

**Case study report on participation and non-formal education in the
support for young people in transitions to work in Italy
(Work Package 6)**

By Gabriele Lenzi, Morena Cuconato, Corina Laasch and Luca Minguzzi
on behalf of Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Educazione
Università degli Studi di Bologna

February 2004

<p>YOYO – Youth Policy and Participation funded by the EC's 5th Framework Programme Project no: HPSE-CT-2001-00072</p> <p>International Coordination: IRIS e.V. Tuebingen Dr. Andreas Walther andreas.walther@iris-egris.de http://www.iris-egris.de/yoyo</p>	<p>Partner institution: <i>Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Educazione – Università degli Studi di Bologna Via Zamboni, 34 I – 40126 Bologna</i></p> <p>Prof. Luigi Guerra Tel. +39-051-2098442 Fax +39-051-2098619</p>
--	---

Table of contents

1. INTRODUCTION.....	6
2. CONTEXT OF YOUTH TRANSITIONS.....	6
3. SAMPLE DESCRIPTION.....	12
3.1. <i>Transitional clusters</i>	13
3.2.1 From user to operator.....	14
3.2.2 Involved but independent.....	16
3.2.3 The really weak ones.....	17
4. BIOGRAPHIC ORIENTATIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG PEOPLE.....	20
4.1 <i>Motivational aspects before/at project entry</i>	21
4.2 <i>Role and meaning of work</i>	22
4.3 <i>Experiences with institutions</i>	24
5. CASE STUDY ANALYSIS.....	25
5.1. <i>Methodology</i>	25
5.2. <i>Case Study 1 ARCIRAGAZZI – Palermo – Sicily</i>	26
5.2.1. Description of agency and project.....	26
5.2.2. Analysis.....	27
5.2.2.1 Participation.....	27
5.2.2.2 Motivation in the project / Relation between participation and motivation.....	28
5.2.2.3 Relationships between young people and project workers.....	29
5.2.2.4 Learning and transition / Learning and biographic progression.....	30
5.2.2.5 Concepts of learning / Learning experiences.....	31
5.2.2.6 Peer learning and informal learning.....	32
5.3. <i>Case Study 2 Project Youth/Suburbs – Turin – Piedmont</i>	33
5.3.1. Description of agency and project.....	33
5.3.2. Analysis.....	34
5.3.2.1 Participation.....	34
5.3.2.2 Motivation in the project / Relation between participation and motivation.....	36
5.3.2.3 Relationships between young people and project workers.....	37
5.3.2.4 Learning and transition / Learning and biographic progression.....	37
5.3.2.5 Concepts of learning / Learning experiences.....	38
5.3.2.6 Peer learning and informal learning.....	39
5.4. <i>Case Study 3 – Youth Centre – Campagnola (Emilia-Romagna)</i>	40
5.4.1. Description of agency and project.....	40
5.4.2. Analysis.....	41
5.4.2.1 Participation.....	41
5.4.2.2 Motivation in the project / Relation between participation and motivation.....	42
5.4.2.3 Relationships between young people and project workers.....	43
5.4.2.4 Learning and transition / Learning and biographic progression.....	44
5.4.2.5 Concepts of learning / Learning experiences.....	44
5.4.2.6 Peer learning and informal learning.....	45
6. SUCCESS.....	46
6.1. <i>CONCEPT OF SUCCESS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE THEMSELVES</i>	46

6.2. CONCEPT OF SUCCESS FOR PROJECT WORKERS AND FUNDERS	47
6.3. CRITIQUE OF YOUNG PEOPLE	50
6.4. CRITIQUE OF PROJECT WORKERS AND FUNDERS	51
6.5. PERSPECTIVE OF RESEARCHERS WITH REGARD TO SUCCESS, FAILURE AND CRITIQUE ..	53
7. RECOMMENDATIONS ON POLITICAL AND POLICY LEVELS	56
REFERENCES.....	58
ANNEX 1 DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE OF YOUNG PEOPLE	61
ANNEX 2: PATHWAYS OF TRANSITION - TABLES	63
ANNEX 3.....	68
<i>A) Sample of project workers and experts.....</i>	<i>68</i>
<i>B) List of materials and documentation for the case studies analysis</i>	<i>68</i>

1. INTRODUCTION

This report collects the Italian findings of the European research project ‘*Youth policy and participation – Potentials of participation and informal learning in transitions to work (YOYO)*’. It is based on the analysis of two rounds of in-depth interviews with young people from three youth schemes and the evaluation of three case studies of the respective projects (with interviews with project workers and external experts), carried out during the last 2 years. For a more complete picture of the theoretical and methodological framework of this study, we refer the reader to the previously published findings of the research project, especially the Yoyo Working papers 1 to 3, made available via the project’s website.¹

Our three selected projects seemed to suitably feature the participatory aspect required by our initial research design while at the same time guaranteeing a geographical distribution such as to reflect the differences between the North, the Centre and the South of the country. All three projects appeared especially innovative with respect to the traditional Italian scenario. Both in their declaration of intent and in their practices, we noticed an explicit valorisation of youth participation in the management of interventions. The selected projects are:

1. Project *Laboratorio delle ragazze e dei ragazzi (A workshop for young women and men)* initiated by the Association *Arciragazzi* in Palermo (Sicily): a multidimensional intervention, based on youth work and prevention of social exclusion, with permanent experimentation workshops and animation activities for children and adolescents from socio-culturally highly degraded areas;
2. The Project *Giovani/Periferie (Youth/Suburbs)*, in Turin, aimed at favouring the participation of youth coming from four different suburban areas of the town in a wider and more comprehensive project of urban development and reconstruction (Suburbs Special Project).
3. The “*Centro Giovani*” (*Youth Centre*), Campagnola (Reggio Emilia), a multi-functional youth centre with an info point, a music room for local bands, promotion of international exchanges, concerts, etc.

2. CONTEXT OF YOUTH TRANSITIONS

In this section, we will give a short overview of the Italian transition system by highlighting the situation of the youth labour market, the school system, the system of vocational training and other specific measures concerning youth policies.

¹ <http://www.iris-egris.de/yoyo/workingpapers.phtml>

In the last years, Italy achieved a remarkably positive result as regards *employment*. From a qualitative perspective, two facts are particularly worth of attention: first, the remarkable growth in employment in the south of Italy, where the reduction of unemployment rate, declining from 21% to 19.3% in 2001, was really considerable and coupled with the clear tendency for undeclared work to come to light, contributing to the positive trend in the employment situation of the country. This positive result is also due to a big improvement in the participation of women on the labour market, which led to a 5.4% increase in the number of women employed (from 41.9% to 47.3%) and a 5.3% increase in the employment rate (from 35.8% to 41.1%). All these positive results contributed to the decrease in the unemployment rate, which fell under 10% for the first time in the decade, standing at 9.5% on average throughout 2001.²

The situation regarding *youth unemployment* (15 to 24 years of age) is less univocal: the high 28.2% stated in 2001 at national level involves 25% male and 32.2% female (ISTAT, Italy in Figures 2002). This gap becomes even wider if we considered the rates assessed in the different parts of the country: the rate of job-seekers amounts to 12.6% in the North-West, 9.3% in the North-East, 24.2% in the Centre, 14.6 in the Centre-North and reaches the 50.6% in the South of the country.³ Also the trend of the youth unemployment rate, considering the 32,9% in 1999,⁴ is positive, but the data don't cease suggesting how difficult it is for young people to obtain a job. Still, unemployment does remain a long-term situation for the youth: either the labour market is entered soon, or the difficulties in finding a job increase drastically. The majority of young job-seekers (about 80% of the total) can therefore be classified as "long-term unemployed", that is to say unemployed for more than one year. Young people who have remained unemployed for less than 6 months (the threshold indicated by the EU for adopting preventive measures) are in fact estimated to amount to a mere 20% of the total unemployment rates. The high rate of youth unemployment has been, in the last decade, at the centre of a cultural and political debate and the need to change the whole education and training system became an important priority.

Reforms in education until now involved providing schools with juridical powers and autonomy in administration and management. A first attempt of an organic reform of the Italian *education system* was made in 1999 by the centre-left coalition, which aimed to create a more flexible and user-oriented system through reorganisation of school cycles and training. As a matter of fact, a lack in continuity among the various educational levels was one of the

² Data are taken from ISTAT, Annual Report 2001 (English synthesis on <http://www.istat.it/english/RAinglese.pdf>), otherwise the figures source is in brackets.

³ ISTAT, April 2003.

most serious problems of the Italian education system: The first years of each cycle caused – and is still causing, as the system is still operating - a sort of obstruction between the different segments in which the attainment standards and difficulties are extremely differentiated and a quite high percentage of pupils dropped out or were required to repeat the first school year, specially during the transition from the lower to the upper secondary school.⁵

The educational priorities of the new government, led by the centre-right coalition of Mr. Berlusconi, were obviously different: this reform was suspended and a new one was put forward in 2003 with the aim to obtain a strong connection between the traditional system and the presumed new needs of economy. In the old system young people moved through primary school (5 years, from age 6 to 10) and lower secondary school (3 years from 11 to 14) in order to enter the labour market or embark on one of four main possible post-compulsory pathways at age 15. Simplifying somewhat, on the more vocationally oriented side was possible to choose either technical schools (Istituti Tecnici) or vocational schools (Istituti Professionali), on the more academic side the options were grammar schools (Licei), and the arts-oriented secondary schools (Istituti Artistici). Pupils and their family had to take an important educational decision at the age of 14 (at the end of lower secondary school) between labour market or school based training. The structure of the new education system is similar to the old one, but at the end of the secondary school pupils have to take a more crucial decision between school-based channel or vocational and apprenticeship training.

The structure of the new educational system

Type	Lenght	Age	Compulsory
Primary school	5	From 6 to 10	Yes
Secondary school	3	From 11 to 14	Yes
School based training	5	From 15 to 19	According to the new law is a “right and duty”
Vocational training	4	From 15 to 18	According to the new law is a “right and duty”

On one hand there is the grammar school system (Licei), on the other vocational and apprenticeship training. They are deeply different channels, without real chances (even if pathways are formally provided) to pass from vocational training system to grammar school system. The crucial educational choice will occur formally at the age of 14, but, as a matter of fact, it will happen earlier because the reform aims at steering pupils choices as soon as possible, dividing in an earlier age pupils “fit to work” from the one “fit to study”. In some way this reform reminds to the German dual system. Theoretically, in Italy is now possible to

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ In 1999/2000 13.8% of pupils dropped out in the first and second year of upper secondary school. ISTAT, April 2003.

enter University after 5 year-upper secondary school, both vocational (Istituti tecnici and Istituti professionali) and grammar school. According to this possibility, the school system represented a real chance of social mobility during the 1970's and the 80's. The new Reform is instead a step backwards along the road towards a real social openness of the system.

The most remarkable changes in education system performance last decade involved an increase in school attendance. The youth in Italy have never been as educated as they seem to be today. The number of students that receive upper secondary qualifications increased by 20%, thereby involving over 70% of 19 years-olds, compared to 49.5% in 1996 and 42.2% in 1992.⁶ Up to 20 years of age, young drop-outs are a minority bound to decrease. This would seem to signal a greater tendency to obtain a school-leaving certificate and a decreasing school failure rate. Nonetheless, although education is spreading, there remains a considerable cleavage between those who obtain a high school certificate and those who drop out after lower secondary school without taking vocational training. Indeed, the latter, who represent a minority, are becoming increasingly marginalized. At the same time, a secondary-school certificate is rapidly becoming inadequate for the needs of the labour market, whilst the intrinsic quality of one's course of study, together with the degree of parental support (socio-economic status and cultural level) are becoming more and more crucial.

Vocational training is also facing a turning point, thanks to the attention devoted to the relationship between labour training and policies within Act 196/97. The purpose is to adjust the training system in terms of both process and products/services in order to meet the specific requirements and needs of the labour market, paying special attention to the new demands connected with self-employment, atypical work, and the weaker population groups. The increased training opportunities and the close connection with the employment services, as well as the greater access to various forms of traineeship both inside and outside training courses proper, should allow a progressive and wide-ranging implementation of actions preventing and reducing unemployment. In particular, with reference to the dropout problem, the strategy is to co-ordinate a number of actions through guidance, curriculum integration, extensive recourse to traineeship schemes, extension of the schooling requirement (compulsory training), introduction of training credits, school/training integration courses, heightening of the apprenticeship schemes.

The *new apprenticeship* plan is soon to provide the main on-the-job qualification channel for the youth: while continuing the experimentation begun in 1998, an effort has been made to specify the contents of off-the-job training programmes focusing on transferable and

⁶ Gasperoni, G. 2002 : 75.

vocation-oriented skills and to heighten the training actions relative to young people of *up to* 18 years of age (compulsory training requirement).

As for the *certification of skills*, a Commission comprising representatives of the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry for University and Scientific Research (MURST, now MIUR) and the Regions will be set up with a view to establishing a “*national system of competencies*”. It will be up to the Regions to certify the skills acquired through the participation in vocational training and continuing education activities, working activities, traineeship and self-training. The *citizen’s training portfolio* will be created by regional authorities with the aim of documenting the training curriculum.

The 1999 Finance Act provided for the setting up of a *IFTS - Sistema di Istruzione e Formazione Tecnica Superiore* (higher - post-secondary - education and technical training system). The courses planned by the Regions on the basis of local requirements and in line with national standards, last from 2 to 4 semesters and aim at the attainment of medium-high professional skills through extended periods of in-house training. Upon completion of these courses, students are issued a certificate, recognised throughout the national territory, anticipating the system of training credits: this should enable them to redirect the course of their education even in respect of university studies.

More specific measures for the young unemployed, aiming at compensating the generation imbalances within the Italian labour market, took place from 1996, promoted by the centre-left coalition. The main ones have been: a) Promotion of self employment in the south of Italy; b) Intervention in support of female entrepreneurship; c) Programmes aiming at financing smaller self employment enterprises; d) Measures concerning “*socially useful works*”; e) Creation and regional distribution of employment agencies, in order to guarantee the provision of services for the placement, guidance, pre-selection, advice on individual training, advice on self-entrepreneurship, promotion of socially useful works and apprenticeship.

In July 2003 a new basic reform of the labour market took place in Italy. This reform aims at generating a greater flexibility in the Italian labour market, introducing the so called ‘project linked contracts’, new part-time contracts, the job sharing, intermittent job and bonus for occasional jobs. In the *Annual Report 2001*, ISTAT proposes a framework to classify 31 different types of work relationship, identified according to the duration, social security and working hours involved. Around one fourth of all jobs are ‘atypical’: there are over 3 million atypical workers, thereby counting for 23% of all workers in the industrial and private service areas.

Atypical work in Italy – especially that involving closed-end contracts – is not a means of obtaining stable work, at least not until 1999: Only 2.7% of atypical workers obtained stable employment over the space of two years (which was the lowest level in EU). The reform also liberalizes personal selection agencies, with the aim to create a private system of job intermediation that should work, in a synergistic way, with the public system (employment agencies). Through this reform the Italian labour market has become one of the most flexible in Europe. The risk is represented by the structural weakness of the welfare system that seems to be unable to sustain the emerging areas of poverty and social concern.

On the side of *youth transitions*, it's worrying to note that neither the National Action Plan, nor the last recent electoral campaign have given any significant space to youth transitions. Equally worrying is the fact that a national basic law on youth participation has not been approved yet (a bill “provisions for young generation” was presented in 1997 but, unfortunately, still stuck in Parliament). Moreover until 1995 there was no systematic policy for the youth, but only laws on particular aspects that aimed to protect young people in various field, with responsibility shared among different ministerial cabinets.⁷ Only in the last few years the State has attempted to re-organise and coordinate strategies in favour of the youth, but the problem of a real coordination of competencies at the national level and among local authorities still remains.

The most important legislative measure approved was Law 285 passed in 1997, *Provisions for the promotion of the rights and opportunities of children and adolescents*, under which the *National fund for childhood and adolescence* was founded. This law has laid the bases for incisive acts to be carried out in the last years on a forgotten sector, that of protection and promotion of youth rights. It also seems to have encouraged allocation of considerable resources (approx. EUR 450 million) to qualified projects, approved by Regions and Municipalities, and monitored by the Department of Social Affairs. The encouraging results achieved by this law are related only to children and adolescents but not to young adults.

Another weakness point concerning Youth Policies in Italy is represented by the promotion of youth participation. Even if participation has become a catchword over the last few years, substantial concrete results are still missing. In the *National plan for the youth* elaborated during the preparatory phase of the basic law on youth participation (not approved yet!!) empowerment and participation are underlined as the main strategies to be implemented in youth policies. They emerge in all fields of intervention whose aim is meeting young people's needs. Unfortunately the law still lies in Parliament and the Berlusconi Government seems to

⁷ Cuconato, M., Lenzi, G. 1998 : 133.

give priority to structural interventions in the field of labour market and its liberalization, forgetting an important social debate concerning the need of participation, and, above all, of youth participation.

3. SAMPLE DESCRIPTION⁸

During the two rounds of interviews conducted respectively between November 2001 and January 2002 and between January and March 2003, we interviewed on the whole **35 young people** involved in the three participative projects selected for our case studies (see chapter 5),⁹ subdivided as follows: 24 males and 11 females.¹⁰ In the first interviewing phase we conducted 3 interviews in focus group and 2 individual ones, while in the second phase the decision was made to carry out a greater number of individual interviews. Thus, in the second phase 28 young people were interviewed individually, and only 3 participants (from the Turin project) have been interviewed through a focus group-modality. As shown in the tables 1 and 2, the group constitutes a rather homogeneous sample if one considers age and level of education. The average age is about 20 and the level of education is averagely distributed between primary level and secondary level (16 and 18 out of 35 respectively). As regards gender, young males predominate (24), compared with young women (11). The majority of the youths interviewed (21 of 35) are following “traditional” educational trajectories, that is to say, they attend higher secondary school, vocational education courses or are at university. 6 of the 35 interviewees left school after completion of obligatory schooling. Moreover, it needs to be underlined that the majority of them is working (in temporary or permanent jobs) or both work and study (in this case in temporary jobs). It should also be considered that the labour market conditions and hence the opportunities for the young job-seekers of the three regions in which the projects are located are very different: with a youth unemployment rate of 15,5% Piedmont is still suffering from the Italian car crisis in which the FIAT in Turin was involved, with a massive effect on the job opportunities for the new generations. The 10,4% in Campagnola (Reggio-Emilia) testifies the quite good economic health of a region, Emilia Romagna, in which the labour market is characterised by small enterprises which include

⁸ See corresponding Tables in ANNEX 1 at the end of this report.

⁹ Only 4 respondents previously interviewed in the first round could not be contacted in the second one: 3 of them, from the Palermo Arciragazzi Project had abandoned the project due to study and work needs, and a girl from the Campagnola Youth Centre, could not be traced, despite numerous attempts.

¹⁰ Our selection of the young interviewees was not based on quantitative criteria, anyway in Italy the participation rate of young men in associations is higher than the one of young women. This fact can be considered primarily as a consequence of the still existing strong differences in the socialization models between genders, particularly in the South. On this regard see Buzzi, C., A. Cavalli, A. de Lillo 2002 : 444. In the case of

important centres of excellence, able to create new job opportunities and to compete both on international and domestic market. The 54,7 % in Sicily shows the reality of the Italian economy “at two speeds”, which plays a deep influence on the youth life: in Palermo, as in many other areas of the South of Italy, undeclared work represents for many young people the most likely work future.¹¹

Almost all our respondents live with their families (31 out of 35), which means that they have not yet undertaken a trajectory of autonomy in terms of responsibility in everyday life and self-support. As regards the family situation, during this second turn of interviews we obtained more detailed information on the education level and on the professional trajectories of the young participants’ parents. About a half of parents (30 out of 70) are unemployed or unskilled. The rate of unemployed or unskilled mothers is very high (22 of 35) in comparison with fathers (8 of 35). Our data suggest that, on average, the most supportive families are those with a higher education level. On the contrary, in single-parent families, for instance, or in families in which both parents are poorly scholarised, or where the young people experience conflictual relations with them, serious difficulties have been reported: these have to do, for instance, with precocious work experiences (mostly precarious and frustrating) and with the strenuous effort to reconcile study (often prematurely interrupted after compulsory school), work and social obligations since adolescence.¹²

3.1. TRANSITIONAL CLUSTERS

Typology construction in qualitative social research has essentially a heuristic aim, playing an interpretative and explicative role, not merely a classificatory or descriptive one. This process should therefore be considered as a sort of fundamental connection between empirical data and theory. Moreover, a typology should be ‘fruitful’, in the sense of being productive and meaningful for the theory building: types should tell something additional compared to the combination of every single variable [Corbetta 1999:532]. The initial question we put ourselves was therefore the following: which are the meaningful variables for our research and – in the second place – which are the attributes characterising such variables? Basing on the empirical data of the interviews, we opted for the following variables, considering them to be the most relevant and ‘productive’ in the developing of the transitions of our young

Campagnola, another reason is that the project began as a mainly boys’ project, whose ‘attraction power’ was based mainly on playing rock music.

¹¹ ISTAT 2003.

interviewees: *level of involvement in the project, period of involvement in the project, participative character of the project, achieved level of education, present occupational status, occupational status of parents.* As it can be seen, the participation in the project characterizes itself as a strong variable in the definition of young people's transitions: this is due to the fact that our sample mainly consists of young people who are still living with their families and whose transition pathways show a limited number of 'steps.'

Given the above mentioned variables and attributes, we identified following types and subtypes of transitional pathways within the three Italian projects (see the corresponding Tables in ANNEX 2 of the present report). The allocation of the single young persons to the single types is obviously a 'biased' operation, due to an overlapping of some attributes: in some cases the persons did not fit exactly the assigned type or could have been assigned to two types at the same time.

3.2.1 FROM USER TO OPERATOR

A sizeable group of young people start as users and gradually undertake more and more substantial responsibilities within the project. On average they are young people from a low-middle class, middle-class or working-class family background. They usually follow a course of studies which is not particularly exacting. For these young people the project becomes (or is going to become) a springboard for a (temporary or steady) job within the *youth work* or social work in general. Their emotional involvement in the project activities is very high since the very beginning. Nevertheless a certain amount of time is generally necessary before they can focus exactly on the area or areas of activity which suit them best. What seems worth noticing is also their awareness of the advantages that joining the project can bring them both for their personal development and for their occupation.

Biographic portrait 1: From user to operator - Chiara¹³ - Palermo

Chiara is 21 years old. Her father is an insurance clerk, her mother is a housewife. She is an only child and is the only young woman in our sample who – at the age of 20 - succeeded in living alone outside the family of origin (thanks to an operator of the association who moved to the north of Italy for occupational reasons, leaving her his little and quite cheap rented flat). She attended and completed secondary school, enrolled at university (Foreign Languages)

¹² On the relationship between the level of scholarisation in the family, the work situation of youths and their own scholarisation level see Buzzi, C., A. Cavalli, A. de Lillo 2002 : 73-96. The data suggest that the Italian school system is, to this day, an important agent of social segmentation and selection.

but after three months dropped out in order to experiment with herself in the association that runs the project.

Her first activity in the association was at the age of 17 as an animator for a group of children in a summer camp. In the last three years she has been offered more and more opportunities within the project and consequently has acquired various skills and competencies in different sectors. At first she took care of the secretary's office, in particular she managed the administrative credit system¹⁴ of the association Arciragazzi. In 2001 she did the international civil service within the association and became responsible for international exchanges and co-responsible for fundraising and project leader for youth projects funded by the EU and the Council of Europe.¹⁵ Since December 2001 she has been a member of the social Cooperative Argonauti, created five years ago as an offspring of *Arciragazzi* and aiming at the promotion of consulting activities pertaining to planning, operators' training, management and control of recreation initiatives.

Chiara reports that, during the last year, she realised that – due to the intense involvement in the project - she had lost contact with her private life. There was a moment when also her friends were telling her off because they thought she wasn't friend with them anymore. She was completely absorbed by the association. From that moment she understood she had to keep her own space: *“There are people who have committed their own life to it [to the project], but I don't personally think this is the right way.”*¹⁶

Chiara considers her participation in the project as very useful to her, first of all for developing self-assertiveness, a certain open-mindedness and a political conscience. The opportunities offered by the projects helped accomplish her self-fulfilling needs, her desire of being creative, of fulfilling herself as an individual in both a trustful and stimulating context:

*“In all cases the main motivation is (...) to have the possibility of being yourself, of making mistakes, they trusted me and gave me the opportunity to project myself in the future.”*¹⁷

¹³ All names in the biographic portraits have been changed.

¹⁴ Young people involved in the different activities are not paid directly for their work; rather, a *system of credits* is in place: when interventions are over, credits are transformed into vouchers that can be spent on books, CDs, cinema, theatre, various season tickets, gyms, entrances to the stadium, or for discounts in pubs, pizza places, discos, travels and so forth.

¹⁵ In November 2002 Arciragazzi organized in Palermo the first national training course for youth operators on human rights funded by the Council of Europe.

¹⁶ P2- Arciragazzi – 21, female, II, 97. Interviews quotations with young people have been marked in the following way: initial capital of project (P = Palermo-Arciragazzi; T = Turin-Youth/Suburbs; C = Campagnola-Youth Centre), identification number, project, age, gender, round of interview (I = 2001; II = 2002), tape position.

¹⁷ P2- Arciragazzi – 21, female, II, 46.

3.2.2 INVOLVED BUT INDEPENDENT

A number of young people engaged in the projects do show a strong involvement in the activities they have undertaken, but, at the same time, they tend to preserve a certain degree of existential autonomy and a fairly "free" attitude towards the project. They use the project as far as it can be useful for their personal development and occupational opportunities, while avoiding giving themselves completely over to the project mission itself. These young people are mainly some of the ones who take part in the two projects located in the north of Italy (Turin and Campagnola). These projects actually offer a less "embracing" and "protective" existential experience when compared with that in Palermo.¹⁸ Moreover, in comparison with the first group, these young people seem to have a quicker understanding of the weak points of the project and show a more realistic perception of the difficulties related to the transition period they are going through as young adults. Their familial background is mainly working-class or clerical and they had a fairly regular course of studies. All of them state that they pay for their education by taking up temporary jobs which entail strong frustration and hard work.

Biographic portrait 2: Involved but independent

Matteo - Turin

Matteo is 23 years old. His father is a retired state employee, his mother is a housewife (both completed only compulsory school). He has an elder brother working and living with his parents. Matteo attended secondary school without particular difficulties. After his school-leaving certificate, he enrolled at university (today he's attending the third year at the Department for theatre and cinema) and decided to leave outside the family of origin with other young people. It was in this time (autumn 2000) that he started attending the Project *Youth/Suburbs*, in a rather casual way: Matteo was looking for a part-time job to support himself financially and a friend of his told him that the Municipality was in search of interviewers for a research action in the district where he lived. Matteo took part in this first research action (addressed to the adult inhabitants of the district) and in a second one aimed to explore the youths' ideas on the planned interventions concerning urban, social and economic transformation decided by the Local Council. In summer he worked as an animator for the children of the district together with other young participants in the Project *Youth/Suburbs* and started contributing to the district newspaper. After which he reduced his engagement in the project, also because in the meantime he had moved out of the district and was very busy

¹⁸ This can be due primarily to the better labour market conditions in the North of the country.

with several temporary jobs and with his studies. Anyway he kept in touch with the project workers and went on contributing to the district newspaper.

Last year Matteo realized that he couldn't go on working and studying, therefore he had to go back to live with his parents. Going back to his parental home has been perceived as a defeat at least at the beginning as he sees it now as a momentary solution in order to recover major economic tranquillity to study without jumping from one job to the other. Today he's started studying regularly, and he is now working at a project for an ethnographic documentary film on a traditional carnival ritual in the surroundings of Turin (he's still looking for funders). Since March 2003 he has been working at an info point in Turin, founded by the Municipality in collaboration with the social cooperative which has run the Project *Youth/Suburbs* in his district.

What characterizes Matteo's experience is a strong disappointment for the financial insecurity which hindered (and is still hindering) him from devoting himself with continuity to his real interests and attitudes. On this subject he underlines particularly the problem of incompatibility between work and study:

*"There is no institution or company that has tried to meet my needs. There is so much talking about flexibility, but if I took a part-time job I couldn't earn a living. I couldn't live on my own and study and so I ended up working in a factory on three shifts and going to university at the same time. And all that was horrible, but then again it was the only way to get a salary at the end of the month. (...) Imagine that I had to fight with my employer to sit for an exam. I believe that it is meaningless to say that they [the employers] need flexible people, they just care about their own business."*¹⁹

Moreover, Matteo is totally aware that he could not take advantage of the support provided by other European countries:

"If I only had the chance to spend the periods of unemployment [with more economic tranquillity], as a guy from the Netherlands or Denmark, I would have acted more rationally. Here instead, there are no certainties, continuously changing jobs, the rent and everything, it grows on you, and makes also study difficult. [...]"

*Indeed, there are not many people who have made my choice [to leave the parents' house], but there would be more of them if the Government understood that a young person needs to work and to be independent, and should be allowed to combine these things. It is not us being tied to our mothers' skirts, as some say, it's an objective difficulty, the situation is worse than in the rest of Europe."*²⁰

3.2.3 THE REALLY WEAK ONES

A remarkable group of young people in all the three projects has a decidedly low socio-cultural background: several monoparental families, parents with low education attainments and with medium-low occupational status, living in peripheral districts. These young people (almost exclusively males) have often followed 'uneven' school pathways and some of them are at risk of deviant behaviour. They report having had several job experiences (though not

¹⁹ T5, Youth/Suburbs, 23, male, I, 68 and 70.

²⁰ T5, Youth/Suburbs, 23, male, II, 45 and 72.

continuous in most cases), in which work is characterised by repetition and alienation. Initially they enter the projects because of the inadequacy of the traditional opportunities on offer, especially by the church (oratory, local parish) and by local sports centres. Therefore these projects represents a chance for this group to express the natural “transgressive” and conflictual energy typical of adolescence, without risking being isolated or stigmatised. They offer to some of them the chance of ‘redeeming’ themselves from the social stigma of ‘deviance’ or anyway of approaching learning experiences which otherwise would be precluded. In this respect projects seem to provide them with those chances of social upward mobility which normally should be guaranteed by school.

These are the common features shared by the group. Nevertheless, according to our observations, young people belonging to this type - during their participation in the project – tend to differentiate themselves in two distinct subtypes. Young people belonging to the subtype we decided to call “LET’S WAIT AND SEE”, go on preferring basically leisure activities, (particularly national and international exchanges, which allow them to meet young people from other cultural contexts). They seem to ‘limit’ their participation to this level of leisure, although they are well aware of the importance of specific skills of socialisation for their personal achievement in the professional sphere they can acquire through the project. Another frequent feature we could notice in a part of this subtype is a strong wish to move elsewhere, preferably abroad, after having finished the project. Some of them want, on the contrary, try to get a job in the social sector through the project.

The second subtype, which we called “THE CRITICAL SOULS”, is numerically less large than the previous one and the young people belonging to it seem to get increased critical awareness and strong motivation to pro-social behaviour from the project. Their considerations are usually characterized by a critical attitude towards injustice and their participative style reflects awareness of the social value of their engagement. Although this subtype is numerically marginal within our sample (5 cases out of 35), we thought it would be interesting to offer a biographic portrait of it as well.

Biographic portrait 3: The really Weak Ones

A) Let’s wait and see!

Luigi - Campagnola

Luigi is 21 years old. He is only child and still living with his parents. His parents are little shopkeepers. Luigi doesn’t even know which educational level they have: *“I don’t know, I live*

with them but we don't speak very much".²¹ After having completed the obligatory schooling (at that time at 14), Luigi attended one year of vocational training school but after few months dropped out to go to work in a little enterprise in the surroundings.

He joined the project at the age of 14 and he explains his decision saying that it was the only available alternative to the local parish activities: [Question: What did you do before project entry?] *We used to hang around going cycling or to the playgrounds. The priest and the other people looked at us with distrust; it was sad.*"²²

The activities he is more interested in revolve around the socializing and leisure spheres (trips to the seaside, chances to borrow CDs, the availability of a rehearsal music room, concerts) and are organized by the youth together with the project operator. Luigi has changed several times job place. He has been working in a factory producing roller shutters for two years: *"Now I'm working like a slave, I'm reduced to slavery in a factory. (...) in this factory they pay me poorly and exploit me (...) You know, producing roller shutters is a hard job, you are working on a machine the whole day and after some time you've had enough."*²³

Last year he badly injured his leg at work and he could not go to work for a long time. In future Luigi is going to resign from his present job, take up some temporary job and move to another city, maybe abroad. In order to accomplish this aim, he is convinced that the international exchanges carried out through the project will be very useful to him, mainly because they gave him a chance to improve his English. Moreover he thinks he has learned from the project "to live with people".

Biographic portrait 3: The really Weak Ones

B) The Critical Souls

Rocco - Palermo

Rocco is 19 and lives with his parents. They did not complete compulsory secondary schooling, having had to start working about the age of ten, and have always been precarious workers. Rocco attended a vocational school for electricians at the Salesians of Don Bosco and he got his diploma. He has got an elder brother - Nicola - a few years older than him, with a past experience of drug addiction and detention in a juvenile reformatory. Three years ago, after starting a rehabilitation path with the Arciragazzi association, Nicola himself convinced Rocco to join the project. The operators report that Rocco was apathetic at first, but then slowly got involved in the activities and even brought some of his friends in the association.

²¹ C1, Youth Centre – Campagnola, 21, male, II, 11.

²² C1, Youth Centre – Campagnola, 21, male, II, 27.

²³ C1, Youth Centre – Campagnola, 21, male, II, 5 and 54.

He has been doing voluntary work as an activity organizer in the children recreation centre and directed the association paper for a while. He has started studying guitar and has become the person in charge of the musical sector of the workshops organized by the association. Now he writes the words and music for socially committed songs in sicilian dialect and is a member of a band which performs both in the association shows and in city festivals. Last year he joined the Coordination Board of Arciragazzi. He has set up a group organizing recreation activities which, besides going on working with minors, is going to start offering services to private customers for parties, birthdays etc. At present, he is earning his living by working irregularly in the transport sector. This job takes up a lot of his time and energies.

Rocco is strongly committed to social engagement and does not hesitate to express an autonomous position (conflictual at times) at a political level:

“One of the fundamental experiences of last year was the conference on childhood held in Collodi in November 2002,²⁴ where we from Palermo Arciragazzi raised a problem the others were trying to avoid. That is to say that many are convinced that in Italy there are no problems related to children and adolescent poverty: we from the Palermo group were the only ones asserting that poverty does exist.”²⁵

Another example is his "battle" within the association against fee payment for membership cards: *“What I don't like ...let's see ... the membership cards for instance: by making people pay for them we run the risk of excluding kids who cannot afford them, so that, in the end, only affluent children will come to us. I'd work more in the streets, trying to reach more children of the most degraded blocks.”²⁶*

4. BIOGRAPHIC ORIENTATIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG

PEOPLE

According to the definition developed by our research network in Joint Report 2,²⁷ by *turning points* we refer to *“changes in young people's motivation and engagement, which may go along with transitional steps, such as entering a supportive measure, but which could also happen through other crucial (learning) situations”*. As it merged from our interviews, every young person has his or her *motivational career*, and the development of this career can be strongly influenced by learning experiences (rewarding or not rewarding, providing or not providing them with social recognition and self-esteem, etc.) he or she has made in the past and in the present. It is obvious that youth disengagement has a multidimensional character and it is problematic to decide exactly which factors affected negatively the motivational level of young people. In this regard, for instance, several researches on the causes of dropout highlight that young

²⁴ He is referring to a Conference on childhood and adolescence organised by the Ministry for work and social policies.

²⁵ P12, Arciragazzi-Palermo, 19, male, II, 9.

²⁶ P12, Arciragazzi-Palermo, 19, male, II, 19.

²⁷ See Du Bois-Reymond, M., Plug, W., Stauber B., Pohl A., Walther A. 2002.

people can disengage from formal education system for different (individual and systemic) reasons, some of which are often connected to interwoven factors like social and economical disadvantage, emotional factors, cognitive styles, lack of support for education from the cultural community [Cunti 1999].

Not ignoring the relevance of the social, economic and cultural contexts, which play an important role in affecting and influencing turning points, we have tried to focus on the turning points which have been explicitly mentioned in our interviews. Our hypothesis was that many young people – in spite of the difficulties faced in their previous relation with the traditional transition system - could find in the projects strong stimuli to recover their motivation towards learning and to face their transitions in a more self-conscious way.

4.1 MOTIVATIONAL ASPECTS BEFORE/AT PROJECT ENTRY

The expectations of the youths before/at project entry are connected with the motivations which induced them to join the project. On the fact, our interviews let us discover numerous motivational factors leading youths to enter the project. Yet they all derive, in every single case, from a free choice with no pressure exerted by other agencies - as is the case with some other European countries.²⁸ The main recurrent aspects are the wish to socialise, talk, have fun, get to know each other. Moreover, on a general level, we can state that it seemed to the young people as if the projects could offer a real chance to accomplish their self-fulfilling needs: *“The earning is for your own self, your personality. People are here only to help others and to me that’s the best way to be paid back: to nourish your soul and feelings.”*²⁹

Some of them manifest their desire of being creative, of fulfilling themselves as individuals in both a trustful and stimulating context: *“At first I liked the idea of creating something, of being actively involved in a creation process”*.³⁰ *“In all cases the main motivation is (...) to have the possibility of being yourself, of making mistakes, they trusted me and gave me the opportunity to project myself in the future.”*³¹

For other youths, the main goal is to pursue their personal growth and have a more concrete and active influence on their local context. One of the main reasons is the need to actively influence a reality lacking in stimuli and closed to the outside, together with the necessity of self-identification with principles of social commitment and solidarity: *“I participate in a fight*

²⁸ All the three italian projects belong to the youth-work sector and the access to them is totally free and not dependent on decisions of services or authorities.

²⁹ P6, Arciragazzi-Palermo, 16, female, II, 19.

³⁰ T3, Youth/Suburbs-Turin, 25, female, 9.

³¹ P2, Arciragazzi-Palermo, 21, female, II, 46.

(...) we denounce the conditions in which children live (...) yes I joined the project to help others – children - and to make Brancaccio's³² voice heard at a national level."³³

In the case of Turin, apart from these ideals, several young people point to the importance of some sort of economic recognition, however small, as a form of payback for the realisation of some activities: *"I saw there were some young people there (...) they really wanted to come up with some new ideas for the district and then I met my colleagues who were doing interviews in the area and they got paid for the action research. They contacted me. And I had a lot of spare time as I was unemployed at that time and, apart from the sport centre, I was interested to see what would come out of this decision table³⁴ for young people."*³⁵

In many cases, wishes and aspirations of the youth coincide with initiatives and/or services offered by the projects. In the Campagnola's case it is the desire to play music that glues all these young people together. The desire to take part in excursions and national as well as international exchanges constitute an important attraction of the offer of the three Italian cases. Especially in the case of Turin and Palermo is the desire to participate in animation activities with children that motivates the youth. On the other hand, they are motivated by the idea of having their own place of aggregation and self-realisation, where they can feel free to express themselves.

4.2 ROLE AND MEANING OF WORK

A high percentage of the youth interviewed have already had their first experiences in the labour market under different forms: from voluntary service to work placement in a company, from temporary jobs to a permanent position. In the interviews, however, there has emerged a great regional difference between the work experiences of young people coming from the Northern regions of Italy and those from the South. Emblematically, the interviews carried out with the youth mirror the situation of the labour market in different geographical contexts. Two of our projects are presently running in the North of Italy, where industry employs youth workforce. One is located in **Campagnola** (in the province of Reggio Emilia), where the labour market is characterised mainly by small and medium enterprises. The other one takes place in **Turin**, dominated by the giant car manufacturing company FIAT and its induced production activities. Almost all interviewees from the North have already had significant work experiences (e.g. supporting themselves whilst studying or earning some money through

³² "Brancaccio" is one of the two highly degraded suburbs of Palermo in which *Arciragazzi* provides opportunities for aggregation and animation for children and adolescents.

³³ P16, *Arciragazzi-Palermo*, 15, male, II, 13.

³⁴ The expression "tavolo per i giovani" [*roundtable for youths*] refers to the decision-making group coordinating the youths involved in the Urban Recovery Programme in Turin, which used to meet to discuss and decide on activities to be undertaken.

³⁵ T4, *Youth/Suburbs-Turin*, 25, male, II, 22.

summer jobs). The work experiences revealed in the interviews were often perceived as particularly negative. The trend observed in some young people is to accept even unpleasant working conditions, because they conceive of their present job as a momentary occupation. The youths from Campagnola boast several work experiences (though not continuous in most cases), often in small factories, where work is characterised by repetition and automatisaion. The most painful experiences in the labour market are expressed by the Turin group with cases of exploitation and high pressure on workers in order to increase their productivity without receiving any benefit: *"(...) maybe these temping agencies are even worse, (...) to me it's the worst thing that can happen to a guy because after all you even miss a good relationship with the other workers, because you are highly discriminated, because when you are in the production line of a factory, you are forced to produce more than a normal person, there is no Trade Union to defend your rights, you own nothing and you feel even like fighting with other workers because if you don't produce as much as they want you to, then at the end of the month you won't see your contract renewed, nobody tells you so but it is common knowledge."*³⁶

Also the problem of incompatibility between work and study has been highlighted.

In **Palermo** (Sicily), our interviewees have had fewer contacts with the labour market and this is not surprising, if we consider that the youth unemployment rates in the South of Italy amount to about 50%. Most of them believe that following education/training trajectories increases their chances to get a job. Migration is also mentioned in the interviews (as future perspective), which is experienced by many young people from Italy's Mezzogiorno. Migrating to the richer North is seen as a means of securing better chances and work opportunities.

In the majority of the interviewees, we find the presence of clear and realistic ambitions concerning work. On fact, most of our respondents face the issue of their own future with sufficient awareness. Several interesting considerations on personal skills and interests as well as strategies to face the labour market have also emerged. The young people question themselves about their own personal skills and wishes and try to find new opportunities by means of educational trajectories, acquisition of diversified skills and participation in various projects. They are willing to act, to invest, to identify flexible goals.

A group from Palermo carried out an articulated reflection on the necessity of setting up their own profession autonomously. This would help them react to a certain fatalist attitude that seems to be rooted in some young people, resigned to the fact that there is no work in Sicily or passively relying on presumed certainties of getting a permanent job: *"Oh sure, it is well known that in Palermo there's no work, but to keep on saying "there are no opportunities" and still*

³⁶ T4, Youth/Suburbs-Turin, 25, male, I, 69.

day-dreaming about the so called "permanent job" seems to me a waste of time. I have personally understood being inside ARCIRagazzi [the project] that you have to create your job by yourself, inventing new professions, considering your own wishes... But to keep on complaining and then doing nothing, never takes you anywhere...".³⁷

It is interesting to notice that some young people have proved to be well aware of the possibilities the project could offer in the future as far as work is concerned. They also acknowledge the role covered by the project in providing means of both enhancing competencies and learning: *"The faculty I chose [Psychology] helps me so much on a personal level but you still need contacts with the institutional bodies that allow practical experience, also in terms of management, contacts, planning, bureaucracy. You can get it all only if you belong to an association (...) Actually, I think the experience gained right on the field will be useful in the future."³⁸*

4.3 EXPERIENCES WITH INSTITUTIONS

Regarding experience of the *school system*, strong feelings of ambivalence emerged from the interviews carried out. Our young respondents expressed firmly and explicitly what they are experiencing or have experienced in school, showing a tendency to conflate very negative aspects and positive ones. Harsh criticisms of school have been voiced, particularly in the Palermo and Turin projects: *"I only see standardised education, teachers not giving a damn about anything that goes beyond Ministry Programmes and everybody learns the same history in the same way."³⁹*

Strong criticisms can be summarised as follows: education is excessively standardised; teachers are not very motivated; customised trajectories are rarely implemented; personal resources are seldom enhanced. In some interviews, there have also emerged quite a few nostalgic memories of school. What our young participants miss particularly are its socialisation aspects. School is seen as either a place for learning or a place for socialising. Another relevant aspect emerging from their school experiences is the importance of single teachers in the accomplishment of their educational trajectories and in the activation of motivation in studying. Those adult figures within the school provided, though with some exceptions, support for the students' personal and cultural development: *"I personally have bad memories about my lower secondary school, I recall it as a narrow-minded place and once it was over I really didn't know what to do and what my vocation was. But then during three further years in*

³⁷ P1, Arciragazzi-Palermo, 21, female, I, 79.

³⁸ P18, Arciragazzi-Palermo, 23, male, I, 80.

³⁹ P20, Arciragazzi-Palermo, 25, male, I, 100.

secondary school and also thanks to my Italian teacher, I was helped in getting to know myself better and developed many interests and started to write and, indeed, I would like to be a writer."⁴⁰

As for the *collection of information in the search for a job*, various strategies have been mentioned in the interviews conducted. As regards the youth of the Palermo project, the young participants have not yet thoroughly coped with the problem of access to work. They primarily see educational trajectories or the project itself as a potential gateway to the labour market. On the contrary, in the Campagnola context, an area with high productivity, personal acquaintances seem to be more important for getting a job. Sometimes young people literally have to stroll from one of the many small enterprises to the other. Such a strategy is effective only for low-qualified jobs. All in all, harsh criticism has emerged concerning the absence and inefficiency of organisations providing information and support in the job search. The youths claim to be left on their own during this delicate phase: *"We are alone! If you are lucky enough to have some friends, fine...otherwise..."*.⁴¹ Only in some cases the interviewees have mentioned local institutions (e.g. youth information centres) but these statements sounded uncertain and revealed that this is not part of their everyday life. As for the career service activities within the schools, the assessment is nearly always negative: [Question: have you been told about orientation at school? Have you been told about the possibilities available?] *"There was this guy of XY [name of the company taking care of the career service activities at schools in Emilia Romagna], he talked for hours but at the end of the class you didn't get anything and also the headmaster thought that activity was useless. You just missed normal lessons for nothing"*.⁴² The young people in Campagnola and in Palermo are working on this aspect at the moment: they set up info-points working as a reference area for information concerning job search, cultural initiatives and youth programmes supported by the European Union. In all three settings, the youth have emphasised the *importance of the project for spreading information* - the project itself stands as a main network and source of information for the youths involved.

5. CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

5.1. METHODOLOGY

Aim of our case studies analysis has consisted primarily of an analysis and a presentation of our three participative projects. For this purpose we have tried particularly to assess the professionals' problem definitions, their concepts of participation, learning and transitions,

⁴⁰ T5, Youth/Suburbs-Turin, 24, male, I, 35.

⁴¹ C1, Campagnola-Youth Centre, 21, I, 75.

⁴² C2, Campagnola-Youth Centre, 22, I, 79.

their ascription of motivation or de-motivation and in general their opinion on the prerequisites for participatory youth policies. We interviewed therefore - by means of semi-standardized interviews - on the whole 14 professionals: project workers, responsables in the respective organisations and external experts (see list in the ANNEX 3). At the same time we analysed several internal and public reports, documents, budgets and balances, brochures etc. (see list of documents in ANNEX 3). Part of our case study analysis has been represented by the process of producing a video with the young people of the Palermo Project: in this video participants presented their way of seeing their transition pathways. For reasons of space, we'll leave the video description out of the following analysis.

5.2. CASE STUDY 1 ARCIRAGAZZI – PALERMO – SICILY

5.2.1. DESCRIPTION OF AGENCY AND PROJECT

Arciragazzi is a national association committed to the protection of minors' rights and to the spreading of a culture of participation of children and youths in the institutions and society at large. Activity in Palermo started in 1991; the first interventions were carried out thanks to Act 216/1991, on measures in favour of minors at risk of involvement in criminal activity, aimed at the reintegration of young men and women coming from detention centres or from socio-culturally highly degraded areas. In 1993 *Arciragazzi* succeeded in obtaining a small room in the municipal centre of the Borgo Nuovo district, a space renovated together with local families and children and used as a children recreation centre. Today, the young volunteers of *Arciragazzi* work there as animators of games and aggregation activities 4 days a week with children and adolescents. Between 1992 and 1998, the association activated a series of participatory planning initiatives in which children, adolescents, and families collaborated to develop and improve public buildings and spaces: cleaning up and refurbishing green areas, renovating a children recreation centre, a green area, a blind alley near the children recreation centre and a primary school courtyard in the Brancaccio district. The project "*Contro la mafia io penso a colori*" (Against Mafia I think in colour) dates back to 1995 and focuses on the enhancement of entrepreneurship. The goal is to facilitate the fulfilment of entrepreneurial trajectories based on youth's skills and wishes experimented and 'reinforced' through play. Experiences of self-entrepreneurship have led to the creation of 'animation and training factories' that, whilst independent from *Arciragazzi*, work in close cooperation with them: a group of animators from *Arciragazzi* joined the social cooperative "I Siciliani" largely devoted to theatre animation; they run a municipal recreation centre for children in Palermo, and coordinate and organise projects with other agencies of the Palermo

area; some ex-volunteers founded the social Cooperative “Punto Esclamativo” (Exclamation Mark), which runs the ‘Il cerchio magico’ (the magic circle), a temporary shelter for children up to 5 years of age, on the basis of a convention with the Province of Palermo; the cooperative ‘Argonauti’ is founded, which is destined to the promotion of consulting activities pertaining to planning, operators’ training, management and control of recreation initiatives.

Since 1998, *Arciragazzi* has been implementing various interventions aimed at the integration and fulfilment of previous activities, largely supported by the Municipality or other local agencies: recreation centre and recreation bus for children, animation activities for adolescents, handicrafts workshops, fairs, concerts, debates, information points for young people, meetings and assemblies with the youth to decide on project management guidelines, initiatives in career orientation and transition to work. With reference to financial aspects, *Arciragazzi*, being a national association, is partly funded financed through membership dues. Other financing sources for single projects are institutions such as the Ministry of Justice, the Department of Social Affairs, the Municipality of Palermo and the *Charlemagne* Foundation.

5.2.2. ANALYSIS

5.2.2.1 PARTICIPATION

The participatory methodological principles that inspired the entire activity of *Arciragazzi*, clearly outlined in the documentation provided, have made an important topic for discussion and analysis for the youth involved. In the year 2000 the Palermo branch promoted in cooperation with *Arciragazzi*-Brescia, -Salerno and -Vicenza a survey about the youth participatory issue on a national scale, in order to verify to what extent young people are able to distinguish participation from non-participation. During the preliminary research phase, young people have reflected on their status within the framework of the participation model introduced by Roger Hart, a consultant psychologist with UNICEF.⁴³ The association’s goal was to create a reality corresponding to the eighth level’s features, i.e. projects planned and run by the youth in cooperation with the adult facilitators. The former were to be both designers and target users of the activities set up, with the association’s support.

Concretely, participation is exerted through a very lively *plenary practice*: all decisions are discussed amongst young people (at times strenuously so), with or without the assistance of the facilitator, recorded and taken into account in successive phases.

⁴³ As it may be remembered, Hart’s participation assessment scale for minors’ includes the following: 1) Manipulation; 2) Decoration; 3) Tokenism; 4) Assigned but not informed; 5) Consulted and informed; 6) Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children; 7) Child-initiated and directed; 8) Child-initiated, shared decisions with adults (Hart, 1992).

Participation is also significant for *biographical self-determination*. As to interviews, young people (especially those interviewed twice) show on average greater awareness with respect to their potentials or intentions to make decisions regarding their life project, to choose between options, and to find out what really fits their needs.

Furthermore, a significant role is also attributed to participation targeted at social context and to the acquisition of *active citizenship* tools. This aspect of participation is especially implemented by the project Arciragazzi by means of trajectories aimed at increasing pro-social skills. Working in a social context characterised by a certain emptiness of citizen rights, the association is keenly aware of the necessity of promoting the discussion about active citizenship at the local level. Concrete examples in the work of Arciragazzi are the campaign about the UN Charta on the rights of children and the animation activities in socially degraded areas implemented by the young people of the analysed project.

5.2.2.2 MOTIVATION IN THE PROJECT / RELATION BETWEEN PARTICIPATION AND MOTIVATION

The prevailing impression is of a considerably high degree of identification of the young participants with the project's goals, the latter being also shared by the association. There follows a strongly felt "team spirit", resulting in the great relevance youths attribute to the various actions offered by projects and in the increased sense of responsibility shared by the young participants.

Motivation is what triggers participation, which in turn exerts a positive influence on motivation. A strategy to increase motivation consists, in the first place, in planning short-term concrete interventions providing the youth with positive feedback on the measures' effectiveness and on their power to impact on reality: positive feedback and satisfaction for reaching a goal have a positive fall-back effect on motivation and further involvement in the project. The major common trait shared by the various participants' experiences is the activation of a virtuous circle where the participatory and motivational aspects are so interconnected with one another that an increase in responsibility (meaning therefore more decisional power) corresponds to a consequent increase in motivation. The effects of this motivational process are also stressed by one of the financing institute's representatives who pointed out the unusual and considerable degree of awareness and responsibility reached by the young participants: "*there's a high degree of motivation. What I was most impressed by was the young participants' freedom, a strong individual freedom, thanks to which they are able to deal with authority i.e.*

*delegates or members of Parliament without fears: with a smile, they say things that even experienced politicians would find difficult to say.*⁴⁴

A local operator expresses an interesting opinion on the relation between motivation and project's characterisation with reference to transfer to the labour market: young people's motivation in their search for professional vocation cannot be part of the explicit association's *mission* as it should grow spontaneously. The career orientation issue is dealt with by the association, only when explicitly raised by the young members showing a strong professional inclination for a given activity: *"I don't believe that a young person's main reason for approaching the project is that of gaining experience for a future job. This would be a loser's strategy with the youths. We wouldn't be accepted so well from the beginning if we were perceived as vocational guidance operators."*⁴⁵

5.2.2.3 RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN YOUNG PEOPLE AND PROJECT WORKERS

Motivation seems further to be proportional to the operator's ability of empathetically listening to the young people, letting them at the same time decide on the actions launched by the association. This is also confirmed by the outcomes of the interviews conducted with operators that showed that trust in, and authority of the adult reference figure is one of the prerequisites for project success. This relation of trust may have positive effects, compensating for the feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction often experienced by young people in their dealings with the institutional subjects responsible for their social and professional integration. Under the term *trust* the youths would seem to refer to the operator's ability of empathetically listening. This attitude also involves doing away with those judgments and standardised answers to individual needs and problems that are negatively evaluated as typical of formal agencies (school, vocational guidance, job centres): *"I haven't got this kind of relation either with my father or with my mother, I can't talk about certain things with them, (...) he [the president of the association] made me see what it really means to listen to somebody, he 's able to listen to, he's got this great skill of listening and respect really everybody."*⁴⁶

Moreover, the adult's activity is inevitably subject to the attentive and critical observation of the young attendants. Thus, the selected figure should demonstrate a great availability of *time* and personal *commitment* to the project. These characteristics confer to her/his figure and the related social work carried out within project's framework a special *charisma* that young people try to acquire in their turn (*role modelling*): *"When I was younger I used to ask myself:*

⁴⁴ Official of the Italian "Charlemagne" Foundation, that financed the *Arciragazzi* workshop for two years, female, 27.

⁴⁵ Arciragazzi-Palermo, operator, facilitator and animator; currently member of the Association's Board and coordinator of the workshop activities, male, 37.

⁴⁶ P1, Arciragazzi-Palermo, 21, female, II, 83.

*why do they [operators] do all this? If it's not about money what then? Then growing up I understood how good it is to work with children as an animator. Maybe it's just something that you do for yourself".*⁴⁷

5.2.2.4 LEARNING AND TRANSITION / LEARNING AND BIOGRAPHIC PROGRESSION

The views of local operators and experts on transition trajectories clearly mirror the difficult living conditions and transition paths of many youths in Palermo: high youth unemployment rate (in Sicily about 50%), a significant percentage of school drop-outs, lack of aggregation opportunities, urban and civil degradation, particularly in the districts where the presence of Mafia is more strongly felt. According to the project goals, a first relevant learning objective in relation to transition is to be intended firstly as a recovery of the alphabet of citizenship, or, in other words, as the re-appropriation of rights and duties applicable not only within the association but also and more importantly in the civil society, in the family and at school. The majority of operators and experts seem to consider the youth as subjects in need of reliable and authoritative reference points, capable of motivating them in the process of searching for their own place in society, a task only partially performed by school: *"I'm convinced that it is important for everyone to have an opportunity to reflect, and school should aim at this goal, helping students live their life, feel a need, stimulate their expectations and then offer them a range of opportunities."*⁴⁸

Another fundamental learning need felt by young people in Palermo is connected with one of the main shortcomings of the Italian transition system, especially in the South: here local structures would be needed where young people can receive detailed information and support for their choices in the fields of transition to work and education trajectories suitable to their vocation. Arciragazzi has tried to fill this gap, involving directly young people in the collection, selection and spreading of any kind of information according to the principles of *peer education*: for this aim a central info-service and five information points has been set up in five high schools of the city– all managed by the youths themselves.

During the interviews it became clear that the project is perceived as a training field to test, sample and explore one's aspirations and vocations. It is a kind of *pathway of progressive orientation* that starts with recreation and aggregation activities and then, sustained by facilitators, progressively leads on to professional engagement, usually within, but also at times outside the association. In a town like Palermo, where young people are constantly confronted with the endemic problem of unemployment, *Arciragazzi* could play the role of a training agency for *social work*, providing informal learning and training opportunities for young operators who, over the years, progressively substitute the older ones. As for

⁴⁷ P3, Arciragazzi-Palermo, 15, female, II, 68.

disengaged young people, experience gathered in the association is also seen as an important aspect of prevention and/or social reintegration. The creation of a friendly environment where nobody is judged, where rules exist but are self-imposed, resulted in the rehabilitation of several young members.

5.2.2.5 CONCEPTS OF LEARNING / LEARNING EXPERIENCES

The majority of the participants have attributed a great relevance for their own individual development to the project experience. They explain how they have been helped in their growing up and personal enrichment processes by project participation. These are occasions for youths to make mistakes, experiment, and choose: “ *The first thing is, nobody should tell you: “do that and that” but it’s you in the first place who have to take decisions... a sort of self-experimentation. We also realise we have made some mistakes during this year-long project but it was nice, even making mistakes, growing up, it was like self-training.*”⁴⁹ The interviewees see the project as a *means of getting closer to their life goals*. Moreover, a great part of the respondents have evaluated the project also as a concrete education and training experience. In short, the youths themselves are the ones who recognise project participation as a training trajectory, though outside formal agencies such as school or university.

Learning contents cover further a wide range of behaviours that can be included in the definition of socio-relational skills, which may also include an improvement of the relation with oneself, in terms of deeper trust in one’s own potential and higher tolerance/acceptance of one’s own limits and mis-evaluations. Young people admit that an improvement in their relation with others is consequent on the “*ability of listening not only through the sense of hearing, but also through the other senses*”⁵⁰, trying to fight any judging attitude.

Within the framework of relational skills, youths attribute to exchanges and any form of cross-cultural relation a great formative and communicative relevance. All different age classes share the latter element: younger participants highlight the pleasure of discovery and the importance of socialisation with young people from other countries through the exchange activities.

Amongst the projects strengths youths mention the acquisition of practical skills in the technical-operational field, and the acquisition of abilities involving logical and sequential, and at the same time holistic, rational processes: “[The things I’ve learnt are things] *useful for my own life, things I can use to deal with different matters, to deal with the others. When I say “the others” I mean everybody, from the headmaster to the district representative. It’s from such*

⁴⁸ President of *Arciragazzi*, male, 37.

⁴⁹ P1, *Arciragazzi-Palermo*, 21, female, I, 91.

experiences that you learn things like how to pay a bill, open a bank account; the association allows you to experiment with these practical chores."⁵¹

The awareness of the crucial role played by learning transferability is also noteworthy: youths mention, e.g. *transversal competencies*, concrete and theoretical knowledge (of relations, projects, values) to be used in other contexts, including the labour market. This aspect shows that participation in this project implements a certain degree of reflexivity both on current and future experiences, which is indeed a fundamental competence of modern life pathways, often neglected by formal education trajectories. The reflexivity acquired within the project has proved also to exert some positive influence within the school context:

*"Now I definitely think things over twice. I'm a very instinctual person and I learnt to think before acting, (...) it's a fruitful piece of learning I use even at school, and when I do my homework, before I used not to study things in depth, now I do it for my personal culture."*⁵²

5.2.2.6 PEER LEARNING AND INFORMAL LEARNING

There are three main target groups for the Arciragazzi's interventions, namely youths between 14 and 26, thus subdivided: Youths of working-class extraction at risk of involvement, or already involved, in criminal activities (10%); Youths of working-class extraction coming from the problematic districts (45%); Youths of lower or middle class extraction, motivated from the start or easier to motivate to take part in social actions (45%). The interaction between motivated young people and disengaged ones is part of the reintegration strategy for youths at risk of criminal behaviours. The learning experiences related to relation with peers, both in terms of motivation and participation support and facilitation in target achievement, are assessed as fundamental by young people and by youth workers. The structure of the association promotes this kind of learning. Young people are involved in all phases of the projects: it's their part to decide, to realise and to value the various activities.

Due to the nature of Arciragazzi, whose target is not directly profession-oriented, the basic learning experiences are acquired through informal modalities enhanced by contact and relational (symmetrical and a-symmetrical) dynamics triggered off within the framework of project activities. Interviews to operator and experts pointed at these modalities as one of the central aspects of the notion of informal learning. In this view, informal learning is to be intended as the learning derived from everyday life experience.

But being Arciragazzi a youth association belonging to the Third sector, learning can acquire also a *non-formal* character, i.e. can also have a *structured and intentional nature*. In this case, learning *intentions* and *contents* are subject to *planning action*: operators suggest

⁵⁰ P5, Arciragazzi-Palermo, 16, female, II, 41.

⁵¹ P1, Arciragazzi-Palermo, 21, female, II, 73.

⁵² P3, Arciragazzi-Palermo, 15, female, II, 36.

contents related to *democratic values* and *socio-relational skills* (i.e. debates on war or the Mafia ‘culture’; editing of a district magazine; action-research on participation etc.), in order to enhance group dynamics implementing learning and social awareness acquisition processes.

In the case of Palermo, youths recognise that the nature of their learning experiences corresponds to the *learning by doing* modality, i.e. progressive acquisition based on action and reflexivity linked to a specific activity and also on group-self-training moments assisted by the operator’s figure.

Also the importance of a *network* of relations favoured by the project, in terms of implementation of new occupational chances is explicitly mentioned in several interviews: “*I think I’ve got a chance to find a job through Arciragazzi because many other people from the project have now settled within the association.*”⁵³

5.3. CASE STUDY 2 PROJECT YOUTH/SUBURBS – TURIN – PIEDMONT

5.3.1. DESCRIPTION OF AGENCY AND PROJECT

The *Project Youth/Suburbs (Progetto Giovani/Periferie)* is part of the wider *Suburbs Special Project (Progetto Speciale Periferie)* whose main goal was a participated local development project for four suburban areas of Turin, particularly marked by physical and social degradation. As a consequence, the general intervention policy has been focused, on the one hand, on *urban planning interventions* (reconstruction of buildings, creation of new spaces, urban refurbishment, etc.) and, on the other, on a synergic *social support action* centred on the enhancement of involvement, participation and sharing of activities by residents. It is within the latter framework that the *Project Youth/Suburbs* has to be located. This measure is co-financed with the sum of EUR 200,000 through a Regional Act in favour of the youth; this is but a small wedge of the wider Suburbs Special Programme, which has obtained and used EUR 450,000,000 of public and private funds. The *Project Youth/Suburbs* should therefore be viewed as a methodological experiment in social support explicitly destined for young people. The Municipality of Turin was the main sponsor and coordinator of the project receiving funds from the Town Council and the Piedmont Region in compliance with Regional Act no.16/95 (actions in favour of the youth). Originally, the project was meant to be carried out between June 1999 and June 2002, though some activities have been carried out also in 2003. The Municipality proposed to the institutions committed to the *Social Support Programmes* to plan and carry out the foreseen actions through a public/private partnership. Therefore, a

⁵³ P10, Arciragazzi-Palermo, 17, male, II, 31.

planning partnership (with pre-set responsibility levels) has been founded by the following: Municipality of Turin, Piedmont Region, Big Torino 2000 (Exhibition of Emerging Artists), Association Gruppo Abele (Social work training and documentation centre) and 4 agencies responsible for the Social Support sector which have directly promoted the involvement of the districts' inhabitants. The project target group has been selected according to age and geographical distribution: youths from 16 to 30 years of age and living in four areas characterised by important urban reconstruction measures. The urban contexts addressed by the planned interventions are all affected by marginality problems.

In practice, the project envisaged a *preliminary phase* consisting in the devising of an *action research* (aiming at identifying young people's needs through the involvement of some groups in the planning and research phase) and in the dissemination of research results to local residents, including the spreading of ideas and proposals, to be carried out with the active participation of the youths, through recreation events and urban interventions.

An other segment consisted in the *documentation of the experience* (various brochures, a documentary video produced with/by the youths) and in *training initiatives* for social and technical operators.

A website was also created by a group of youths, who attended a course on *html*, to disseminate information on ongoing experiences; a district magazine ("Vista da Nord") was edited, and several participated planning activities (i.e. with the students of a higher secondary, looking after a green area near the school) were carried out, among them several district parties, sporting competitions, concerts involving young people from the district. The project should act as a pilot project aimed at collecting experiences regarding direct involvement of the youth in the planning, refurbishment and maintenance of urban spaces.

Like in Palermo, in the case of Turin, we are dealing with a highly articulated project with various initiatives located in different areas of the urban context. Summing up, there is no single view on the Turin Project, which appears to be an intervention articulated in a series of sub-segments.

5.3.2. ANALYSIS

5.3.2.1 PARTICIPATION

Protagonism and youth participation in urban development initiatives were the main project goals. Participation, according to the operators involved, turned out to be proportional to the exerted "power": the former is hard, if not impossible to accomplish, unless young people are empowered through a stable and lasting participatory strategy. Experts and operators agreed on the fact that involvement strategies imposed on youths rather than mutually agreed with

them, proved to be ineffective. In other words, if young people are not directly involved in the ‘political’ decision-making processes the action is destined to fail. “Give the youths a voice” (one of the project’s slogans) best summarises the meaning of participation: “giving a voice to somebody” also implies the presence of a receiver, somebody listening to young people, listening to their requirements, evaluating them and successively promoting strategies to reach their goals. The problem is therefore satisfying the young participants’ expectations: if you do not succeed in concretely giving shape to their ideas, “*the youths are only partly protagonists, this is one of the main risks and constraints with these kinds of projects*”.⁵⁴ According to the interviewed experts, participation should go through a number of essential stages: A first *Information Phase*, whose goal is to help young people consider and elaborate their problems and needs in a more articulated way, as well as trying to find possible solutions to them. A second *Animation/Education Phase*, facilitating the creation of relations between youths and institutions based on mutual knowledge and trust. Finally a *Planning Phase*, in which the involved youths are faced with various situations in order to gain views, ideas, opinions, assessments, and evaluation of problems.

Going beyond theoretical aspects and “good intent”, the common thread characterising the whole intervention stands out clearly: participating, within the scope of the project, means “*making the youths work concretely towards urban development and renovation*”,⁵⁵ in order to create a self-sustaining permanent system in which the role of the public administration is limited to the control activity. The implementation of a *culture of participation* turns out to be the real project’s goal. What is meant by the notion of ‘culture of participation’ is an enhancement of a generalised interest for participation in the social and public life of the suburbs: once this goal is reached, institutions are solely responsible for supervision and control. Both institutional representatives and local operators mention a much wider project that should be developed on the basis of all indications collected during the experimentation of “Youth/Suburbs”. Summing up, more than an increase in participation, some favourable conditions for its instantiation should be developed: on this platform, after having collected a number of indications and useful information, a new project could be developed: “*an open project, a project that shouldn’t be so neatly outlined, a trajectory indicator, because if you have to share this project you cannot be the only one taking decisions but you have to let the others feel like protagonists too*”.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Youth/Suburbs-Turin, Operator of the “Valdocco” Cooperative, a social animation agency of the Via Ivrea district, male, 42.

⁵⁵ Youth/Suburbs-Turin, Official of the Region Piedmont, co-financing institution, male, 24.

⁵⁶ Youth/Suburbs-Turin, Operator of the “Valdocco” Cooperative, male, 50.

With regard to *decision-making procedures* within the project, all the young people involved expressed positive views on the joint decision-making roundtable procedure: “*We made the decisions concerning the project, by means of weekly meetings. Afterwards our supervisor, who had no decisional power,*⁵⁷ *helped us with suggestions and information.*”⁵⁸

Some youths reported that financial constraints dictated by the local institution and project budget required a form of monitoring of the young people’s proposals: “*We always made so many proposals but the operators were perfectly aware of what was possible and what not, that’s how I realised that there are some small restrictions.*”⁵⁹

In the interviews conducted in Turin, as well as in Palermo, youths highlighted the importance of *participation targeted at social context and at the acquisition of active citizenship tools*, aimed at increasing their *pro-social skills*: “*I liked to work with the people from the district cause I felt part of it, having something concrete to realise I felt protagonist, somehow I especially enjoyed the activity with the children in 2001, together with T5, we were animators.*”⁶⁰ Participation in the project is implemented also by the acquisition of *knowledge of mechanisms of local democracy*, social issues at district level and resources available to young citizens: “*Being in contact with so many different people, from the educator to local authorities, I came across so many new things: about Turin, international exchanges youth projects, getting nearer to the mechanisms of Municipal Administrations. I didn’t even know there was a structure specifically devoted to young people.*”⁶¹

As to the *biographical dimension*, at a first glance it seemed that choices concerning the private sphere had been taken independently from project participation. This is particularly true for “older” young people, the ones who participated from the beginning in the action research. Their statements revealed a high degree of autonomy and strong awareness of the necessity of going on by means of compromises, at times reached with great efforts, between study, work, social commitment and the necessity of living alone and independently.

5.3.2.2 MOTIVATION IN THE PROJECT / RELATION BETWEEN PARTICIPATION AND MOTIVATION

The motivation of the youths participating in the Turin project is evaluated as high on the whole by operators and experts (especially in the course of the first project year) since “*the young people participating in this kind of activity (...) are more inclined to commitment in the social sector (parishes, scout associations, student unions, sporting clubs, etc.) than those youths not having*

⁵⁷ What this respondent means is that the cooperative worker supervising the project was constrained by the resources available and by the decisions made by the town administration, i.e. he did not have a free hand.

⁵⁸ T5, Youth/Suburbs-Turin, 24, male, II, 60.

⁵⁹ T1, Youth/Suburbs-Turin, 22, female, II, 43.

⁶⁰ T2, Youth/Suburbs-Turin, 24, female, II, 23.

⁶¹ T2, Youth/Suburbs-Turin, 24, female, II, 27.

some kind of socialising experiences outside the school".⁶² According to the project operators, youth motivations and expectations for participation are basically ascribable to the following classification: a) socialising and having fun with peers; b) desire to see one's district changed: "*gaining a different perception of the territory, even simply colouring it somehow...*";⁶³ c) distinct curiosity and interest for the activities to be undertaken; discovering new things about one's territory considering it within a wider scope; d) active contribution to the improvement of one's district; e) providing people from "outside" with a different and positive image of one's district; freeing it from the social stigma.

Motivation and participation are closely connected to each other. It comes out clearly from our interviews that the more young people are involved in practical activities, the more motivation and participation appear to grow; the latter similarly tend to decrease when this pragmatic aspect is absent. Lastly, it should be pointed out that, in order to increase motivation, the youths involved in the main operative phases (research/action, video-making, writing for the district newspaper) have been rewarded with small sums of money.

5.3.2.3 RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN YOUNG PEOPLE AND PROJECT WORKERS

Like in the Palermo Project, also from the interviews with the youths in Turin it emerges that *trust in, and authority of the adult reference figure* is one of the prerequisites for project success. The general observations made, in this regard, in the Palermo project (see 5.2.2.3) are valid also for the Turin project. However, all the youths interviewed (in particular very young subjects) declared that they had positive and trusting relations with the operators:

*"I'm on very good terms with Y [the operator], he's a very nice person and I see my dreams come true through him. He likes to do this and he doesn't do it for money (...). He taught me that you can do your job with a team spirit, deeply believing in what you do; I was a bit more selfish before."*⁶⁴
*"Y [the operator] will always be our reference point, also when he'll move somewhere else, we'll call him and ask him how we have to handle it [he laughs]."*⁶⁵

5.3.2.4 LEARNING AND TRANSITION / LEARNING AND BIOGRAPHIC PROGRESSION

It is important to note that the main target of the Turin project was to stimulate the active participation of youths coming from degraded areas in "urban development projects", rather than promoting youth transition policies. One of the main theoretical assumptions, on which most of the actions carried out have been based, is the following: those who live on the margins of society (literally living on the margins, in the suburbs) have little chance of living an active, full life. A common idea emerged during the interviews: the youths' sense of

⁶² Youth/Suburbs-Turin, Official of the Region Piedmont, co-financing institution, male, 46.

⁶³ Youth/Suburbs-Turin, Official of the Municipality of Turin, Youth Department, male, 11.

⁶⁴ T4, Youth/Suburbs-Turin, 25, male, II, 46.

⁶⁵ T8, Youth/Suburbs-Turin, 20, male, II, 65.

responsibility and participation in social life could be increased only through a trajectory leading to their *re-appropriation of the territory* for instance through self-organised activities in the own district: “*The main problem in the suburbs is the lack of identity, (...) everything is impersonal and people are not respected. Moreover, globalisation entails an ever increasing feeling of not belonging anywhere...it is important to re-enact a sense of belonging.*”⁶⁶

In sum, the practice of *involving young people in tangible activities*, “things to do” (common space planning, party organisation, video-making, bench painting and so forth) is seen as a way of increasing their self-esteem, their need for being on the front line, and it activates the transversal processes necessary for a better accomplishment of one’s own transition trajectories. The notions of “*active protagonism*” and “*responsible participation*”, the core ideas of the project, involve a further fundamental element: the attitude of youths towards public policies (it may be remembered that the project is sponsored by public institutions). Indeed, it has been noted that the more young people are passively “subject” to institutional ready-made decisions, the less likely they are of developing self-confidence and self-assertiveness. Worse, this lack of confidence also affects other fields, such as employment and social services. Therefore a big part of the efforts of the project leader of the Municipality was devoted to *bring youths closer to local authorities*. Furthermore, in the majority of the interviews carried out, the importance of facilitating young people’s transformation from mere consumers (of goods, services and policies) into active subjects/producers “*who begin to produce their own goods, services, ideas*”⁶⁷ clearly stands out.

5.3.2.5 CONCEPTS OF LEARNING / LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Due to their common character as innovative youth-work-projects, our three case-study-agencies share a very similar approach to the conceptualisation and operationalisation of learning (see 5.2.2.5 and 5.2.2.6). Therefore we have found also in Turin the dimensions of learning we highlighted in the previous chapters about Palermo (learning as a means of individual development, as concrete education and training experience, as acquisition of socio-relational skills and of inter- and multi-cultural competencies, as acquisition of practical skills in the technical-operational field, as achievement of transversal competencies, of concrete and theoretical knowledge to be used in other contexts, including the labour market).

Side by side with these common characteristics of learning we have uncovered, in the Turin project, a particular ‘added-value’ attached to learning about ‘social space’, intended as a

⁶⁶ Youth/Suburbs-Turin, Cultural animator of the Municipality, contact person for the project, male, 90.

⁶⁷ Youth/Suburbs-Turin, Official of the Region Piedmont, co-financing institution, male, 43.

physical and symbolic place: taking care of some parts of the town, re-appropriating them, taking on individually the responsibility of a service to the community, are all crucial steps towards an individual's growth and fulfilment of autonomy. In this sense learning is expressed also in a clearer vision and a feeling of greater proximity to the institutional mechanisms and structures that are charged with the governing and regulation of local social space: *"I enjoyed working in a team with the others, (...) surveying the social fluxes produced in the district, looking for solutions and causes."*⁶⁸

To be considered is also the importance of a *network of relations* favoured by projects in terms of implementation of new occupational opportunities, which is explicitly mentioned in some interviews: *"It was important in terms of formation trajectories, I would like to work with the social theatre, thus the experience in the social sector seemed a good start to me. Also working for the local magazine is good for getting to know people (...) I have recently written an article on the Gypsies. I considered everything as a training pathway."*⁶⁹

The Turin project also provided for a web-design course. This course was structured as a *teacher-learning situation*, though the *setting* was still relaxed and informal: *"It was a school-like situation, there were theory classes, then in the remaining two hours-two hours and a half we did some exercises, and it was nice to see our teachers going around desks to help us and answer any kind of questions really. There was no teacher- student distance and that felt really good."*⁷⁰

5.3.2.6 PEER LEARNING AND INFORMAL LEARNING

Also in Turin the learning experiences related to *relation with peers*, both in terms of motivation/participation support and facilitation in learning achievement, are assessed as fundamental. Project operators and experts are in general well aware of the importance of supporting learning exchange patterns between youths and their peers and youths and children. They recognise the importance of promoting spaces and moments of *inter- and intra-generational learning*, according to the *peer-education* perspective: youths with more resources and experiences have the role of mediators and facilitators for less involved ones and/or those owning less resources.

As we have already indicated the role of informal and non formalised learning, given that the Turin project is run by Third Sector cooperatives at the behest of the Municipality and the Regional government, has been fundamental in the development of the project. The problem of *recognition for such learning* is a question yet to be dealt with as, despite a level of rhetoric on the subject, little has been done, in this country, to ensure that learning that takes place in

⁶⁸ T5, Youth/Suburbs-Turin, 24, male, II, 37.

⁶⁹ T5, Youth/Suburbs-Turin, 24, male, I, 39.

⁷⁰ T6, Youth/Suburbs-Turin, 28, male, II, 31.

structures and projects without formal institutions can become part of a recognised portfolio of skills accepted in a structured way, in the private or public sectors.

With regard to the question of whether the project has facilitated the acquisition only of ‘soft skills’ rather than giving the youth involved ‘hard resources’ there is, as is the case with Palermo, no easy answer. It is clear that the Turin project was based on a wager. That is to say that getting youth involved in a participative process of urban regeneration, should guarantee not only a better outcome for the project itself, in terms of revitalisation of the social structures of the district concerned, but also would have a positive fallout on the transitions of the youths themselves. In our view the wager has, in part, been won. Even the *disengaged* youths that we could interview in the second round of interviews showed a strong motivation for pro-social action and involvement in activities of social utility in the district, indicating a form of interiorization of the project objectives. The difficulty now is to understand how well disposed the labour market and present-day society in general are to bestow appropriate value and recognition on such learning.

5.4. CASE STUDY 3 – YOUTH CENTRE – CAMPAGNOLA (EMILIA-ROMAGNA)

5.4.1. DESCRIPTION OF AGENCY AND PROJECT

The present Youth Centre is located in Campagnola, a small Municipality of about 5,000 souls, in the Province of Reggio Emilia. The local Municipality launched the initiative in 1992 and since its early days the project has been characterised by close cooperation among the young participants, the project operator and the Town Council financing the project.

Campagnola is located in a rural context where social control is rather tight (i.e. everybody knows everybody else). The unemployment rate is very low thanks to the high number of small and medium enterprises demanding manpower. Moreover, the Province of Reggio Emilia is well-known for investing in the education and social sectors, as testified by the considerable presence of Third Sector and volunteering organisations on its territory.

The idea of the project was launched by a young civil servant who began to gather the youths in the village. At the beginning, most of the activities were centred on music: *a music room* was provided and various *youth music bands* were formed. In the following years, the initiatives involving the youth covered other sectors as well: the young participants organised some *European youth exchanges* and other activities on and for the territory. From the outset, the management of the youth centre and the related resources (i.e. a *phono-library*) has always been the responsibility of the involved youths. At the present stage, the following activities are taking place in the Youth Centre: management of a music room open daily;

management of a public local youth information point; organisation of cultural exchanges (within the scope of the European “Youth” Programme); organisation of concerts and a summer jazz festival; organisation of excursions; participation in social and humanitarian projects (i.e. distant adoption). A young representative coordinates every single activity.

A remarkable legal change has occurred at the beginning of 2002. Young people belonging to the Youth Project founded an *association* of their own (“pRosa”) and agreed on a convention with the local Administration, in so doing taking on the highest degree of responsibility. In practical terms, the Municipality supports the association with annual funding (managed by the youths themselves) conditional on the accomplishment of specific goals. Currently, new funds have been asked for the accomplishment of a further initiative: the foundation of a “Music School” where youths with some music competence (often former participants to the Project) can teach newcomers.

5.4.2. ANALYSIS

5.4.2.1 PARTICIPATION

From the perspective of the operators and experts, young people are considered as responsible for the entire process of accomplishment of activities. This process starts with the decisional stage: youths are asked to express their ideas and to make decisions. Once the decision has been made, participation implies also commitment and good will to do things actively and concretely: “*Real participation means showing your enthusiasm, your creativity, your willingness to act*”.⁷¹ Taking on a task means also, according to the interviewees, holding it and carrying it out: “*Real participation is when you express your opinion, you are fully part of it. Active participation is when you say something, suggest something, you take on your own responsibility and accomplish your task*”.⁷² This idea expressed by operators and experts reflects the Youth Project’s approach. What is at stake is a concrete and direct participation carried out in a specific context strongly tied to the territory. The youth from Campagnola have a place where various activities can be carried out. So, if they do not commit themselves to the project, no activity is carried out. They are in charge of thoroughly managing two public services (the music room and the Info-point) – “*youths providing services to youths*”. The legal form given to the association in 2002 should make it easier for young members to get new spaces and to have more influence on the territory’s decisional and participatory aspects.

As to the perspective of the young interviewees, the concept of participation seems to be considered in terms of collective *decision-making modality*, implemented in the past as well

⁷¹ Youth Centre-Campagnola, Vice-president of the Association “pRosa” and father of one of the participants, male, 47.

as in the present. Plenary meetings are held to decide on the activities to undertake as well as related managing and organisational aspects. Also in Campagnola, even if less than in Palermo and Turin, certain relevance is attributed to participation intended as *attention paid to social context and commitment to pro-social activities*, even though recently the centre seemed to be more focused on recreational and information activities: [Question: can you recall some moments important for you?] *“When we organised the manifestation with the bonsai sale to raise funds for AIDS research, but you can’t do such things alone if there is no one teaching you how to do it.”*⁷³ Due to Campagnola high degree of social control, young attendants tend to consider participation as implemented through *personal responsibility* as to what *organisational aspects* are concerned: custody of the centre’s keys, consumption of alcoholic drinks, attendance of the evening opening times (not to disturb the inhabitants of the area where the Youth Centre is located), as clearly expressed by the words of the current young coordinator of the Youth Centre: *“Very bad things had happened. The centre had been even closed. So first of all I took all the keys back and told them (...) the project would be open only when I’ve got time, unless somebody takes on direct responsibility to open it. Two guys were available, so I gave them the keys. Now we keep the centre open when we’ve got time, we decided together the opening days (...) Once it was a sort of anarchic place: you could smoke, drink spirits, etc. I don’t allow all this anymore.”*⁷⁴

At the beginning of 2003 a young man from the Youth Centre, has become a paid coordinator within the Youth Project, taking on responsibility tasks previously entrusted to the operator (who currently still represents a reference figure).

5.4.2.2 MOTIVATION IN THE PROJECT / RELATION BETWEEN PARTICIPATION AND MOTIVATION

The definition of motivation towards the project given by the young participants is practically unanimous. A particular relevance was attributed to the socialization aspect, i.e. to the chance of having their own place of aggregation and self-realisation, where they can feel free to express themselves: *“Because I didn’t know where to go and I find myself at ease here. There is music, people and bustle. It’s nice after all.”*⁷⁵ Other related aspects emerged in connection with the specific activities carried out within the project: first of all the music activities that represented the starting point and are still representing a kind of ‘glue’ for the youths involved.

The adults shared differentiated opinions about motivation in the project. In the opinion of the operator, there are some very active youths, but there is also a small group taking

⁷² Youth Centre-Campagnola, Municipal Councillor for Youth Policies, male, 48.

⁷³ C2, Youth Centre-Campagnola, 22, male, II, 47.

⁷⁴ C3, Youth Centre-Campagnola, 21, male, II, 90.

passively advantage of the initiatives and using the project as a mere entertainment occasion. On the whole, he speaks positively of motivation, though recognising its problematic aspects. The vice-president/parent has provided quite a critical assessment: according to him, the youths only like to laze about without building anything. The municipal councillor reports the presence of some problems, such as the cleaning up of the centre, but has also singled out the youth's desire for safeguarding the space available for them. Two basic strategies emerge from the debate on motivation development. The project operator considers the personal interests showed by single participants as the starting point for motivation: *"They give you some clues anyway on what they would like to do...(...) It would then be important to understand which direction these clues are leading to and try to stimulate them in that direction"*.⁷⁶

The second more formal strategy consists in giving youths a higher level of responsibility. The councillor's expectation is to enhance actions leading to training and education trajectories, where more mature participants may take care of younger ones.

Which could be the relation between participation and motivation in this project? We have already underlined that all three Italian agencies are not belonging to formal pathways of transition and so the participation is fully voluntary. The young people are motivated because they find in the project personal benefits for their own life careers but there are no benefits on a formal level (like credits for training programmes, direct insertion in the labour market or other advantages). Furthermore we have to consider that the project is located in a rural context where social control is rather tight and the lack of cultural stimuli for the youths is quite deep. The motivation towards participation in the project seems to be based on the will to react against the inadequacy of the opportunities on offer: *"[Question: What did you do when you didn't have this place?] I went to bars to play videogames wasting loads of money, then we moved to the playgrounds of Campagnola always outside, in the cold."*⁷⁷

At a certain point motivation and participation are no more distinguishable in the realisation of the project: if the young participants don't activate themselves, taking their responsibilities, activities are not carried out. This 'pact' is very explicit for all the parts involved and it makes the functioning of the project more transparent.

5.4.2.3 RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN YOUNG PEOPLE AND PROJECT WORKERS

The project in Campagnola is a very interesting example of the importance of personal relationships in a youth project. The young civil servant who launched the project has been the central person in the project and has played an important role as person of trust for many

⁷⁵ C1, Youth Centre-Campagnola, 21, male, I, 15.

⁷⁶ Youth Centre-Campagnola, Project operator, male, 70.

⁷⁷ C2, Youth Centre-Campagnola, 22, male, II, 41.

participating young people. After several years he moved away (still keeping alive contacts to the project) and new operators arrived. Many young people expressed in the interviews that they are missing him and his way to lead the project. They described the feeling of an „empty space“ which he has left. Nobody else could take the same position as the first operator had. Furthermore, we could notice an interesting phenomenon of ambivalence, representative for the characteristics of the adolescence: On one hand the youths look for wide opportunities of self-management, on the other hand they feel the need to have strong adult reference figures. Some of the interviewed youths expressed the wish to have an adult person in the project with whom they can build up a relationship of trust and empathy to discuss personal issues. Now this kind of person doesn't exist in the Youth Project of Campagnola and the self-management of the young people has increased. But not all of them are happy with this new situation.

5.4.2.4 LEARNING AND TRANSITION / LEARNING AND BIOGRAPHIC PROGRESSION

Firstly, one of the main objectives which has been declared by all interviewed adults in relation to transition, is the increasing of responsibility, i.e. the empowerment of youths to be active and creative in their social life-world. The young people got the centre as a place where they can try to organise themselves, the group life and the several activities. It is defined as a place where to experiment and feel protagonists. That means that the young people are involved in all phases: from the decision-making to the realisation and evaluation of the activities. The project objectives refer mainly to the social dimension of transition in terms of supporting the young people to acquire social abilities for managing the personal life and to find out their own life ways. That includes obviously also the professional dimension, but the project doesn't aim to give concrete support for the orientation on the labour market. More it deals to make available different tools and opportunities for the young people, as experiencing of international exchanges, providing various information about training and work etc.

Another important element of this project is the creation of a sense of community. In view of the peculiarity of the rural context where the project is located, the young people are strongly confronted with the community. The Youth Centre aims to create a positive contribution, which is self-determined by the youths, to the community life; for instance organisation of music festivals, activities to clean up the village etc.

5.4.2.5 CONCEPTS OF LEARNING / LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Above all the project and its activities are seen as relevant for the own individual development. The interviewed youths underlined how the project has enriched their growing up and widen their personal experiences. They valued the participation in the project as

useful. Mostly the youths referred to the dimension of social-relational abilities. Being able to manage relations with the others has proved of fundamental importance even for personal development and individual growth: *“I learnt how to behave in a group of young people, which doesn’t necessarily mean we were all friends, far from it. Being able to be with others, to have fun, to have some good time together (...) It helped building my personality, for sure (...) if I had lived in a big town and had continued to go out with a small number of friends, the usual 4/5 friends, I would have definitely missed something. Acting, well the emotion of being on a stage, these are all things that you bring inside yourself for ever.”*⁷⁸

Often they talked about the process through which they learned to practice participation in sense of basic democracy and common decision-making. Learning contents refer to social behaviours in a group, involving skills like accepting foibles of each other, listening to each other, tolerating the differences. When we asked the youths for the most significant learning situations, they described particularly the situations where they could be protagonists (for instance: organising an event). That means when they realised something that gave them satisfaction and increased their self-esteem. Furthermore the young people attributed a high relevance to intercultural exchanges. In this case the acquisition of relational competencies includes also the intercultural dimension, the skills become more differentiated and learning situations more complex.

5.4.2.6 PEER LEARNING AND INFORMAL LEARNING

Since the young people in the Youth Centre have to manage the activities by themselves, peer-education is one of the fundamental principle of the project. The relevance of peer learning and teaching emerged in the interviews, when the youths attributed a high value to the group life as learning field. As we described in the previous chapter, the young people referred mainly to socio-relational skills and learning experiences. They talked about situations where they had to discuss and to find solutions and agreements, where they had to collaborate, or where they had simply to handle to live with each other. Many of them were aware of (and expressed it explicitly) the importance of these experiences and competencies for the personal development also for other environments, outside the project.

The interviewed expert of the local Administration underlined the interest of the authorities to promote the peer education, especially between the different ages. One important step to reach this goal is the foundation of the association by the young people of the centre. Since that moment they have got much more responsibility also on a formal level because the local Administration gave them the responsibility of the centre and its several services.

⁷⁸ C4, Youth Centre-Campagnola, 19, female, II, 55 and 59.

Due the character of the project, the basic learning happens through informal modalities within the framework of the self-management of the centre and the activities. The contents of the learning experiences derive from everyday life. This is one central point regarding the learning processes. In the interviews with the youths we found a certain awareness about informal learning modalities and often they appreciated first of all the learning in the project for its informal character, contrary to learning at school which has been seen quite critically. The problem about recognition of informal learning is - like in Palermo and Turin - a still open question, depending on the general backwardness of the acknowledgment of informal pathways in our country.

6. SUCCESS

6.1. CONCEPT OF SUCCESS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE THEMSELVES

As already mentioned, the projects selected for our research study are not thoroughly representative of standardised trajectories, they should rather be viewed as creative non-formal workshops lacking a curriculum proper. In the cases of Turin and Palermo, we are dealing with more articulated projects with various initiatives located in different areas of the urban context. Therefore the young respondents already inserted in different project sectors recall varied experiences and perceptions. Particularly manifest in the case of **Turin** is the *different meaning of the project depending on each individual's approach*. Some of the young participants took advantage of the opportunity offered by a course for web designers, which they saw as a new job opportunity. Others organised instead some sporting activities for young people from the district and consequently felt more actively involved in the realisation of the project itself. Some other youths first approached the project through a participated action research for which they have also been paid. Summing up, there is no single view on the Turin Project, which appears to be an intervention articulated in a series of sub-segments. The **Palermo** initiative is also rather complex. Within this context the prevailing impression is of a *considerably high degree of identification* of the young participants with the project's goals, the latter being also shared by the association. There follows a strongly felt "team spirit", resulting in the great relevance youths attribute to the various actions offered by projects and in the increased sense of responsibility shared by the young participants. The youths from **Campagnola** are unanimous in their evaluation of the project. In particular, the possibility given to young people of having a place where to get and be together has been assessed as especially positive. The activities conducted have been mentioned only in the second place.

It may be useful at this point to summarise the typical situations related to project experiences indicated as relevant by the youths themselves. Notwithstanding the differences between the three projects, some common traits regarding youths' experiences can be traced. The most frequently mentioned episodes are the ones in which the youths are the real protagonists, from which they derived a positive emotional involvement: the first concert, a district sporting competition, animation activities with children – the list is rather long but the common thread is clear. It is quite a difficult task to precisely identify the ways in which projects seem to have favoured *biographical turning points* and young people's personal development. The only mainstream tendency emerging from the interviews is that, generally, the *experiences lived within the projects have been positively judged*. This applies to all three case studies. The experiences gathered thanks to the projects are valued as favourable because young people themselves consider their involvement in the proposed activities as *fundamental to their growth*: “*The earning is for your own self, your personality. People are here only to help others and to me that’s the best way to be paid back: to nourish your soul and feelings.*”⁷⁹

These are occasions for youths to make mistakes, experiment, and choose. The interviewees see the project as a means of getting closer to their *life goals*: “*I learnt so much, especially working with children and that’s what I want to do in the future, continue working with them.*”⁸⁰

“*I also learnt to act selectively, to understand what I’m really interested in.*”⁸¹

The activities and the related comparison, the exchange with peers and other project reference figures become meaningful: “*I also liked to be together with other youths from my district, we found out that many of us live in the same area and we haven’t met before, and now thanks to this course we have more contacts.*”⁸² In short, the youths themselves are the ones who *recognise project participation as a training trajectory*, though outside formal agencies such as school or university.

6.2. CONCEPT OF SUCCESS FOR PROJECT WORKERS AND FUNDERS

As we have highlighted repeatedly, in the case of the three Italian agencies selected for case studies, we are dealing with Third Sector agencies that are not directly linked to set curricula aimed, for example, at professional insertion. It is evident therefore that the success criteria identified by operators remain at a relatively general/ level, with no precise qualitative indicators specified.

⁷⁹ P6, Arciragazzi-Palermo, 16, female, II, 19.

⁸⁰ P12, Arciragazzi-Palermo, 19, male, II, 26.

⁸¹ P1, Arciragazzi-Palermo, 21, female, II, 29.

⁸² T3, Youth/Suburbs-Turin, 25, female, II, 17.

As regards the Palermo Project of **Arciragazzi**, no relevant discrepancies have been found between the perception of success of an intervention expressed by local operators and external experts respectively. Amongst the success criteria fundamental for the fulfilment of the project, the achievement of both material and psychological *autonomy from the families-of-origin* (typically achieved late in Italy) seems to be of major importance. Autonomy is also understood to imply the ability (to be acquired) to choose and undertake an education trajectory, a career or simply a *life project suitable to one's wishes*: “*I don't really care whether a guy stays in the association or in the project, or leaves, I'm more interested in his acquiring motivation, method, the ability to re-plan his life: we have young people who stay with us for 6-7 months and then go away, (...) and I'm very happy with it because I say to myself: here's a guy planning his life and it's his choice.*”⁸³

Another signal of success is the ability of transforming the experience gathered within the project in *self-awareness*, and in *civil and political participation*: “*The experience of self-expression, of being listened to, of carrying on and out ideas and projects, can maybe lead the participating youth to move beyond the association experience and put these newly acquired attitudes into practice in the wider social context in which they live.*”⁸⁴

It should not be forgotten that, particularly in the Italian context, where on average they leave their families in their thirties, young people also represent a sort of *community glue* (Lorenzo 1996), a means of involving families as well. Experience suggests that children and *young people* act as real *catalysts in the involvement of other age groups*: “*There are families at risk of criminal behaviour who, thanks to the action of Arciragazzi are partly rescued. In other words, “the district” whose young people are targeted by the project is not intended in strictly physical and environmental terms, but takes into account family groups as well.*”⁸⁵

As regards the **Project Youth/Suburbs in Turin**, the agencies and experts involved in the project have singled out a primary success criterion in the *degree of protagonism and active participation* - however difficult to measure - reached by the young participants and facilitated through group or individual *empowerment processes*. Another recurrent issue throughout the interviews is that of *self-awareness and autonomy*, “*that is to say the ability to see oneself as a bearer of tangible skills and therefore put oneself on the line*”.⁸⁶ Another criterion adopted is the *ability of enlarging the group of the young participants* and creating some valid aggregation activities to attract heterogeneous young people coming *from different*

⁸³ President of *Arciragazzi*, male, 33.

⁸⁴ *Arciragazzi-Palermo*, Psychologist, Vice-president of the Social Cooperative “Argonauti”, providing technical and scientific support for the association's initiatives, female, 26.

⁸⁵ Official of the Italian “*Charlemagne*” Foundation, that financed the *Arciragazzi* workshop for two years, female, 27.

⁸⁶ *Youth/Suburbs-Turin*, Official of the Region Piedmont, co-financing institution, male, 90.

backgrounds (parishes, sporting clubs, student unions, etc.) and transversal initiatives aimed at involving youths from the various urban areas. One of the project's goals is to provide the youth with key-competencies enabling them to "act" in different contexts, taking advantage of the experiences and teaching strategies provided by educators/animators: "*We operators provide the tools and create the context and then the youth develop the appropriate skills and learn to stand on their feet...*"⁸⁷ By means of construction or reconstruction of a sense of belonging to the district and to the town, the youth are stimulated towards participation and assuming responsibility and in this process a crucial role is played by the urban restoration works, which allow youths to identify themselves with their district territories.

Three are the main success indicators according to what has emerged during the interviews carried out with operators and experts belonging to the **Campagnola Project (Youth Centre)**: informality, participation and responsibility. The project started informally and *informality* still characterises it. Only in recent times, with the foundation of the association and the convention with the Municipality, the project has been formally structured. The local councillor regards the latest aspect as positive. Moreover, it should be pointed out that the need for *managing one's own space without the interference of adults* had already emerged from the young participants' interviews. In the project, the informal approach is connected to the concept of participation, representing a solid and crucial element pertaining to the multiple organisational aspects of the activities carried out: "*To me the peculiarity of the project (...) is that of being thoroughly built by young people. Every small space that you see around has been built, furnished and organised by young people and this makes it rather special in comparison with the other youth projects.*"⁸⁸

This form of participation includes also *responsibility*. The parent/vice-president sees the latter feature as the distinguishing element in comparison to other youth centres. Responsibility emerges in the Councillor evaluation as an important element in the participatory process. It is precisely responsibility that he sees as a future target, for which he asks for further investments: "*Responsibility is among the goals of primary importance to me and I insist very much on giving more responsibility to youths so that they grow up inside the centre learning how to manage a project; in other words taking on responsibilities from the most banal ones like the cleaning up of the common spaces to the entire management of a specific activity...*"⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Youth/Suburbs-Turin, Operator of the "Valdocco" Cooperative, male, 27.

⁸⁸ Youth Centre-Campagnola, Project operator, male, 40.

⁸⁹ Youth Centre-Campagnola, Municipal Councillor for Youth Policies, male, 16.

6.3. CRITIQUE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

As to the critical aspects and weaknesses of the projects as seen by the young participants, we have to notice that the opinions collected are extremely varied being linked to the specificities of each single project.

The criticism of the youths of **Arciragazzi – Palermo** are decidedly focused on vulnerabilities in the managing sector: a) *difficulties in promoting, spreading and giving visibility to the activities* carried out by their association within different intervention and context action areas; b) *difficulty in transferring experience to new volunteers* and young operators and absence of efficient mechanisms for knowledge transmission within the group; this would involve the necessity to introduce “entrepreneurial” management mechanisms in order to standardise organisational aspects and avoid improvising but safeguarding the principles of social commitment and “on-territory” action; c) *heavy investment of time and resources*, leading to the objective difficulty for some participants to “withdraw” from an engagement requiring a high level of personal involvement, i.e. problems of *excessive involvement* of the youths more highly involved.

On the whole, the youth of Arciragazzi have no argument with the participatory character of the project but turn their criticisms on the organisational factors that impeded greater effectiveness of their activities. They show therefore a high level of involvement with the association’s activities and its social and cultural *mission*, accompanied by an awareness of the risk of excessive personal involvement that can lead to over identification with the project and therefore to being, in a sense, overwhelmed by it.

With regard to the young people of the **Project Youth/Suburbs in Turin**, the criticisms can be synthesized as follows: a) the *promise of obtaining a place* in the district where the youths could meet and self-organise some activities was *only partially kept at the end of the pilot Project* (building is not central to the area; the management has been assigned to a coordination board formed by some *Municipal* subjects together with youth groups and private social agents external to the district); b) *inefficacy of the social roundtables* to concretely influence decisions to be taken in the framework of social restructuring action for the district as well as the major contractual power held by other structures (local shopkeeper associations, Church); c) *episodic involvement of the youths and in the insufficient economic contribution* young people are rewarded with.

In this case the youth’s criticisms focus on the actual participatory nature of the project. Its format as a ‘pilot project’- with implications of limited time and budget and with youth involvement being just *one* aspect of a more comprehensive project of urban requalification – would seem to have resulted in less than complete fulfilment of the original project premise.

Regarding the **Youth Centre of Campagnola** the young people involved highlighted following critical points: a) *loss of the informal character of the project* after the foundation of a formal association and the agreement on a convention with the local Administration (more structured way of handling activities, more precise division of responsibilities and closer control over equipment and facilities seem to have resulted in some of the young participants detaching themselves); b) *less participative attitude of the newcomers* (younger attendants taking advantage of the Youth Centre services as mere users); c) *relation problems with the new operator* (not everybody in the group succeeded in setting up a relation as deep as the one they had with the previous operator, designer of the original project).

With regard to point a) it is clear there is a need to find a balance between maintaining continuity while at the same time recognising the youths' need to be able to benefit from autonomous space that is not excessively bound by bureaucracy and management concerns. Point c) is common to the smaller projects, which mostly centre on a single reference figure. These project typologies are strongly characterised by the emotional and relational component, that can be either positive or negative. It would appear that the presence of more operators could guarantee better emotional 'bonding' for the group.

6.4. CRITIQUE OF PROJECT WORKERS AND FUNDERS

On the whole the criticisms of the operators and funders of the three case study agencies highlight the following:

Arciragazzi - Palermo

- a) The specific *Sicilian socio-cultural reality* was held responsible for a general distrust of people in any possibilities of positive change: a direct legacy is the widely-felt *difficulty in aggregating youths*;
- b) *Participatory processes* may be seen as both valuable and *problematic* for the association: "*there are so many people wishing to have a say in every decision. This is a risky mechanism: too much democracy may mean management difficulties*";⁹⁰
- c) *Different levels of involvement* amongst the various groups of young participants: this may cause tensions – which however are always addressed and discussed. The most highly motivated group boasts very high levels of involvement, which in turn can be experienced negatively by those who, though willing to take part, do not wish to be as strongly committed with the project. In this respect, it is interesting to note the suggestion made by a project

⁹⁰ Arciragazzi-Palermo, Vice-president of the Social Cooperative "Argonauti", providing technical and scientific support for the association's initiatives, female, 17.

worker who proposes to differentiate the various involvement interventions according to different levels of participation, so as to allow everybody to participate in different ways;

d) The representative of the financing institute expressed no criticisms whatsoever of the project, but positive enthusiasm for the commitment showed by the young participants in documenting progresses and expenses: “*By providing accurate and extensive documentation, these young people have succeeded in raising the foundation’s interest for their work. Such an attentive, enthusiastic as well as objective accounting report has proved decisive for the financing institution’s decision to keep supporting the project.*”⁹¹

Youth/Suburbs – Turin

a) The project seems to be *too centred on governing and coordinating*. The greatest effort was devoted to improving cooperation between the project and institutions. Cooperation with the Region, the Municipality, different departments of the local Administration and social cooperatives has been a primary focus of attention, thus leaving somewhat less space for the actual effort of supporting youths in their transition processes. We had the impression that the organised transformation (coordination activity between different sectors; agreed planning activity between different administrative offices, training and vocational courses for staff, etc.) has somewhat obscured the real involvement of youths in participated activities that could help them to improve the quality of their ‘being on transition’;

b) A common problem raised by all interviewees is the *difficulty* encountered *in contacting young people and in involving them* in project initiatives, especially if launched by institutional subjects.

Youth Centre – Campagnola

a) *Negative impact the youth centre had on the local population*. The centre is thus perceived as a place where youths are under no control and can trespass. The project operator, the youths and the Municipality take great care to prove them wrong, and to try and establish relations with locals as well as with other territorial associations;

b) The *transformation of the youth group into an association* and the convention with the Local Council with regards to services offered by Informagiovani and for the management of the music room is considered by the project operator as a critical point that could somehow hinder the successful accomplishments of activities informally dealt with so far. The Municipality is currently placing more *control and higher demands on the association*. In

⁹¹ Official of the Italian “Charlemagne” Foundation, that financed the *Arciragazzi* workshop for two years, female, 14.

addition, future funding will be conditional on the achievement of some standards of quality and quantity.

c) *Lack of economic resources* necessary to establish a solid structure to support the young members' totally voluntary work. The local council can only grant the operator's salary whereas more investments would guarantee continuity in and quality of the intervention. He calls for higher investments also on a national and European level.

6.5. PERSPECTIVE OF RESEARCHERS WITH REGARD TO SUCCESS, FAILURE AND CRITIQUE

Among the risk factors that at times undermined the projects we analysed we can identify three categories of problems.

A first nucleus of *structural problems*, that is attributable to the fact that youth policies (particularly for young adults) are, on the whole, characterised by a lack of official recognition in terms of status and investment. This analysis is even more true in the case of *youth work* which, even today, is considered the Cinderella of interventions for young adults. This gap translates into this new policy area of participation for *young adults* having to constantly carve out finance in areas set aside by law for childhood to adolescence⁹² or having to constantly chase EU funding: it cannot count on targeted national level law that would assign – as happens in other countries - specific funds for this type of intervention. Thus we have a paradoxical situation in which projects such as the ones we analysed - despite being recognised formally as models of good practice - have a general difficulty finding a financial stability that allow them to set up continuous interventions, beyond the ephemeral dimension of the single project. Clearly this gives rise to a series of problems linked to the quality of training and retraining of the operators and to the continuity of funding, as well as to the possibility – for the young people involved full time in the project – of receiving some form of payment (even small sums) for their dedication that might facilitate their pathways of transition.

A second category of problem to emerge is that tied to the difficulty of uniting young people in participative pathways: this problem brings us back to the necessity of structuring Italian (but also European) youth policy to reflect the present-day characteristic of the young persons' universe, fragmented, having pluri-identities and impossible to capture easily. This

⁹² See for instance the Law 285 passed in 1997, *Provisions for the promotion of the rights and opportunities of children and adolescents*, under which the *National fund for childhood and adolescence* was founded. The mission of the Fund is that of developing interventions at national, regional and local level in order to encourage

will require, on the one hand, greater recognition of more recent forms of youth identity (aesthetic, emotional, expressive) and on the other, experimentation with new forms of democratic participation (civil networks, electronic forums, the reality of informal youth involvement outside the circuit of traditional youth associations).⁹³ The fragmentation that is a driving factor of youth culture implies the development of methodologies that allow differentiated approaches and that can reach the greatest possible number of subjects. On the agenda therefore we find it necessary to include the empowerment of this sector that, often, at both the Italian and European level, is subject to little recognition and to periodic cuts in funding.⁹⁴

Then there are a third series of problems specific to the individual projects. We will limit ourselves here to consider three principal problems that, in our opinion have emerged. The impression we got is that some youths belonging to the **Palermo Project**, highly committed and skilled, bearers of competencies and abilities above average (also thanks to seminars, vocational courses, on-territory self-training activities encouraged by the association) tend to underestimate the academic pathway as a useless trajectory totally detached from reality. The risk is real: in Italy professions in the social sector (educators, animators, etc.), after long years of improvisation and do-it-yourself, are now being rethought in terms of career profiles requiring an academic qualification. As a consequence, some of these young people, potentially able to hold innovative and co-ordinating positions in the socio-educational field, may in the future end up being excluded from specific trajectories because of lack of academic recognition. This tendency to undervalue university courses is motivated on the one hand by the poor quality (as viewed by the youth) of university formation on offer, for example, in the area of educational sciences; on the other hand it is related to the other problem evidenced: a very strong involvement and consequent risk of 'burn out' of the youths more highly involved in the project. To avoid this problem it would be useful if this type of project could differentiate the various involvement interventions according to different levels of participation, so as to allow everybody to participate in different ways and on various thresholds of engagement according to their own attitudes and desires.

The criticisms registered at the **Turin Project Youth/Suburbs** point rather to the opportunity to improve the calibration of the project, above all, with regard to the dimensions of the projects which should remain rather 'smaller'. Projects of mega-dimensions (like the *Special Project Suburbs*, of which the *Project Youth/Suburbs* is only a sub-segment) - focused on

the promotion of rights, quality of life, development, individual fulfilment and socialisation of children and adolescents.

⁹³ Cfr. L. Siurala 2000.

institutional architecture between a variety of departments of the administration and not specifically on the transitional needs of the target youth - can bring about the reduction of the young peoples' participation. Also, in the situation of a project that foresees the participation of a variety of social actors (shopkeepers, Church, etc.), the youth component risks becoming the weakest link from the point of view of the contract: and it is necessary to consider mechanisms that will guarantee decision making with equal weight to the other stakeholders. Finally the revelation of youth needs evidenced through participative techniques such as action-research, should be followed by the realization of the proposals that emerge from the research, ensuring that the solutions proposed by the local authorities correspond to the needs revealed and expressed by the young people involved in the relevant activities.

The principal criticisms that emerged from the **Campagnola Project – Youth Centre** is connected to the necessity of maintaining, as much as possible, flexible frameworks, avoiding excessive regulation and standardisation of the involvement of the young people. When young participants see an analogy between the new trend towards rationalisation and the school environment (experienced as judgmental and selective), this means that the threshold of informality that characterises a participatory project has been, in a certain sense, passed.

Despite of the limits and weak points emerged, we can state that our results tend to corroborate our initial hypothesis, that the three projects seem to have strongly positive repercussions on the motivational level and on the (re)activation of socially disadvantaged young people, safeguarding their specificity and differences (as regards orientation needs, cognitive styles, cultural identity) and at the same time enhancing their resources and chances of inclusion. Moreover, it is a matter of fact that through the several interaction activities and through the management of organisational tasks connected to the project development, young people acquire various transversal competencies, relational and procedural, essential also to professional insertion. Anyway it is evident that these projects, as youth work projects, can not guarantee per se a professional insertion and a frictionless transition: as we already stated before, this aim depends mainly both on the structure of the labour market and the integration/support measures offered by each welfare system.

It is even more difficult to understand if the maturation of the youth in the project can be considered effective biographic turning points for the youths themselves. Rather we could say, in relation to our three projects, that what has emerged is the difficulty of thinking of resolution of youth transition as occurring only through learning pathways. The situation of some of the youths, knowledgeable and aware and involved in work and study, highlights the

⁹⁴ Cfr. IARD 2001 : 142-145.

necessity of a more rational coordination of transition policies, bringing together - in an integrated way - labour policies, housing policies and measures like income support and supports for study.

Negative views of work experiences evidenced, for example, among the youth in Turin, (short-term contract work, repetitive and tiring work, lack of union protection for temporary workers, difficulties in balancing study, work and social obligations, difficulties in paying rent alone) are signals that must be taken into consideration to avoid falling into a rhetoric on the value of learning (or as it is said these days: acquisition of competencies) as a panacea that will resolve problems of transition for youth with few resources.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS ON POLITICAL AND POLICY LEVELS

As was already pointed out in our initial report on youth policies and participation in Italy,⁹⁵ attention to participation and new participatory approaches in Italy has only just begun to emerge within the debate pertaining to youth policies, encouraged by the pressure of EU and of the Council of Europe. Moreover, most youth policies are in most cases specifically intended for adolescents and a truly participatory approach to policies targeted at the 15-30 age group is still rarely adopted. Besides, to this day, Italy is the only country which lacks a national representative body for youth associations. A first general recommendation, directed to the national policy makers, should be therefore to fill this serious lack that characterises the Italian youth policy system, providing once and for all a legal framework of institutional responsibilities and resources at the national level, that could guarantee both a national youth representation body and a coordination of competencies of the various local authorities. This is, in our opinion, the first premise for reaching a qualitative change in the sector of youth policy in our country.

A second indication emerging from our analysis is that till today Italian youth policies have underestimated the potential of participatory praxis: If it's true that one of the main problems in our 'risk societies' is the constant loss of social capital [Cartocci 2000; Putnam et al. 1993], it should be recognised that giving voice to young people and enhancing their acquisition of new alphabets of citizenship are all elements which should be included in the repertoire of mainstream youth policy and not remain a mere 'optional extra' relegated to the animation and out-of-school sectors.

Nevertheless, in order that participation doesn't become a mere rhetorical exercise or - even worse - a manipulative situation in which young people apparently hold responsibility

positions but in fact are deprived of decisional rights, it should be necessary that youth policies measures can guarantee an effective power redistribution (i.e. decisional possibilities for youths about the financial management of initiatives, decisional processes entailing veto rights for the young people towards the decision of the adults) among the involved subjects, i.e. the youths, the policy makers, the funding institutions, the operators of the educational agencies which run the interventions.⁹⁶

The experiences of many operators of our selected projects prove that participatory approaches to youth policies can not be improvised, on the contrary they require reflected learning and experimentation pathways to avoid developing into failures or frustration of both operators and young people involved. Therefore these pathways should be supported by a strong reflection on meaning and essence of participation itself, by its explicit thematization within the interventions. This, in its turn, implies the necessity of enhancing both the quantity and the quality of training measures for youth workers: managing participative dynamics, guaranteeing a balance between participation and effectiveness of interventions (a very important issue for the satisfaction of the young participants), devoting attention for the emotional and affective sides of learning are all competencies which require a specific training for youth workers.

Another element shared by our projects that could ‘inspire’ Italian (and in this case European as well) mainstream youth policies is a new concept of systematic orientation activities based on careful observation, listening capacity and a relation of trust between operator and young participant. In the ‘risk societies’ – particularly for disengaged youths - orientation can not limit itself to providing episodically information on working and studying opportunities, but should rather ‘accompany’ the youths, helping them to test, sample and explore their aspirations and vocations, and acting on both the emotional and the cognitive level, in order of activating learning and changing processes both in the personal and in the relational sphere. A more ‘thorny’ issue concerns the possibility of survival for this kind of innovative projects, which – as we have seen – find it hard to find a certain financial stability. If it is true that the added value of these projects consists just in their flexibility and in their capacity of offering to the young people informal low-threshold interventions, that doesn't alter the fact that a better financial ‘securitization’ would allow them to give more continuity to their work, beyond the ephemeral dimension of the single project.

⁹⁵ See, on this subject, G. Lenzi , M. Cuconato, C. Laasch, L. Minguzzi 2001.

⁹⁶ The problem of effective power sharing in youth and social policies has been largely thematized. See, on this regard, CDEJ (European Steering Committee for Youth) 1997; A. Stevens, A.-M. Bur, & L. Young 1999; P. Lauritzen, I. Guidikova 2002; N. Nelson, and S. Wright 1995.

With regard to **transnational comparison and transfer** we can identify in our projects the following strength points which could justify a recommendation of possible transferability.

A first aspect of the Italian projects which in our opinion is worth of being kept in consideration is a model of social planning that tried to avoid the traditional linear approach based on the separation between those who plan and those who turn ideas into practice, and in general on standardisation. The adopted planning approaches (more or less effective) seems to be more similar to ‘dialogical’ planning, or ‘inter-subjective’ planning based on research and collective construction actions implemented by exchanges and negotiations among multiple social actors.⁹⁷

A second aspect which could be promising also in different national contexts consists in the particular attention devoted by the Italian projects (particularly in Palermo and Turin) to the involvement of youths in activities aiming at ‘reconquering’ the urban space in its social and symbolic dimensions. It has been ascertained that the socio-spatial dimension is of fundamental importance for adolescents and young people: “their development is also dependent on socio-spatial insertion processes that allow them to discover and configure their spatial environment in order to experiment and put themselves to the test” [our translation Böhnisch 1996:149]. The environment re-appropriation measure takes place on two separate levels: the first one regarding the street and district ‘occupation’ (outdoor leisure and recreational activities, public initiatives) and the second concerning an understanding of the town’s history, filtered by the youth’s personal experiences. The knowledge of the social environment of the district, of their town represents for the youths a further sphere of informal learning that the projects tried to enhance: “*The love for one’s town: the Mafia prevents you from considering the environment around you, and politicians do not seem interested in making you reflect on your surroundings. Making young people see the colours around them is an outstanding result. Helping them re-appropriate their history is definitely no less important, as this triggers off a sense of affection for the place where they live.*”⁹⁸

REFERENCES

- ARCIRAGAZZI, *Con i giovani del III millennio per pensare a colori* (With the youth of the third millennium, to think in colour). Typed document addressed to *Fondazione Charlemagne* in the context of the Association’s request for funds, pages not numbered, no date.

⁹⁷ See, on this regard, D’Angella and Orsenigo 1999: 62.

⁹⁸ President of *Arciragazzi*, male, 52.

- BÖHNISCH, L. 1996. *Pädagogische Soziologie. Eine Einführung*. Weinheim und München: Juventa Verlag.
- BUZZI, C., CAVALLI, A., DE LILLO, A. (a cura di) 2002. *Giovani del nuovo secolo. Quinto Rapporto IARD*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- CARTOCCI, R. 2000. *Chi ha paura dei valori? Capitale sociale e dintorni*, in “Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica”, XXX, N. 3, p. 423-474.
- CDEJ (European Steering Committee for Youth) 1997. *The Participation of Young People*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.
- CUCONATO, M., LENZI, G. 1998. *Politiche giovanili in Europa. Germania e Italia tra innovazione e continuità*, Bergamo: Junior.
- CUNTI, A. 1999. *La dispersione scolastica. Analisi e azione formativa*. Lecce: Pensa MultiMedia.
- D’ANGELLA, F., ORSENIGO A. 1999. “Tre approcci alla progettazione”, in *La progettazione sociale*, Quaderni di Animazione e Formazione. Torino: Edizioni Gruppo Abele. pp. 53-68.
- DU BOIS-REYMOND, M., PLUG, W., STAUBER B., POHL A., WALTHER A. 2002. *How to Avoid Cooling Out? Experiences of Young People in their transitions to work across Europe*, Working Paper 2. Online: <http://www.iris-egris.de/yoyo/workingpapers.phtml>
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION 2001. *Communication on Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality*, online: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/life/> .
- GASPERONI, G. 2002. “I processi formativi fra vecchie disuguaglianze e nuove trasformazioni”, in: BUZZI, C., CAVALLI, A., DE LILLO, A. (a cura di) 2002. *Giovani del nuovo secolo. Quinto Rapporto IARD*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- HART, R. 1992. *Children’s participation. From tokenism to citizenship*. UNICEF, Innocenti Essays, No. 4.
- IARD (ed.) 2001. *Study on the State of Young People and Youth Policy in Europe. Executive Summary and Comparative Reports*, Vol.1, online: http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/doc/studies/iard/summaries_en.pdf .
- ISTAT, *Annual Report 2001*. English synthesis online: <http://www.istat.it/English/RAinglese.pdf> .
- ISTAT, *Italy in Figures 2002*, online http://www.istat.it/English/Products-a/Italy2002/12_labourmarket.pdf
- ISTAT, April 2003, online: <http://www.istat.it/Banche-at/contesto/info02.html>.
- LAURITZEN, P., GUIDIKOVA, I. 2002. *European Youth Development and Policy*, in “Handbook of Applied Developmental Science”, Vol. 3, Tufts University, pp. 363-382.
- LENZI G., CUCONATO M, LAASCH C., MINGUZZI L. 2001. *Transitions to Work, Youth Policies and 'Participation' in Italy. National Report for the Project Youth Policies and Participation for Italy*, online: <http://www.iris-egris.de/yoyo/pdf/italynr.pdf> .
- LORENZO, R. 1996. *Progettiamo insieme la città. La sistemazione di due aree verdi nei quartieri di S. Eraclio e Madonna della Fiamenga attraverso la progettazione partecipata*, Foligno: Comune di Foligno.
- NELSON, N., WRIGHT, S. (eds.) 1995. *Power and Participatory Development: Theory and Practice*. London: Intermediate Technology Publications.
- PUTNAM, R.D., LEONARDI, R., NANETTI, R.Y. 1993. *Le tradizioni civiche delle regioni italiane*. Milano: Mondadori.
- QUADERNI DI ANIMAZIONE E FORMAZIONE 1999. “Giovani e periferie. Un possibile protagonismo”, Torino: Edizioni Gruppo Abele.
- QUADERNI DELL’OSSERVATORIO 2001. “La ricerca si sta facendo in quattro”. Torino.

- REI, D. 2001. *"I Progetti di accompagnamento sociale nel recupero urbano a Torino"*. Torino: Tipografia Stargrafica.
- SIURALA, L. 2000. *Changing Forms of Participation. Round Table "New Forms of Youth Participation"* - Biel (Switzerland), May 2000, online: <http://www.coe.fr/Youth/research/participation.htm> .
- SORCIONI, M. 1997. *"Responsabilità sociale - Rappresentanza politica"*, Paper presented at the National Conference *Bilancio giovani*, Turin, 28-29 November 1997.
- STEVENS, A., BUR, A.-M., YOUNG, L. 1999. *Partial, unequal and conflictual: problems in using participation for social inclusion in Europe*, in "Social Work in Europe", Vol. 6, Number 2, pp. 2-9.
- WALTHER, A., STAUBER, B. (eds.) 2002. *Misleading Trajectories. Integration Policies for Young Adults in Europe?* Opladen: Leske+Budrich.

ANNEX 1 DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Tab.1: Description of sample according to project, no. interviewees, gender, age

Project	No. persons interviewed	Gender		Age Groups		
		Male	Female	14-18	18-21	21-28
Palermo - Arciragazzi	20	14	6	10	2	8
Turin - Youth/Suburbs	9	6	3	1	2	6
Campagnola – Youth Centre	6	4	2		3	3
Totals	35	24	11	11	7	17

Tab. 2: Description of sample according to education and occupation

Project	Achieved Level of Education			
	At most primary	Secondary	Higher	Total:
PALERMO - ARCIRAGAZZI	10	10		20
Turin - Youth/Suburbs	3	5	1	9
Campagnola – Youth Centre	3	3		6
Totals	16	18	1	35

Tab. 3: Description of sample according to occupational status

Project	Occupational Status					
	Only attending School /Vocational Training /University	Studying and working	Only Temporary Job	Only Permanent Job	Unemployed	Unknown
Palermo - Arciragazzi	11	3	3	0	1	2
Turin - Youth/Suburbs	1	4	3	1	1	0
Campagnola – Youth Centre	0	2	0	3	0	0
Totals	12	9	6	4	2	2

Tab. 4: Description of sample according to the occupational status of parents

Father					Mother				
Unemployed	Unskilled	Skilled	Academic	Total	Unemployed	Unskilled	Skilled	Academic	Total
0	8	19	3	30	10	12	9	1	32

Figures on 5 fathers and 3 mothers in Turin are lacking

ANNEX 2: PATHWAYS OF TRANSITION - TABLES

Name	Gender	Age	Education	Transition Steps and Particular Background			
From User to Operator							
P1	female	21	Upper secondary Attending university: Education Sciences	Project entry at 14	Transition from user to project worker (animation with children)	Member of the Presidency Office, elected for the second time Just finished civil service in Arciragazzi	Living with family; father upholsterer, mother housewife; precarious jobs
P2	female	21	Upper secondary; Dropped out from University after one year	Project entry at 18	Responsible of secretary's office; Responsible of international exchanges;	Co-Responsible for fundraising and project leader	She's the only girl living alone
P3	female	15	Lower secondary; attending first year upper secondary	Project entry at 7 as user	Transition from user to project worker (animation)	Member of the Presidency Office from 2003	Sister of P1
P4	female	24	Upper secondary; Attending university: Education Sciences	Project entry at 23	Started in Arciragazzi with apprenticeship for the university. Voluntary work in the project	Made civil service in Arciragazzi; now Responsible for children activities at the ludoteque	
P5	female	16	Lower secondary; attending second year of upper secondary	Project entry at 14	Started as volunteer in animation with children	Member of the Presidency Office; Responsible for bank accounts and membership cards	
P6	female	16	Lower secondary; Attending second year of upper secondary school	Project entry at 15 through a friend of her's		Volunteer in the ludoteque	Hopes to study medicine and to go to Africa as volunteer
P15	male	26	Upper secondary; Attending university: Education Sciences	Started as conscientious objector at 19. Project entry after civil service	Became volunteer in animation activities	Now working as operator for animation activities and workshops on music; Coordination tasks of workshops	Because of many engagements in the association he neglected the university, but now he is willing to restart it regularly
P16	male	15	Lower secondary; Attending secondary	Started at 14 (user)	Last year was elected member of the Steering Committee	Member of the animation group	Hopes to work as lawyer

Name	Gender	Age	Education	Transition Steps and Particular Background			
			school				
C3	male	21	Upper secondary; Attending university (education sciences)	Project entry at 12 as 'user'	Took part to all the activities and events, international exchanges, helping organizing concerts (playing with a band)	From September 2002 takes part to a theater-project within the youth centre; From January 2003 working as coordinator of the Youth Project	Jobbing in a pub

Name	Gender	Age	School	Transition Steps and Particular Background			
<i>Involved but Independent</i>							
T5	male	24	Upper secondary; Attending university (theatre and cinema)	Started at 22 as volunteer in the action-research project carrying on animation events for children	Took part to international exchange in Liverpool; Still in contact with the project: now he writes for the district newspaper	He's going to start a new job in an Information Point thanks to the project network	Recently came back home after two years independent living (several works and study were no compatible)
T1	female	22	Upper secondary; Attending university (Foreign languages)	Started at 19 as 'inter-viewer' in the action-research of the project	Still in contact with the project: now she writes for the district newspaper	Since the beginning of university worked as baby-sitter or in short-time jobs in offices	She is also studying dance
T2	female	24	Upper secondary; Attending university (biomedical laboratory)	Started at 22 as 'intervie-wer' in the action-research of the project	Took part to international exchange in Liverpool; 2001 worked in the project in animation activities with children	Still in contact with the project: gives some help in organizing events	Since the beginning of university worked as baby-sitter or in pubs, pizzerias etc
T3	female	25	Upper secopndary; Attending university: Education Sciences	Projet entry at 23 as 'user' of the course for web designer	After finishing the course still collaborating as journalist at the web site of the project	Several precarious job to pay her studies	Grew up without father, lived with mother; after mother's death living with grandfather and her boyfriend
T6	male	28	Tertiary education (mathematics)	Project entry at 26 as 'user' of the course for web designer	After finishing the course still collaborating as 'designer' at the web site of the project		Living alone

Name	Gender	Age	School	Transition Steps and Particular Background			
C4	female	19	Upper secondary; Attending university (cultural sciences)	Started at 14 as 'user'	Took part to all the activities and events, international exchanges, helping organizing events (playing with a band)	In the last year reduced (but not interrupted) her presence in the project; From September 2002 takes part to a theater-project within the youth centre	Jobbing during week-end in a pub
P17	male	26	Upper secondary	Started at 21 as volunteer (co-ordination of workshops on video, theatre)	Last year left Palermo to work in Venice as freelance video maker and director	Still in contact with Arciragazzi (organizes spectacles, videos with children and adolescents)	Lives with his girl-friend He has married in April 2003
C2	male	22	Upper secondary (accountant)	Started at 13 as 'user'	Took part all the activities and events, helping organizing	In the last year reduced (but not interrupted) his presence in the project	Did civil service Now working in a factory as accountant
C5	male	18	Lower secondary; Attending the last year upper secondary	Started at 16	Took part to all the activities and events, international exchanges, helping organizing events (playing with a band)	Travelled much in Italy with his band in the week-ends	Wants to try to live abroad (in Madrid) after finishing school
P18	male	25	Upper secondary; Attending university (Psychology)	Started at 23 as volunteer at the recreation centre with children		Stopped attending because he moved to Catania to continue his studies	
P19	male	21	Upper secondary; Attending university	Started at 19 as conscientious objector	Stopped after finishing civil service		
P20	male	24	Upper secondary; Attending university (Philosophy)	Started at 23 as conscientious objector	Stopped after finishing civil service		

Name	Gender	Age	School	Transition Steps and Particular Background			
<i>The Really Weak Ones – Let's Wait and See!</i>							
C1	male	21	Lower secondary; dropped out from upper secondary; no qualifications	Started in the project at 14 as user	Took part to international exchanges;	Helping organizing events	Working in a factory Heavy work accident last year
C6	female	19	Lower secondary; dropped out from higher secondary; trainig as haidresser	Project entry at 15		Worked for a while as haidresser but had to stop because of an allergy	Now working in a factory

Name	Gender	Age	School	Transition Steps and Particular Background			
P7	male	14	Lower secondary; Attending secondary school (hotel management)	Started at 13 as 'user'	Attending once in the week the Youth Centre in Brancaccio district (playing, painting etc.)	Takes part to excursions and animation activities	Wants to finish the school and then emigrate to London; Parents separated, he's living with uncle and aunt
P8	male	16	Lower secondary; Attending secondary school (hotel management)	Started at 6 years as user	Last year took part to international exchange in Spain and several national excursions	Following a project about war in Brancaccio district	Would like to become operator in the association; Wants to become cook and emigrate
P9	male	17	Lower secondary; Attending secondary school (hotel management)	Started at 6 as user	Helps to organize activities in the Centre in Brancaccio district and to organize national exchanges	Last year took part to the national assembly of the association Arciragazzi	
P10	male	17	Lower secondary; Attending secondary school (land-surveyor)	Started at 15 as user	Attending once in the week the Youth Centre in Brancaccio district (playing, painting etc.)	Takes part to excursions and animation activities	Hopes to find a job through the association
P11	male	17	Lower secondary; Attending secondary school (electronics)	Started at 15 as user	Takes part to excursions and animation activities		
P13	male	20	Upper secondary vocational education in electronics	Started at 15 as user	Two years ago started doing animation with adolescents		Hopes to find a job in an other city through the association
P14	male	17	Lower secondary; Attending secondary school	Started at 16 as user	Takes part to leisure activities		Recently he had 'personal problems' he didn't want to reveal

Name	Gender	Age	Education	Transition Steps and Particular Background		
<i>The Really Weak Ones – The Critical Souls</i>						
P12	male	19	Upper secondary Vocational education in electro- technics	Started at 15. His brother had been in jail and put him in contact with the association	Responsible of music workshops; has a band, writes music, texts and sings; Member of the animation group; Member of the Steering Committee	Brother of this guy has a past experience of drug addiction and detention in a juvenile reformatory
T4	male	25	Lower secondary; no qualifications	Started at 22 as volunteer in the action- research	Collaborated at project carrying on sport and animation events for children	Started working as hawker at 15 Working in a factory with temporary contract; Father died early, now living with his mother
T7	male	20	Upper secondary Vocational education in electronics	Started in the project at 18 organizing football matches for the youth of the district	Just started voluntary military service	

Name	Gender	Age	Education	Transition Steps and Particular Background		
T8	<i>male</i>	20	Lower secondary; no qualifications	Started in the project at 18 organizing football matches for yp of the district	Worked in the project to restore an old school to become youth centre	Working in a factory Hopes to leave the district
T9	<i>male</i>	17	Lower secondary; no qualifications	Started in the project at 15 organizing football matches for yp of the district	Worked in the project to restore an old school to become youth centre	Unemployed

ANNEX 3

A) SAMPLE OF PROJECT WORKERS AND EXPERTS

Project 1 – Arciragazzi - Palermo (Sicily)

- President of *Arciragazzi*, the organisation supervising the entire project (male)
- President of the Social Cooperative “Argonauti” founded by former volunteers from *Arciragazzi* (female)
- Psychologist, Vice-president of the Social Cooperative “Argonauti”: she provides technical and scientific support for the association’s initiatives: surveys on youth condition, vocational guidance and training, testing and monitoring activities (female)
- Operator, facilitator and animator of *Arciragazzi*; currently a member of the Association’s Board and coordinator of the workshop activities (male)
- Former Councillor for School, Education and Equal Opportunities Policies of the Municipality of Palermo (female)
- Official of the Italian “*Charlemagne*” Foundation, that financed the *Arciragazzi* workshop for two years (female)

Project 2 – Youth/Suburbs - Turin (Piedmont)

- Operator of the “Valdocco” Cooperative, a social animation agency of the Via Ivrea district (male)
- Cultural animator of the Municipality of Turin, contact person for the project (male)
- Official responsible for the socio-cultural team of the Municipality of Turin (male)
- Official of the Municipality of Turin, Youth Department (male)
- Official of the Region Piedmont, co-financing institution together with Turin’s Municipality (male)

Project 3 – Youth Centre – Campagnola (Emilia-Romagna)

- Project Operator (male)
- Municipal Councillor for Youth Policies (male)
- Vice-president of the Association “pRosa” and father of one of the participants (male)

B) LIST OF MATERIALS AND DOCUMENTATION FOR THE CASE STUDIES ANALYSIS

Palermo – Arciragazzi: researches and surveys on the conditions of young people conducted in the past providing the basis on which interventions have been planned (aspect shared by Project 2 - Turin); internal norms voted by young people; minutes of their assemblies, where the various activities to be undertaken as well as changes to the initial project have been decided; letters addressed to local authorities, institutions and associations (schools, local shopkeepers, etc.); reports on the evaluation of single interventions (workshops, outdoor activities, children’s recreation centre, meetings with political decision-makers, etc.); budgets and balances for the years 1999-2000-2001, with all the corresponding bills and invoices; brochures on the various activities.

Turin – Youth/Suburbs: magazines, posters, brochures, seminar abstracts, newspaper articles, leaflets (Rei 2001; Quaderni dell’Osservatorio 2001; Quaderni di animazione e formazione 1999), planning notifications, resolutions and the disciplinary pilot committee report.

Campagnola – Youth Centre: Constitution Act of the Association “pRosa”; Convention between the Municipality of Campagnola and the newly formed association; Association’s Statute; Report on the activities budgeted for the year 2002.