

Participation and Informal Learning in Young People's Transitions to Work

Joint Analysis Report on Case Study Agencies
(based on draft reports of expert interviews and document analysis)

Research Project YOYO

"Youth Policy and Participation. Potentials of Participation and Informal Learning for the Transition of Young People to the Labour Market. A Comparison in Ten European Regions" funded under Key Action "Improving the Socio-economic Knowledge Base"

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Introduction

This report aims at structuring and comparing the material gathered under WP 3 consisting in document analysis and expert interviews. It primarily tries to distinguish case study agencies according to type of measure, in terms of legal form and funding, in terms of target groups and to relate this to the fundamental perspectives of the Yo-yo-project: participation, (recognition of) informal learning and labour market integration. We will try to develop a provisional typology regarding to the way in which agencies succeed in linking the three fundamental yo-yo-perspectives and to relate case study agencies with regard to the transition regimes of their countries. Finally, we will try to relate WP 3 findings to the transition experiences of young people gathered in WP 2. Of course, this is a highly tentative approach

Types of Agencies

Funding and legal form of agencies: public, private, third sector

Legal form of agencies

If we consider the typologies of agencies promoting and carrying out the projects, we can notice that the majority of them (16 out of 27) belong to the field of the so-called Third Sector. In most cases the start of the project has been decided and carried out with the more or less effective support of a public service/institution (municipality, county, central government, University, European Union, etc.). Less widespread but also present in a certain number of cases are funding sources from private sponsors, national and international foundations and NGOs. One can get the impression that these projects have a general difficulty finding a form of financial stability that allow them to set up continuous interventions, beyond the ephemeral dimension of the single project. Despite the fact that some of the analysed programmes have been acknowledged by official authorities as being examples of good practice, in several interviews with experts and operators concerns were raised as to why the programmes had not been given the formal recognition it was felt they deserved. Such recognition could have been expressed through the grant of mainstream funding, or else treating these as exemplary programmes, to be fed into some of the more mainstream or formal ones:

'I do feel that there has been no effort by policy makers to really look at how something that is very successful can be built into national policy making or into service delivery.' (British Report – *Lifting the Limits - External Expert*)

Table 1: Typology of projects according to legal form or status of agency

Legal form or status	Countries/Projects
Non-profit association /organisation/cooperative	Romania : Solaris Romania : CCSA Germany (East): Shalom Germany (West): Mobile Youth Work Germany (West): LaSilhouette United Kingdom: Youth Action/Lifting the Limits Spain: Infinite Patience Spain: Laura Vicuña Spain: Social Cooperative/Pep-Pepes Portugal: Batoto Yetu Ireland: Simon Homeless Ireland: Glen Foroige Denmark: Ecological Starters Denmark: Girls-Boys House Italy: Arciragazzi Palermo The Netherlands: Cityteam
Private Institution	Germany (East): DAA/Kompass The Netherlands: Center Parcs (private resort business) /Helicon (public institute) The Netherlands: Starters Service Almere
Public institution /service/ programme	Romania: SZINFO United Kingdom: Opportunity Youth Portugal: PROACT/Princes of Nothingness Portugal: Aldeia de Santa Isabel Ireland: Youghal Youthreach Denmark: Open Youth Education Italy: Youth and Suburbs Turin Italy: Youth Center Campagnola

Although the projects share their financial fragility and insecurity and their dependency from policy developments there are some important differences: while to the activities of public institutions it can happen that they are simply closed as soon as policy priorities change, private and thirds sector organisations have still the possibility (and necessity) to look for other funding. This may imply to go through difficult periods and/or to change profile and it implies that (at least from time to time) survival becomes the top priority – undermining the potential to follow the primary objectives with regard to young people. Another important difference is that third sector organisations on average enjoy a higher credibility – from young people but also from professionals in the field. In some countries this credibility partly derives from the mere fact of being third sector or NGO like in Romania where public institutions still are associated with socialist era or in Italy where the public sphere per se faces a high level of distrust with regard to its efficiency and moral integrity.

Sources of funding

It may be also important to distinguish where the funding of case study agency comes from. This regards the specificity of programmes: for example, regular funding programmes compared to

particular programmes which however – given the broad range of programmes from which the projects involved receive their funding. We will concentrate on the regional level instead: are they funded locally, regionally or nationally. The Yoyo project assumes that ‘hard’ transition policies more often are located at national level and therefore are regulated by stricter guidelines allowing for less flexibility while ‘soft’ policies (especially youth policy) more often are governed and funded locally; and that local projects can react more flexibly to individual needs and local contexts. In the following table we try to locate projects on a continuum between being ‘dominated’ by local or a national perspective. If it is mixed, if most relevant funding comes from regional governments, the EU, from private sponsors or foundations this will be treated as ‘intermediate’.

Country	Local	Intermediate	National
Ireland	Glen		
		Simon	
			Youthreach
Romania	SZINFO		
		Solaris CCSA/ We want to be independent	
Spain	Infinite Patience?		
		Laura Vicuna Cooperative/ Mallorca	
UK			Lifting the Limits Opportunity Youth
West Germany	Mobile Youth Work		
	La Silhouette		
East Germany		Kompass	
			Shalom
Netherlands	City Team		
		Starters Service	
			Center Parcs/ Helicon
Denmark	Boys and Girls		
		Ecological Starters	
			Open Youth Education
Portugal	Batoto Yetu		
	Princes of Nothingness		
			Aldeia de Santa Isabel
Italy	Campagnola Youth Centre		
		ArciRagazzi	
		Youth and Suburb	

In the following, we can give some examples on funding difficulties affecting the agencies at the time of the research:

(East Germany, Romania) Very difficult to ensure long-term continuity, trustful relations with the clients and high quality work, let alone adapting new concepts and strategies.

(West Germany) The model status, instead of securing them a good position among transition institutions, is the reason for a specific vulnerability as regards financial security. There is a big discrepancy between the public and professional reputation, which is high, and financial security, which is limited (especially in time). Relationship between (un)stable funding and innovation.

(Netherlands) Policy changes with regard to the privatisation of the ‘re-integration market’ in the Netherlands: municipal institutions and agencies in the areas of counselling and unemployment are losing their public status (becoming private) and have to compete with other public and private organisations for subsidies. Besides, other sources of public financing plus the periods of financing (between one and five years, depending on the source) are on a temporary basis, not a structural one. Too little funds to hire more trainers: frustration because more and more (multiple) problematic youth (mentally disabled, major behavioural problems) enter Cityteam and they need more – i.e. specific – counselling.

Wages

Within the context of single projects, the role played by various forms of subsidies and allowances destined to the participation of youths should be further and more carefully investigated.

As a matter of fact, in some projects the young participants are treated like real ‘workers’ engaged in a paid job formation trajectory: this is the case of Shalom, the East German Project: “It is the wage people receive, which in most cases makes them participate at all. Nevertheless, receiving a wage gives the participants time to ‘breathe’ and may open up resources for re-orientation and self-development.” (*East-German Report – Shalom Project*).

A similar situation characterises the British intervention *Lifting the limits*, where the young mothers involved are employed 18 hours per week on the Project for 14 months (earning approx. 9,300 Euros per annum) and receive a contribution towards childcare and travel. The Dutch *Center Parcs* has adopted a similar approach: participants are employees who get paid for their regular job.

A second typology is represented by some forms of incentivisation and small refunds granted to the youths involved (mostly adopted in the projects enhancing the methodologies of youth work). For instance, in the *Youghal Youthreach Project* in Ireland participants get a small weekly allowance based on age. In the Italian Project of *Arciragazzi* in Palermo, young people 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. Finally a third typology is to be taken into account, namely those projects in which young people are stimulated to participate by public agencies in exchange for social benefits and training scheme allowances. As a consequence, non-attendance at the programme results in economic sanctions and deductions are made from their training scheme allowance (this is the case, for instance, of the UK *Opportunity Youth*, or in the Dutch *Cityteam*, where some of the placed participants receive a kind of social or youth unemployment benefit.)

It would be advisable to take a closer look at the projects individually to observe how those extrinsic motivation dynamics, related to forms of retribution, subsidies, etc. work, and to better assess their function and extent within the context of project.

Typology of agencies according to mission, methods and strategies

As regards the methodologies and strategies applied by the single agencies we can notice a strong ‘eclecticism’ in their approaches, although some distinctive traits can be identified according to the main objectives the agencies adopted in order to fulfil their own *mission*: education, rehabilitation, prevention, employment etc.

The methodologies adopted in our projects can be seen as largely connected with the well-established tradition of *youth work*. A second category which is strongly represented in our case studies is that of projects for groups at risk and hence projects with an accentuated mission of *prevention of social exclusion*.

Projects offering *training schemes in the context of dual trajectories* and *pre-vocational schemes* are also represented. These are aimed at enhancing the acquisition of basic and transversal skills, the employability and the social insertion of the young people addressed. Some projects focus on *job-creation projects* and measures aimed at favouring *promotion of self-employment*.

For reasons of simplification these projects can be located on a continuum between the ‘soft’ sector of youth work on the one end and the ‘hard’ sector of clearly labour market related projects on the other (cf. YOYO Working Paper 1 on Youth Transitions, Youth Policies and Participation). In this perspective, the attributes ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ refer not only to the organisational aspects such as funding, recognition and standardisation of structures and procedures but also to the outcomes: soft skills such as motivation, self-confidence, communicative skills on the one end and ‘hard’ outcomes such as recognised qualifications or jobs on the other. In the final section of this report we will try

to locate the single projects in such a typology. For the moment we will limitate to the characterisation of the two extremes: youth work and labour market related projects.

Table 2: Types of agencies according to methods and strategies

	No. of cases	Countries	Orientation
Youth work (incl. youth information and cultural activities)	6	Denmark: Girls-Boys House Italy: Arciragazzi Palermo Italy: Youth Centre Campagnola Portugal: Batoto Yetu Romania: SZINFO Germany (West): Mobile Youth Work Germany (East): Kompass/DAA United Kingdom: Opportunity Youth Netherlands: Cityteam	Youth work related
Prevention of social exclusion (projects for groups at risk)	10	Denmark: Girls-Boys House Ireland: Simon Homeless Ireland: Glen Foroige Italy: Arciragazzi Palermo Netherlands: Cityteam Portugal: Batoto Yetu Portugal: PROACT/Princes of Nothingness Romania: CCSA Spain: Infinite Patience Spain: Youth Cooperative/Pep-Pepes United Kingdom: Lifting the Limits	
Community development	1	Italy: Giovani e Periferia	
School-related projects	1	Denmark: Open Youth Education	
Pre-vocational schemes	8	Germany (East): DAA/Kompass Ireland: Youghal Youthreach Ireland: Simon Homeless Romania: CCSA Spain: Laura Vicuña United Kingdom: Opportunity Youth The Netherlands: Cityteam Germany (East): DAA/Kompass	Labour market related
Training schemes; dual trajectories	6	Portugal: Aldeia de Santa Isabel Germany (West): LaSilhouette Netherlands: Center Parcs /Helicon Romania: Solaris United Kingdom: Lifting the Limits Spain: Social Cooperative/Pep-Pepes Spain: Laura Vicuña	
Job creation projects	2	Germany (East): Shalom Spain: Infinite Patience	
Promotion of self-employment	2	Denmark: Ecological Starters Netherlands: Starters Service Almere	

several projects have been listed more than once due to combination of different aspects

Of course the objectives of the Yoyo project point to the centre of this continuum, or better to the overlap of these both approaches because – as elaborated in the thematic network Misleading Trajectories – sustainable social integration requires both: subjective satisfaction (which may be

translated into intrinsic or internal motivation) and systemic success in terms of fulfilling the demands of labour markets and meeting the criteria of public institutions.

Youth work related projects

Youth work may be considered as a fluid and mobile set of practices which has a capacity "to shift its identity in response to varying conceptions of 'youth need', either self-defined or specified by others." One of the major commitments within the projects relates to *leisure time*. Actions take place in youth clubs and youth centres, through a range of activities organised by youth workers like sports, arts, drama, etc. A second area of interest is the so-called 'therapeutic' one, helping young people through *counselling, advice and information* services. The third relevant dimension of youth work may be seen in its '*educational*' character, focusing on helping young people to cope with questions connected with personal and social relationships, health, race, gender or sexuality. All of these activities are characterised by a "professional commitment to voluntary and participatory relationships between youth workers and young people" (Bradford 1997: 246). Another important factor underlined by several researchers – and pertinent to the YOYO-Research – is the recent evolution of youth work which is more and more often addressed to young people considered to be 'at risk', raising the dilemma for project workers of whether they are agents of social control or rather educators in informal settings providing a service to young people in general (Jeffs, Smith 1994).

The reasons for this orientation towards targeted rather than universal provision of services are linked to the constantly diminishing budgets and uncertainty in the public service sector: youth work is put under pressure to identify clearer outcomes and to deploy unambiguous indicators in measuring them.

One could say that the typology of youth work-related projects reflects a sort of "tension between the principle of 'universal' youth work provision, and a focused approach on young people 'at risk'" which is discernible at present. (Bradford 1997: 245)

The projects analysed differ in the extent to which they – in their limited range of possibilities – address the transitions to work of the young people with whom they work. There are those not addressing work related issues explicitly such as the *Youth Centre in Campagnola* (Italy) while other see it as an integral part of their work to support and counsel their young people in this regard, such as *Mobile Youth Work* in Stuttgart (West Germany). The project *ArciRagazzi* in Palermo in this regard is particular as it includes the possibility that young people develop their voluntary engagement in leisure related youth work into careers. However, the project neither has an official

mission nor particular funds to do so.

Labour market related projects

Under ‘labour market related’ all those projects may be subsumed that either provide young people with vocational training leading to skills that are officially recognised and/or demanded by the local labour market. In most cases they address young people who either are registered or at risk of becoming unemployed, for example due to early school leaving or labour market structures. The projects mostly depend on funding regional or national programmes the guidelines of which not always are compatible with local and individual specificities. Compared to the youth work projects these policies start from assessing the mismatch between employers demands for labour (e.g. with regard to skills and individual characteristics of the labour force) and the young people concerned. This principle perspective in most cases leads to a differentiation of target groups regarding social categories such as gender and ethnicity, the qualifications young people hold respectively their (assumed) skills deficits and at the same time according to (assumed) needs of the local labour market. This may either lead to supply-side programmes aiming at enhancing young people’s skills or adapting them to employers needs or to demand-side programmes aiming at creating employment opportunities for those who fail in entering the regular labour market. And of course there are projects that combine both aspects.

The supply-side projects include elements such as vocational orientation, pre-vocational education and training, proper training, or work experience. The majority of the projects analysed characterised as labour market related projects falls in this category, especially those characterised as pre-vocational schemes and training schemes in table 2. To a certain extent also the Danish *Open Youth Education* may be part of this as although not providing vocational training but an alternative way to attain a recognised qualification which may be the basis for a further education and training in the formal career system.

The pre-vocational schemes address young people that for one reason or the other are already labelled as problematic – either for being registered unemployed or for being part of a group at risk of marginalisation such as the homeless (*Simon project*, Republic of Ireland), the early school leavers (*Youghal Youthreach*, Republic of Ireland) young people who have grown up in public care (*CCSA*, Romania), or young people who not necessarily show risk factors but are considered to belong to the weaker competitors for employment and training in a constraint local labour market (*DAA/Kompass*, East Germany; *Laura Vicuna*, Spain). Pre-vocational education or training may include psychosocial stabilisation in case of heavy personal problems that make regular training in

fact impossible; it may include vocational orientation for those who have no idea in which direction of training and work they might develop or for those whose choices appear to be incompatible with the local labour market opportunities; it may include preparation for interviews with employers or apprenticeship enterprises or writing of CV; and it may include job placements either for orientational purposes or to gain work experience. In pre-vocational education and training there are always elements of adaptation to local labour markets combined with aspects of personal development and empowerment, yet in different combinations; this means pre-vocational schemes – apart from their policy function to reduce high numbers or rates youth unemployment – is always about socialisation to work. While in most cases trying to do this in a youth work way, funding guidelines and the pressure to produce quantitative outcome in terms of success rates of participants in jobs or training after the measure restrict the possibilities to do so – more or less.

A particular case is the project *Youth Opportunity* in Belfast (Northern Ireland, UK) which is a youth health education and counselling project delivering personal development modules for partner organisations that are concerned with pre-vocational education and training in a stricter sense.

The vocational training measures are more integrated into the formal system in terms regional or national institutions such as employment service or education and training authorities controlling the fitting of training to national standards and or to labour market demands. This restricts the space of the agencies and often implies a higher entrance threshold as recruitment of participants is influenced by the pressure to succeed in bringing them to the completion of qualifications ('creaming off'). At the same time however, participants receive qualifications which are likely to be capitalised on the labour market by raising their individual competitiveness. These projects of course are very strongly influenced by the respective national education and training system: dual apprenticeship system in Germany (*La Silhouette*, West Germany), modular (NVQ) system open for rather individualised courses (*Lifting the Limits*, UK Northern Ireland), a partly outdated school based system in the context of social and economic transformation in which NGOs take the role of training providers (*Solaris*, Romania), a plural system between school-based, company-based and course-based without clear pathways between school, training and labour market (*Laura Vicuna and Youth Cooperative*, Spain), and a traditionally apprenticeship based system which has been considerably flexibilised so that training institutions and companies can develop targeted courses (*Helicon/Center Parcs*, Netherlands).

Finally, there are projects that also – or exclusively – engage in job creation which however takes different forms. The *Shalom* project (East Germany) provides 100 % subsidised jobs in documenting local (Jewish) history. The jobs are fixed term and 'artificial' in the sense that they

have been created to provide long-term unemployed with work. The project *Infinite Patience* (Spain) is a cooperative assisting long-term unemployed people in self-organised projects which may lead into self-employment, more often however remain on the level of occasional jobs. The *Ecological Starters* is an alternative project in environmental issues with several sub-projects. It is approved by the local authorities as activation scheme so that unemployed persons engaged there for a certain amount of hours continue to receive their benefits. As well it may serve as a springboard into further work activities which however strongly depends on individual initiative. Finally, *Starters Service* (Netherlands) is an agency assisting young people in creating own enterprises. In the YOYO context one could argue that it is the most participatory and work related project. However, it has to be noted that the participants at the same time are the least disadvantaged in terms of family background and qualifications.

Typology of Agencies According to Target Groups

As regards the target groups of our projects, we have to take into account that in several cases we chose projects addressing disadvantaged young people or young people at risk of social exclusion, and hence in most projects the target group typologies overlap and mix. It is well known that social exclusion normally occurs in a multi-dimensional context, where exclusion from labour market goes hand in hand with economic, institutional, cultural, spatial exclusion and social isolation (Kronauer 1998: 51- 67). It is therefore obvious that a project addressing young unemployed people as the main target will also probably deal with groups in which young people from ethnic minorities are either over- or under-represented, or that a project explicitly addressing early school leavers must face problems connected with unemployment or with the use of illicit drugs. In general terms, however, the most widely represented typologies of target groups in our case studies are as follows:

- Young people with integration difficulties (who have left school early, have lived in orphanages, are homeless, are at risk or are using illicit drugs)
- Unemployed young people with low labour market experience
 - Young people who have become detached or have resigned from standard education, training or the social support system
 - Young women/single mothers
- Young people from ethnic minorities
- Young people in general.

Since the projects are characterised by free attendance, most of the agencies allow access also to youth 'in general', in the role of service users or of volunteers. Besides, the presence of young

people without particularly heavy social problems is considered by operators as a precious resource in the processes of *role modelling* and of *peer learning* taking place within the projects:

”the groups should be as diverse as possible ‘otherwise it will be too hard for the trainers’ and at the same time there is the hope that a good balance within the group will have a positive (peer-learning) influence on participants” (Dutch-Report - Cityteam). The interaction between ‘not particularly problematic’ young people and disengaged ones is also part of the reintegration strategy for youths at risk of criminal behaviours: *”as they relate to each other on a peer basis, they start to think: ‘I also want to study then! I want to do something as well’; then it’s not me as an adult telling them ‘you have to study’, which they may resent; they influence each other through group dynamics and positive examples: I believe this to be our main strength.”* [Italian Report – Arciragazzi Palermo].

In fact however, access can only be characterised as open in the youth work related projects that address young people in general with regard to their leisure interests and dealing with transitions to work rather ‘by the way’. In the other cases the specificity of approach directed either problems of unemployment or of multiple disadvantage guarantees a selective recruitment of those concerned by these problems which in some cases is ‘supported’ by institutional allocation – either by convincing young people that otherwise they will have no chance on the labour market or by applying pressure in the context of workfare policies like in the Netherlands, the UK or Denmark.

The measures addressing a particular group of young people can be distinguished by two main approaches: either they address disadvantages structurally or individually. Of course, this distinction is ideal typical as most ascriptions of disadvantage refer to both structural and individual aspects. The differences become more clear if the agencies’ activities are considered: do they concentrate on the individuals to adapt to labour market demands or do they also provide additional opportunity structures?

In the Yoyo sample the projects that most clearly apply a structure related approach address young women affected by additional difficulties. In the case of *Lifting the Limits* (UK Northern Ireland) it is single mothers who are acquire accredited qualifications and for the time of training profit from child care, in the case of *La Silhoutte* (West Germany) it is young women with a migration background who are provided regular training in dressmaking. To a similar extent this is also true for the Spanish projects *Laura Vicuna* and *Youth Cooperative* and the Portuguese project *Aldeida de Santa Isabel*. To a certain extent also some of the youth work project fall under this category inasmuch they address all young people from a certain deprived area or neighbourhood, such as *Giovani e Periferia* and *ArciRagazzi* (Italy), the *Glen Project* (Ireland), the *Boys and Girls House*

(Denmark) or the *Mobile Youth Work* (West Germany). Another interesting intermediate example is *Open Youth Education* (Denmark) inasmuch as it addresses the individual learning deficits of potential early school leavers – by providing them with an alternative route to the qualifications which they would have missed in case of dropping out.

The other measures addressing disadvantaged youth often struggle with the contradiction of wishing to empower ‘their’ young people but at the same time having to lead them through preparatory steps the value of which – in terms of improving their career chances – are not guaranteed. But without these measures the young people wouldn’t have a chance at all and consequently focus lies on soft skills: motivation, orientation, personal initiative, constructing a life plan (*Kompass/DAA*, East Germany; *City Team*, Netherlands; *Simon Project*, Ireland; *Opportunity Youth*, UK Northern Ireland). In pedagogical terms these projects have to be considered on high level inasmuch they succeed in motivating young people with very poor starting conditions without being able to providing them with reliable and meaningful perspectives. Especially as project workers invest in both in the relationships with the young people to build up confidence and enlarging options for their young people ‘against’ funding institutions, employers, training providers.

Networks

According to the interviews to project operators and experts, the attention paid by all agencies to the creation of a net of relations and contacts with the local resources is the common element shared by all projects. Operators and experts generally tend to consider their mission as partly achieved when a network with the world of enterprises, the social services and other associations and agencies (professional schools and associations etc.) is successively activated.

A second type of network which can be very relevant for a project is a sort of professional network among its former participants after their insertion into the labour market: the role of this network is that of providing the means for job information sharing, and again is an important counselling structure in all life issues. In the West-German project for young migrant women (*LaSilhouette*), for instance, some of the former participants engage voluntarily in the ongoing work for the project. For instance, they act as teachers supporting the trainees in several of the subjects they take at the professional school, they help out in the preparation of fashion shows, they offer advice on various issues concerning labour market insertion: ”The former trainees are necessary to us. With our own capacities alone, we would not manage all this work” (project manager).

Also in the Italian Palermo Arciragazzi Project, the creation of a net of relations among the ex-volunteers of the association turned out to be of major importance. As a matter of fact, it is often

observed that some of the young members of the association find job and training scheme opportunities within the action area of social cooperatives created by groups of former volunteers. This is the case with a group of animators from Arciragazzi that joined the social cooperative "I Sicaliani" 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 of Arciragazzi founded the social Cooperative "Punto Esclamativo" (Exclamation Mark), which runs 'Il cerchio magico' (the magic circle), a temporary shelter for children up to 3 years of age, on the basis of a convention with the Province of Palermo; a further example is that of the cooperative 'Argonauti', which is devoted to the promotion of consulting activities pertaining to planning, operators' training, management and control of recreation initiatives. An institutional network approach is especially constitutive for community projects like *Giovani e Periferia* (Italy) that primarily aim at involving young people in the social and political processes of their neighbourhood.

Apart from this institutional level, networks play also a crucial role on the level of the young people themselves: the social networks of individual young people, the peer networks to which some projects refer, or the networks emerging from the groups of participants in the project themselves. Moreover, social networks are fundamental when determining the dynamics leading to social exclusion. "exclusion resulting from social isolation severely affects one's own social network, causing the reduction of a person's contacts to only one restricted group of people or even leading to the utter isolation of the affected person." [M. La Rosa, Th. Kieselbach 1999:177]

The ability of using networks in order to successfully fulfil the transition stage emerged as a relevant factor during interviews with young trendsetters underlining a strategic use of dense, diverse and resource-rich networks, as opposed to the example of disengaged young people, whose net relations appeared rather more homogeneous and often displayed poor resources.

In this respect, projects are also seen as a fertile ground where weaving a texture of relations with friends, acquaintances and colleagues that could then provide a springboard to plunge into the challenges of future transition. While individual networks only rarely are referred to systematically, the other two types play an important role: youth work projects either recruit their participants on a community basis, this means also neighbourhood peer groups, or by mouth-to-mouth propaganda, participants bringing their friends along (especially ArciRagazzi and Youth Centre Campagnola, Italy; Girls and Boys House, Denmark; Mobile Youth Work, West Germany; Glen Foroige, Ireland; Princesses of Nothingness, Portugal, and also the Kompass/DAA with its youth work drop-in setting). The Simon project is related to the 'community' of the homeless young people – both positively as an access and negatively as the constant risk to fall back into the respective lifestyle.

The Ecological Starters are related to the alternative scene with its variety of project and lifestyle networks. At the same time the agencies create networks among their participants. In fact many young people describe the project groups as a 'family', a development that project workers – more or less – intend to facilitate peer learning and role modelling (for example *La Silhouette* and *Mobile Youth Work*, West Germany; *Open Youth Education*, Denmark; *Batoto Yetu*, Portugal; *ArciRagazzi*, Italy; *Lifting the Limits*, UK Northern Ireland). In the case of *Aldeia de Santa Isabel* (Portugal) this includes even various generations.

Time

A specific need has emerged during the interviews conducted with project operators: a greater availability of time in order to initiate and then carry out systematic rather than episodic orientation activities based on careful observation, listening capacity and a relation of trust between operator and young participant. These aims would be achievable only if rigid time constraints are lifted. As evidenced in the *East German report*, operators expressed the need for larger availability of "time and space to build up trustful relations between participants and staff"; of the same opinion are also some of the operators working for the West German Project *LaSilhouette* claiming that interventions "should be accessible for young people over a period of their lives longer than what is currently offered by standard vocational guidance, which is often concentrated in the last school year; effective support needs time". The same need is also felt by the Italian operators belonging to the *Palermo project* who put the accent on the question of time (of a longer time availability) to allow the youth to self-experiment thoroughly: "I believe experimenting is important in the transition from school to work, i.e. having time and opportunities to realise what you like, what you don't, and what you want to do in life (...) Experimenting also involves the possibility of making mistakes, and discovering your potential [Operator of Arciragazzi].

Within all three *Danish* projects the importance of being in contact and having the necessary time is underlined. None of the experts think that just giving advice or telling people where to go and what to do is qualified counselling, they all advocate a kind of counselling in which young people can discuss how to go on and are not given pre-set or standard answers.

Furthermore, the activation of participatory dynamics is a process requiring a flexible planning stage which is at odds with standardized time constraints: "Participation is a process that needs space – it needs time, and it needs long-lasting contacts. And *LaSilhouette* lasts only 3 years" (*West-German Report – LaSilhouette - Representative of funding authority*).

The personal – or: human resource – factor

The structural weakness of many of the projects as well as the relevance of close relationships with the young people participating in the measures raises the question for the specific role of the personal factor – the project workers. This is interesting on two main dimensions: the professional skills and qualifications of the staff and the personal engagement they invest regardless of (or beyond) their professional self-concept and organisational task.

The professional backgrounds of the project workers and project responsables depend on several factors: national context, field of practice (of project), type of organisation. In Ireland, the UK, Denmark, the Netherlands or Germany a majority professionals of youth work and social inclusion projects (pre-vocational measures) included holds a degree in social work, social science or psychology as these practice fields have been institutionalised for a considerable time. Of course, some projects employ also other specialised staff such as teachers (Open Youth Education) or business experts (Starters Service). In Spain, Italy, Portugal and Romania this may be the case as well but there are also other professionals engaged in the projects. This partly has to do with the origin of many organisations in the (less institutionalised) Third Sector and the laic movement of the Catholic Church. Here, often the project initiators and workers shift from voluntary engagement into a sort of paid employment drawing their professional knowledge from being part of the social context and from learning on (respectively by developing) the job.

Their professional self-understanding can be described in the words of the Irish Report:

”The respondents evidently have a thorough understanding of the life circumstances of the disengaged young people that they work with, they appear to base their practice on a comprehensive knowledge of young people and society. This knowledge seems to derive from 3 principal sources:

- 1. The respondent’s own life experience, and their ability to reflect on same.*
- 2. Professional training courses, especially in the area of social sciences.*
- 3. Practice wisdom built up through experience.” (Irish WP 3 Report, p. 36)*

Apart from a general level of advocacy shared by the project workers as an integral part of their professional self-concept, in some cases engagement goes beyond this. This additional engagement often is necessary where the staff mainly consists in one person and/or where the project initiators have invested a lot of personal energy into the creation. This accounts especially for innovative projects in contexts which are not prepared for such kinds of innovation. Additional engagement means to work unpaid overtime, to give way to very emotional reciprocal relationships – which may be even contested as unprofessional – , by trusting young people and giving them more

responsibility than ‘allowed’ by legal regulations and funding guidelines, or by engaging in conflicts with authorities not only with regard to the survival of the organisation but also on behalf of the young people. An example is the German project *La Silhouette* which combines regular apprenticeship training with a highly empowering family atmosphere, and with individual support in every life situation – which in many cases are highly problematic. With the city council as the main funder the resources of the project are and always have been very limited. This means that the particular approach depends on the personal energy of the project leader. Apart from the risk of getting overburdened this situation may create a problem in case of change of personnel because this degree of identification may be difficult to expect from someone who has not been involved in the birth and growing of the project from the beginning. Probably, in other projects there are similar situations which will come clearer when in the WP 5 reports documenting young people’s experiences in the projects, including the project atmosphere and the relationships with the project workers.

Concepts of Informal Learning

Beyond the formal system: a brief historical outline

Since the early seventies, in many Western countries a total re-shaping of the school-society relation has taken place. In order to adjust itself to the development models imposed by the advanced industrial society, the school system is being accused of sticking to the selective and discriminatory criteria of the traditional education system conceived for favouring the reproduction of élites. The primary accusation with regards to its didactic and curricular organization and the subdivision of space and time is that of generating new intellectual poverties, binding the freedom of learning to the ruling class needs. Everyone is offered the same types of learning, totally detached from the reality shared by the masses¹ and only significant to the privileged, those who recognize themselves in a cultural tradition (with its own contents, language and experience).

Over the last three decades, pedagogy has constantly tried to remove the causes of the previously analysed discontent providing the educational offer with different models of institutional democratisation. Some results have been obtained, most notably an increase in the percentage of

¹ See on this topic Althusser (1972 (1970)) and Bourdieu & Passeron (1972 (1970)).

youths accessing the formal educational trajectories. Conversely, the percentage of participants successfully ending those trajectories has not increased accordingly. At the same time, changes in the composition of the school system attendance (according to gender, geographical distribution, social and family origin) as well as in the modes of economic production of the reference social contexts have been registered.

Today, as never before, it seems clear that the learning offered by education institutions (the so-called formal learning) seems to run the risk of turning into pure knowledge ritualization, constantly re-proposing (with only minor corrections) the same cultural offer. This is informed by a tendency to standardise individual needs and interests in accord with ready-made didactic and curricular structures. In other words, the present school system has no relation to the life, the affective and the psycho-cognitive conditions of subjects going through formation pathways. As such, it hardly ever triggers motivation, with the result that it is difficult for youths to:

- confer meaning to the knowledge learnt, as the offer of knowledges and skills is not expendable in the framework of individual life experience;
- know themselves, experimenting themselves with activities that may contribute to symbolic and social imagery (e.g. targeted and non-targeted leisure experiences);
- try themselves out as carriers socially accepted and recognized of skills, abilities and competencies;
- participate, with active involvement potentially able to influence action and context;
- choose, as subjects directly involved in the trajectory offer and in the various learning processes;
- communicate in a learning environment characterized by mutual exchanges and interactions;
- create sense, newly discovering or re-discovering values useful for the orientation of personal trajectories.²

Over the last two decades, the attempts made at the modernization/flexibilization of the education system have all been targeted at the creation of a model of permanent education to be inserted in the framework of an integrated education/training system, where the various education/training agencies, institutional and non-institutional, intentionally and non-intentionally oriented, formal and

² *We believe that the condition of disengaged youths, with their difficulties of integration into a school learning context, shows quite a number of parallelisms with the case of adults going through a re-insertion into the education system. In both cases, the demand for education increases at the very moment in which needs (be they adaptive, transformative and/or reproductive) and desires for change are felt within the fundamental existential spheres (related to love, action, leisure and tragic events). "Under these circumstances, the subject will get to understand, at times unconsciously, both the outside world and his/her inside world; s/he will learn from human, interpersonal and environmental experience as*

non-formal/informal (family, school, local institutions, associations, labour market, church, market agencies) should all interact in the formation process of the present education system.

The described issue originates from an assumption of learning continuity related to various places and opportunities of socialization and individual and collective alphabetisation. The theoretical assumption of learning continuity is still scarcely outlined within the context of the education system institutional planning, as shown by a lack of communication among agencies, difficulties to agree on the recognition of certifications, misinterpretation of the principle of subsidiarity, insufficient funding). For this reason, it is at risk of becoming inadequate before reaching a fully-fledged realization unless the opposite concept of learning discontinuity is introduced as well.

The latter notion, which has recently found its way into the Adult education sector, recognizes that learning biographies constantly change and are re-shaped in a relation of close dependence with life biographies and variations in status, which in recent times have tended to become more and more fragmented and pluralized, in an attempt to adjust themselves to new space-time directories (even fading away in certain cases).

In this view, the perspective of learning conceived as a process of addition (typical of continuity, in which new segments of knowledge pile up on top of previously processed ones) does not correspond to the re-formulation process characteristic of an individual's learning approach (here discontinuity applies: an event or a series of events, sorrowful or happy, bursting into everyday life and subtly triggering the need for learning change).

The individuals' life trajectories turn out to be more and more discontinuous and characterized by a broken rhythm of interruptions, pauses and re-starts. In consideration of the nature of this rhythm, it is necessary to address the demand for integrated education/training policies able to overcome the traditional mechanical approaches (need channelling - answer aggregation) in order to focus attention on learners and their inclination towards learning. The latter aspects being central to any learning project, this should be structured in compliance with the interaction and contextualization criteria, facilitating the reduction of the difference between pedagogical-institutional targets of formation agency and the learners' needs.

It is therefore important to acknowledge that the very first educational event is the learners' recognition of their learning needs; this is often difficult to be translated into active attitudes, especially when caused by frustration originated by early and guilty expulsion from the formal system. To turn "a satisfied educational need into the stimulus to feel further needs" (Demetrio 1997: 246), it is therefore necessary that the learner who experienced failures firstly recovers the

a living being who longs for happiness, tranquillity, peace and power; s/he will learn not to be contented with past achievements nor to keep, defend and maintain the positions conquered" (Demetrio 1997: 29, our translation).

strategic sense of learning. And it is indeed at the strategic and motivational level that the so-called informal learning may play a crucial role.

Informal or non-formal learning?

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe with the Recommendation 1437 on "Non-formal education" acknowledged that *"formal educational system alone cannot respond to rapid and constant technological, social and economic change in society and that they should be reinforced by non-formal educational practice. Non-formal education is an integral part of a lifelong concept that allows young people and adults to acquire and maintain the skills, abilities and outlook needed to adapt to continuously changing environment. It can be acquired on the personal initiative of each individual through different learning activities taking place outside the formal educational system. An important part of non-formal education is carried out by non governmental organisation involved in community and youth work"*.

In this framework, the concept of informal learning, which has long represented one of the leitmotifs of the education debate is not explicitly mentioned and, accordingly, not recognized. One of the reasons is undoubtedly the absence of a univocal agreement on the theoretical-methodological definition of the concept itself, due to the subtle shades of meaning that separate/differentiate it from and integrate it with *non-formal learning*. This ambiguity has been empirically confirmed by the answers given during interviews to experts and people responsible for the projects, who made no distinction between the two concepts merging together the two definitions in order to distinguish them from the learning taught in school classrooms.

Furthermore, the arguments provided to answer the question "How is informal learning facilitated and/or recognised?" show that interpretations and implementation attempts carried out inside every individual project deeply change according to socio-spatial dimensions.

The most widespread distinction is the one that has also been adopted by the European Commission in its communications on life-long learning. Informal learning stands for learning from everyday experience which may also include learning without being conscious of it. Non-formal education or non-formal learning in contrast is defined by educational activities organised outside formal systems. This distinction may be seen as largely administrative. Formal education is linked with schools and training institutions; non-formal with community groups and other organizations; and informal covers what is left, e.g. interactions with friends, family and work colleagues (European Commission 2001; European Youth Forum, 1999; cf. Coombs and Ahmed 1974). However, it includes also a pedagogical aspect which at the same time shed light on the relation between

informal learning and non-formal education: in contrast to informal learning in non-formal education intentions and learning objectives external to the learner play a role. Educators, youth workers follow educational objectives such as democratic values, social skills etc. and they assume that under certain spatial, situational and group conditions young people are like to acquire such competencies. Therefore they arrange spaces, situations and groups in order to facilitate learning in this direction – exactly what youth work is about.

This distinction still may be pragmatic but we suggest that in the YOYO context it may be reasonable to refer to it and – this is the hypothesis arising from our analysis – to assume that what we find in most case study projects has to be interpreted rather as non-formal education than as recognition of informal learning.

Recognition of informal/life skills

At the present stage, an updated evaluation of the current state of the recognition of informal learning in the various countries taking part in the YOYO project would be recommended. From the interviews with operators emerged that in most cases questions on informal learning have not been thoroughly understood (this may be a consequence of the fact that this concept is not yet univocally recognized and considered as central by all project operators).

Moreover, there is a number of countries where the transition system is highly standardized, this is the case, for instance, of Germany:

”Recognition of informally acquired skills is very limited (...). Therefore the main aim (...) was not the official recognition of these skills on the labour market, but that of raising the awareness among young people of their (sometimes hidden) skills and capabilities by providing them with opportunities to experience themselves in various contexts:

‘(Recognition of informally acquired skills) This is another taboo here, I must say. Take the example of waitering: some of them are doing a lot of jobs like that, and at the end of the year, or at whatever time, they think of doing something else, and we should think of ways of evaluating all the skills they have acquired on the job’ (Youth administration)” (West-German Report – Mobile Youth Work).

Informal learning in yoyo case studies

In this paragraph we will try to show that – partly shared by the statements of interviewed experts and partly by relating their statements to the projects’ activities – all YOYO case studies have an

awareness – yet more or less articulate – of informal learning and try to use its potential. That is: they apply methods of non-formal education. Having said this, we resist the temptation of further differentiated definitions and accept informal learning and non-formal education as a polysemic concept, which embodies different shades of meaning according to the project focus. This can be more concerned with the political-educational context of a specific environment (e.g. where qualifications to access work or continue studies are more or less compulsory); it can be based on the individual needs of the participants involved (socio-economically or individually disadvantaged people or people undertaking change), or conform to the dictates of the local labour market (whether in contraction, expansion, specialization or re-structuring).

Undoubtedly, such definitions depend on social context and on personal interests. As far as our experience is concerned, the interviews show a tendency towards the adoption of one or the other depending on the degree of institutionalisation of the project surveyed: in Romania, for instance, where NGOs represent and are perceived as one of the signals of an accomplished pluralist democracy, experts and operators prefer the non-formal education definition which highlights the structured character of the formal education and contemporarily stresses the importance of change from the past (“non-formal”). On the contrary, e.g. in Denmark, where associationism is institutionally rooted and acts through largely standardized interventions, the preference goes to the informal learning definition. This emphasises the active nature of “learning” as an individual experience deriving from alternative initiatives of civic activation (“informal”). A youth worker in the *Boys and Girls House* explains the concept to – for example – provide the building and to give money for furniture without taking the initiative to buy anything yet: *“I am not buying the furniture – cause that would put an end to informal learning and motivation”*.

Whether considering informal learning as the learning projects that people undertake for themselves or as part of being involved in youth and community organisations in all analysed projects, the experts and workers see describe their work to encourage people to think about experiences and situations, finding a new way to interpret them. Common is the idea that recognising informal learning and non-formal education are ways of helping people to learn.

In what follows we intend to distinguish particular aspects and ways of non-formal education – and in some cases of informal learning – from the interviews carried out.

Informal learning and symmetrical/a-symmetrical relations

As the interviews carried out deal with the operators’ point of view, it is interesting to primarily analyse how they perceive their role in the project management and success. The most important

element to emerge from the interviews is the importance attributed to the relational aspect (*symmetrical and a-symmetrical relations*) that needs to be developed in the various projects in order to allow participants to find a battleground where they can freely express their feelings of frustration, anxiety and future expectations. It ought to be remembered that most of the youth involved generally come from life experiences already stigmatised by social failures and personal problems.

As for *a-symmetrical relations* (adult-youth, operator-user), operators underlined the fundamental importance for the youth of a *trustful* relation with the adult reference figure as they have been frequently discouraged by the anonymous and impersonal relations established with the school system or the job centre. A significant example of this phenomenon is provided by the Danish *Boys & Girls House* aimed at offering support to young people from non-Danish ethnic origins: the young people from the *Boys House* call the Danish leader of the project a "*white Paki*", indicating that he is different, but trustworthy.

Trust plays a key-role in healing the damages caused by the lack of a dialectic and direct relation between the young participants and the institutions in charge of their social and on-job integration.

Referring to a boy who spent one year in the Danish Project "*Ecological Starters*", an expert says:

"It was important for him to realize, that there were things other people did in which he could take part. After this experience he went out to have a youth education, and you could say that he reconciled himself with society in this respect, now he wanted to have something to do with official society...."

The lack of communication and of orienting activities plaguing the school system and the traditional job insertion channels is revealed by the words of the Caritas Manager of the Stuttgart *Mobile Youth Work*:

"What these young people are often lacking is a realistic perception of their actual opportunities. As a secondary school student, you are given the impression that everything is possible. And when the shock of reality after school comes, they have no one to turn to, and then they realize they're alone now" (Caritas manager, 183).

Counselling and advice

On the institutional level, there is close to no agency that cares for young people in an acceptable way, in the sense of a) taking into account their interests, wishes, values, b) accordingly pointing at

and helping to achieve the necessary abilities and competencies and c) evaluating their chances and opportunities.

Generally, the orientation activities promoted in schools or provided by institutional subjects tend to be rather scarce and reductive. As a matter of fact, this activity is carried out by means of a simple presentation, during the last months of final school years, of information material on working and studying opportunities, and also by means of a census activity of the supposed interests of young learners through vocational questionnaires and tests. Thus, orientation has no *formative* function – but is reduced to ‘*in*’formation – and is therefore not able to promote the basic conditions necessary to provide cognitive tools’ and increase motivation towards learning.

This kind of orienting activity has proved to be an important cause for young people’s *frustration* and *disengagement*. During this round of interviews, we had the possibility to notice that when young people enter the project, some of them are so frustrated that they have completely given up looking for a job or training. In this case, the first step consists in dragging them out of their apathy; sometimes, the educator is the only person with whom they can talk about the reasons for their frustration. In the words of the Caritas Manager, mentioned above:

”Where in society do our kids have the opportunity to reflect upon the demands they have to face when they have left school? Where can they reflect together with somebody else? Young people need opportunities to talk about such things as ”Why do you need an upper secondary certificate to work in a bakery?” They feel this to be an injustice, and need a real person to talk about it, and maybe later on they see, ok, this is unfair, but it is like that and I have to look for another opportunity. But, if they have to face this demand alone, they have no chance to cope with it productively, and conclude that this is a deliberate attack by society against them”.

According to the same Caritas manager, not only the educator, but also the *setting of the project* plays an important role in keeping in touch with disadvantaged young people. He notices that the informal character of the offices and the institution as a whole proved to be an important motivational factor:

”One could imagine that the job centres themselves would organise outreach work. They could say, let’s go and look for the disengaged ones, (...) but what would definitely not work would be the context, the local network. The kids who came to us (...) saw, it’s ok, there are other young people here, and there are leisure activities as well. They feel they are neither alone nor judged for what they should do and are unable to. (...) It makes a big difference if the office you go to is also used as a café by other youths. You get a completely different

picture, not just "good afternoon", "sorry it's six p.m.", "I have an appointment", and "good-bye again".

One of the educators' tasks is to voice the young people's needs, to act as a *sounding board* for them: together, they can discuss, in an informal manner, different topics and subjects, primarily in the area of social and individual skill development. In the words of an operator of the Irish Project *Youghal Youthreach* the *key features* of successful intervention, in his case with early school leavers, are:

"A focus on the holistic development of the individual, set in a learning environment which is safe, structured and challenging; A methodology/pedagogy which begins with the young person and places emphasis on recognizing and rewarding achievement rather than reinforcing failure".

The operator's listening ability has proved to be the crucial element in helping a young person identify and shed light on his/her own problems, expectations and value scale. Through *empathic understanding*, which favours the transition from clarification to action, the educator tutors the learner in his/her gradual re-appropriation/ re-learning of basic skills so as to receive positive feedback on the rational-emotional level. This is proved by the examples taken from biographical-learning careers of participants in different projects.

These revealed that de-motivation is frequently the result of a series of reiterated failures that, according to their age may lead on to partial or total drop-out from concrete activities or projects for the future. Thus the new *motivation* is linked to progressive fulfilment in a certain area of action or within some education or professional trajectories which may increase the participants' self-esteem and activate recognition from peers and reference figures.

The success or failure experiences, not only limited to the cognitive field but also to the socio-relational one, respectively increase or decrease the quality of outcomes of new activities (which may be similar but also at times totally different) through positive or negative emotional anticipation (*success anticipation vs. fear of failure*). The cognitive and the affective/socio-relational contexts are in a *circular relation* that can be converted either in a virtuous or a vicious circle depending on the circumstances. Especially for disengaged young people, recognition is of fundamental importance when accompanied by the opportunity for them to experiment, to show their skills, to receive positive feedback. The leader of the *Girl House* of the Danish project "*Girls-Boys House*" states therefore:

"One very important qualification in the project(s) is to learn to self-esteem – to have the courage to speak up and to argue for your own interests and to become more independent".

Research on motivation clearly demonstrates that *intrinsic motivation* (interiorised, connected to the pleasure of performing a certain activity and therefore bond to the process itself) is more closely linked to the desire of acquiring competencies than *extrinsic motivation* (bond to the promise of receiving prizes, therefore more focused on the product than the process). This is what the concept of '*pedagogy of desire*' developed in Latin American and based on Paolo Freire's '*pedagogy of liberation*' contexts refers to: discovering individual desires to know and to do which have been submerged by education and teaching of contents that largely remain external to the learners life-worlds (for inspiring proposal of 'roof pedagogy' see Pais and Pohl, 2003).

Intrinsic motivation may be seen as an active mode of adaptation to an environment. Subjects show an intrinsic "need" for becoming competent, a tendency to adopt explorative and curious attitudes, a need to be committed to and actively influencing the activities chosen autonomously (Stipek, 1996). These may result in surprising outcomes regarding expectations, demands for autonomy, self-evaluation of one's commitments, enhanced processes and results gathered.

In order to create or support motivation it is therefore necessary to activate flexible strategies adjustable according to the learner's cognitive and affective features. This goal could be achieved thanks to the educator's ability to rework negative events by creating a system of hypotheses). This kind of intervention should guarantee that past and present life experiences of boys and girls are appropriately recognised and – "*following critical reflection*" (mission statement) – included in future planning. In these regards, as an example of how the *motivational approach* can facilitate learning trajectories, we report the words of the President of the association Arci-Ragazzi, working on the Italian Project "*A workshop for young women and men*" (Palermo, Sicily) who explained us an intervention strategy in the youth detention centre:

"Our initial idea was to hold a workshop on the idea of love: talking about love stories to youths who were in detention and poorly-educated has proved difficult; the starting point was the vision they had of love: sex, their love for their mothers, or for their families; then we gradually ended up talking about Palestine about macro-concepts, tribes, history of territories. We began with real life experiences and then introduced some informal learning topics that would however not be without interest for scarcely educated young people."

An operator of the same project states:

”Starting from [leisure] initiatives and then introducing some cultural elements, starting from everyday life, from entertainment, so as to get in touch with young people within their everyday social environment.”

The educator’s task, on the rational and *emotional* level, is to stimulate the young person to go through a series of changes in the way he/she perceives himself/herself and the outside world, the difficulties and problems ending up in frustration and anxiety, elaborating an operational project involving him/her to many extents and in so doing activating several learning and changing mechanisms both in the personal and in the relational sphere.

In this regard it is useful to provide another example, along the lines of the Palermo Project, listing the basic principles of informal learning applied by the components of the groups working in the Spanish project *”Infinite patience”* of Alfafar-Valencia:

- *”learning is a life-long task”*
- *”people do not reject learning, but some specific ways of learning”*
- *”every single person is able to learn if what he/she learns is useful for him/her in some way”*
- *”an act of learning is completed whenever the appropriate resources have been obtained”*
- *”learning of new and useful things makes people happy”.*

In view of persistent experiences of failure, disillusion, marginalisation and subsequent resignation the full set of resources available need to be drawn upon to re-integrate the young people. They often look for the project collaborators in order to ask for advice, help on their personal or professional life, or about alternative forms of education.

Therefore one of the most important skills of the educators who work with disadvantaged young people is to raise their awareness about their (sometimes hidden) skills and capabilities, by providing them with opportunities to experience themselves in various contexts.

An informal setting could be useful also in letting young people learn those *transversal skills* which are very important for social insertion and for the labour markets and have to do with discipline and the importance of being on time, of being assiduous. A Youth worker of the German *Mobile Youth Work Project* emphasizes the difference between the control exerted by formal institutions and the informal control within the project, in which the operator has built a trustful relationship with the young persons:

”It is a huge difference whether you have direct access to young people’s everyday life or not. (...) If someone does not go to work for two days he will get sacked. But, we at the neighbourhood have the opportunity to avoid such a situation. For example, I would usually walk into my office here and ask people: have you seen person xy walk by the window this

morning, and when they say, no, we haven't, I immediately go up to his front door, dling dlong, door-bell ringing, and ask him, hey why didn't you go to work? And thus we can avoid that people get sacked too quickly".

Further evidence of the value attached to punctuality and discipline in triggering motivation comes from the Portuguese experience of "*Batoto Yetu*". Here the project workers consider the youth's passion for music and dance (*intrinsic motivation*) as the main strength of their intervention, as opposed to the informal nature of the relations established with the participant youths. Within this context, to ensure a constant attendance to the project activities, they have developed a system based on prizes and punishments (*extrinsic motivation*), whereby only those who attend participate in shows and public events. The same principle applies to the very participation in the project activities, which is made conditional on achieving good results at school.

The above quoted statement may sound somewhat contradictory with regard to the youth work principle: the workers are expected to facilitate the youth in acquiring skills providing *support and guidance*. They must not provide any help if not requested to do so, but sometimes this can become very difficult for people who really want to be helpful.

The degree of involvement deriving from this educational relation does not rule out risks completely. As a matter of fact, the relation established between operator and young user may imply an overlapping of roles resulting in the risk of overexposure (*staff burn out*), as observed by an operator working for the Irish Cork Simon Homeless Youth Drugs Project:

"Sometimes you feel like a surrogate mother, it's a difficult balancing line, you know the relationship is a professional one, but this individual needs a mother figure".

We can conclude this excursus about the perception that informal educators have of their work, highlighting the importance they put on certain values, which include commitments to:

- work for the well-being of all
- respect the unique value and dignity of each human being
- dialogue
- equality and justice

The intention of building environments and relationships in which people can grow and care for each other is often voiced. In this regard, it is essential that informal educators are capable of:

- attending to the vast range of opportunities that arise in *everyday settings* for learning.
- considering *relationships and learning processes* - and how these can be increased
- expressing concerns for democracy and respect for others, improving the dialogical abilities of the group

- valuing people's experiences and feelings
- working in a way that helps people to deepen their understandings and commitments and to act on them.

In the case of symmetrical relations (*peer relations*), operators expressed at times contradictory opinions on the importance the peer group embodies in the learning process. In other words, none of the interviewees denied that group dynamics favour individual learning, it is in fact on the nature of the learning acquired through mutual exchanges that opinions differ.

We noticed also that project operators and experts are in general well aware of the importance of supporting learning exchange patterns between youths and their peers. 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 those with fewer resources. But some of them underlined that resources and experiences are not neuter, but often have a *positive or negative connotation*.

In general, project operators expressed themselves in favour of *peer learning* as informal ways of learning (to be intended even in the wider sense of contextual learning; Mørch, 1999). For example: in the opinion of the project responsible/director of the Portuguese project *Batoto Yetu* learning from one another, being together and exchanging experiences is essential:

“They (girls and boys) end up understanding many things that they don’t even do; they listen here and there, and afterwards, when they get to the labour market, these things may be important.”

There are also examples of unfavourable opinions based on the belief that the group has a great standardizing power. For example, the Director of Services of the *Cork Simon Homeless Youth Drugs Project* (Republic of Ireland) affirms that in the context of Simon Community, informal learning can generally be considered as a negative phenomenon; young people learn dysfunctional behavioural patterns (such as shop lifting, street drinking and aggressiveness) from the context (homeless population). A young person without a home, by being together with other homeless people and deprived of alternative models learns to behave like a homeless person. Through the interaction with the project worker (*role modelling*), the young persons have the possibility to relate themselves with alternative (*“positive”*) behavioural patterns.

The words of the project operator of the Italian *“Youth Centre” of Campagnola* go in the same direction. He expresses doubts about informal learning pathways, which he sees as imitative, as the a-critical taking on of some behaviours and attitudes influenced by fashion:

"I've got the feeling that when young people join a group, it's more like they're buying a ready-made box, thoroughly equipped, with everything you can imagine inside. They do not discover anything new. We have a group at the centre that likes acting punk. And everything should be punk: from punk music to clothes, ideas, books (...) it's all packaged, ready-made... It's basically a learning process that doesn't develop into fully-fledged creativity" (Operator).

Following this idea of informal learning as potentially *imitative*, there emerges the need to stimulate young people to develop their own trajectories autonomously.

Anyway, from the projects' typology and from the words of those responsible the fact emerges that isolated, scholastic qualifications are not sufficient for educating *"the whole individual."* Peer learning can contribute to a more holistic understanding of education and development: the voluntary co-operation with peers in a group or in an organisation can become the *framework* for pursuing all the goals required by current society standards, i.e. independence, creativity, the ability to plan ahead and be innovative.

In the vocational projects, peer learning plays an important role as a positive side-effect of training in small groups, helping participants to overcome the separation between cultural and professional learning pathways and emotional/affective ones. The project leader of the West German project *"La Silhouette"* tells an episode that constitutes a good example of this concept:

"There was one of them (a girl in the project) talking about having been beaten by her boyfriend. And the other one declares, in a totally rational way: 'that's enough, leave the asshole and concentrate on your profession'."

But peer learning appears to be very important, although the competencies attained may not be directly *"professional"*: in the interaction, in the management of organisational tasks connected to the project development, young people acquire various transversal competencies, *relational and procedural*, essential also to professional insertion. In this regard, the Vice-president of the Argonauti Cooperative, involved in the Italian project of Palermo (*"A workshop for young women and men"*) points out:

"The relational aspect should not be underestimated, i.e. the ability to manage relations and one's individual role within the group context, the capacity of negotiating between different positions, of building something together (...) I think this is a learning strategy (...) always effective and useful in any context".

The experts seem to be convinced that the *non-intentional* side of peer learning plays an important role in supporting the *intentional* one. This is what has been referred to earlier with regard to relation between informal learning and non-formal education.

Conclusion

Trying to summarise and to relate concepts of informal learning and non-formal education to types of measures we may suggest the following:

The nearer they are located to youth work the more the projects are structured according to non-formal education. Social participation is both the goal and the way which includes that the ways to achieve it must not be formally prescribed. Yet, a lot is done to facilitate such a development.

Hence, non-formal education. The field in which this is done is mostly leisure activities – as youth work is voluntary and therefore has to meet interests of young people in which they are likely to engage voluntarily. Youth workers are there as mediators – between different interests – and as supporters. On the other hand the more labour market related projects often are structured by externally defined goals: labour market demands, curricula, placement guidelines. In these contexts, non-formal education is set against these external demands in order to allow a maximum of identification and intrinsic motivation – in a situation which makes this rather difficult. Constant counselling – be it in explicit counselling sessions or in terms of personal accompaniment alongside other activities – is one important issue in this regard. The other is to form groups in settings in which – different from youth work – most participants come individually: the creation of a peer group in which peer education may occur; also in terms of role modelling: to provide young people with the experience that there are some peers that succeed in reconciling their identities with adapting to the labour market. In those cases in which the young people participating in the measure face multiple problems such as drug use, homelessness, psychological problems or migration the non-formal approach is even more crucial to create a confident atmosphere that prevents that the participants do not terminate collaboration.

Participation

Analysing the various reports about the case studies in the different European countries, we find a wide range of definitions of participation.

The answers of the internal and external experts, collected in the interviews, show how each project has its own specific approach and idea of participation. There is no reference to a homogeneous model and understanding of participation but the description of a big variety how to realize participation in youth projects according to different social areas and projects.

Not all concepts of participation have been developed and presented in a manner which allows to understand all processes of participation carried out in the single projects. Sometimes the definition given by the interviewed experts remains quite vague and demonstrates the difficulty to find a common basis and understanding of participatory involvement of young people. Links to other existent models of participation (for instance: participation model of Roger Hart; see below) have been expressed by few project workers but also theoretical concepts which try to classify the various levels of participation of children and young people reflect often heterogenous approaches.

However, analysing the projects, different levels of participation emerged. The common element is that the young people are considered as active members not as passive clients how the following quotation gives an example: "From the moment they enter the project, they understand they are the creators of the final outcome" (*Batoto Yetu*, Portugal). Above this basis a variety of levels of involvement of young people exists. The analysed projects in the numerous European countries show a diversity in the modalities of decision-making and power processes carried out by young people.

We try to summarize the represented experiences of the European case studies in order to the following approaches:

- Participation as attendance of the project and as choice
- Participation as possibility of decision-making
- Participation as biographical dimension
- Participation as community approach

Participation as attendance of the project and as choice

Several projects stress the fact that the attendance of the project is voluntary and young people can choose if they want to join as it is stated in a similar way by the three Irish case studies. The worker of the Simon project argues:

"The very fact that they come and talk is participation on their part, and some of the time its quite difficult because people don't want to do anything with their lives and they don't want to come to me and feel bad. If they just keep in contact over the mobile phone, much as I'd like them to call in."

It seems a very basic level of participation – as prerequisite for active involvement – which is in contrast to the obligations of other contexts (like for example the school system). On the contrary the projects are offers for the young people and they have the competence to decide if they want to use them.

”Participation is basically understood as a way of participating in, of participating externally, as for example participation in the courses, to participate, by means of the voluntary work, in the external activities carried out by the ,Laura Vicuna Association‘ concerning the Torrent’s social environment, and in the NGOs” (Laura Vicuna, Spain).

Some project workers underlined the possibility for the participants to decide what happens in the projects or what they individually want to do there.

”The decision to participate in the project lies squarely with the young people; ,they are service users, the participation can be at differ‘. ... Every young person decides what programmes they want to be involved in, and what they want to do in the project. So they have control over their own involvement in the project ent levels depending on the person.” (Glen Foroige, Ireland)

Especially in youth work type projects there is no fixed standard programme which the young people have to go through. Their involvement in the projects is based on their own decision, so that the young people are more active protagonists in their life ways. In the Glen Foroige project participation is perceived as primarily engagement, as starting point, with the expectation *”that this engagement can lead the young people becoming more and more involved with the workings and running of the project and their community”*.

Yet, there are projects – some of the more labour market oriented ones – in which the young people’s initial decision to attend not necessarily can be characterised as voluntary and chosen. In the case of *Youth Opportunity* (UK, Northern Ireland) they risk to lose their training allowances which is a more manifest example. In other cases, like *Shalom* (East Germany), *Youthreach* (Ireland), *Open Youth Education* (Denmark), *Laura Vicuna*, *Youth Cooperative* (Spain), *City Team* (Netherlands), *CCSA* (Romania) it is the pressure – experienced sometimes individually but always through parents or other institutional representatives – that attendance might be the last chance for a future career that undermines the freedom of choice.

Participation as possibility of decision-making

A very important aspect, which emerged in the explanations of several interviewed experts, is the involvement in processes of decision-making with regard to project- or organisation-related issues.

In this case participation is not limited by the choice to join or not, but is requested also in terms of actively influencing the project.

”Concretely, participation is exerted through a very lively plenary practice: all decisions are discussed amongst young people” (ArciRagazzi, Italy).

The power to decide is strongly related to the discourse about democracy and civil rights.

”We believe that full democracy is accomplished only when citizens can participate in decision-making whenever their interests are at stake” (ArciRagazzi, Italy).

This kind of participation becomes a means of living full democracy and social inclusion.

”Participating is the only possibility to stay inside the part and not to be excluded from the problems and questions we are interested in” (Infinite Patience, Spain).

There are different forms of decision-making in the projects. We can name some of the analysed projects which implement participation (in form of decision-making) in all phases of the project.

”Participation is understood as the real fact of deciding in the projects, from the beginning until the end: from the gestation until the evaluation” (Infinite Patience, Spain). Also in the Italian case study of the *Youth Centre Campagnola* the concept of participation is related to the following activities: propose, become operational and carry out a project.

In this sense participation through decision-making is realised not only in the first stage, when the young participants decide which activity they want to do. It begins there but continues in all the other moments in the project, until the point when the young people have also to verify and evaluate what they did and how it worked.

To stress are the interesting solutions about involving young people in active decision making and creating a high degree of organisational commitment to facilitating the participation. The young people become part of the organisation/ the project and are not considered anymore only clients or users.

For example: the young mothers in *Lifting the Limits* (UK, Northern Ireland) are not just trainees but employees, *”so they are treated like any other employee in the organisation. They are involved with the staff development programmes”*. This accounts as well for *La Silhouette* (West Germany) which has found specific structures to promote participation. There is a weekly meeting where everyone can complain or make proposals and where everyone has the same vote to decide about all important issues concerning the project. Moreover some of former trainees get in the role of teachers/counsellors in the project what means a twofold participation:

”... for those who take over these roles, it is an additional empowerment (...) and those, who get trained, benefit from getting realistic role-models”.

Participation as biographical self-determination

The notion of participation referred to in the objectives of the YOYO project can be defined as biographical self-determination: active decision-making with regard to the own life in general and transition to work in particular. A lot of analysed projects relate the term of participation to the biographical dimension. They describe how the involvement in the project brings benefits for the life of the young person, giving space to make experience and consequently to influence the own biography. That means to have the possibility to make decisions regarding the own life project, to choose between options and to find out what really fits the own needs.

However, participation also happens in the sense that the individual must actively define a life project. In this sense, participation is thus defined: *"Each one is co-responsible for his life project"* (expert from the Ministry of Education; *Aldeia de Santa Isabel*, Portugal).

"Participation is seen in the sense of having an active coping strategy, to participate in the making of your own future so to speak (...)" (*City Team*, Netherlands).

The interviewed experts mention several positive aspects at the individual level which are connected to an active involvement in the projects. An important one is the attitude to take the young people seriously so that confidence and mutual trust can be developed. A participatory approach can give importance to the desires, needs and decisions of the individual and so facilitate the building up of self-confidence.

"Participation at Batoto Yetu (case study) is a way to achieve self-esteem, empowerment, to feel valued" (*Batoto Yetu*, Portugal).

"... and it's having the courage and the self-confidence to maybe stand up to people and say, 'This is the choices I want to make and these are the right choices', and not to be bullied as a result of that, or not to feel bad, or they are letting someone down as a result of that" (External expert, *Lifting the Limits*, UK, Northern Ireland).

Some project workers point out the relevance of trust created between the professional and the young person. In these cases trust is seen as crucial factor for the success of the project. *"The degree of participation is as high as the degree of trust they have on the project's workers"* (project responsible) (Portugal, *Princes of Nothingness*).

Another important aspect related to participation is the question of giving and taking *responsibility*:

”Active participation is when you say something, suggest something, you take on your own responsibility and accomplish your task” (Municipal councillor) (Youth Centre Campagnola, Italy).

It is often realised through the involvement of the participants in decision-making processes, but it has not to be limited there. Responsibility has also a strong relevance for the construction of the own life project, when young people become conscious of their role in influencing what is going on.

”... participants are pointed out issues of dependency and independence, (the freedom to have) self-responsibility, bringing out the positive experiences instead of the negative ones, the particular qualities of someone and, especially, to become conscious that they do can influence matters that concern them” (City Team, Netherlands).

Political and civil participation as community approach

The community approach starts from the consideration that participation doesn't stop at the individual level but includes the possibility to influence the social context. There is only a smaller part of the analysed projects which aim in evident manner at the community level. In this sense participation is directed to issues which affect and involve the social context where the project is located. That means also to create an active citizenship. The young people become protagonists further their own life-projects also in their life-environments.

The Italian project *Giovani e Periferia* has the young people's participation in urban development initiatives as main goal. This kind of participation should go through a number of stages: from the information and animation phase in the beginning to the planning phase where the involved young people are faced with various situations in the communities in order to gain views, ideas, opinions, assessments and evaluation of problems. So the youths should take an active role in the social and public life of the suburbs.

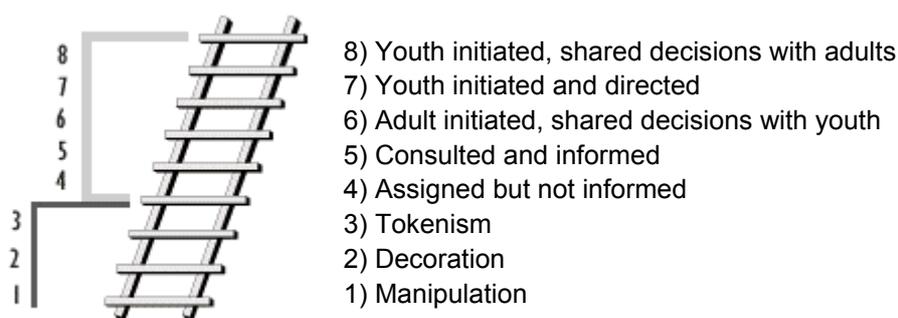
Also the projects themselves can be active in the creation of participatory structures for citizens in the communities. For example the Irish *Glen Foroige* Project played an active role in the establishment of a Youth Forum which aims to promote the young people's participation in the life of the community.

A special case is the Portuguese project *Princes of Nothingness* for young people from the gypsy community. There participation is a main issue, helping to overcome the big obstacles for their integration in the society. To decrease the isolation, the project works with a community approach, promoting inter-changes with other communities and increasing empowerment of the gypsy group:

“However, all the activities that take this community outside their neighbourhood can be considered a form of participation. Participation is a way to learn about new realities and to show others, what the gypsy community can do”.

Classifying projects with regard to participation

In the following we will try to classify the Yoyo case study projects according to the concept and degree of participation. For this purpose we refer to the “Ladder of Participation” developed by Sherry Arnstein in 1969 and further developed Roger Hart for the UNESCO to conceptualise and operationalise children’s participation (1992). The concept was developed as a reaction to the increased reference of policy makers to participation while reproducing a lot of tokenism in this regard:



- 1) *Manipulation* is where adults use youth to support causes and pretend that the causes are inspired by youth.
- 2) *Decoration* is where young people are used to help or "bolster" a cause in a relatively indirect way, although adults do not pretend that the cause is inspired by youth.
- 3) *Tokenism* is where young people appear to be given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about what they do or how they participate.
- 4) *Assigned but informed* is where youth are assigned a specific role and informed about how and why they are being involved.
- 5) *Consulted and informed* is when youth give advice on projects or programmes designed and run by adults. The youth are informed about how their input will be used and the outcomes of the decisions made by adults.
- 6) *Adult-initiated, shared decisions with youth* is when projects or programmes are initiated by adults but the decision-making is shared with the young people.
- 7) *Youth-initiated and directed* is when young people initiate and direct a project or programme in

which adults are involved only in a supportive role.

8) *Youth-initiated, shared decisions with adults* is when projects or programmes are initiated by youth and decision-making is shared among youth and adults. These projects empower youth while at the same time enabling them to access and learn from the life experience and expertise of adults.

There is an ongoing debate on the order of the steps 7 and 8 of this scale. On the one hand in step 7 apparently young people have more power which is a criterion of participation. On the other hand step 8 considers that it may be a superficial form of participation if young people have the freedom to make decisions which are likely to have negative effects on their lives or that of others. It is as well quite likely that youth initiated and directed projects and decisions will always be restricted to 'soft' policy sectors with limited funding and in which central values such as work and qualifications are not affected. However, on the other hand in the case of shared decisions 'real' participation needs to be secured by something like 'veto' rights of young people to avoid to be overruled by adults. This however stands for a more general question if the implicit hierarchy of levels of participation is useful. On the one hand the hypothesis of Yoyo is: the more participation, the more motivation. Therefore we look for 'more' participation. On the other hand, it may be more useful to distinguish just different types of participation and then see how young people react to them. As this report deals with the objectives, methods and structures of projects we think that the hierarchical model reflects to which extent the issue of participation is explicitly considered and addressed by project workers and responsables. In the overall evaluation it will be needed to extend the perspective by motivation reported by young people and the sustainability of biographic destinations which will make a hierarchical ranking much more contradictory (see below). considering the different levels of participation mentioned above we will concentrate on the two central ones: participation in project related decision-making and biographic participation.

- *Participation in project related decision-making* in the Yoyo projects spread over the range from steps 4 to 8. It is especially constitutive for youth work related projects while in labour market related projects it competes with externally set objectives and contents. Here, participation in decision-making relates to methods, forms and internal arrangements to deal with or to fulfil external demands. Of course, there is no project in which one type of participation occurs in a pure form. An interesting combination of 6 and 8 is the Danish *Open Youth Education* where one part of the curriculum is prescribed (but not the way get there) while the other part is free to be chosen by the students individually or collectively.
- *Biographic participation* is more difficult to rate as in principle none of the projects has the right to take decisions in behalf of the young people involved. It is also important to

consider the expectations (the subjective ones as well as the institutional ones). This implies the first type of participation (choice and voluntariness) as well as whether the project relates explicitly to young people's life plans and life decisions. This accounts in the first place for youth work projects which on the one hand can be experienced as decisive for one's life decisions but on the other hand can also be seen and experienced as 'only' related to leisure.

The perhaps most difficult project to locate is the case of *SZINFO Youth Information Centre* (Romania). On the one hand the information on offer and the modalities of delivery are decided by the staff (who of course react to clients' demands, a type of participation not included in the ladder which may be characterised as the reciprocal (market) relation between supply and demand). On the other hand the young people are free to come to the Centre and they are as well free how to deal with the information. Here, the ambiguity between steps 7 and 8 becomes obvious. Considering that young people who feel totally disorientated or are too shy to use public facilities will not go the Youth Information Centre one could argue that even adult initiated but shared decision-making can be more participatory than youth (non-)initiated.

In the following we try to relate the projects to different aspects of participation. This is tentative and might be too reductive which should be discussed further. Perhaps it 'only' serves to reflect once more participation in the different agencies as well as on the concept of participation itself:

Project	Participation with regard to ... (ratings for participation addressed explicitly in bold)		
	Project related decisions	Biographic decisions	
<i>Youth work related projects</i>			
Boys and Girls House (DK)	7-8	n.a.	↑ ↓
Youth Centre Campagnola (I)	7-8	n.a.	
ArciRagazzi (I)	6-8	6-8	
Youth Information Centre (ROM)	5, 6 and 8	6-8	
Princes of Nothingness (P)	6 and 8	6 and 8*	
Batoto Yetu (P)	6-8	6-8	
Glen Foroige (IRL)	6-8	n.a.	
Mobile Youth Work (D West)	6-8	6-8	
Youth and Suburbs (I)	6 and 8	n.a.	
Simon Homeless (IRL)	6-8	6-8	
CCSA (ROM)	6 and 8	6-8*	
Open Youth Education (DK)	6 and 8	6-8	
Youth Opportunity (UK)	6-8	4, 6-8	
DAA/Kompass (D East)	6 and 8	6-8	
Cityteam (NL)	6-8	6-8	
Lifting the Limits (UK)	5, 6 and 8	6-8	
Youghal Youthreach (IRL)	5, 6 and 8	6-8	
Infinite Patience (ES)	6-8	6-8*	
Ecological Starters (DK)	6-8	6-8	
Laura Vicuna (ES)	5 and 6	6-8	
Youth Cooperative (ES)	5 and 6	6-8	

Aldeia Santa Isabel (P)	5 and 6	6-8	
La Silhouette (D West)	5, 6 and 8	6-8	
Solaris (ROM)	5 and 6	6-8	
Starters Service (NL)	6-8	6-8	
Center Parcs/Helicon (NL)	5	6	
Shalom Project (D East)	5, 6 and 8	4, 6-8	
<i>Labour market related projects</i>			

* biographic effects limited due to social obstacles and/or weakness of project

This table suggests that level 6 "adult initiated shared decisions" is the most frequent form of participation. Ratings of 5 in the project related column reflect that training projects are bound to a curriculum and thus limiting the space for individual influence. The biographic column has the difficulty that in principle after the project young people are 'free' to do what they want with or without involving project workers in their decision. And in all projects cases will be found in which project workers stimulate and influence certain decisions. Therefore, the main difference is whether biographical participation is explicitly addressed (on bold) or whether biographical decisions occur throughout or as a result of the projects 'by the way'. Interestingly, here we find youth work projects as well as labour market related projects.

Comparative Perspective or: Relation of Agencies to Transition Regimes

Given the fact that all the analysed projects do not represent the mainstream of projects in their regional or national context the issue of international comparison is difficult to address. On the one hand one may even argue that comparison does not apply at all but with regard to the context of each single project contributing to its existence and success (which partly has been addressed in this report). On the other hand however one can argue that the projects – although being exceptional – do stand in a certain relation with the institutional context of their transition regimes; either as a deliberate choice of the exceptional or as being at the margins of what is acceptable rather than exceptional. In this report we limitate to look for some potential links between transition regimes by clustering projects of the same country and try to relate them to the transition regime applying to this country (see Walther et al., 2002: Yoyo Working Paper 1). The dimensions and aspects informing this clustering will be rather deliberate and refer to different levels which might be deepened, developed or changed fundamentally in the work package related to comparative analysis. This means that the following is a quite eclectic combination of a deductive (transition regimes typology) and inductive approach (clustering projects according to nationality and one other apparent further factor):

The *universalistic transition regime* in the Yoyo context refers to *Denmark*. In terms of policy the Danish case studies have been selected from three different sectors: youth work, school and labour market policies (inasmuch the Ecological Starters are recognised as an activation scheme for unemployed people on benefits). It can be argued that both the official objectives and the reasons for receiving funding (or being accepted in terms of activation) as well as the practices applied reflect the high value of individual development and intrinsic motivation structuring all policies addressing young people in the Scandinavian countries. This includes that the State provides resources but accepts a certain openness of outcomes. In the case of youth work this is quite normal also for other transition regimes but not so in education and labour market policies.

The *liberal transition regime* applies for the UK and the Republic of Ireland. The *UK* projects can be seen as examples for a so-called ‘compassionate’ activation policy which aims at bringing all individuals into the labour market regardless of their life conditions. In the case of *Youth Opportunity* the young people are enrolled in a programme in which absentism may be sanctioned but in exchange they experience an open space of experiences in which peer education plays a major role. *Lifting the Limits* can be seen as demanding from single mothers to be part of the labour market but investing quite substantially in this goal. Both projects not only represent the liberal transition regime but are also influenced by the Anglo-Saxon tradition of youth work with its strong community orientation. The selected *Irish* projects share a stronger social policy approach by dealing primarily with problem groups: the homeless, the early school leavers, and the youth from a deprived neighbourhood. This orientation is close to the conservative welfare regime and might be explained by the strong Catholic influence on the Irish welfare state. Another influence may be the booming economy which absorbs most young people except those facing multiple disadvantages arising from structural factors and individual coping.

The *employment-centred transition regime* in the Yoyo context includes a typical (Germany) and a rather untypical example (Netherlands). To a certain extent one can say that the *German* case study projects are influenced by the formal transition system in which recognised training and employment are rigidly structured. *La Silhouette* stands for the fact that empowerment for marginalised groups can only succeed if also providing regular vocational training. In contrast the *Mobile Youth Work* failed in trying to overcome the formal barrier between youth work and education and training. In the East the *Kompass* project’s aim to support young people in developing individual life plans struggles with the standardised training offers and especially with the lack of employment opportunities. The *Shalom Project* reacts to this with subsidised – to a

certain extent artificial – employment which is difficult to be recognised by the individuals as well as the environment as ‘real’ work. Compared to this the *Dutch* projects are characterised by flexibility: flexibility between youth work, training and labour market (*Cityteam*), flexibility in adapting vocational training to the local labour market (*Center Parcs/Helicon*) and in labour market policies in terms of self-employment (*Starters Service*). All these projects enjoy a considerable freedom in adapting their approaches to the needs of their clients and/or to the local labour market demands. This reflects the hybrid structure of the Dutch transition regime which in the last two decades has integrated universalistic and liberal aspects into a formerly employment-centred transition regime.

Finally, the *sub-protective transition regimes* account for Spain, Italy, Portugal and – though before a different background – Romania. In all these countries transitions from school to work are under-institutionalised. Vocational training is only scarcely developed and to a large extent is still provided on a school-based level lacking recognition from employers. Labour regulation is still oriented towards (male) adult bread-winners while labour market policies for young people largely can be interpreted as de-regulation: lower wages, less security etc. The *Spanish* projects may be interpreted as a reaction of third sector organisations to the incomplete – or not yet completed – restructuring of the transition system. The projects *Laura Vicuna* and *Youth Cooperative Pep-Pepes* are attempts to contribute to the development of a vocational training infrastructure outside from school while *Infinite Patience* deals with the incapacity of local and regional labour market and welfare policies to integrate young people who lack any opportunities by assisting them in developing projects of coping with everyday life – on a cultural, social and economic level. The dominance of the non-formal sector is also visible in the Italian case studies. It becomes visible that for the most young people the only way to become active in the long transition period which keeps young people dependent from the ‘long family’ is the area of youth work. In the cases of the *Youth Centre Campagnola* – located in a region with low unemployment – and the Turin project *Youth in the Suburbs* – due the long tradition of manufacturing the decline of which has not yet been met by a modernised system of transition policies – the relation between youth work and transitions to work is limited to the individual level. In the case of *ArciRagazzi* – though lacking public funding – the project workers and responsible clearly see the projects responsibility also with regard to young people’s careers reflecting the lack of formally structured trajectories and the incapacities of the public administration to intervene in this regard.

This is as well true with regard to the Romanian projects *CCSA (We want to be independent)* and *Solaris* who try to fill the gaps emerging from inadequate or lacking State policies. Even the pure

fact of not being a State body for many young people provides these projects with a high level of credibility and thus stimulates their engagement and motivation. The (public) *SZINFO* project can be seen as the attempt of local policies to cope with the inefficient national guidance structures in a fundamentally changing labour market. All the Romanian projects show a high interest in or dependence on European programmes in both regards: funding and innovative orientation.

In *Portugal* the case study projects reflect the segmentation of the modernisation of society and labour market which leaves weaker social groups behind: in the cases of *Batoto Yetu* and *Princes of Nothingness* these are young people belonging to ethnic minorities – of Gypsy and African origin. In a country where still a high rate of young people do not complete compulsory and post-compulsory school while child work prevails these local youth work projects primarily aim at assisting young people in school, to reach qualifications on which they may build viable careers. The *Aldeia de Santa Isabel* stands for the lack of alternatives to school-based vocational training where especially children from weaker social backgrounds face high risks to fail or not to enter at all.

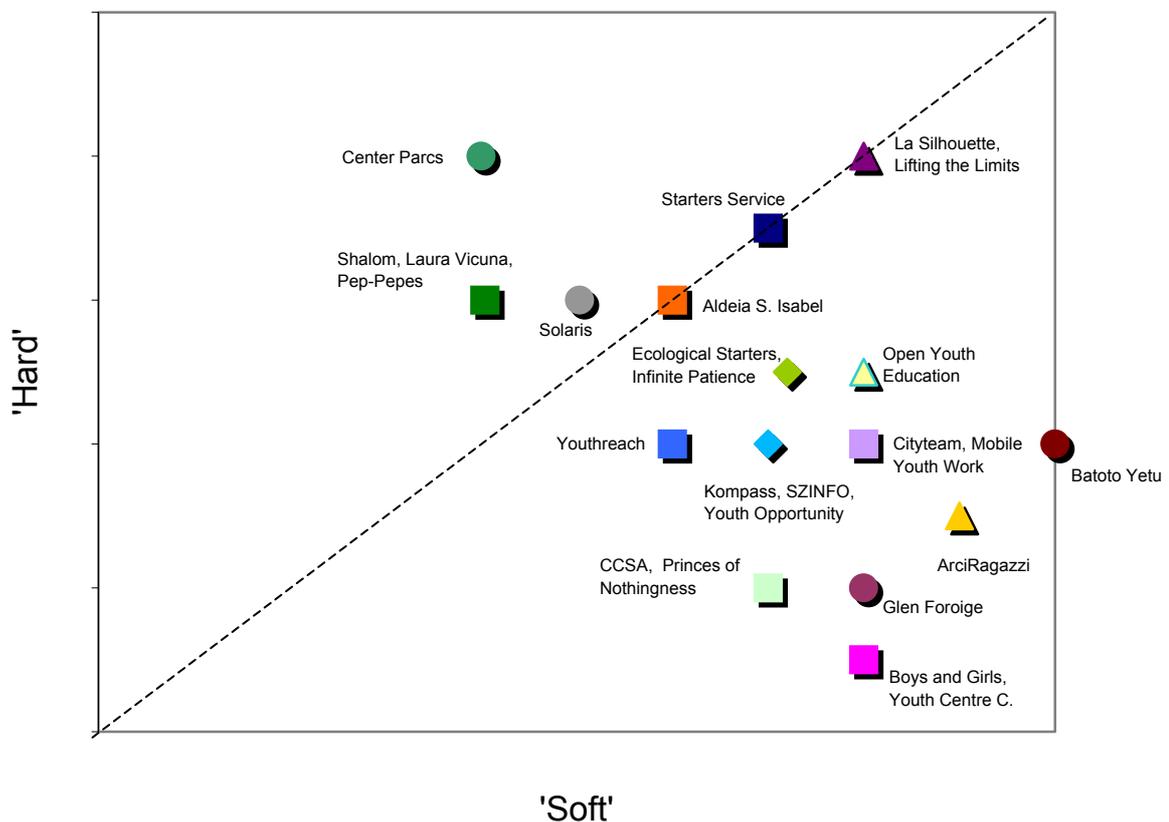
This remarks intended to show whether despite of the biased selection of exceptional case study projects relations between them and the transition regimes in which they are – marginally – embedded can be identified. It should be subject of further discussion whether this is the case and especially which other relations can be detected. For example, international differences regarding either problem group identification and success criteria of agencies.

Conclusion: active participation in transitions to work?

To conclude this analysis we want to reflect to which extent Yoyo projects succeed in introducing the principle of active participation into young people's trajectories to work. This means both the explicit articulation of biographic planning and decision-making in the project and the sustainability of such biographical decisions in terms of capitalisation on the labour market; or: to combine 'soft' and 'hard' policies. In the YOYO Working Paper 2 on young people's transition experiences two main dimensions have been distinguished: the structural axis of resources and opportunities and the subjective axis of motivation and engagement. We can now try to relate the projects to these two dimensions and we can also consider how much they do this (this relates not only to the value of 'hard' resources resulting from the project but also from the degree of structural disadvantage of the clients). As with regard to the 'rating' of participation this may appear as the hazard of quantifying

qualitative data. But perhaps the heuristic purpose lies more in sharpening our concepts and views on participation in youth transitions rather than presenting a league of good practice projects. It may also help to modify the bonds between researchers and projects that have grown over two years and to contribute to a more distanced perspective. From close distance – knowing the engagement of the workers and the difficulties of everyday practice and organisational survival – every project may appear as ‘the’ participatory project. Nevertheless there are differences in both scopes for active participation and labour market relevance and thus the integrative potential.

Yoyo Case Studies: Participation (soft) and Labour Market Relevance (hard)



This figure suggests that only four projects are located on the ‘ideal’ (diagonal) line which represents the maximum coincidence of participation and labour market relevance. These projects – yet to a different extent – succeed in providing young people with recognised qualifications in a highly participatory way. Compared to the other two projects *Lifting the Limits* and *La Silhouette* – sharing the orientation against the segmentation affecting young women, especially if facing

additional constraints such as migration and/or motherhood – succeed in combining recognised and relevant outcome with subjectively meaningful and reflected life plans and a warm family atmosphere. In the case of *Starters Service* this is less necessary due to the better starting positions of participants while the training offers of *Aldeia de Santa Isabel* are less individualised. The majority of youth work and social inclusion projects is stronger in increasing young people's motivation than in improving their career opportunities 'objectively'. The training and work projects – bound through either curricula, labour market demands or employment service guidelines – in contrast have less space to meet young people's needs in an individualised way. Interesting cases are *Infinite Patience* and *Ecological Starters*. Both projects engage in providing work perspectives in participatory way, they contribute to a re-definition of work. The fragility of their offer however derives from the fact that these activities are not officially recognised as 'real' work.

It might an objective for the local hearings to discuss with project workers and external experts and funders whether a stronger engagement of the more youth work related projects in transitions to work is desirable and under what conditions. It may also a topic to discuss the perspectives of increasing the flexibility of the more labour market related projects in order to better being able to meet young people's subjective needs.

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