Transformative learning and youth agency within present and future urban scenarios

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Abstract: The article reviews current policies relating to youth and to environmental and sustainability challenges especially within the European Union and it relates them to transformative learning issues and to the widening sphere of citizenship's rights including the rights to safe and clean environment and sustainable development. the focus of the article is on the types of agency that are relevant to the present and futures environmental and socio-economical scenarios and their relations with the human ability to unlearn established routines and to develop a critical view of dominant epistemologies to make change possible.

Key words: youth; transformative learning; agency; sustainability; urban planning

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Introduction

"Youth" and "climate change" are both relatively recent concepts and they both relate to key socio-economical dimensions such as hope, lifestyles, family-education-work transitions. Within the present urban scenarios this article reviews some of the international definitions, reporting and policies relating to youth and to environmental and sustainability challenges especially within the European Union and it relates them to transformative learning issues and to the widening sphere of citizenship's rights including the rights to safe and clean environment and sustainable development as defined by the Aarhus Convention (1998).

The article is structured in eigth parts. Following these introductory notes, the next and second part (*Urban youth, routine actions and environment*) reviews current institutional defintions of "youth". Next to such definitions, the concept of routine actions in relations to environment is addressed based on the assumption that a "climate change" transition implies and triggers "attitudes and behavioural changes" as well.

The third part (*Agency beyond dominant epistemologies*) is concerned with the types of agency that are relevant to the present and futures environmental and socio-economical scenarios and with the human ability to unlearn and to develop a critical view of dominant epistemologies to make change possible.

The ability to take decisions and to make choices is at the core of the fourth part (*Choices in context*) which briefly reviews key environmental transition urban issues such as distributed generation and co-housing.

The fifth part (*EU Youth, climate change and challenges to intergenerational solidarity*) moves into climate and demographic future scenarios and it addresses the issue of intergenerational solidarity as well as the youth dimension within European Union and international environmental policies.

Such policies highlight the central role of the "risk" category and of the influence of our ideas concerning science and technologies in addressing environmental decisions, the key topic reviewed in the sixth part (*Environmental decisions, science, technologies*). Such issues are further developed in relation to the opportunities for developing cultural criticism, the focus of the seventh paragraph (*Developing cultural criticism*).

In the final and eigth part (*Urban planning and Soft and Hard sectors of youth policy*) the article identifies soft and hard sectors of youth policies as critical issues in urban planning.

Urban youth, routine actions and environment

The definition of youth varies depending on the institutional framework. While "youth" is translated by the World Bank and the United Nations into the 15-24 age range, the "EU Youth Report. Youth - Investing and Empowering" mainly identifies as youth "the population aged between 15 and 29" (EC, EU Youth Report, 2009, p. 7). According to 2007 figures this means that some 96 million people aged between 15 and 29 reside in the European Union, just under a fifth (19.4%) of the total EU population.
According to the same report (EC, EU Youth Report, 2009), taking into consideration only young people between the ages of 15 and 25 (closer to the World Bank and United Nations definition of youth), their total population in the 27 EU Member States is 75 million.
The population share of (15 – 29 years old) young people is foreseen to drop, while that of older people will increase: in 2050 the projected share of young people is 15.3 % of the total EU population (EC, EU Youth Report, 2009). The Europe 2025 report's models for the European Union suggest that population ageing (within the 27 EU Member States) will reach a top (meaning a share of the 65+ population at around 30%) around 2050. Later some "rejuvenation" will occur although the 65+-share will only drop a few percentage points and the likely scenario is that then it is going to become quite stable, higher than the current level.
To what extent are these young people interested in and committed to environmental and sustainability issues?
In determining the degree of young people's participation in political or community / environmentally-oriented NGOs, the 2011 DG EAC Flash Eurobarometer on youth focuses on the age group 15-30 and their self-reported participation in activities of a political organisation or political party or a local organisation aimed at improving their local community and/or local environment in the last 12 months. Almost one fourth (24%) of young adults in the EU reported an involvement in an organised voluntary activity in the year prior to the survey. Almost half of them, 11% of the respondents, had taken part in the previous year in activities of a local

organisation that aimed at improving their local community / environment and 3% are active in organisations in the domain of global climate change / global warming. 6% had taken part in activities or projects with young people from other European countries and 4% mentioned activities with young people from other continents.

With key cultural, educational, and job opportunities centred in and around cities, the urban dimension plays a critical role in shaping youth lifestyles, consuming and cultural attitudes. Today European urban areas and citizens are facing increased pressure and new challenges including "an increasingly flexible labour market, the change in the family structure, the hyper-isolation of individuals, the mobility problem, the rise of stress level, and the aging population" (Harvey, 2000). Housing speculations and lack of adequate social housing policies are heavily conditioning the life and choices of urban citizens in general and urban youth in particular while one of the targets of the European Union 2020 strategy is a "new sustainable social market economy". While the provision of housing remains a competence of the Member States it appears of crucial importance to reinforce the housing dimension of the future Cohesion, Energy, and Social Inclusion Policies of the EU as article 34(3) of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union states: "In order to combat social exclusion and poverty, the Union recognises and respects the right to social and housing assistance so as to ensure a decent existence for all those who lack sufficient resources, in accordance with the rules laid down by Community law and national laws and practices". With the entry into force of the Lisbon treaty the Charter of Fundamental Rights now has the same legal value as treaties. Therefore, authors such as Harvey invite planners to focus on the key challenge of thinking today's places of pathology as potential spaces of hope, a dimension that is often linked to the ability to develop a responsible and caring attitude towards the social and the environmental context (Hicks and Slaughter, 1998). Obviously, this implies a critical perspective on definitions of citizenship as a status given by the state to the citizenry. Rather, it means taking into consideration individual and collective / cultural perspectives in relation to hope and the way human beings structure their aspirations. Although all individuals are always agents, not all agency necessarily transcends structural social barriers nor can be conceived in isolation from the local cultural context (Appadurai, 2004; Coté, 2007) where the meaning and content of citizenship can be contested (Vandenberg, 2000) and / or claimed including "the importance

of responding to the priorities and practical needs that young people themselves identify" (Bartlett, 2010, p. 313).

The way human beings structure their aspirations and are able to identify and to modify routine actions are becoming critical issues at a time where the ability to address sustainability issues requires challenging well established assumptions (Hueting, 2008). Authors such as Böhnisch and Schröer (2008) argue that a major implication in relation to social change towards individualisation and de-standardisation of life courses concerns the fact that individual biographies can no longer rely exclusively on routine actions as active processes of meaning-making become more complex and more explicit. Böhnisch and Schröer (2008) therefore suggest to analyse biographical agency based on an understanding of everyday life action as acts of biographical coping, implying reflection upon issues of social belonging and of agency. This perspective is brought one step further by Isin Engin' (2009) s focus on acts of citizenship, drawing attention to acts that may not be considered as political while their performance "instantiates constituents" (beings with claims). "The rights (civil, political, social, sexual, ecological, cultural), sites (bodies, courts, streets, media, networks, borders), scales (urban, regional, national, transnational, international) and acts (voting, volunteering, blogging, protesting, resisting and organizing) through which subjects enact themselves (and others) as citizens need to be interpreted anew" (Engin, 2009, p. 368). While the "greening" of the economy and the "ecology" jargon can be used as business perspective not necessarily implying less exploitation of nature, protecting and making resources publicly available implies, from this perspective, an understanding of participation in terms of power relations and qualified agency: as acting that implies a public dimension of subjective agency in a social perspective (not limited to the sociality of the biographical or coping perspective alone).

According to authors such as Hueting (2008) the present climate change debate should take into account three fundamental issues. In the first place, a wrong belief in a wrongly formulated growth should be acknowledged as a threat to the whole world. This implies that environmental sustainability cannot be attained aimeing at a growing production. The alternative is to supplement the National Income (NI) in all countries by a series of NI's ex asyms and a series of environmentally sustainable NI (eSNI). Intergenerational relations are crucial within this analysis as environmental sustainability is defined as the situation in which vital environmental

functions are safeguarded for future generations. Therefore, Hueting (2008) highlights that what is at stake is that the possibilities to use them remain available. This is why from this perspective environmentally sustainable national income (eSNI) is defined as the maximal attainable production level by which vital environmental functions remain available for future generations, based on the technology available at the time (Hueting and De Boer, 2001).

Since the mid 1960's, at Statistics Netherlands, the department for environmental statistics has been developing the eSNI definition, implications and statistics. The notion of eSNI has a pedagogical function as it draws attention to information about the gap between the current and a sustainable situation – between the likely and the preferred future scenario: whether we are drifting away or approaching environmental sustainability. The calculation of eSNI adopts a precautionary principle and thus future technological progress is not anticipated in the calculation of eSNI (technological progress is measured after the event on the basis of the development of the distance between the eSNI and standard NI over the course of time).

Hueting (1996) argues that there is a theoretical mistake in the (dominant) way of reasoning implied by the official policy of the countries adopting standard NI. The dominant paradigms assumes that production, must increase in order to create scope for financing environmental conservation and thus attain a sustainable situation. According to Hueting (2008) while the future cannot be predicted, the plausibility of whether (a) the actual production level and (b) environmental sustainability will develop in the same direction can be examined.

Hueting (2008) claims that such development is extremely unlikely and suggests that the opposite is more plausible because while – theoretically - the possibility that growth of production and consumption can be combined with restoration and maintenance of environmental quality cannot be excluded, in practice such combination is highly uncertain and scarcely plausible as it would require technologies that:

> (i) are sufficiently clean,
> (ii) do not deplete renewable natural resources,
> (iii) find substitutes for non-renewable resources,
> (iv) leave the soil intact,
> (v) leave sufficient space for the survival of plant and animal species and

> (vi) are cheaper in real terms than current available technologies, because if they are more expensive in real terms growth will be reduced.

Hueting (2008) acknowledges that when we take into consideration the whole spectrum of human activities it is very unlikely that all six conditions can be met. This is especially important when it comes to simultaneously realising both (i) through (v) and (vi). This is a prerequisite for combining production growth and conservation of the environment. Renewable energy is a critical example as within the present scenario it is much more expensive to produce renewable energy than energy generated using fossil fuels (Hueting, 2008).

Agency beyond dominant epistemologies

The work of scholars such as Hueting provide us with examples of the ways in which we are "governed by epistemologies that we know to be wrong", as Bateson (1972, p. 461) used to phrase it, while advocating that we should adopt a relational perspective in thinking about the world we live in. A similar perspective is adopted within urban studies by Harvey (1973) who shows that "space can be viewed as relative", it can be regarded as relational "in the manner of Leibniz, as being contained in objects in the sense that an object can be said to exist only insofar as it contains and represents within itself relationships to other objects". It is hard to imagine a caring and conserving attitude without an awareness and a sense of responibility for such relational dimension. Nonetheless, Sterling (2003) and a growing number of educational scholars stress that we are educated by and large to "compete and consume" rather than to "care and conserve" and that most educational theory and practice still supports unsustainable practices.
Within the dominant neoliberal economical model, Hendry (2010. p. 11) identifies seven key (pricing and regulation) issues facing economics in relation to "climate change externalities":
(1) the consequences for economic analyses of shifts in distributions;
(2) risk perceptions and attitudes to anthropogenic effects on climate;
(3) how to evaluate the future costs of climate changes and possible benefits from mitigation;

(4) designing mechanisms, permits and auctions to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions;

(5) global negotiations about emissions abatement;

(6) intellectual property rights and prizes for new technological investment; and

(7) modelling and forecasting climate change and reactions to any resulting price and income changes.

Hendry (2010, p.17) highlights that "the first mitigation steps need not be costly, and a rising price of carbon could lower usage and stimulate innovation. International negotiations are more likely to succeed if some actions have already been taken at the country level–potentially creating opportunities as new technologies develop".

Nonetheless, the mantra adopted by the EU and by international conventions on climate change is the notion that global problems require global solutions. However, a different view that has been advocated for some time by several leading authors (Schumacher, 1973; Lovins, 1979) is only now beginning to gain support. Global problems, such as climate change, not only require global agreement and leadership but also rely heavily on local action. This intuitively simple idea was notably recognised by the Brundtland Commission and later ratified by the United Nations in 1987 with the publication of "Our common future" (Brundtland and World Commission on Environment and Development, WCED 1987). This recognition of the importance of the local dimension and of participatory processes for improving the world's environmental problems received renewed recognition when the majority of countries at the Rio Earth Summit signed Agenda 21 where it was recognised that effective participation of local government are a determining factor in fulfilling the objectives of Agenda 21 (United Nations, 1992).

Kelly and Pollitt (2011) observe that while climate change remains a global issue, some of the best strategies for mitigation are implemented at the local level and that local government involvement in energy generation is well developed (e.g. Denmark, Sweden, and Finland) and already accounts for a significant proportion of energy supply. They show that local government can and do have a significant impact on both energy production and energy consumption and are important participants for the implementation of distributed generation (an issue to be addressed later in this paper).

Other authors such as the director of the Paulo Freire Institute Moacir Gadotti (2009, p.87) are not less concerned with a perspective of change at

the personal, local and global level although focusing on and showing a concern for five interlinked "deep crises" scenario that are sparked by the present unsustainable economical model:

> • world social crisis: cruel and pitiless poverty and exclusion of members of our own species;
> • drinking water crisis: many children die from diseases caused by the lack or treatment of water and sewage. Drinking water is becoming scarce;
> • food crisis, which will come attached to water crisis;
> • greenhouse effect crisis (climate change). If this crisis is not overcome, there will be nothing else to share;
> • energy crisis: how long will we still keep using non-renewable fuels? Oil is currently the planet's blood.

According to Gadotti (2009, p. 10)

> there is a strong link between the Earth Charter Initiative and the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. Mikhail Gorbachev, president of Green Cross International, sees the Earth Charter as sustainable development's 'third pillar'. The first pillar is the UN's Foundation Charter; the second one is the Human Rights Declaration. He asserts that the Earth Charter has to be 'universally adopted by the international community' (In: Corcoran, ed., 2005:10). The Earth Charter has been an ethical inspiration for the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (…) The ecopedagogy movement, emerging from the heart of the Earth Charter initiative, is supporting its process of discussion and diffusion, indicating an appropriate methodology that is not a simple methodology of governmental 'proclamation', a formal declaration, but the translation of an experienced process of critical participation of the 'demand' , as said by Francisco Gutiérrez and Cruz Prado (1998).

In "The Development Dictionary" (Sachs, 1994), authors such as Ivan Illich and Vandana Shiva draw the attention on the links between the development discourse as implemented since 1948 by the USA and the United Nations and the neo-colonialist attitude of liberal economies and their worldwide impact upon ideas of "needs" and "resources". Since the Seventies international United nations summits have drwn the attention to the unsustainable features of the dominant economical model and the need to operate a paradigm shift. Today's core ideas and principles of sustainability science are summarised by Martens, Roorda, and Cörvers (2010, p. 295) as:

➢ Inter- and transdisciplinary research,
➢ Co-production of knowledge,
➢ Co-evolution of a complex system and its environment,
➢ Learning through doing and doing through learning,
➢ System innovation instead of system optimalization.

Simply stated, this new approach promoted by sustainability science can be represented as coproduction, co-evolution, and co-learning. The theory of complex systems can be employed as an umbrella mechanism to bring together the various different parts of the sustainability puzzle,

a perspective that authors such as Morin, Ciurana, Motta (2002), O'Sullivan (1999) and Sterling (2003) have explored in its pedagogical implications, highlighting alternative educational scenarios "less focused on productivity", as requested by the "Smartphone" scenario presented in the "Three Scenarios to assess post-carbon transitions" by the PACT research group (Château, Bougnoux, 2011, p.27).

At the core of such an approach is the concept of sustainable life. Moacir Gadotti (2009) suggests to consider a sustainable life as

a lifestyle that harmonizes human environmental ecology by means of appropriate technologies, cooperation economies and individual effort. It is an intentional lifestyle whose characteristics are personal responsibility, commitment to other people and a spiritual life. A sustainable lifestyle is related to ethics in managing the environment and economy, trying to keep balance between the fulfilment of current needs and the fulfilment of the future generations´ needs.

How does this perspective translate into learning strategies and "more time-budget for self-accomplishment" (Château, Bougnoux, 2011, p.27)? In launching the UN Education for Sustainable Development - ESD - Decade (2005-2014) the United Nations provided a set of teaching and learning principles and tools[2].

According to UNESCO, ESD is
➢ education that allows learners to acquire the skills, capacities, values and knowledge required to ensure sustainable development;

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[2]   available at http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/

> ➢ education at all levels and in all social contexts (family, school, workplace, community);
> ➢ education that fosters responsible citizens and promotes democracy by allowing individuals and communities to enjoy their rights and fulfil their responsibilities;
> ➢ education for life-long learning;
> ➢ education that fosters the balanced development of the individual.

Such pedagogical perspectives need to be addressed in relation to the wider cultural influences on youth lifestyles (Kenway & Bullen, 2008; Edwards & Usher, 2008; Burbules & Torres, 2000) as well as to the youth condition of growing up in a world of risk and uncertainty (Beck, 1992, 2000) including the transformation of the workplace and the way it is perceived by young workers, hardly a place where to develop identity bonds and sense of purpose. This uncertainty varies according to cultural and social contexts, leading to the question of whether many young people have the cultural and financial resources to offset the risks associated with these shifts towards a lack of stability in the workplace (Harvey, 2003). At the same time, according to scholars such as Mayo (2005) and Bourn (2008), many young people have adopted a worldview in which the whole world represents the key arena for social action and therefore are engaging themselves in global campaigns such as Make Poverty History and that on climate change. Ang (1990) and Bourn (2008) identify the need to distinguish between different types of agencies and participation and argue that

> being active is not necessarily the same as being powerful, and this is particularly true in the context of globalisation. The rhetoric that might be associated with young people's citizenship in a global community generally does not match the reality. Young people are in one sense citizens of a global culture but at the same time struggle for a sense of acceptance in the local societies in which they live. For youth, this is the ultimate paradox of globalisation.

Choices in context

This paradox brings the reflection back to what to are the alternatives and the viable choices not only at the global, but also at the local level between

the "compete and consume" attitude vs. the "care and conserve" attitude. As mentioned earlier, Kelly and Pollitt (2011) show that some of the best strategies for the mitigation of the climate change effects are implemented at the local level and they offer examples from Nordic Countries about energy production and energy consumption relating to distributed generation (DG, i.e. energy that is generated close to the point where it is used). According to Kelly and Pollitt (2011) distributed generation can be categorised into three distinct groups:

1. Micro-generation is generation that occurs at the household level and includes technologies such as solar photovoltaic's, micro-chip and micro-wind.

2. Community energy initiatives usually evolving through grass-roots community led organisations and typically building power facilities under 200kW

3. Local energy systems tend to be led by local or regional government, district network operators or ESCOs operating at the meso-scale. Because of this Local energy systems tend to be much larger in capacity than both micro-generation and community energy, usually with sufficient capacity to supply a town, city or region. Because locally led solutions are often created with support from local government, they usually have strong organisational structures and develop strong networks with other locally based organisations and businesses and due to their size; they are able to leverage economies of scale usually only afforded to large centralised power plant.

The progress being made by successful local governments can be narrowed to three key factors.

First, they have all recognised the co-benefits of a local energy strategy: a reduction in fuel poverty, increased employment, improved quality of life and mitigation of uncertain fuel supplies and prices.

Secondly, successful councils have strong political leadership and employee support to implement the structural change to bring about change.

Thirdly, leading councils have gained momentum by working in partnership with utilities, private companies, NGO's and government departments to raise finance and garner support.

At the European Union level we are witnessing efforts to streamline energy and emissions standards, but even within the European Union Greenhouse Gas Emission Trading System (EU ETS), crucial climate policy issues such

as decentralised heat generation - unlike electricity and district heating – and decentralised heat generation emissions are not covered. Measures to save heat energy in residential buildings have a potential to result in effective CO_2 abatement and not just in a shift of emissions. A yearly refurbishment rate of approximately one to two percent would produce considerable energy-saving outcomes.

However, national EU regulations such as German regulations currently in force mostly prescribe standards, and thus ignore individual preferences. In order to know house owners' preferences on heating and insulation technologies and to learn more about their decisions Achtnicht (2011) conducted a choice experiment concerning energy for existing houses in Germany. The sample consists solely of owner-occupiers of single-family detached houses, semidetached houses and row houses. In the experiment, participating house owners could either choose a modern heating system or an improved thermal insulation for their house. Unlike previous studies, we explicitly included both cost and environmental benefits of energy-saving measures.

Achtnicht (2011) finds environmental benefits to have a significant impact on choices of heating systems. However, they played no role in terms of insulation choices. Achtnicht (2011) concludes that house owners are aware of their responsibility and willing to contribute to climate protection. However, there are a lot of uncertainties which hinder investments in energy-efficient technologies in the real world, but which were abstracted in the experiment. The results suggest that future policies should address the market failure of information asymmetry and reduce related uncertainties as far as possible, rather than implement further and stricter standards.

"Sharing" of information as well as of agency appears to be a crucial issue for climate- as well as social-related choices. Lietaert (2008) presents the result of a study in 14 cohousings, in Denmark, Sweden, Holland, and Belgium. The study defines Cohousings as a movement that started in Scandinavia three decades ago and is spreading in the Anglo-Saxon world since the 1990s, and more recently in the rest of Europe and in Japan, based on neighbourhood developments that creatively mixed private and common dwellings to recreate a sense of community and useful networked relationships, while respecting – to a significant degree - individual privacy.

It illustrates that the cohousing model brings significant answers to some of the above mentioned problems based on ideas and practice involving urban citizens in working cooperatively to identify and to address common challengesas well as having fun in the process.

> It clearly shows how human beings can, and have a huge advantage, to work among themselves without passing through a market relationship. In fact, existing cohousings show that cohousers tend to develop Local Exchange Systems of all sorts instead of using the consumerist way of life as first and unique alternative. (…) This success is mainly due to its high degree of flexibility, making it possible to adapt each cohousing in relation to its particular cultural context, and the specific group of cohousers themselves.

Lietaert (2008) identifies six fundamental characteristics of cohousing:

1 - Participatory process: cohousers are managing the whole process from scratch. They can be helped by experts (lawyers, architects, facilitators, etc) but they are in the driver seat. This requires much time and tough weekly meetings for years and years.

2 - Intentional neighbourhood design: the design of the cohousing site is fundamental as paths, green zone, houses, benches, parking have major influence on the quality of the community glue.

3 - Extensive common facilities: seen by many as the heart of the cohousing, common facilities and activities must be given a crucial attention. Experienced cohousers even say that it is much more important than the private dwelling where cohousers spend statistically less time than they originally thought.

4 - Complete resident management: it is fundamental that cohousers meet on a regular basis to take decisions. Decisions can be taken either by consensus, by voting or by hybrid approach. Each cohouser should get a voice, for fairness and to avoid time-bombs.The use of small working groups for the daily management of the cohousing is required.

5 - Absence of hierarchy: the existence of rankings and leaders is acknowledged by cohousers as these are human processes that naturally occur in communities. However, clear mechanisms are created to ensure that everyone gets a fair opportunity to express their ideas during meetings.

6 - Separate income: a cohousing is not a commune and in that sense every cohouser has to find a way to earn money by itself. In some cases, community rooms can be hired as office or some cohousers can be paid for occasional work.

As mentioned earlier, a key element of the social market economy should be the guaranteed access to essential quality social services, including housing. The present shortage of quality, decent housing at affordable prices as well as a widespread inability of residents to afford the costs of maintenance and renovation is affecting the dynamics of social exclusion as well as limiting the sharing of good practice in relation to climate policies. Thus young people are facing a paradox: on one hand, as briefly recalled in the following paragraphs, the European Union programmes are acknowledging and supporting youth role in society; on the other hand, urban and housing policies are providing little room for sustainable personal, collective and climate choices.

EU Youth, climate change and challenges to intergenerational solidarity

As previously mentioned, the Europe 2025 report's models for the European Union suggest that population ageing (within EU-27) will reach a top (meaning a share of the 65+ population at around 30%) around 2050. Later some "rejuvenation" will occur although the 65+-share will only drop a few percentage points and the likely scenario is that then it is going to become quite less stable and higher than the current level. The report points at two key challenges.

The first challenge concerns the forecast that ageing should affect intergenerational solidarity due to changes in family patterns (more unmarried cohabitation, later marriage, more divorce, more repartnering, smaller family sizes, later childbearing). This should trigger social protection systems in finding social cohesion to support people to interact as much as possible within and between generations, both in countries with cultural traditions of stronger or weaker family ties. Measures in support of child and elderly care as well as measures that make work-family balances more compatible can strengthen intergenerational solidarity.

The second challenge is related to the 21st century massive migration to cities. Urban population passed 50% in 2008: 3.3 billion. Urban population grows twice faster than total population growth (1.78% vs. 0.95% annual rate for 2005-2030). This should result in 4.9 billion (about 60% of total population) by 2030 (out of 8.2 billion) 1.8 billion urban population will be added in 2005-2030 out of which 1.1 billion will be added in Asia.

As mentioned in the introduction, according to the 2009 European Commission's EU Youth Report 75 million young people between the ages of 15 and 25 live in the 27 EU Member States. The first financial support for European youth activities was established in 1972 by Council of Europe's European Youth Foundation (EYF) and since 1972, over 300,000 (15 and 30 years old) young people participated in EYF-supported activities. Since the mid Eighties EC youth priority actions followed up and paved the way for Youth as a policy issue being included in the Maastricht Treaty (1993) Article 149 § 2, which states that the EU should "encourage the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors".

Until 2001 this made possible the implementation of specific programmes as the series of Youth for Europe actions that were officially launched in 1988. The White Paper on Youth adopted in November 2001 included a proposal addressed to EU's Member States in order for them to cooperate and develop four youth priority areas: participation, information, voluntary activities and specific knowledge of youth. Following up on the White Paper, the June 2002 EU Council approved a framework for European cooperation in the field of youth. In November 2005, the framework was updated to take into account the European Youth Pact including three main strands of activities: Young people's active citizenship; Young people's active citizenship; youth dimension in other EU policies.

Young people's active citizenship: the Member States have agreed on common objectives

for each one of the four priorities of the White Paper. In order to reach these objectives,

the Open Method of Coordination is applied. Other instruments to foster young people's active citizenship are the *Youth in Action programme*, the *European Youth portal* and the *European Knowledge Center on Youth Policy*. The structured dialogue aims at involving young people in policy shaping debates in relation to the European agenda.

Social and occupational integration of young people: the European Youth Pact aims at improving the education and training, the employability and social inclusion of young Europeans, while facilitating the reconciliation of career plans and family life.

Youth dimension in other EU policies[3]: the European Commission actively works to take youth into account in a number of policies, of which anti-discrimination and health are the most prominent.

Moreover, the European Union is also contributing to developing youth mobility and the recognition of their non-formal learning experience.

In December 2009, article 165 of the Lisbon Treaty spelled out a new dimension concerning the relationship of the European Union (EU) with youth, encouraging youth participation in European democratic life.

Parallel to youth policies, the implementation of Agenda 21 at the local level was promoted by the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign from 1994 with the adoption of the Aalborg Charter; in 2004 (after the Johannesburg Summit) the European Cities adopted the Aalborg Commitments recognized by the European Union as the way to achieve urban sustainability. This voluntary process led by local administration merged with current EU policies in urban and local development with the adoption of the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities under the EU German Presidency in May 2007. Nonetheless, during the Fifth Conference of Sustainable Cities and Town held in Sevilla in March 2007 the sharing of experiences among local administrations showed a big gap between wide participation in energy consumption patterns and, on the other side, of an environmental sustainability driven "from above", restricted to managers, scientists, administrators for medium and long term energy strategies, such as the "Hard way" and "Spacecraft" scenarios (Château and Bougnoux, 2011, pp. 5-9) with the first one still driven by conflicting national interests while the second one would be relying on a highly technology oriented centralized transition process. Alternatives include a "bottom-up" and "social networking" "Smartphone" scenario

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[3] From a legal and formal perspective the three key documents who play a role in shaping EU youth policies are:
- the legal basis for youth initiatives in the EU Treaty (http://eur-lex.europa.eu/en/treaties/dat/12002E/htm/C_2002325EN.003301.html);
- the Charter of EU Fundamental Rights (http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf) recognising the values for which also youth NGOs have been lobbying;
- the social, cultural and human charter, aimed at encouraging cultural understanding and exchanges involving youth and civil societies in the Euro-Mediterranean. Partnership (http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/euromed/index.htm) and in the European Neighbourhood Policy (http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/welcome_en.htm).

(Château and Bougnoux, 2011, p. 6) with limited belief in the technological potential to "save the world" while local players would "play a critical role" within a more "grass root" centred perspective.

Environmental decisions, science, technologies

Within this framework it seems important to focus back on the "risk society" concept as highlighted by the "Pathways for Carbon Transition" report referring to the increasing inability to calculate risks and to develop fully responsible attitudes as

> we live increasingly projected towards the frontiers of high technology, that no one can fully understand and for which no institution can be considered totally responsible (Giddens 1998).

According to the "Pathways for Carbon Transition" report the interpretative category of risk thus becomes a metaphor of human life itself. This is particularly relevant for environmental policy making which is generally claimed to be based on science while it seems difficult for the non-scientific community to review and examine the evidence on which the regulatory decisions stand. It is even harder to challenge that evidence when it appears not to be appropriate for citizens who are adversely affected by policy makers decisions: usually the burden of proof exceeds their options. In such situations, it may not surprise if the perceived quality of scientific information is low, the policy decisions are contested and the disagreements turn into intractable conflicts. This is not only matter of appropriate communication of science to non scientists and relationship among government and citizens. It implies a co-production of (socially robust) knowledge (Nowtony, 2003), its critical review by all knowledgeable actors and the promotion of participatory and inclusive processes.

The Aarhus Convention represents the first commitment in the world to promote environmental democracy through the implementation of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration. The Convention links human and environmental rights recognizing that the best way to enforce these rights is the change of environmental governance opening decision-making processes to a wide participation, transparency and accountability: substantially defining the new era of "eco-citizenship". The Convention is a considered a floor not a

ceiling instrument, representing the basic level of environmental rights suitable for improvement by the States signing the Convention. The European Commission has implemented the obligations of the Aarhus Convention through the adoption of two directives one dealing with right to information (2003/4/CE) the other with right to participation (2003/35/CE). The two directives contain also mechanism to grant the access to justice in environmental matters. The directive amends also public participation rights in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive (85/337/EEC) and the Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) Directive (96/61/EC) with the introduction of new definitions (public and public concerned), detailing the information's requirements and the procedure to access to justice. However, the "Aarhus Framework" has been insufficiently implemented for a number of reasons: lack of legislative up-dating, scarce enforcement of existing provisions, scarce ability of local and national administrations in dealing with inclusive and participatory processes, difficulties in the dialogue among civil society and decision makers, narrow approach to actor' involvement.

Within this context it becomes particularly relevant the reference framework mentioned earlier as proposed by the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014), for which UNESCO is the lead agency, trying to integrate the principles, values, and practices of sustainability and active citizenship, as defined during the Johannesburg 2002 Summit, into all aspects of education and learning of society at large.

From this perspective, educators and trainers have a crucial role in trying to understand not only how new technologies work but also how they can support learning and acts of citizenship through personalised, social and contextually-based interactions.

This implies exploring the trendy issues related to web 2.0 (the semantic tagging of Internet contents) and augmented reality (blending real and virtual environments) exploring at the same time issues of critical pedagogy bearing in mind Neil Postman's words of warning[4] that

> all technological change is a trade-off (…) a Faustian bargain. Technology giveth and technology taketh away. This means that for every advantage a new technology offers, there is always a corresponding disadvantage.

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[4]   *Five Things We Need to Know About Technological Change*, available at:
http://www.mat.upm.es/~jcm/neil-postman--five-things.html

In "Growing up with Google. What it means to education" (2008), Diana G. Oblinger (Educause) sums up the Net Generation as students who were born after 1982 and who have never known life without the Internet, today a crucial tool in accessing the information and relations that shape global awareness. In their own words:

- My computer is the nucleus of my workspace
- When I need information I go online
- Besides IM or email my cell phone is my primary method of communication
- I'm usually juggling five things at once.

According to Oblinger, although "educators may see students every day, we don't necessarily understand their habits, expectations or learning preferences (…) Today's students bring a consumer orientation to education, which is viewed as a commodity to be consumed, acquired and accumulated", echoing Mark Taylor (2006)[5].

Therefore, from a cultural perspective ESD implies as well to explore a different perspective that does not consider education and its related technologies a commodity. Such perspective implies in-depth and multidimensional reflection about how different issues relate to each other and it is probably best summed up by the thematic circle that echoes the informal–non-formal–formal learning continuum and it is marked by four sectors policy–practices–participants–professionalization suggested in "Tracks and tools for trading up in nonformal learning" by Lynne Chisholm and Bryony Hoskins (in Lynne Chisholm, Bryony Hoskins with Christian Glahn (eds), 2005).

Authors as Bourn (2008) are monitoring issues of global learning by young people and are offering significant indications from recent polls such as the one conducted by the Ipsos Mori in the UK. Although such findings are not available in a coparative ways at the EU level, at least six trends are worth mentioning:

• Over 50% of students see global learning as important. Over three – quarters of pupils for example, think it is important that schools help pupils understand what people can do to make the world a better place (78%).

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[5]   *Generation NeXt Comes to College: Today's postmodern student*, available at: http://globalcscc.edu/tirc/blog/files/Gen%20NeXt%20handout%2006%20oln.pdf

• There appears to be a demand for global learning, with more pupils believing global learning is important than actually experience it in school. Findings suggest that there are a proportion of young people who are not experiencing global learning in school; one in five (19%) for example, say they have not discussed news stories from around the world at all in school.

• Findings suggest that global learning has an impact: those who have experienced global learning in school are keen to understand more about the problems in the world, as well as being more likely than average to believe that what they do in their daily lives can affect those in other countries and that people like them have the ability to make a difference.

These more informed pupils also appear to be more open to people of different backgrounds than those who have not experienced global learning in school, and more likely than average to say that they try to do things to make the world a better place. Those who have not experienced global learning in school, are less likely than those who have to be keen to learn more about problems in the world and to believe that they can do things to make the world a better place.

• Two thirds of school children feel that they can do something to make the world a better place (66%), while around two in five (42%) believe that what they do in their daily life affects people in other countries.

• Half (50%) of pupils think it is a good idea to have people of different backgrounds living in the same country together. Around three in ten (28%) are neutral or unable to give a response, while 14% disagree that it is a good idea. Those who have thought about news stories from around the world from different points of view are more likely to think it is a good idea (66% vs. 50%).

• 22% of young people say they would prefer to make the world a better place than earn a high salary, whilst nearly twice as many (39%) say that making money is more important to them.

Experiencing global learning as well as engaging in acts of citizenship appears to be a crucial dimension in developing reflection, understanding and motivation concerning sustainability issues. This approach seems to provide promising educational experience both drawing from the young environmentalist NGOs and from International networks such as the Earth Charter Initiative that explicitly works towards actively engaging youth in the Earth Charter Initiative by empowering young leaders from around the world in incorporating the Earth Charter as part of their activities.

Approaches include: inviting interested individuals and organizations to organize Earth Charter Youth Groups as well as capacity building for young leaders. Examples include e-GLO, Earth Charter Global Learning Opportunity, it is a semesterlong, online leadership course on youth leadership and the Earth Charter offered since 2008 as a collaborative project between Earth Charter International and BeatBoard's (implemented in Heart In Action Enterprise's interactive virtual platform called "secured multimedia communication). Today the Earth Charter youth network involves active young people from a variety of countries, with more than 70 Earth Charter Youth Groups.

Developing cultural criticism[6]

In the words of Edmund O'Sullivan "we are in need of a resistance education that moves in the direction of cultural criticism". Such attitude takes into account evidence that the power of organisations depend on their positioning in relation to the sources of knowledge and on their capacity to understand and process such knowledge, but also that there is no single, privileged source of science or information: knowledge is also flow (Castells, 1994) and learning in partnership can be a good example of co-adaptation: it contributes both to access and to modify the flow of knowledge. This is particularly relevant for urban policies, a topic that lacks appropriate data and globally is suffering from an information crisis which is seriously undermining the capacity of most cities to develop and analyse effective policies, according to the UN-Habitat Global Urban Observatory. O'Sullivan identifies three dimensions of critical pedagogy that are in need of deep critical reflection.

To begin with, there is a need to discuss the matrix of thought that provides the dominant frame of reference and world view rooted in western European thinking, a sense of the world that views nature as a mechanism that is enmeshed in mechanical forces, a prevailing attention for the individual over the collective dimension. According to Santos (2001) mainstream economics have reduced the variety and wealth of social

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[6]   This part of the article is based upon "Social Inclusion and Intercultural Dialogue", paper presented at the Council of Europe 2nd Intercultural Forum (2004).

agency to two types of individuals, docile bodies and strangers, neither of whom is fit to sustain a social practice based on knowledge as emancipation. Not surprisingly, Santos is promoting a project to establish a Popular University of Social Movements (www.ces.uc.pt) in line with the challenges raised by the World Social Forum.

A second dimension of critical resistance education concerns what Paolo Freire called a submerged state of consciousness. To deal with the saturation of consciousness we have to remind ourselves of Marshall Mc Luhan observation "I don't know who discovered water, but it certainly wasn't the fish". As with the fish in water, we are dealing with an unprecedented saturation of information although our knowledge does not necessarily make us conscious. Information is often disconnected from usefulness. As noted by León, Burch, and Tamayo (2001) "to turn information flows effectively into useful knowledge for each organisation's development, what counts - more than hiring in experts – is to train people who have a clear vision of the organisation's purposes, to monitor and to identify the useful information, channelling it towards the right people in a timely manner". Information diversity becomes as critical to our long term survival as biodiversity.

The critical examination of hierarchical power is the third essential dimension of critical transformative learning. Modern Western historical inheritance is deeply embedded in a hierarchical conception of power based on patriarchy that comes to us in the structures of imperialism, ecclesiastical establishment, nation state and modern corporation. A critical transformative deconstruction of patriarchy is one urgent (un)learning task to address the destructive effects of patriarchy and deep power structures affecting race, class and gender throughout contemporary societies. Housing and habitat issues involve contemporary struggles that make such power tensions and polarisation particularly evident and provide challenging basis for the transformative and critical (un)learning process. As noted by Schugurensky (2002), most local urban planners, city officials, community organisers, and participants do not perceive the pedagogical potential of participatory democracy.

The methodological approach of such educational action-research perspectives acquires a crucial
role. Of particular importance are Mezirow's concepts (Taylor, 1998) of centrality of experience and

critical reflection based on critical social theory (Scott, 1997). For learners to transform their "meaning schemes (specific beliefs, attitudes, and emotional reactions)" they must engage in critical reflection on their experiences, which in turn leads to a perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991, p. 167).

> Perspective transformation is the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrating perspective; and, finally, making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings (ibid.).

Perspective transformation explains how the meaning structures that adults have acquired over a lifetime become transformed. These meaning structures are frames of reference that are based on the totality of individuals' cultural and contextual experiences and that influence how they behave and interpret events (Taylor, 1998). An individual's meaning structure will influence how she/he chooses to vote or how she/he reacts to persons who suffer physical abuse, for example.

The meaning schemes that make up meaning structures may change as an individual adds to or integrates ideas within an existing scheme and, in fact, this transformation of meaning schemes occurs routinely through learning. Perspective transformation leading to transformative learning, however, occurs much less frequently.

Mezirow believes that it usually results from a "disorienting dilemma," which is triggered by a life crisis or major life transition, although it may also result from an accumulation of transformations in meaning schemes over a period of time (Mezirow, 1995, p. 50). Meaning schemes are based upon experiences that can be deconstructed and acted upon in a rational way (Taylor, 1998). Mezirow (1995) suggests this happens through a series of phases that begin with the disorienting dilemma. Other phases include self-examination, critical assessment of assumptions, recognition that others have shared similar transformations, exploration of new roles or actions, development of a plan for action, acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing the plan, tryout of the plan, development of competence and self-confidence in new roles, and reintegration into life on the basis of new perspectives (ibid., adapted from p. 50).

Therefore two key challenges in contributing to personal and social choices envisaging social and climate preferable futures relate to the capacity to aspire (Appadurai 2004) and to the cosmopolitanism dimension. del Aguila and Vallespin (1995) advocate a cosmopolitan vs. a national perspective. The following table provides a summary of the main features of the two approaches:

NATIONALISM	COSMOPOLITANISM
1. All states should be founded on a nation and every nation on a state	1. Recognition of the contingency of specific political communities. Regulative ideal of a great political entity of global or regional proportions
2. Identification between cultural/moral community and political community (recognition of a sole principle of social and political integration)	2. Distinction between cultural/moral and political community
3. Community political identity predating its members, the basic characteristics of which are not negotiable	3. "Present" and negotiable political identity, product of constant democratic political interaction
4. Loyalty to a supposedly natural, historical and traditional community, and to the political community only in so far as it is capable of conforming to the former. The natural community is prior and superior to the political community	4. Loyalty, not to the essences of an "imaginary people", but to individual autonomy and democratic processes
5. "Substantialist patriotism": total identification with the historical community	5. "Constitutional patriotism" (Habermas): identification with the universalizable abstract principle

Though a series of intermediate positions are obvious, the table has the advantage of presenting two radical positions. Both can be referred to in order to advocate the use of violence. The recent Balkan wars provided dramatic examples of "cosmopolitan humanitarian military intervention" in responding to "nationalist local conflicts". End of the seventies-early eighties studies such as "Orientalism", by Edward Said and "Imagined Communities" by Benedict Anderson indicated as "the invention of tradition" (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992) the typical modernist approach to identity based on the creation of a new community based on the belief of belonging to a remote and forgotten one. The nationalist view analyses the nation-state on the basis of its own nationalist assumptions. This essentialist perspective is challenged by the cosmopolitan view that tries to

understand interdependence and links at the global level as well as the way in which such links have an impact onto the single nation-state. From a cultural perspective the substantialist patriotism is challenged on the basis of the key distinction between closed views of the Other on the one hand and open views on the other hand as outlined by Milton Rokeach (1960). Phobic dread of the Other is the recurring characteristic of closed views. Legitimate disagreement and criticism, as well as appreciation and respect, are aspects of open views. The latter implies not to over-generalise and the ability to change view of both oneself and others by taking into account new evidence. This is a core attitude in relation to positive conflict transformation and the promotion of community cohesion according to Galtung's nonviolent approach which includes action to change attitudes and assumptions; action to reduce violence; and action to transform conflict. Therefore a key component to facilitate community cohesion is intercultural sensitivity. In this field some twenty different assessment instruments are available today (Earley and Ang, 2003). They indicate the growing relevance of intercultural competencies and of the ability to unlearn cognitive patterns in communities that are increasingly characterized by multiculturalism and exclusion. While this dimension is often related to cultural diversity rooted in different geo-cultural origins, its relational potential appears to be particularly relevant in re-establishing consumers-producers relations, including urban-rural relations. For instance, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA, or AMAP in France, Teikei in Japan), refers to a particular relationship between farmers and consumers: the latter pay a share of the farm's expenses in return for a share of the harvest. This relationship enables small-scale commercial farmers to have a successful, small-scale closed market. In this way consumers contribute to finance farming operations by providing a guaranteed market through prepaid annual sales. CSA farms are usually small, independent, labor-intensive, family farms. In France, the first CSA started in 2001 and in 2007 their total number was close to 1000.

In relation to the capacity to aspire (Appadurai, 2004) and in the footsteps of Paulo Freire ("I do not understand human existence, and the struggle needed to improve it, apart from hope and dream"), David Hicks (1998) identifies nine main sources of hope: The natural world; Other people's lives; Collective struggles; Visionaries; Faith and belief; Human creativity; Mentors and colleagues; A sense of self; Relationships. The two latter

dimensions remind us of the importance of self-esteem and cultural rights as the actual basis to develop positive relationship and dialogue.

Frank Hutchinson (1996) suggests the following table as a frame of reference (and a useful indicator of the relation between visions of the future and of social attitudes) to further explore this issue:

Anticipations about the 21st century	Related motivational states
Hopelessness	Low self-esteem; feelings of worthlessness; impoverished creative imagination about social alternatives; flight; violence turned against self or others
Passive hope	Bland optimism; technological cargo-cultism; reductionist literacies for accommodation to 'future shock'
Active hope	Foresight; pro-social skills; appropriate assertiveness; enriched social imagination; optimal literacies for facilitating integration of the personal, the political and the planetary

The "Pathways for Carbon Transition" report helps to identify youth positioning along the temporal dimension. The prevailing youth attitude (adopted by 36% of the sample) is defined as "unbalanced" lacking a strong anchor in the present, while not yet empowered to plan towards a preferable future. This is linked to bland optimism including the belief that "the foreseeable end of oil does not appear as an issue that closely affects young respondents in their present, but rather an issue for the medium to long-term". Only 16.5% of respondents believe that we will run out of oil within the next 50 years. In terms of social justice, the young respondents believe that to provide everyone with a home and to make hospitals more efficient are the top priorities when asked by the "Pathways for Carbon Transition" questionnaire about how to invest additional resources by the year 2030. 7 out of 10 interviewees placed *the importance of money* on top of the list, emerging with almost 10 percentage points among the values retained as the most important from here up to 2030. *Competition* ranks second with 61.1%. As for future problems, *air pollution* will worsen (according to 59.6% of the sample group) while 54.5% of the sample consider the *greenhouse effect* the second worst problem of the future.

These data indirectly point at "the happiness paradox", the non-linear ratio between economic growth (for example as measured by GNP) and

subjective wellbeing (Easterlin, 2001), an individual perspective that is often unable to identify a viable change process in relation to burning socio-economic and environmental challenges.

Matthey (2008, p.234) shows that the effect of a decrease in consumption on well-being does not only depend on the absolute size of this decrease. It also depends on the individual's aspirations, and on how strongly the environment "primes" the individual towards focusing on material achievements.

These issues appear to be related to the erosion of the political and public sphere. Chantal Mouffe (1999, 752) argues that

> What is really at stake in the critique of 'deliberative democracy' (…) is the need to acknowledge the dimension of power and antagonism and their ineradicable character. By postulating the availability of [a] public sphere where power and antagonism have been eliminated and where a rational consensus would have been realized, this model of democratic politics denies the central role in politics of the conflictual dimension and its crucial role in the formation of collective identities.

Yet another paradox of the "high speed" and "hyper-choice society" (Héran, 2008).

Authors such as Illich and Héran (2008) challenge the conventional approach to economics and show that in general the advantages of speed are overestimated and are related to the assumption that in open country just as in the urban setting, the advantages of speed far outweigh the disadvantages. While in the short term speedy commuting helps to "save time", when the long term perspective is taken into account, speed's main advantage is to allow to go farther, i.e. accessing a higher number of destinations and a wide range of choices, a condition often related to a more favourable balance between supply and demand in all markets. This advantage is translated by studies such as the report by the Council of Economic Analysis (by Didier and Prud'homme in August 2007) into the growing cities and access to numerous destinations resulting into an increase in productivity, income and wealth and in a decrease of unemployment.

Does this mean that all policies "limiting mobility" (i.e. reducing the number of vehicles, favouring means of transportation which are less rapid than the automobile, or reducing investment in highways) would result into a less favourable economical situation and in an increase of the nuisance

factor? To the contrary, Héran (2008) forecasts consider as overestimated the speed advantages while the nuisance factor of speed is grossly underestimated.

Héran (2008) argues that speed increases the dimension of commuting. This contributes to urban expansion as it makes it possible to reduce the density of cities. Within conditions of such lower density, downtowns are several times less accessible from the periphery and thus considering all factors, speed in reality reduces accessibility.

However, in view of the fact that we have entered a "hyper-choice society", the key argument brought forward by Héran (2008) is that it is wrong to assume that by expanding the choice of destinations we are making a vital contribution to the economy, as choice has become so extensive in the numerous markets that behaviours by disoriented consumers by now are including slowing down decisions and transactions, as well as failing to consummate their purchases. The relational dimension previously mentioned plays a key economical role in Héran' (2008) suggestion that we have to look beyond choice in order to balance supply and demand, a the factor that begins to play a prominent role is the quality of the relationship between those who supply and those who demand. On the contrary, speed and car-dependency push social segregation. Gentrification in centrally located neighbourhoods, the pushing out of the middle class into periphery areas, the poor placement of public housing projects are related to the urban and suburban spraw, the reduction of density and the space overconsumotion generated by a culture favouring speed and marginalizing public transportation, as well as non-motorized means of transport.

According to Héran (2008)

> speed is far from representing a radiant future for our cities. On the contrary, today keeping speed under control is crucial, not only for reducing nuisances and encouraging alternatives to the automobile, but also, perhaps most importantly, for encouraging density, proximity, and diversity, thereby creating economic and social relations that are less damaging to the environment.

Therefore, a crucial issue related to climate change is how to communicate the present unsustainable patterns of human consumption. Authors such as Arnaud (2008), on the basis of the work by Georgescu-Roegen argue that it is impossible to develop a society of infinite growth within a finite world. This makes it urgent to identify effective ways of describing and communicating the impact of human activities and the scenarios that they

are likely to bring about, i.e. to identify descriptor and indicators that can be expressed in a known unit in order to be put into relationship with concrete consequences.

The human development index (HDI) developed at the end of the Eighties by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) - combining life span, years of study, and a level of production – is the most well known alternative to Gross National Product. According to Arnaud (2008), the HDI allows countries to be classified, but does not express their situation. Arnaud's alternative is focusing on synthetic indicators, the cumulative indicators of the different dimensions translated into a common concrete unit, an expression of a general equivalent: monetary value, global hectare, ton of carbon equivalent, etc.

Arnaud proposes three structure indicators, i.e. the situation of the planet at a given time, based on three indicators for three relationships: social-economic, social-environment; environment-economic. Based on these relationships, the three indicators are the following ones:

Relationships	Indicators	Dimension
Social -economic	Time spent on non-business activities/ time spent on remunerated work	Time
Social -environmental	Area taken up in catering to human needs/ areas set aside for other species	Space
Environmental -economic	Ecological footprint: equivalent space used by human beings for their needs and to absorb their waste products	Space/time

According to Aubauer (2011) the Ecological Footprint (EF) is rapidly becoming the single indicator, which converts human interactions with nature into a proportion of the Earth's surface it indirectly consumes. The EF meets only some of the challenges of a single indicator. Aubauer (2011) stresses that it indicates the demand for biologically productive land and water area with world-average productivity (in units of —global hectares) by individual people, groups of people (such as a nation), or activities (such as manufacturing a product), delivering all of the biological materials consumed by these individuals or groups and absorbing all biological wastes generated by them, in a given year. In addition to the areas

necessary for producing biological materials, such as cropland (for crops), grazing land (for animal products of pasture-fed animals), fishing grounds (for fish), forest land (for forest products), cropland is also taken into account as a site for building infrastructure (land take) and forest areas for the sequestration of emissions of carbon dioxide (CO_2), or for the production of fuel wood. Nuclear energy was considered as if it were fossil energy and is not taken into account at all now. Although facing a number of deficiencies, the EF can be compared with the —biocapacity of the Earth, indicating the supply of the existing biologically productive area on Earth.

However, becoming aware of the Earth Overshoot Day according to the EF does not imply deconstructing the deterministic Western paradigm which is at the core of dominant economical model. Sterling (2003) summarises in seven sets of questions the epistemological changes that educators need to address in order to step out of such deterministic Western paradigm in order to recognise it and to master it rather than the paradigm mastering us:

> ➢ *holistic:* how does this relate to that?, what is the larger context here?
> ➢ *critical:* why are things this way, in whose interests?
> ➢ *appreciative:* what's good, and what already works well here?
> ➢ *inclusive:* who/what is being heard, listened to and engaged?
> ➢ *systemic:* what are or might be the consequences of this?
> ➢ *creative:* what innovation might be required?; and
> ➢ *ethical:* how should this relate to that?, what is wise action?, how can we work towards the inclusive wellbeing of the whole system?

Santos and Meneses (2009) make their own contributions in deconstructing what authors such as Enrique Dussel and Anibal Quijano define as the "coloniality of power" pointing at the process of embodiment as the key focal issue in exploring power and cultural conflicts. While the idea of "buen vivir" is incorporated into Andinean pluri-national constitutions, the "myth" of economic development (Furtado, 1974) is questioned from a variety of perspectives as the "local" and the "social" dimensions of economical relations gain weight again (Coraggio, 2004). This is a challenging scenario for international development co-operation donors and agencies while their global investment, impact and role is decreasing and the sustainability dimension has not been incorporated into co-operation policies to the extent promised by the Rio 1992 Summit declarations. A

new co-operation approach is bound to address in a different way the relations between sustainability and peace culture. As Gadotti (2009) notes:

> "The Earth paradigm is a civilizing one. And since a culture of sustainability offers a new perception of the Earth, considering it as a single community of human beings, it becomes a basis for a culture of peace. Wars and violence exist because we do not know each other (Ricoeur, 1991)".

Urban planning and Soft and Hard sectors of youth policy

Finally, focusing on specific youth policies, it is worth exploring recent networking efforts specifically addressing participation issues such as the "UP2YOUTH Thematic final report on Youth participation" which builds on Walther et al. (2006, p. 44) analysis of public policies. The participatory dimension appears to be particularly relevant to Château and Bougnoux's "Smartphone" transition scenario (2011, p.6) implying enhanced socio-political agency by citizens and a "social movement towards more autonomy, more connectivity and more self-reliance" .
Fainstein (2005, p. 121) argues that

> much of planning theory discusses what planners do with little reference either to the sociospatial constraints under which they do it or the object that they seek to affect. (…) such a narrow definition of planning theory results in theoretical weakness arising from the isolation of process from context and out come.

According to Walther et al. (2006, p. 44) it is useful to distinguish between soft and hard policies as outlined in the following table:

soft		hard
Local	*Level of governance*	National
Restricted	*Funding*	Massive
Flexible	*Organisation*	Bureaucratic
Subject	*Concept of individual*	Human Capital
Participation	*Principle of involvement*	Activation
Self-realisation, citizenship	*Aim*	Employability
(Open) Youth work	*Policy sectors*	Labour market policies, education

The "UP2YOUTH Thematic final report on Youth participation" builds on this distinction. According to the report, hard policies are hierarchical, inflexible and narrowly focussed on remedying perceived deficits. They tend towards a large scale bureaucratic set of actions that rely on hard objective criteria (such as income levels, educational achievements, evidence of seeking employment) as evaluation criteria. Such policies are usually delivered by large-scale state actors (such as education and/or welfare departments) and are centrally funded.

On the other hand, soft policies have a relationship focus and prioritise the voluntary engagement of the young people who are (potentially) involved. This makes such policies more locally orientated and tailored to meet the needs of individuals through loosely structured programmes that emphasise citizenship, social and political education and self-realisation within local communities. Funding mechanisms can be complex and insecure, usually with NGOs or municipal entities in the shape of youth organisations being the primary actors.

At the soft end we find the subjective arenas of non-formal education, informal and peer learning, civil and social capital building, self-realisation and the attempt to meet the needs of the young people within their own communities. Conversely, it is also here where young people experience meaningful participation, social and cultural development, personal development and active citizenship while also learning socially valued norms and behaviours:

> la fiducia comincia proprio là, dove il calcolo razionale finisce / trust begins where rational computing ends (Pelligra, 2002).

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