challenge could perhaps be summarized in the following proposals:

- promoting the change of the paradigm of learning:
  - a general mission to promote – within all educational policies and contexts - a participatory, learner-centred approach of learning and education with emphasis on real life situations.
- creating new learning environments in ‘real life situations’:
  - the Council of Europe’s Directorate of Youth and Sport has a long experience of anchoring learning in real life situations, not only through applying intercultural learning but also through its Long Term Training Courses where young peoples’ own projects constitute the core of a participatory learning process. This experience should be assessed and used to search for other learning contexts, even in new areas like culture, sport, cyber world etc.



- developing the curriculum of non-formal learning:
  - this is a difficult and important task. It is difficult because of the dangers of formalising non-formal learning, but important because that might be the only way to promote its recognition and develop it systematically;
  - One important part of this strategy is to develop a curriculum for European youth worker training (in partnership with the Europe Commission).
  
- exploring links to formal education and creating joint projects:
  - as discussed earlier, it is important to identify the area of complementary interests of formal and non-formal education. How could the activities in our priority areas be linked to formal education?
  - there are various levels of educational policies in which synergies should be sought: at the level of local, national and European policies. (see the chapter on “School and Youth” in this volume).
  
- establishing guidelines for the use of non-formal learning in social integration:
  - how to use non-formal learning to work with unemployed young people, school drop-outs, low achievers at school, delinquent youth, youth at risk, or youth in conflict regions, etc.?
  - promoting peer education, peer involvement (like mediation).
  
- enhancing non-formal learning as active citizenship:
  - how to promote, in a more transparent manner, non-formal learning as a form of young people developing and expressing their identities and being active participants of society? (see the chapter on “Changing Forms of Participation” in this volume).
  
- being open to informal learning:
  - the field of informal learning may be a source of innovation and inspiration to the development of non-formal learning;

- citizenship skills are also developed and exercised in informal contexts.
- making co-ordinated use of the programme and the partners of the Council of Europe's Directorate of Youth and Sport:
  - through a large variety of instruments of non-formal learning: study sessions, training courses, consultative meetings, symposia, European Youth Foundation, Solidarity Fund for Youth Mobility, Partnership Agreement with the European Commission, Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) intergovernmental programme, national youth policy reviews, networks of the governments, NGOs, youth information, youth research, etc.. A co-ordinated and targeted approach is the best way to create synergies and to learn from our own practice. This would mean a drastic change from sectorised and individualised working methods to team based working methods and from the conventional 'we do do everything' – programme to strict long term priority programmes.
- being aware of the instrumentalisation of non-formal learning and the political interests behind:
  - despite all the positive prospects that co-operation with a variety of actors seems to reveal, the Council of Europe's youth sector should, at the same time, be aware of the problems of instrumentalisation and the political uses of non-formal education.

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## CHAPTER 5 - SCHOOL AND YOUTH<sup>19</sup>

### I. The difference of approach

*“It is more important to learn Latin well than to make a class journey to Rome”*

*Theodore Adorno*

There are those, like Adorno, who maintain that school and formal knowledge represent qualitatively and normatively different fields and types of learning from those of informal and non-formal learning. They should be kept separate. Then, there are those who speak of the ‘crises of the school’ and want to abolish the borders between the school and the current ‘life worlds’ of young people. How far is the school from the aspirations, daily concerns and life-styles of young people? Should they be kept apart or somehow linked? How different is formal education from non-formal education? In sum, should non-formal learning be seen as *complementary*, *alternative* or *irrelevant* to formal education?

In the discussions on lifelong learning and lifewide learning it has been proposed that non-formal learning is a *complementary* method to formal education. One also learns at work, in community and voluntary work and at activities in NGOs. Learning in these contexts should be better recognised and linked to learning in formal educational contexts.

Then there are also those who argue that the current school and its conception of knowledge is outdated and does not match the demands of young people nor the demands of industry. The conception of knowledge, the teaching paradigm, the role of the learner and the administrative structure of the school should be radically changed. Within this context critical pedagogy and non-formal learning do not appear as complementary, but rather as an *alternative*.

Finally, one could also maintain that non-formal education has only marginal importance, is not much developed as an educational approach and is severely handicapped by its very nature of defying formalisation. Consequently, the current practice of mutual ignorance between formal and

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<sup>19</sup> A discussion paper prepared in February 2001 for the Council of Europe’s Directorate of Education and Higher Education and the Bureau of the Committee of Education (CC-ED) to search for co-operation between the youth and education sectors of the Council of Europe.

non-formal education should be continued. Non-formal learning is *irrelevant* to formal education.

The debate on co-operation is not easy when some of the very basic questions about the nature and status of formal and non-formal education, and their inter-relationships are so controversial, hence the comments on the differences between formal and non-formal educational approaches. Perhaps this is the way to clarify the obstacles to the co-operation between the youth and education structures of the Council of Europe.

### **Has the school changed?**

It is common place to complain that during the last few decades school has not changed at all. Perhaps its organisation has not changed much (disregarding the recent moves towards decentralisation) and perhaps the school has persistently retained its basic three functions (1) as a national site of cultural homogenisation, (2) as transcending (and even widening) social inequalities and to (3) aim at serving economic integration<sup>20</sup>, *but* there are crucial changes as to *'the mentality of the school'*<sup>21</sup>.

About 30 years ago school was already accused of concentrating only on the mainstream "cultural hand-over" totally neglecting popular culture, everyday culture and the media. Secondly the school atmosphere was accused of being thoroughly formalistic and authoritarian. Thirdly it was accused of not giving enough consideration to individuality.

Today many educationalists argue that in these respects school has drastically changed. Popular culture and media are so omnipresent in the everyday life of current young people that school should rather concentrate on its own 'cultural hand-out'; mediating the cultural heritage and social values of the society to its young people. According to this point of view, there is ample room for young people to develop their popular culture and subculture identities in the current youth cultural scene.

Likewise, the authoritarian and formalistic atmosphere of school has changed. The dialogue between the students and teachers is more open and students are more conscious of their rights than before. As Thomas Ziehe says, "the 'de-formalisation project' of the revolt of the 1970s is over".

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<sup>20</sup>Walo Hutmacher, "Education system and social integration" in Education and Social Cohesion, Council of Europe, 2000 (p. 33)

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Ziehe, "School and youth – a differential relation. Reflections on some blank areas in the current reform discussion", in YOUNG 8:1 2000

Finally, the school facilities and the curriculum have become much more flexible to provide room for individual expectations and expressions. One descriptive example is the emergence of schools specialising in the specific interests and competences of the student, whether it concerns sport, drama, art, new information technology, natural sciences, languages etc..

It would thus not be at all justified to claim that school has not at all changed.

### **Individualisation and the school**

*“A 16-year-old explains to what extent you can distinguish eight different techno-subtypes, but he explains it in a way that makes it impossible for you to understand”*

*Thomas Ziehe*

The constant development and differentiation of youth cultures and subcultures is one important framework of today’s young people. As this differentiation and the concomitant individualisation of life worlds keep on continuing, the disparity between the life worlds of young people and the life world of the school becomes ever bigger. Even if the school wanted it, it has reached the limit of being able to be responsive to these changes. This has led some pedagogists (like Thomas Ziehe) to conclude that the relationship between the school and the individual is so much apart that one should simply acknowledge the situation. The school should just be seen as a section of society with its own logic and own demands, which do not have to fit to those of the individual (nor the youth cultures). Being a student is just one of the roles and life worlds of a young person. Even if the distance between the school and the young people increases it should remain (according to Ziehe) a ‘normative relationship of difference’.<sup>22</sup>

Hutmacher (2000) also takes note of the increasing gap between school and pupils’ subjective meaning structures and says that: “pupils can to a considerable extent be obliged to go to school and behave reasonably, but they cannot be forced to prefer mathematics to football or to like school”. To make use of the subjective meaning structures of the pupil, the school (the teacher) should move from the public sphere (mandated to the teacher by the state) to the private sphere of the individual where the school has no

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<sup>22</sup> A counter argument is that even if we acknowledge that the school is just one life world among others, it becomes an unreasonably huge life world surpassing the more dynamic fields of identity development within out-of-school contexts, like those of the civil society activities or those of the ‘digital’ and ‘youth cultural’ life worlds.



legitimacy. Linking school and the individual thus entails an ethical dilemma.

However, recognising the differences does not mean not building the bridges. **Even if the school curriculum cannot turn into a ‘life-world learning offer’, it should not only stick to its ‘theoretical offer’ but also try to create links to the life-worlds of today’s young people.** This is an area of activity discussed below in more detail.

### **Opposing or complementary pedagogies?**

The main priorities of the Council of Europe’s youth sector are promoting participation, non-formal education and human rights education. Non-formal learning is understood as a learner-centred, participatory educational approach (see Appendix I: Short tentative definitions). It is a means to promote active citizenship and social integration: through non-formal learning in community work, youth work or organisational activities young people develop their identities, social skills and competences and take part in social decision making. Furthermore, non-formal education projects are means to learn norms and values, to improve employability and to empower youth at risk.

Recently the Conference of European Ministers responsible for Youth (1998), the Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly (1999) and the European Union (2000) have emphasized the importance of non-formal learning and the need to promote it’s recognition.

In October 2000 the Council of Europe’s Directorate of Youth and Sport Steering Committee on Youth (CDEJ) organised a symposium on non-formal education. The aim of the symposium was to examine the uses of non-formal education and lay grounds for a strategic action plan on how to promote the transference of non-formal education, create links to formal education, use it as an instrument to work with youth at risk and develop non-formal learning in the context of civic society, community action and identity development.

The essential characteristics of non-formal learning can be summarized as follows<sup>23</sup>:

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<sup>23</sup> Lynne Chisholm, “Towards a revitalisation of non-formal learning for a changing Europe”, (draft) report of the symposium on non-formal education, 13-15 October, 2000. Council of Europe. Directorate of Youth and Sport 2000. (Sympo/Edu (2000) rap)

### Essential features of non-formal learning

- balanced co-existence and interaction between cognitive, affective and practical dimensions of learning
- linking individual and social learning, partnership-oriented solidary and symmetrical teaching/learning relations
- participatory and learner-centred
- holistic and process-oriented
- close to real life concerns, experiential and oriented to learning by doing, using intercultural exchanges and encounters as learning devices
- voluntary and (ideally) open-access
- aims above all to convey and practice the values and skills of democratic life

This description has certain common elements with ‘critical pedagogy’<sup>24</sup>, ‘alternative education’<sup>25</sup> and ‘post-formal education’<sup>26</sup>. All put emphasis on affective and practical dimension of learning, learner centredness, ‘real life concerns’, voluntary nature of learning, learning as a process, participation and implications to practice. Perhaps one common denominator is also a

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<sup>24</sup> The main characteristics of ‘critical pedagogy’ (Shor, 1993; Semali, 1999):

1. society and history are man-made
2. critical reading competences
3. ability to decipher reactionary values and stereotypes
4. to replace unintellectual and authoritarian practices of mass education with critical analysis and dialogue (to change the world)

<sup>25</sup> ‘Critical educationalists’ like Grundvig (Denmark), John Dewey (USA), Maria Montessori (Italy), Célestine Freinet (France), Paulo Freire (Brazil), A. S. Neil (The Summerhill School, UK) emphasized the child’s own frame of reference, learning as a process, importance of practice, learning social skills and social emancipation.

<sup>26</sup> ‘Postformal education’ is a constructivism inspired educational approach, which gives more emphasis on internal experiences than external objectives. Learning is essentially a method of learning yourself; how is one’s identity constructed within the social power structures of gender, ethnicity, class, capitalist production, global economy, sustainable development etc. The main aim is to “uncover the role of power in shaping the way the world is represented” (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1999). The outcome of learning is a perception of how these structures can be changed.

joint conception of knowledge as something which involves social power relations and which is essentially socially negotiated. If one compares this conception with what is sometimes called (in a perhaps a too simplifying manner) ‘standard pedagogy’, the list of characteristics appear very different:

A summary of the key assumption of ‘standard pedagogy’ (Suoranta, 2000, p.51):

1. permanent and coherent identity of the learner
2. cumulative knowledge
3. subject based curriculum
4. one interpretation of the world
5. top-down information transfer
6. teacher based curriculum (without negotiation with the students)

This snapshot review of pedagogical approaches indicates that it might not be easy to link formal and non-formal education by simply *assuming* that they are complementary educational approaches. Evidently there are differences and some of the differences appear quite drastic (the conception of knowledge, the voluntary nature of non-formal learning, learner centred emphasis, etc.) and often it seems that the driving force of non-formal pedagogies arise from their very opposition to formal education.

Reading (very selected) recent documents of the Council of Europe’s Directorate of Education and Higher Education on current challenges of education, one sometimes encounters these oppositions. To take, for the sake of argument, some (again selected) examples, perhaps the most striking features of difference are (1) a different and contradictory understanding of what ‘participation’ in the context of education means, (2) the lacking element of learner centred pedagogy and (3) non-existing references to the aspirations, opinions, values, life-styles and social conditions of youth themselves in the analyses of educational reform.

(1) In a report on “Strategies for educational reform” (2000)<sup>27</sup> the introductory article summarizes 7 country studies and mentions that ‘the essential components’ of the reform are ‘evaluation’, ‘participation’ and ‘communication’. Discussing ‘participation’ the article associates it to ‘schools for all by all’ and ‘bottom up process’. Within the context of the Council of Europe youth sector these terms would imply methods through which the ‘citizens of schools’, the pupils, participate in the decision making of the school. However, in the context of the educational reform

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<sup>27</sup> Strategies for educational reform: from concept to realisation, Council for Cultural Cooperation. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2000

‘participation’ and ‘bottom up process’ refer to giving voice to elected local representatives, teachers, parents and business persons - but nowhere is there a mention about students or pupils themselves.

(2) A recent publication on “Education and Social Cohesion” (2000)<sup>28</sup> discusses challenges to combat social inequalities through education. There are some references to extracurricular actors to co-operate with. Non-formal education projects are mentioned as promising methods for school leavers which afterwards can find their way back to formal education. Another reference is made to ‘local authorities’ – which apparently refer to social, cultural and youth workers and the NGOs. They are said to be important in providing leisure activities “to keep children busy when neither teachers nor parents are there to supervise them”. ‘Local actors’ appear to be of secondary importance, needed only when the ‘primary actors’, the teachers and the parents are not there. The role of the ‘leisure time actors’ is to ‘store’ the children while they are not in the important activities, like the classroom or at home. No educational role is seen for the ‘storing actors’. There is a certain antagonism between the task of the teachers and parents ‘to supervise the children’ and the non-formal learning approach; the non-formal educationalists’ approach emphasises childrens’ intrinsic motivations and own initiatives – something which does not go along easily with authority and supervision.

(3) The Directorate of Education has carried out a set of national studies on education reform. The rich collection of experiences is impressive, but from the ‘youth point of view’ it is somewhat surprising that the ‘clients’ or ‘target groups’, i.e. young people themselves, are not given much concern. One finds discussion on ‘major trends affecting our societies’, but there is no mention on trends of young peoples’ values, attitudes, living conditions, lifestyles and youth cultures, things which youth research has shown to be very quickly changing and diverse. It looks as if education reform does not take into consideration what is relevant for the students themselves. This thinking is also in contradiction with the mission statement of the youth field which postulates that youth should be involved in all decision making which concerns them.

These examples might not be very representative and perhaps they should not carry too much weight. They, however, highlight some of the assumptions between the formal education and non-formal learning field which are contradictory. These differences should be made transparent and negotiated as co-operation between the two approaches is planned. However, one should not go too far in establishing antagonistic polarities. Lynne

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<sup>28</sup> Education and Social Cohesion, Council for Cultural Cooperation. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2000

Chisholm, the rapporteur of the Directorate and Youth and Sport Symposium on Non-formal Education (October 2000), argues that: “It is **time to move beyond regarding formal and non-formal learning as a binary opposition**, in which non-formal represents all that is ‘good’ and formal represents all that is ‘bad’. In reality, the boundaries between the two are not firmly fixed. Their respective features fade into one another towards the centre of what is ultimately **a continuum of learning contexts, contents and methods.**”

## **II. Areas of co-operation**

Following the conclusions of the previous chapter it might be feasible to acknowledge the differences between the ‘life worlds’ of the school and the young people and the differences between formal and non-formal learning. However, these differences should not be seen as antagonistic divides. The school should actively intermediate between the two life worlds and create links to non-formal learning. What are then the areas where the links could be found?

### **Equal opportunities and social exclusion**

As Gisele Halami (2000) says “Education must ensure equal opportunities”. The recent UNICEF study (Fajth, 2000) in Central and Eastern Europe, the Community of Independent States and the Baltic countries also concludes that “equal education opportunities remain a huge challenge across the entire region”. This challenge includes measures to improve the situation of those groups of young people which have the greatest difficulties in gaining access to educational institutions and of those who have the highest risk of leaving school early. These groups include young people from low-income households, low-income suburbs, rural areas, those from broken families, migrants, ethnic and other minorities.

Youth work has strengths in working with youth at risk, even youth with behavioural problems at school, the youth sector closely co-operates with NGOs and networks of rural and urban youth, school, student and minority organisations, etc. The youth field has experience and models in local cross-sectorial co-operation, human rights education, intercultural learning, confidence building, mediation and conflict resolution – a variety of assets which could be used in closer co-operation with the school authorities. Potential joint projects could be:

- using the National Youth Policy Reviews and the National Action Plans as a basis to develop new means to improve the participation of rural youth, ethnic youth and suburban youth at risk to

educational careers in co-operation with educational authorities, NGOs and the youth structures. These needs have been clearly identified in earlier National Youth Policy Reports;

- gathering experience on projects where youth work has been co-operating with the school through a non-formal education curriculum designed for young people with low educational motivation with the aim to become re-integrated into the formal education;
- organising a seminar/symposium on developing models for schools to combat risk behaviour through intersectorial and community co-operation;
- the Parliamentary Assembly has recently drawn attention to the fact that schools should develop new working methods in co-operation with families to combat social exclusion, marginalisation and violence ([http://press.coe.int/cp/2001/64a\(2001\).htm](http://press.coe.int/cp/2001/64a(2001).htm)). A possible approach is to introduce the experience of the youth field in mediation, conflict resolution and confidence building in the classroom, teacher training and/or partnerships between schools and families to prevent the escalation of deviant trajectories;
- another form of exclusion from knowledge is the 'digital divide', the unequal opportunities of access to new information technology. This item has been addressed by both services (see for example the "Information technologies in schools" and "Youth in the information society" - publications of the respective Directorates). The Council of Europe's Council for Cultural Cooperation Jurmala Symposium (8-10 July, 2000) concluded that there is " a movement towards a comprehensive concept of education covering social learning, democratic activity and equal opportunity for all". The Council of Europe's Directorate of Youth and Sport would be a natural partner to develop the pedagogic context of new information technology (NIT) to become a learning site of Council of Europe values linked to 'real life' activities. One important element of the Council of Europe's Directorate of Youth and Sport's priority programmes is to develop NIT as a method of reciprocal participation;
- The school is well on its way using the NIT to build networks (Odine, [Netd@ys](mailto:Netd@ys) etc). The DJS is developing a concept of linking youth centres and other actors involved its field of interest into a 'network of knowledge centres', which could also be linked to

interested schools, teacher training institutes, education departments of universities, etc.

### **III. Developing teaching and working methods**

Secondly, it is important to find ways to increase young peoples' interest at school and help them to commit themselves to school work. This means measures not only to increase access, but also to improve teaching and working methods at school.

#### **Youth participation**

The overall aim of the working method to *commit* young people to school work is to create *involvement*. To achieve this "...fresh policies and approaches which see young people as a resource and which are grounded on youth participation" (Fajth, 2000 p. 62) are needed. Those countries which have experience with school councils, report an increased sense of responsibilities by the students for their school and for their studies:

- Youth participation is one of the key priorities of the Council of Europe youth sector and its experience and networks could well be used to promote participatory working methods to schools. The practical implementation of this co-operation could take many forms; a joint study session with student organisation(s) and teachers, a joint training course on local participation for young people, local authorities and teachers, perhaps a Council of Europe Recommendation ?
- The youth sector is considering establishing a Joint Working Party with the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) to evaluate the implementation of its Charter on Participation (Resolution 237/1992). Participation at the school should be one important topic, where the Council of Europe's Directorate of Education and Higher Education should become involved;
- A joint study on the participation of pupils, students, apprentices?

#### **Citizenship skills, participatory teaching, lifewide and lifelong learning**

Current discussion on educational reform also includes proposals on *how* young people are educated. There are strong pressures to redefine and modernise "basic skills for all", "teaching methods" and "learning contexts"

<sup>29</sup>. There is a need to define more broadly what citizens need to learn, with increased emphasis on ‘citizenship competences’. There is a strong need for changing the teaching paradigm towards learner-oriented ‘participatory teaching’. There is the need to recognise and promote non-formal and informal learning on the side and in co-operation with the formal education.<sup>30</sup> Accordingly teacher training is also expected to be thoroughly reformed so that “it genuinely caters for the full range of learning contexts and target groups”. These are the key elements of the current lifelong learning and lifewide learning strategies:

- the two Directorates (youth and education) could design a curriculum and teaching methodology of citizenship competencies bringing the experience from its Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) project and the Human Rights Education programme and other relevant projects of the Directorate of Youth and Sport (DJS);
- Develop in co-operation with teacher training participatory teaching modules within human rights, tolerance, intercultural understanding, etc.
- Work together to further develop the concepts of lifelong learning and lifewide learning to better map the areas of out-of-classroom learning that could be interconnected to the wider learning concepts. This would mean bringing together knowledge of different learning sites; ‘citizenship sites’ (EDC), voluntary work, NGO work as a learning site (DJS), ‘cultural and digital’ learning sites, etc.. A joint activity would be to find better recognition for these non-formal learning contexts. Finally, models and guidelines should be found on how then to interconnect these learning types into a lifelong learning curriculum incorporating the respective work done by the Directorate of Education and Higher Education’s Higher Education and Research Committee (CC-HER).

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<sup>29</sup> A memorandum on lifelong learning, European Commission, 2000

<sup>30</sup> This is very much in line with the recent recommendation of the European Youth Forum on non-formal education which recommends creating ‘an integrated model of education’; “Probably the single most important principle in improving education in the third millennium is to establish co-operation...We recommend that youth organisations focus on an integrated model of education in which co-ordination, co-operation and identification of new resources are the core processes. This could also act as an invitation to all other parties to participate in the dialogue on the new Crossing Boundaries Paradigm that aims to create better education for all” (Sahlberg 1999, p.36).



#### **IV. Community involvement**

Furthermore, there is the tendency of ‘bringing education to people’, ‘opening up of the school to the community’ (also a recent Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1437 (2000) and Doc. 8595 (1999)) include the idea of pupil/student participation, creating links to local youth work and NGO structures and even new institutional solutions like learning centres in everyday locations. To take an example, in the UK Tom Bentley<sup>31</sup> has proposed that the school should act as a ‘broker and monitor’ between the school and the actors in the local community (school as the ‘neighbourhood learning centre’, appointing a member of staff as ‘school-community co-ordinator’, etc.).

- If the school is to ‘open up to the community’ possible counterparts are young peoples’ own local organisations and projects, youth councils, organisations working for young people and local youth services. There are numerous local examples of how these actors have worked together. The two Directorates could gather the experience, analyse it and set policy guidelines for future action. A policy recommendation backed up by both services could carry exceptional weight,
- The Council of Europe’s Directorate of Youth and Sport Human Rights Education programme and the respective programme in the Directorate of Education and Higher Education could join forces and develop an educational package for schools to be used in co-operation with the respective local NGOs and youth work structures - a method of linking the school curriculum to the local issues and actors.

#### **V. Political and social awareness raising**

Finally, there is the new policy of combining social and educational objectives, that is, more emphasis on political and social awareness raising through education. Formal education is sometimes criticised of lacking connections to the social issues of the ‘real life’ and the concerns of young people themselves. At school the learner is criticised for being in a social vacuum devoid of social problems, political conflicts, moral and value-laden issues. By definition non-formal learning is situated in ‘real life situations’ within the context of social power relations (between the gender groups, ethnic groups, social classes, religions, urban and rural areas, consumers and

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<sup>31</sup> Bentley, Tom, Learning beyond the classroom: education for a changing world, London:Routledge, 1998.

producers, industrial and developing countries, etc.) and their moral dimensions. In a typical youth field example of NGO activities necessarily link participants/learners to social issues, and, as the choice is voluntary, the social issues in question relate to the personal concerns of young people themselves. Then the question is; can this characteristic of non-formal learning be used to link formal education to ‘more emphasis on political and social awareness raising’?

- Studies on young peoples values show alarming signs of political alienation. There is considerable interest among some parts of the youth population on global and even national issues, but it seems that the best approach to creating awareness among the majority of young people on social questions would be through their local concerns. In this sense the local NGOs could play a vital role. Perhaps pilot studies on the ways that co-operation between the school and local NGOs could contribute to increase interest and heighten the awareness of young people to local issues could be of mutual interest;
- The Council of Europe’s Directorate of Youth and Sport’s Human Rights Education programme aims at producing an educational package and educational approach made by young people for young people. This package, updated by experience and ideas from the Directorate of Education and Higher Education’s Education for Democratic Citizenship programme, could be introduced into the school curriculum (a European Human Rights Day at schools, a module in the curriculum?) in co-operation with the Directorate of Education and Higher Education and perhaps other directorates.

## Appendix I

### Short tentative definitions

**Formal education:** *curriculum of the formal educational institutions* (school, university)

With this definition formal education becomes characterised by education which is structured, hierarchical and chronologically graded putting emphasis on the importance of the teacher, objective knowledge and competencies of memorising and ‘classical subjects’.

**Informal education:** *learning that takes place in everyday life outside the curriculum* (family, peer-groups, media, youth cultures, other every-day contexts)

This is the realm outside the curriculum of formal education. It is definitely less acknowledged and perhaps at the same time the fastest developing field of learning. It has been cultural youth research, during the post World War II period, which has maintained that young people learn their cultural codes, lifestyles and social orientations in informal contexts at school, during their leisure time, within youth cultures and subcultures and through the media.

**Non-formal education:** *out-of-school education, based on intrinsic motivation*

(NGO activities, community work, training in companies, trade unions)

Non-formal education is often placed somewhere between formal and informal education, implying that it is not as structured nor equally clearly oriented towards certificates as formal education and that it is more intentional and organised than informal education. These demarcation lines are not as evident as they might at first appear. Within the concept non-formal education various actors put the emphasis differently: some want to link it to formal education, some to labour market integration, some to empowering youth at risk and some to civil society and NGO promotion.

**Postformal education:** *educational trend to introduce a pupil/student centred curriculum to formal education*

This concept refers to ‘alternative educational thinking’ with roots in the works of Grundtvig, Paolo Freire, Maria Montessori, constructivists of the 1970s and finally today’s educationalists like Patrick Slattery (1995) and Kincheloe, Steinberg and Hinchey (1999). The common element is to put emphasis on the learner, learning as process and the contradiction to formal education.

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## CHAPTER 6 - LINKING KNOWLEDGE AND ACTION<sup>32</sup>

This chapter addresses links between ‘fortresses of knowledge’ (youth research and formal education) and ‘communities of practice’ (youth work and modalities of citizenship learning). Firstly, it shows that youth research should develop closer alliances with the practice of youth work. Secondly, it discusses non-formal learning – a liminal space between formal education and new contexts of citizenship learning and action. It is maintained that research and policy action are needed to grasp the potentiality and limitations of non-formal education.

### I. Identity problems of youth research

The Second Nordic Youth Research Symposium (NYRIS) in Savonlinna in 1989 discussed the construction of youth and youth research. The debate was about youth and what it is, what is youth research, why the need for youth research? Keith Roe (1991) started his presentation with the following words: “*I do not regard myself, or wish to be regarded, as a youth researcher*” (Ehrnrooth & Siurala 1991, p.14). He went on to argue that: “*I sincerely do not believe that youth research, as a separate field of study, has a particularly bright future. In most respects it is altogether too limited a perspective, a heuristic cul-de-sac*”.

Despite this gloomy prophecy, youth research has been able to survive and is even booming. Keith Roe’s critical comments must be seen within the framework of the high expectations at that time to establish youth research as a new all-covering field of science, even a discipline. At the First Nordic Youth Research Symposium (NYRIS) in Oslo in 1987 the famous Romanian youth researcher Fred Mahler presented his ambitious plan for *Juventology*, a field of study covering all fields of life of young people looked at through all the scientific angles (Mahler, 1987). The youth policy counterpart of this approach was called (and still is) a *comprehensive youth policy* or *integrated youth policy*, where the aim was to promote the situation of young people in all fields of public policy through co-ordinating plans and interdepartmental bodies. The optimism and faith of the 1970s and 1980s in *juventology* and *integrated youth policy* was a manifestation of the trust of those times in scientific research and rational planning.

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<sup>32</sup> Based on a key note speech given at the Seventh Nordic Youth Research Symposium  
Helsinki 7-10 June, 2000.

Today, youth research is seen more modestly as a concept of a network or a meeting point for people working in any discipline on youth. Perhaps this is why the Nordic youth research symposiums have become one of the most successful products of the Nordic Youth Research Co-operation.

However, the identity problems of youth research, which Keith Roe rightly raised, are not at all solved. One of them is the relation between youth research and youth policy/youth work - the identity of youth research as basic or as applied research. How close can the relationship between knowledge and practice be?

One reason behind the success of youth research, at least on the nordic scene, has been its partnership relation to youth administration. That is very much so in the case of Nordic co-operation and the Finnish national structures of youth research, in particular.

Based on the contributions of the Second Nordic Youth Research Symposium (NYRIS), a publication edited by Jari Ehnrooth and Lasse Siurala called for a re-thinking of the distinction between basic and applied research, see the introductory chapter: *“Contemporary pressures to break down barriers between disciplines and the criticism against the ideal of pure science may, however, result in a diminishing cleavage between applied and basic research.”* The key questions seemed to be: is it possible to *both* ask fruitful scientific questions, develop theories, be critical, *and* carry out research with practical relevance? The overall answers in the book were affirmative.

Despite this optimism, some doubts were also raised: *“As youth research matures into a more autonomous discourse emphasising scepticism and experimentation, it may bring about interesting conflicts between youth research and its administrative ‘eminence grise’.* After having moved from youth research to the ‘administrative eminence grise’, the conflicting issue is raised again: is there a gap between youth research and youth work and is it possible to bridge it?

## **II. From isolation to alliance?**

The Finnish debate started from a Council of Europe Review of Finnish National Youth Policies (1997), where an international expert group stated that Finnish youth research is too isolated from youth policy and youth work and seems to be targeted at subjects irrelevant to current youth issues (Evaluation Report on the Review of National Youth Policy Finland, CDEJ/CC (97) 1, Directorate of Youth and Sport, Council of Europe, Strasbourg). This statement was not based on any extensive research, but

should be seen as a good question for further debate. It can be broken down to further issues:

1. Is it possible to move from a theory-driven approach to a question-driven approach?
2. How can youth research improve its image as a youth policy actor?
3. Are consultants replacing researchers?
4. Has youth research become a social closure?

(1) A theory-driven approach refers to an approach, which looks at the world through its current theoretical paradigms, while the question-driven approach starts with practical issues and problems. The Council of Europe's expert group on Finnish youth policies, for example, had the strong impression that Finnish youth research was dominated by abstract theoretical discourses drawn from post-modern cultural theory and tested against various youth phenomena, rather than research on current issues of youth work or youth policy and positioning them into a larger explanatory perspective. In a theory-driven approach 'reality' is described on the conditions of the theory, and empirical indicators are developed to test the particular hypothesis of the theory. In a question-driven approach 'reality' is described rather on its own conditions, and eventually leads to theory development. The issue is not as simple as described, but in order to break the barriers between research and practice, one should look at ways to promote research that has closer links to current problems of practice. How can one introduce issues of practice into a research process?

The policy of the doctoral programmes of the Finnish Academy of Sciences are interesting in this respect. The Academy favours arrangements where doctoral students establish partnerships between the Academy and an employer. Municipal and national youth departments, youth councils or other youth related organisations support a dissertation made on a theme relevant to them.

(2) Often the distance between research and practice is well and truly experienced. Often NGOs perceive youth research as peripheral, useless, unreliable, authoritarian and treating young people as objects rather than subjects. According to this criticism young people themselves should carry out youth research. Some professional youth workers, who often have an academic degree in youth or social work, also share this impression of irrelevance of research discourse to their daily concerns. Very few NGO activists or youth workers read youth research reports.

Where does this perception come from? Youth researchers have become increasingly active in producing publications, writing articles, organising



conferences and seminars – not only for themselves but also consciously for broader audiences and often targeted at youth policy makers and youth workers. Undeniable success has been made. But, still, it is perceived that youth researchers ‘come from the above’, use theories, explanations, categories and vocabulary unfamiliar to the common man. There is an impression of a gap between external producers of knowledge and the passive consumers of it. Is there a way to enhance a more reciprocal interaction between research and practice?

Perhaps NGOs and youth workers should be encouraged, in co-operation with established academic researchers, to carry out their own research projects. This could, not only produce interesting research, but also create a learning process for the practitioners to become more interested and educated about youth research, thus decreasing the existing gap.

Another format to increase reciprocity, transparency and the influence of the practical youth work *vis-à-vis* research, would be to involve the researchers in actual youth work as is done in the Netherlands where a doctoral student can, for example, encounter ethnic youth by simultaneously working as a youth counsellor in a youth information and counselling centre with mainly ethnic clients. A joint experience in and competence of both the academic and youth work discourse making it possible to transform knowledge in two directions – and this double faced experience enriches the research itself. Of course, there also follows the problems of objectivity and problems of researcher identity, which for instance Jaana Lahteenmaa (2000) has recently highlighted.

(3) There has also been much educational policy discussion on the cleavage between knowledge and practice, between academic knowledge and practical working skills. How can one make a better fit between education and skills needed for a working life? In the field of management the gap between research and practice is particularly visible. In fact, an intermediary profession has arisen between science and working life to bridge this gap. The profession is called management consultants, a booming profession today. The success of consultants is based on their practical experience and their (claimed) capability to transform recent academic findings into working life situations. There is also an increasing market for consultancy in the field of culture and youth, but at the risk of discrediting good consultancy, perhaps there are better ways of linking youth research to youth work.

Most likely there are many answers to this question, to give one example drawn from the Fifth Nordic Youth Research Symposium (NYRIS) in 1996 in Tonnsberg, Norway, during the debates in the Working Group on

Marginalisation were there was an interesting contribution on street children in Hamburg presented by Peter Hansbauer and Thomas Mobius. Mobius, a youth worker had worked together with Hansbauer, a university researcher, to study the nature, manifestation and causes of the street children phenomena and the methods to work with the children. In this process, research and outreach youth work were so intimately intertwined that Hansbauer and Mobius seemed to have cloned together. In the working group discussions it was impossible to decide from their intellectual rhetoric or manner of argumentation which of them was the academician, and which was the down-to-earth street worker.

(4) Finally, there is one even more polemic question: To what extent does youth research becomes a 'social closure', keeping the resources and the legitimacy of knowledge production within the academic world of established researchers? The research agenda (academically relevant topics) and resources (funds and research posts) are decided upon academic criteria, which youth workers, NGOs and youth policy makers can not much influence. Should youth policy makers negotiate a more open access to this (suggested) social closure?

### **III. Non-formal learning – bridging knowledge and action?**

Another fortress of knowledge is the school. Even if, during the last few decades, the school curriculum has opened towards 'real life' issues, become less formalistic and authoritarian and more flexible towards individual expectations, there still persists a gap between its curriculum and the current demands of citizenship education. In a way formal education has become isolated from current conditions of becoming a citizen. This is why much of the popular sociological, educational and political discourses maintain that formal education has to develop a learner-centred pedagogy, has to open up to learner participation, the surrounding community, civil society, current social issues, changing conditions of working life and the ever diversifying and quickly changing concerns of young people themselves.

#### **Changing modalities of citizenship learning**

The reason behind these new demands is that the notion of modern citizenship with civil, political and social rights and duties granted by the nation state, introduced through parents and formal education and exercised via representative democracy, is drastically changing.

Changes take place at global level ('globalisation'), local level ('glocalisation') and individual level (towards fluid and multiple identities).

It is increasingly difficult to face these challenges without educational input to create transparency between supranational structures and the citizens, without learning to link global and local phenomena, without training to intercultural understanding and sensitivity to cultural (and subcultural) diversity, without an educational approach which is both responsive to the needs and aspirations of young people themselves and which is able to empower them to take action of their own.

Globalisation, for its part, challenges the basic framework of traditional citizenship – the sovereignty of the nation-state: information, pollution, migrants, arms, ideas, images, news, crime, drugs, and disease, etc., easily cross national boundaries. It follows that citizens identify and organise themselves according to these issues and the result is newly differentiated types of (global) citizenships. At the same time national and local citizenships become internally increasingly pluralised; life-styles, sexual preferences, cultural habits, subcultures, consumption styles, environmental concerns, ethnic issues, urban and rural segregation, etc. are examples of new forms of conflict and interest, new group- or individual-based identifications through which citizenship is exercised.

Furthermore, the modern ideal of a singular, fixed national identity is also challenged by emerging forms of identification which are constantly changing, multiple and fluid. Citizenship participation is more than the black and white divide between those who vote and those who do not; there is a vivid participation in ecological, gender, ethnic, peace and other single issue movements but also emerging forms of expressive, emotional and aesthetic forms

of identification and action. These communities, lifestyles and expressions, through which young people articulate their interests defy exact definition. They are, as Kevin Hetherington (1998) says: “messy, contradictory, diverse and heterogeneous”. They are outside the established, rationally organised forms of citizenship participation.

### **The non-formal becomes political**

It is a sociological commonplace fact that young people learn and act outside formal institutions. Some of us already know that from the classic sociological and pedagogical writings of Paul Willis and Thomas Ziehe. Many have realised this from recent manifestations against the risks of globalisation. People, young people in particular, are very concerned about national and supranational decision making. Despite the very selective media reporting on violent manifestations, a big majority of demonstrators, for example at the Gothenburg Summit (summer 2001), expressed their opinions in an organised and peaceful way either in the streets or in numerous well

organised civic group meetings. Perhaps the problem is not so much how to organise G8 meetings inaccessible for civil society manifestations, how to train the police to deal with demonstrators, how to control the behaviour of openly violent demonstrator groups or how to enforce global deregulation and privatization without the interference of civil society actors, but rather, how to establish a two-way dialogue between power structures and the citizens, concerning globalisation, in particular. The challenges should be rather: how to better prepare young people to deliberate supra territorial issues through an educational method which is anchored in their individual concerns; how to strengthen the civil society to become better aware and informed on globalisation; how to support a 'global civil society' (Scholte 2000, p.306) and how to organise the dialogue between the civic groups and the governments and supranational bodies at the occasion of their meetings. One does not have to be a Jeremy Rifkin (1999) fan to see that the third sector and the arenas of non-formal learning become ever more important sites of citizenship which cannot just be overlooked – or left to one-sided and dramatising media reporting.

European international organisations like the Council of Europe and the European Union are clearly less panicked about their relationship to the civil society than global organisations like the World Trade Organisation or the G8. Both of the European organisations are actively co-operating with NGOs. A paramount example is the Council of Europe's youth sector where youth NGOs co-manage together with the governments the sector's budget and programme. Both the European Union and the Council of Europe have put special emphasis on the recognition of non-formal education and proposed to find links between formal and non-formal education. The Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe have adopted resolutions and recommendations to promote non-formal education. The Directorate of Education and Higher Education has been running the Education for Democratic Citizenship programme and within the Directorate of Youth and Sport non-formal education figures among the four key priorities for the years (2000-2002). The Directorate of Youth and Sport's Symposium on Non-formal Education, as a part of its 3 year priority programme, has made proposals to enhance the recognition and application of non-formal learning (Sympo/Edu (2000) 1). The European Commission has been active in promoting lifelong learning as a transversal concept bringing together programmes in vocational education, higher education, culture and youth. The idea is to understand both formal and non-formal learning as essential parts of the entire lifelong-learning curriculum.

The promotion of non-formal learning is one promising way of linking formal education (as a fortress of knowledge) and the citizens current concerns and activities (as communities of practice). Formal education, as

the key vector of social integration, has to be more responsive to the individual interests of the citizens, has to provide more flexible routes to citizenship and has to open up to the civil society and the community. At the same time learning that takes place outside the institutions of formal education should be made more transparent, strengthened and linked to formal education. Ideally, non-formal learning would diversify the educational offer, would introduce a strong participatory element and would build the link to the lifestyles of individuals and concerns of the community and civil society. This is the rhetoric, but how can it be achieved?

#### **IV. Going beyond rhetoric**

Non-formal learning will stay marginal as long as civil society is not recognised as a partner in citizenship education and in social decision making. As long as citizenship education is monopolised by formal education, non-formal education will have only a 'support or storage function'. As long as civil society or the third sector is understood as unstable and an uncoordinated field of 'non-professionals lacking long-term commitments' or a field of actors lacking true internal constituency or legitimacy or a field unproportionately dominated by extremist groups etc., it is very difficult to seriously promote non-formal learning. Perhaps, this is where Jeremy Rifkin (1999) has to be taken seriously - ways have to be found to promote civil society as the third, united, strong, political entity and counterpart to the private and public sector?

It is true that in the Council of Europe co-management in the youth sector exists as a unique model, but efforts to apply it in the other sectors have not been very successful. The youth sector model is understood within the Council of Europe as something too specific to the field itself. When NGO or civil society relations are discussed in the Council of Europe the youth sector is kept separate and often not even mentioned, as the dominant mode of the organisation is to understand NGOs as external consultants – kept at arms length. The Council of Europe's youth sector also needs to critically examine its own model. It needs to keep in mind that the concept of civil society, the spectrum of its actors and the concept of modern citizenship has broadened, and the current composition of the youth sector co-managed formula dominated by 'established NGOs' is inevitably too limited. This is not to undermine the important work of these NGOs, but to point out that there still remains the necessary challenge of opening up the sector to other actors – otherwise it will not survive as an applicable model of a modern way of organising civil society co-operation.

Nobody will take non-formal education seriously until its pedagogical effects are demonstrated. The current talk about 'the recognition and

transparence' of non-formal learning is too ideological and political. We also need proof. Proof, in the sense of presenting a coherent conceptual understanding of non-formal learning (it is not enough to say that NGOs are important vectors of the society) and empirical evidence of the outcome of non-formal learning (it is not enough to say that in NGOs young people learn important interpersonal and social skills and competences). To achieve this, better co-operation with the academic world and youth research is needed.

The existing ideological and political pronouncements will not lead anywhere if radical policy decisions do not follow them. Linking formal and non-formal learning would entail new initiatives in reforming teacher education, the curriculum, the organisation of school work, established formats of interdisciplinary co-operation between educationalists and youth, cultural, media and social researchers, better use of experts of formal education in non-formal education, partnerships between the school, community, civil society and the employers etc.

Going one step further in recognising non-formal learning also leads to new unanswered questions. We demand recognition of new learning contexts, but what, more precisely, are those extra-curricular learning sites? What type of learning is taking place in NGO activities, municipal youth work, sport activities, cultural and subcultural activities, cyberspace etc? Is it possible to operationalise and measure maturity, responsibility, awareness and identity growth or other non-formally learned competences? Can non-formal education be recognised without it becoming institutionalised? Do NGOs themselves practice their ideal? Can formal and non-formal education be truly linked? Can formal education be replaced by non-formal education?

To react to these questions, one might have to get away from the fortresses of knowledge, basic research and educational institutions, but also from some of the self-sufficient ideological discourses of civil society itself, to explore if synergies bring in new answers.

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## **CHAPTER 7 - TRENDS IN EUROPEAN YOUTH POLICIES**<sup>33</sup>

### **I. Youth in Europe**

It is difficult to talk about European youth policies without a reference to the situation and aspirations of European youth. Thus, what follows is a short reflection on some of the key elements of European youth trends.

The picture of today's youth is *multifaceted*. There is, on the one hand, *continuity* and, on the other, *change*. The majority of young people continue becoming well integrated into labour markets through proper education, they establish families and become socially and politically responsible citizens. Furthermore, the new generation efficiently adopts the values, norms and cultural practices of the adult society. Integration to the adult society is more apparent than revolt against it.

In addition to this cultural continuity, changes also take place. To simplify things, there are two kinds of changes: firstly, increased *individualisation* and, secondly, increased *risks and potentialities*.

The process of growing-up has become individualised; more and more one has to negotiate one's identity and life. A *normal biography* used to be structured by social class, parents, church, nationality, teachers, youth workers etc. These collective actors guided young people into their life careers. Now this guidance has lost some of its grip on youth. There is consequently more room for individual decision-making. In this respect a *normal biography* is said to be replaced by a *self-made biography*. This biography is a result of the choices the individual has to make when facing new risks and new potentialities. Those who can make use of the increased potentialities make successful biographies. Those who cannot deal with risks create vulnerable trajectories.

What are the risks and potentialities?

#### **Increased risks:**

- The persistence of educational inequality;

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<sup>33</sup>Based on a lecture given at an International Seminar on "European Youth Policy", 29 August 2000, Spanish Institute of Youth of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the San Lorenzo el Escorial Further Education Centre, Spain

- A high school drop-out level, lacking skills in literacy, mathematics and science;
- unemployment and labour market insecurity (the situation is probably worst in post-communist countries where school to work transitions have become chaotic);
- Increased economic dependency (probably the most difficult youth problem in Spain);
- Weak social security;
- Polarisation (of young people within a country and within different regions of Europe);
- Alcohol and drug consumption, tobacco smoking;
- Increase in political apathy and extreme right movements;
- Vulnerable groups like ethnic minorities, immigrants, Roma people, young offenders, the homeless, the disabled and those brought up in care institutions
- Refugees.

Talking about ‘problems’ and ‘youth’ it is perhaps useful to make a distinction between

- *‘problems of youth’*- unemployment, labour market insecurity, increased economic dependency, polarization, use of alcohol and drugs, psychic and psychosomatic symptoms;
- *‘problem youth’*- long-term unemployed youth, young alcoholics and drug addicts, homeless youth, street kids, youth attempting and committing suicide, refugees and young people with severe psychic disorders;
- *‘youth problems’*- media-created moral panics, like youth unemployment panic, drug panic, video panic, virtual world panic, street violence panic or, recently, violent manifestations panic.

Many young people are exposed to, and in some phase of their life touched by, ‘problems of youth’, a considerably smaller amount of young people actually become ‘problem youth’ with the media created ‘youth problems’ seldom existing in reality. The youth sector should be actively involved in all these problem areas. Youth policy has to combat the ‘problems of youth’ to the effect it professes to do so, youth work should be better utilised in intervention programmes on marginalised youth (‘problem youth’) and the youth sector has also an obligation to fight against dramatised and exaggerated media messages on young people.

Although most of the problems mentioned above at **Increased risks** are familiar to most of the European countries, countries and regions still vary as to their most important youth issues. In the case of Spain it is unemployment

and economic independence, in Azerbaidjan it is the number and condition of refugees, in Romania it is the situation of rural youth and minorities, in Finland it is the lack of proper housing and alcohol abuse, in Armenia it is the brain drain, etc..<sup>34</sup> One may also find a similar variety as to regional and local level youth problems. All this means that youth policies should be adapted to the national, regional and local demands in question. It is very difficult to formulate European youth policies, which would be directly applicable to all countries, regions and municipalities.

### **Increased potentialities**

- Expansion of education;
- More flexible provision of education;
- Weakening of the division between academic and vocational education;
- Increased possibilities for geographic mobility: travelling, working and studying abroad;
- Improving the labour market situation;
- Large variety of leisure and cultural activities;
- Better access to and supply of information, etc.

These increased potentialities have contributed to a better awareness of social, political and economic developments and a better means of creating individual action, groups, communities and organisations to react to a variety of local, national, regional and supranational concerns. As a result there are new types of citizenships and new methods of action. The Council of Europe's youth sector has a long tradition of co-operation with civil society representatives and has developed a model to that effect (co-management). The new types of citizenship challenge us and the entire youth field to find new ways of supporting and responding to the emergent formats.

To conclude, young people in today's Europe face increased risks and potentialities, which they have to deal with more and more on their own (individually). The social situation of youth has become more and more diverse and fluid. At the same time new formats of citizenship expression have come about. It is more and more difficult today to 'locate' youth and youth problems and to channel the concerns of young citizens through

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<sup>34</sup> This was also the clear result of a survey carried out among the governmental representatives of the Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) of the Council of Europe youth field. Respondents were asked to name "the most significant issue in the current public debate" in their respective countries. Very few items were actually mentioned twice or more: thus the public debate of member countries identified a very large variety of youth issues (see "Youth Policy Statement" of the Director of Youth and Sport, 21 March 2000 in DJS/JC (2000) PV3prov).

established NGOs and governments only. This *ambiguity* makes it difficult to point out a public administration sector responsible for youth, to deal with youth questions only through nation state structures, to assign a research discipline as ‘youth research’ and it is increasingly questionable to mandate the representation of youth only to NGOs and governments. Future youth policies have to cross these traditional barriers.

## II. What should youth policy do?

Within the context of the Council of Europe - a pan-European organisation emphasizing human rights, democracy, social cohesion and cultural diversity - the Committee of Ministers (as the highest decision making body of the Council of Europe) has adopted the following principles and priorities to the youth field (Resolution (98) 6) on the youth policy of the Council of Europe).

### Principles:

- Meet the aspirations and challenges of young people, particularly the disadvantaged;
- Strengthen the civil society through active citizenship, non-formal education and participation;
- Develop youth policies, bearing in mind the specificity of each country;
- Promote youth mobility;

### Priorities:

- Promote intercultural dialogue, train young people to assume responsibilities, increase awareness of and commitment to human rights and democracy and combat intolerance and social exclusion;
- Analyze and develop national youth structures and youth policies;
- Exchange information and good practices;
- Encourage new forms of youth participation and organisation;
- Improve young people’s access to information and new information technologies.

Based on these principles and priorities the governing body of the youth field has adopted four priorities for its programme of activities for 2000-2002. They are **participation, non-formal education, human rights education and activities in South Eastern Europe**. Recently, the Council of Europe has invited its Directorates to contribute to two pluriannual priority programmes on “responses to violence in everyday life” and on “making democratic institutions work”.

Considering the trends in the situations and aspirations of young people and the frameworks and ongoing programmes of the Council of Europe and its

youth sector the following three elements emerge as constituents of future youth policies:

**(1) guaranteeing knowledge production:**

- to promote knowledge and understanding of youth phenomena and youth issues;
- to enhance research co-operation;
- to develop youth policy indicators.

**(2) creating interdisciplinary activities:**

policies and activities which cross administrative sectors:

- co-operation with sport (empowerment of youth, healthy lifestyles, substance use prevention etc), cultural (cultural youth work, 'cultural citizenships' etc.), social, family and educational affairs;
- integration of children and youth policies;
- regional co-operation (Euro-Barents, Baltic Sea, South Eastern Europe, Mediterranean);
- co-operation with international organisations (The Council of Europe's youth sector co-operates with the European Union youth sector and UNICEF, but more is needed with the United Nations and UNESCO Youth Units);
- promotion of multidisciplinary research on youth (through the national youth research correspondents, researcher seminars, etc.);
- crossing the borders between, on the one hand, governments and established NGOs, and individual citizens on the other hand. (Developing responsiveness towards new types of expressions, movements and action of citizens whether that is in the field of sport, culture, subculture, consumer behaviour, cyber world, etc.).

**(3) empowering citizens in participatory learning:**

participation of young people:

- strengthening and developing current forms of participation (youth and school councils, youth parliaments, national youth councils, co-management);
- improve NIT as a two-dimensional instrument of participation;

non-formal learning:

- promoting transparency and creating links to formal education;
- using it as an instrument of social integration; and

- a learning method to awareness raising, critical reflection and practical action, for example in human rights issues and social reconstruction of deprived areas (like in South Eastern Europe).

To put all this in a popular format, a concise ‘mission statement’ of the Council of Europe on youth policies could be *“to empower young citizens in participatory learning through knowledge based policies with a broad spectrum of partners”*.

### **III. Promoting knowledge and understanding of youth phenomena and youth issues**

The needs, conditions and lifestyles of current youth are changing fast; they are diverse and filled with ambiguities. To carry out evidence-based policy research statistics are needed. This is particularly important as mass media and often the political discourse have a tendency to dramatise, individualise and categorise youth phenomena. This sometimes results into a general ‘youth as a problem’ approach, while solid research data should keep open the other option of ‘youth as a resource’.

To give an example, from the Spanish media in 2000 where there was a case of a young person who had committed brutal ritual murders inspired by computer games. As a first reaction the media questioned “What was wrong with this generation and computer games?” Good research should show that one should not generalise from isolated examples and that this generation as a whole is a very proper generation, and that computer games (as a whole) can develop many important competencies and be a great experience!

Many countries have developed youth research centres and networks in order to provide proper knowledge about their young people. The Spanish Institute for Youth is one good example of investing in research on youth and in co-ordinating it with youth policy.

National research results become more interesting and useful when put into an international context. One good example of regional co-operation is found in the Nordic countries where researchers in co-operation with the Nordic Youth Council run a comprehensive youth research service with research networks, conferences, consultations, publications, a journal, bibliographic databases, etc. (for details see: <http://www.sub.se/sam/nyri/nyri.htm>). An important specificity of the Nordic network is that it is truly multidisciplinary. The Nordic Youth Council would be in favour of supporting the establishment of, for example, a Mediterranean Youth Research Co-operation Network.

On a European level various youth research networks exist. One, inspired by the Nordic example, is run by the Council of Europe youth sector. The core is the network of National Youth Research Correspondents open to all the (48) member states, which have signed the Council of Europe Cultural Convention. Through its yearly meetings it runs documentary services, databases, symposiums, training courses for young researchers and produces an annual “Youth Trends Report” – a European survey on youth issues (available at <http://www.coe.fr/youth>). As with the Nordic network, it is a multidisciplinary research network.

#### **IV. Integrated youth policy – is it possible?**

An integrated youth policy approach has become more and more popular in European countries. By ‘integrated youth policy’ it is meant a policy through which the youth field co-operates with other sectors, a policy which promotes a comprehensive approach on youth. Spain with *the Interministerial Commission for Youth and Childhood* and its *Integral Youth Plan* is, of course, one good example of this approach.

But to what extent is such an approach a reality and not just a political aim?

In the current discussions there are two objections to integrated youth policies. One is that under the conditions of diminishing (public sector) resources it is better to concentrate deepening substance competences (youth work) than to become involved in counselling and co-operation with other sectors on broader areas such as education, employment, culture, social security, environment, planning and development where the youth sector actually does not have much expertise (ie. aim for a comprehensive youth policy). It is better to emphasise the vertical rather than the horizontal dimension of youth policy. The other objection is that in administrative practice a sector is not generally motivated to be advised by other sectors.

To expand on the latter objection it should be noted that as a general rule, bureaucracies tend to be self-sufficient. There is a natural rejection of intersectorial co-operation. To take a few examples:

- The school prefers to keep education of youth and its problems, like school violence and motivation, for itself. Non-formal education should be kept strictly outside the classroom; NGOs and municipal youth services are often seen as ‘storing actors’, supervising the children when the ‘important actors’ like the teachers are not available. In the assessment of children’s’ growth only numbers in school reports count, not competencies gained through leisure activities and NGO responsibilities. When the school faces problems

with pupils, they tend to turn to their own specialised staff, special schools for those who fail the standard curriculum, the social workers or the police – very seldom are youth workers, NGOs or parents invited to help. Even more exceptional are the teachers who involve themselves in a joint effort with the youth and social workers and parents to keep the problem children in the class.

- The labour administration has a tendency to regard the problems of unemployed people, as problems of employment policies. For example, if long-term unemployed young people drink, display psycho-social symptoms, are isolated, work-shy, etc., it is all a result of the hazardous effects of being too long without work. The only cure is work. According to this view it is not possible to see that unemployment could be a result of cumulated problems prior to the first experience of unemployment – as the majority of the research reports clearly indicate. One *could* see youth unemployment as a social, youth and educational policy issue; early prevention against the accumulation problems would be a task for the school, social workers, community work and youth projects to undertake.
- Even social workers tend to keep youth workers, NGOs and voluntary workers out of their projects. The most common arguments are that social workers are bound by the law to pursue ‘professional confidentiality’ *vis-à-vis* the client and that this makes it impossible to integrate voluntary workers not bound by the same obligation to share common work. The public sector social work is also highly professionalised which makes them hesitant to work with people whom they often judge to lack the necessary professional competence and qualifications. The third common argument is the said lack of long-term commitment of the voluntary sector actors. But to what extent are these excuses rather than obstacles to be looked at?
- The cultural sector is often hesitant to work with the youth sector because the latter promotes popular culture, subculture, fringe culture - cultural activities like rock, rap, hip-hop, street dance, disco dance, graffiti, punk, and other things, which are seen as antithetical to real art<sup>35</sup>. However, as the boundaries between Fine Arts and popular art become less and less accentuated, as youth work is

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<sup>35</sup> This of course is not always the case. Popular culture and youth cultures have been increasingly recognised. Many celebrated Museums, like the New York Museum of Modern Art has displayed graffiti paintings and the Helsinki Museum of Modern Art recently (summer 2001) organised a hip-hop and graffiti event – causing the Police and the Construction Department of the City to condemn it.



moving towards art (see for example ‘arts based youth work’ or ‘cultural youth work’) and as art is moving towards youth (modernising arts education in schools, etc.), there is no reason why synergies should not be searched for.

- The Sports sector also keep a distance from youth work. This is at least partly caused by the fact that youth work has been openly critical towards competitive sports raising the issues like its concentration on the 5% of top sportsmen and women, concomitant segregation of those who would like to enjoy sports but for social or physical handicaps can not meet the narrow internal performance criteria of the different sports, commercialisation, disrespect for democratic procedures, constant doping problems, violence and neglect of social responsibility. If, however, both are working to enhance the growth of young people with ethically similar ideals, why can't youth work join forces with sports in the field of intercultural learning, social responsibility, tolerance, democracy, or confidence building, etc?

These examples suffice to indicate the everyday resistance that an integrated youth policy approach is likely to face. Some of the resistance is based on a lack of knowledge as to what the youth field can do, even prejudices and false assumptions. Sometimes the method or institutional arrangement of the integrated youth policies are not functional. Experience has shown that an intergovernmental co-ordination group on youth affairs functions better when it is chaired by the Minister of Education than a civil servant. A municipal inter-sectorial youth committee is most productive when chaired by the Mayor or the Vice-Mayor, and so on. Experience shows that early involvement of colleagues from other sectors leads to best results. Small municipalities have been more successful at integrated youth policies than larger ones. Ambitious comprehensive national or municipal ‘Integrated Youth Action Plans’ based on research, long-term implementation plans and covering all fields of public administration have not, as a rule, been as effective as thematically limited project based co-operation activities.

To sum up, integrated youth policies are needed, the exercise is difficult, but possible and much work is still needed to overcome the obstacles and pave the way for good examples and benchmarking.

## **V. Promoting youth participation**

Participation is the one lasting mission statement of the Council of Europe's youth field. The priorities, programmes and budgets of the Directorate of Youth and Sport itself are decided through co-management, where

representatives of young people make decisions on equal footing with the governments. In addition, the entire programme of the sector is devoted to boost youth participation through an educational programme, support to NGOs, youth networks and through the intergovernmental programme of activities.

But, what then are the future challenges of ‘participation’?

Within the Directorate of Youth and Sport they might concentrate on the following three areas; developing ‘co-management’, promoting youth participation models at local level, searching for New Information Technology applications in participation and enhancing cultural participation.

### **Development of ‘co-management’**

Co-management is a concept and a model of youth participation at local, regional, national and international level. On a European level it has been the characteristic feature of the Council of Europe’s youth field for the last 30 years.. Today, pluralist democracy and social cohesion are at stake in Europe. Among young people there is a widespread disinterest in representative politics, there is mistrust in politicians, low participation in elections and high participation in extremist movements. They are also the first to suffer from social inequalities. However, perceiving young people and the voluntary sector as a resource in today’s Europe, it is possible to create a dialogue between generations and a dialogue between political authorities and citizens with the aim of promoting social cohesion. Using young people and the voluntary sector as a resource means giving them increased possibilities for participation. This is very much a question of power sharing and learning. Society needs to develop methods and structures to share power and give young people the opportunity to learn about their own responsibility of using it.

‘Co-management’ - as the symbol and challenge for effective youth participation - must itself, as practiced within the Council of Europe’s youth sector, be constantly critically evaluated and developed. Is this system still working in the interest of young people at large, or is it developing into a corporatist system, only available for ‘insiders’?

### **Promotion of youth participation at local level**

It is generally agreed that youth participation at local level is far from what is expected, for example, the Council of Europe’s European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Municipal and Regional Life (Standing

Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe Resolution 237/1992). Campaigns and projects to activate young people in local elections, eg. by lowering the voting age to 16 years, have been particularly discouraging. Schools, work places and even youth clubs too often lack structures for youth participation. A further problem with youth councils, school councils, or youth parliaments, has been the lack of real power, the missing link to the 'electorate' and their difficulties in representing the variety and range of the youth scene, disadvantaged young people in particular. However, these structures and the various types of youth hearings have also had indisputable success in bringing youth issues onto the adult agenda, raising the awareness of young people in participation and increasing the responsibility of young people in their school, community, youth club and neighbourhoods. With this situation it is important to learn from existing experiences, develop the current structures and to originate new innovative participation possibilities.

### **New Information Technology and participation**

New Information Technology (NIT) and what is often called "cyber space" has the potentiality to promote young persons' identity development and social interaction, and provide quick information and a means for interactive participation. There are numerous encouraging examples on how young people have used the internet in training and education, career promotion, artistic creativity, establishing social relations, involvement in 'net communities', in municipal participation (citizen's channels, net parliaments, electronic town halls, online NGOs), even voting. However, as such NIT does not make people socially or politically active. It only provides a means that can be used to promote democratic practises. Too often governments, municipalities, political parties and NGOs use NIT for one-dimensional flow of information only; from the producers of the information to the citizens. Creating real possibilities for feedback has been rare. In sum, there is a lack of reciprocal models of communication. Another set of problems lies in the access to NIT, the abilities and competencies to critically use it, and a lack of policy in the field.

In this situation the Council of Europe's youth sector should promote access to new technologies, develop models for interactive, reciprocal participation, contribute to a 'Cyber Code of Ethics', collect good practices of NIT as a method of youth work, and develop web-based youth information services.

### **Cultural participation**

It is indisputable that the forms of youth involvement and youth participation are changing. More young people develop and express their social, political

and moral identities through cultural<sup>36</sup> and subcultural activities and through actions in their ‘every-day cultures’. This type of participation differs from the traditional participation, which is oral, rational and often hierarchically organised and expects long-term commitments. It seems that, increasingly, young people are reluctant to engage in long term commitments in hierarchical organisations, but instead favour aesthetic, emotional and expressive involvements. Cultural activities are also increasingly used as working methods in youth work, a tendency, which is also clearly visible from the recent applications to the European Youth Foundation.

Changing forms of participation should be a challenge to the Council of Europe youth policy. How can the youth sector promote the awareness and transparency of the ways young people use arts, culture, subculture, the media, popular culture and their every-day life to become moral and political citizens? How could one ‘mediate’ between these phenomena and adult ignorance and even hostility? How can we develop cultural activities and cultural participation as instruments of youth work? Is it possible or necessary to find a link between ‘traditional’ and ‘cultural’ participation? Is there something that the ‘traditional’ NGOs could learn from new types of ‘expressing and developing identities’? How can we combat the negative effects of youth cultures (violence, drug use) and popular culture (commercialisation, passive consumerism, indoctrination)?

## **VI. “There is as yet no European people”**

In a way a prerequisite to the Council of Europe’s youth policy would be a shared pan-European identity. The member states have agreed to respect and promote the same values; human rights, rule of law, pluralist democracy, cultural diversity and social cohesion and the Council of Europe provides a unique opportunity to put these ideals into practice. But the task is not easy. The phrase “Identity through diversity” may be appealing, but is it realistic? We cannot be naïve in going too far with a convergent image of Europe and this is why we tend to balance the ideal of ‘A European identity’ with the acceptance of a certain degree of diversity and controversy. But what if the ‘diversity’ becomes too large? In fact there are at least three tendencies, which rather increase the diversity than decrease it. Firstly, the *internal polarisation of Europe* with an increasing east-west divide, internal polarisation of the post-communist countries, intensified urban segregation, higher level of economic and social insecurity, rising incidents of politico-humanitarian crises and human rights violations. Secondly, *globalisation*,

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<sup>36</sup> « Cultural » is used here in a very broad sense referring not only to fine arts, but also to popular culture.

together with its positive effects, has also contributed to human insecurity, increased social inequality, widened the gap between the suprateritorial structures and the citizens and furthered cultural homogenisation and 'normative globalisation'. Thirdly, it seems that the whole idea of a citizen with a universal and persistent identity is more and more a myth. Instead *identities become increasingly situational, time bound, particular, multiple and changing*. All this means that it is ever more difficult to construct a shared European identity, as there are increasing internal divisions and concerns, more global concerns which put individual identifications rather into a global than a European perspective, increasing reference points for a global rather than a European identity (cultural homogenisation) and, finally, as identities in general tend to be more particular than universal – “there is as yet no European people”.

The task for European youth and its youth policies will also be to combat all the forms of internal polarisation of Europe and the negative effects of globalisation. Today there is a danger of Europe being divided into three layers; the European Union countries, the acceding countries and those outside. The Council of Europe, comprising all those states, has a specific task to counteract internal segregation. Furthermore, the Council of Europe's policies should take a more active role as an 'intermediary' between European citizens and global suprateritorial power structures. Youth and youth policy has to be put in the same framework. There is room for a sharpened political action of European youth policy actors - whether it be the White Paper Process, Council of Europe youth policies, NGO activities, other organisational, collective and individual forms of action – to tackle social diversification of big cities, labour market insecurity, educational inequality, brain drain, polarisation within post-communist countries, humanitarian crises, adverse effects of globalisation and neoliberalism, 'the global democracy deficit', etc.. Looking at the recent efforts of drafting European youth policies in the Council of Europe and in the European Union - and referring both to governments and to the youth NGOs - there is a certain reluctance to put on the agenda concrete, difficult and politically conflicting issues. The lowest common denominator, compromised and abstract pronouncements are the prevailing mode. Perhaps this is a reflection of 'the intellectual insecurity' of our times which has prompted Guy Standing from International Labour Organisation to observe that there is an “unwillingness to think, speak or act radically”?