



ITALIAN JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

Editor-in-Chief: Silvio Scanagatta | ISSN 2035-4983

## Widespread educational experiences and educating territories. Theoretical perspectives

Nadia Crescenzo\*

### Author information

\* Department of Human, Philosophical and Educational Sciences, University of Salerno.

### Article first published online

May 2026

### HOW TO CITE

Crescenzo N. (2026) "Widespread educational experiences and educating territories. Theoretical perspectives", *Italian Journal of Sociology of Education*, 17(3), 37-52.

DOI: 10.25430/pupj-IJSE-2026-3-3

# Widespread educational experiences and educating territories. Theoretical perspectives

*Nadia Crescenzo*

---

Abstract. In today's world, education is increasingly recognised as an extensive process that is deeply embedded in local communities and driven by the relationships that permeate everyday life. The growing hybridisation of learning spaces, coupled with the presence of multiple social actors, means that local areas are not only places where education takes shape. They are also genuine educational spaces capable of activating resources, supporting participation, and generating new forms of community welfare. Building on this, and referencing some recent publications, this contribution offers an interpretation of educating territories, structured around four core concepts that stem from different yet complementary experiences and traditions. The first of these regards community proximity, as highlighted by social spaces such as oratories, where intergenerational relationships and meaningful, horizontal educational practices develop. The second focuses on youth creativity and agency. In informal contexts, young people experiment with forms of expression and participation that can transform the meaning and dynamics of territories. The third focuses on constructing territorial educational networks that organise, connect and sustain education through the coordination, co-responsibility and integration of different stakeholders. The fourth focuses on collaborative practices inspired by the idea of education as a public resource, considering how such networks and practices can be managed, recognised and shared democratically through participatory governance models involving schools, local authorities, civic networks and citizens.

This approach presents widespread education as a dynamic continuum crossing formal, non-formal and informal education. It generates opportunities for participation and redesigns the relationship between individuals, communities and life contexts.

Keywords: Community-based Education, Youth Agency, Non-formal Education, Educational Networks, Participatory Governance

---

## **Social education and educating territories**

In today's world, which is characterised by increasing complexity, rapid transformation and profound change, education cannot be viewed as a process confined to institutional spaces or as a rigidly structured path. It is a widespread phenomenon that develops in every dimension of social life: in everyday places; in relationships that transcend borders; and in individual experiences (Pope & Houghton, 2020; Jefferson & Anderson, 2021). Educating involves not only transmitting knowledge, but also generating values, worldviews, attitudes, behaviours and skills. It involves accompanying people in constructing meaning, identity and the ability to navigate uncertain and changing contexts. In this sense, education takes the form of continuous learning, grounded in real-life situations and practical problems (Field, 2006; Edwards, 2015; Chisholm, 2024).

In recent decades, a complex debate has emerged within the field of sociology, offering a new perspective on territories as educational environments rather than merely frameworks for educational action. From this perspective, education is understood as a process arising from the interplay of spaces, relationships, social practices and local cultures. This process can continuously cross formal, non-formal and informal contexts (Giovannini, 1978; Wenger, 1998; Mongelli, 2021; Merico & Scardigno, 2022). As Edgar Morin (2016) also points out, every educational process is characterised by an inherent tension between the universal and the particular. The universal dimension regards the acquisition of knowledge, skills, interpretative frameworks, norms and values, while the dimension refers to the fact that this learning occurs at a specific time and place, within particular configurations of relationships, intentions and conditions. Consequently, education cannot be reduced to a single form, such as instruction, personal development, training or socialisation, but rather comprises a variety of evolving practices and meanings in response to changing societies and territories.

This theoretical approach did not arise in isolation but is part of a broader tradition of studies that has long questioned the institutional, reductive conception of education, restoring its social and relational nature. In line with early 20th-century American sociological reflections on educational intervention experiences, such as those promoted by Jane Addams at Hull House (Addams, 1909), and Frederic Thrasher's (1927; 1936) studies on youth groups and informal socialisation processes, the Italian sociological debate of the 1960s also drew attention to 'social education' as a process through which individuals construct an identity oriented towards participation and community life (Cesareo, 1966).

Adopting this perspective means recognising that educational processes are not confined to formal settings. They are embedded in the everyday

fabric of social and territorial relations. Peer groups, urban spaces, local services, associative and cultural practices, and work environments all play a role in shaping individuals and communities, albeit in different ways.

Studies on social education and non-formal and informal learning show how many of these processes often remain invisible as they are embedded in everyday actions, informal interactions, and relational routines that shape life in local areas (Tramma, 2019; Mottana & Campagnoli, 2020). This perspective allows us to move beyond a reductive conception of learning as an exclusively cognitive and linear process. On the contrary, education involves the whole person and develops through experiences that mobilise emotional, physical, imaginative, and relational dimensions (Crescenzo, 2022).

It is from this framework that the concepts of educating territories and widespread education emerge as keyways of understanding contemporary educational processes. Thus, the concept of educating territories takes on specific analytical relevance, as it involves building bridges between formal, non-formal, and informal education. This approach recognises the unique characteristics of different contexts and acknowledges that learning occurs across the continuum of life spaces.

Networking between educational agencies, sharing common rules and merging projects is crucial in improving the quality of learning pathways. Territories are not merely the backdrop to educational experiences. They actively stimulate, guide and shape learning processes (Capogna, 2014; Di Genova, 2023). Neighbourhoods, squares, parks, libraries, cultural spaces, oratories, youth centres, community services and civic networks generate real learning opportunities in which education takes shape through shared activities, mutual observation and participation in community life. From this perspective, education appears as an open, horizontal, and kaleidoscopic process built on the interplay of educational intent and social spontaneity, institutional action, and citizen initiative (Wenger, 1998).

Numerous studies on urban education and community learning have highlighted how cities can be viewed as educational laboratories where the density of relationships, plurality of experiences, and coexistence of differences constitute decisive educational resources (Poyntz et al., 2023). Educating territories thus become spaces where education is distributed, branching out and multiplying to produce collaborative, creative and reflective skills. This interpretation also allows us to attribute central importance to the community dimension of education. Communities are not merely contexts in which educational processes take place. They are also active participants in the learning process. They take care of spaces, address collective problems, experiment with solutions and build new ways of living together (Putnam, 2000; Donati, 2017).

From this perspective, this contribution proposes a theoretical interpretation of educating territories that brings into dialogue different strands of literature on non-formal and informal education, community-based learning and territorial approaches. It develops an analytical framework that connects these perspectives and uses it to read widespread education as a process that takes shape across multiple contexts, rather than as a set of isolated or context-specific practices.

More specifically, the article organises this interpretation around four interconnected dimensions. The first concerns educational proximity, with particular attention to local social spaces, such as oratories, where everyday relationships support the development of meaningful educational experiences. The second focuses on youth creativity and agency, understood as key elements in processes of participation and in the ways young people contribute to shaping their local environments. The third examines the construction of territorial educational networks, highlighting practices of coordination, co-responsibility and integration among different actors and initiatives. The fourth addresses the idea of education as a common good, reflecting on forms of collaborative governance and shared responsibility involving institutions, communities and citizens.

Taken together, these dimensions make it possible to read educating territories as configurations in which learning, participation and forms of community welfare are produced through ongoing interactions between actors, practices and contexts. In this sense, the article contributes to current debates by offering a way of holding together processes that are often analysed separately, and by proposing a relational and process-oriented understanding of education across formal, non-formal and informal domains.

### **Proximity-based education**

Proximity is one of the key principles of educating territories since it allows education to become embedded in everyday places and neighbourly relationships, as well as the social fabric that constitutes community life. From this perspective, the oratory is one of the most emblematic examples of educational proximity. Regardless of their operating models, all oratory experiences “are in fact united by their unique offer of proximity to the younger generations, who are loved, welcomed and supported in their historical, social, cultural and spiritual reality” (CEI, 2013: 4). An authentic oratory encourages face-to-face encounters and daily contact, gradually transforming into the sharing of languages, activities, spaces and emotions. It allows for regular attendance, enabling people to ‘inhabit’ a place, become familiar with it and recognise themselves in it (Iori, 1996).

In local Italian communities, oratories have historically been one of the most important ways in which people have created shared identities, collective memories and inclusive spaces where young people and adults can recognise themselves and develop together. The oratory plays an integral role in the relational dynamics of a broad and complex system by exercising its pastoral, educational and social functions. The Italian Episcopal Conference (2013: 44) also emphasises that “the oratory, by its very nature, is called upon to promote broad and fruitful educational alliances, building bridges”, thereby highlighting its outward-looking nature and its ability to build on the strengths of the local area. Oratories are gathering places where informal and non-formal learning takes shape through play, recreational activities, culture and socialising, forming a horizontal circle of knowledge. Dialogue, practice, experimentation and peer interaction form the basis of an educational model that recognises storytelling, play and listening as vital means of connecting the various facets of the youth experience. In contexts where traditional educational institutions may seem rigid or distant, youth clubs can identify the needs, desires and vulnerabilities of young people, offering responses that are grounded in their local area and real lives.

This is the context for the contribution by Rosangela Lodigiani and Veronica Riniolo, *Il ‘posto’ degli oratori. Una mappa delle proposte educative e ricreative per adolescenti a Milano* (2024) (*The ‘place’ of oratories. A map of educational and recreational opportunities for adolescents in Milan*). This work is arguably the most systematic attempt to interpret oratories as local infrastructures within a complex metropolis. The volume, the result of research promoted by the Fondazione Oratori Milanesi and the Fondazione Ambrosianeum, uses cartographic tools and socio-demographic analysis to reconstruct the distribution of educational and recreational opportunities for 11–19-year-olds in Milan’s twelve deaneries, with a particular focus on the ‘ten-minute oratory city’: a network of 146 oratories spread throughout the city that can be reached on foot or by a short journey. This creates a geography of proximity that is not only pastoral, but also deeply urban. Using urban maps, analytical data sheets and quantitative data, the authors demonstrate how the educational, sporting and recreational activities offered by the oratories are intertwined with those of other youth centres, as well as with the socio-economic transformations of the neighbourhoods. This highlights both areas where the offer is saturated and “shadow zones” where local educational facilities are less prevalent or inconsistent.

However, the research is not limited to mapping existing practices. Through the interdisciplinary approach of sociology, pedagogy, demography and urban planning, combined with quantitative and qualitative methods, the volume explores the educational needs of boys and girls, the forms of participation and belonging generated in oratory courtyards, the role of

volunteers and educators in co-designing activities, and the extent to which oratories engage with the local community and collaborate with other educational institutions. On the one hand, it reveals the well-known but often overlooked fact that attendance declines with age. On the other, it shows that this is offset by adolescents and young people becoming more responsible and participating in service-oriented activities. Furthermore, the increasingly multicultural and pluralistic profile of the 'oratory people' makes these spaces ordinary places of encounter between different histories, backgrounds and faiths, where inclusion and integration are practised in both informal activities and structured proposals. From this perspective, Milanese oratories are seen as territorial devices that inhabit the neighbourhood, listening to its needs and resources. They are not just 'parish spaces' but platforms of proximity where daily educational care, spontaneous socialising and co-responsibility between adults and young people intertwine. This contributes to the concrete construction of an educating territory.

Interpreting speakers as active local figures deeply rooted in the daily life of urban communities provides a snapshot of Milan and suggests a broader perspective. Recognising the educational value that develops outside of school shows that education is the lifeblood of local areas, nourished by relationships, networks, and proximity. This does not imply marginalising schools but rather highlights the need for structured dialogue between all the members of the educational community (Mongelli, 2006; 2021; Merico & Scardigno, 2022).

This vision is perfectly encapsulated by the image of an open, flexible and 'low-threshold' oratory: a place that can move around the local area, enter public spaces, engage in dialogue with schools and local institutions, form alliances with associations and services, and listen to the voices of the educational community. An oratory that opens up to the street can act as a bridge between different worlds, reaching those who do not have access to more formal channels of education. This represents a concrete translation of the widespread education paradigm (Boccacin, 2022). However, this openness requires careful consideration. The drive towards networking must not obscure the unique identities of the various stakeholders. For oratories, this means safeguarding their educational mission, which is centred on relationships, human resources, and promoting paths of integral growth. The challenge lies in balancing openness and identity, dialogue and differences, ensuring that plurality leads to shared wealth rather than dispersion (Az-zolari & Zappella, 2020).

This is the context in which Don Bosco's educational legacy can be understood. As Pietro Braido (2003) recalls, the founder of the Salesian Oratory recognised that education is also a 'work of environment'. A 'total' educational environment aimed at all young people, regardless of background.

Creating healthy and stimulating spaces fosters the development of life skills, such as empathy, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills. These skills are essential for dealing with complex situations and preventing risky behaviour (Margiotta, 2011). In the Salesian system, the relationship between the animator and the young person lies at the heart of the educational network. The animator, who is a young person among young people, acts as a mediator between the young person and the educator. In this process, the animator transitions from being 'educated' to becoming 'self-educated', taking on responsibility and developing an awareness of education (Castaldi, 2025). This perspective is rooted in the concept of generative education, where personal growth is defined as "knowing how to be, knowing how to choose, knowing how to become" (Margiotta, 2014: 224).

For younger generations and society as a whole, education is increasingly viewed as an area requiring shared, cross-cutting responsibility. Some contributions to the contemporary debate have drawn attention to the role of education in countering the impoverishment of reflective, imaginative, and dialogical abilities. These processes are closely linked to the dynamics of individualisation and social fragmentation. Along these lines, educational initiatives that are grounded in local communities, especially neighbourhood-based ones such as youth clubs, are considered essential for fostering educational alliances and developing communities that can support the balanced growth of younger generations (Lodigiani & Riniolo, 2024).

### **Creativity and youth agency**

In the debate on educating territories, youth creativity calls for a radical rethink of the ways in which education is delivered in social contexts. Creativity cannot be understood as merely an expressive dimension or an individual trait. It must be interpreted as a social practice that emerges from the interplay of individuals, spaces, relationships, and territorial opportunities. Creativity is therefore a means by which young people can learn, participate and contribute to the transformation of their living environments, exercising forms of agency that impact both their own trajectories and community dynamics.

Numerous sociological studies of youth work and non-formal educational contexts (Coussée et al., 2009; Cooper, 2017; Morciano & Merico, 2017; Jeffs & Ord, 2018; Morciano, 2021; Merico & Scardigno, 2025) show how young people develop creative and initiative skills, particularly in environments that promote participation, experimentation and experiential learning. Youth centres, community spaces, cultural associations and voluntary practices are therefore widespread educational experiences that can support

informal and non-formal learning processes and generate social capital in local areas.

Within these spaces, creativity plays a key relational role. Studies by Poyntz and colleagues (2023) on youth creative practices in urban areas demonstrate how grassroots cultural production can transform spaces into places that are recognised as such by the community. These places support processes of learning, nurture bonds, and facilitate the symbolic regeneration of territories, rendering contexts narratable and shared. This process simultaneously promotes the development of transversal skills and the regeneration of local communities, particularly in areas characterised by social fragility or a lack of structured educational opportunities. Creativity is a territorial resource capable of activating new connections between individuals, institutions and spaces. Other research on youth work emphasises that low-threshold, non-prescriptive, flexible contexts encourage progressive involvement, from observation, to active participation and taking responsibility, to co-designing activities (Cooper, 2018; Ord et al., 2022; de St Croix et al., 2023). In these environments, young people's sense of agency develops over time through concrete experiences that allow them to experiment with different roles, negotiate meanings, and hone their relational, organisational, and civic skills. Such community spaces often operate as testing grounds, providing opportunities to experiment with roles, languages and forms of participation that are difficult to find in more structured institutional contexts. Young people can exercise temporary leadership in these environments, test themselves in conflict management, experiment with cooperative decision-making methods, and confront limitations imposed by the local context. Creativity plays an important educational role since it allows young people to explore possibilities without fear of immediate punishment for mistakes, which are instead recognised as part of the learning process.

This interpretative framework provides the context for the Italian work of Daniele Morciano and Fausta Scardigno, *Youth Cultures and Transformative Spaces* (2023). It is a study of the creative processes that generate change and analyses these processes as factors of social change within informal and non-formal contexts frequented by young people in Puglia. The observed spaces are interpreted as learning environments in which creativity manifests as a daily, collective practice, capable of generating empowerment and participation. Young people learn through their actions in the local area, helping to redefine social ties, a sense of belonging, and forms of citizenship. This involves an ongoing interplay between the expressive and political dimensions of community life.

The narrative dimension plays a decisive role in these processes. Through narrating experiences, producing shared languages and constructing collective imaginaries, young people contribute to the meaning of places and

strengthen the link between memory, identity and territory. Creative practices produce forms of learning that extend beyond the individual, fuelling processes of mutual recognition and social cohesion.

The impact of youth creativity and agency also extends to the civic sphere. Associative and voluntary experiences, which are often intertwined with creative pursuits, help to foster active citizenship and a sense of shared responsibility. This strengthens the ability of communities to respond to emerging needs. Recent studies have highlighted the social and economic value produced by such practices, which affect the quality of community life and the sustainability of local welfare systems (OECD, 2024). Territories can be viewed as spaces where young people's creativity becomes a collective skill, spreading education into everyday life and intertwining with social practices to contribute to the transformation of communities.

The impact of young people's creative practices on local areas does not necessarily manifest itself through immediately visible or quantifiable changes. It often takes the form of a widespread, progressive impact affecting relationships, representations of places, and modes of interaction between individuals. The ongoing presence of youth activities helps to make certain spaces more desirable, strengthen neighbourhood networks, reduce the generational divide and foster a sense of familiarity between residents and their surroundings. Creativity acts as a stabilising and regenerative social force.

In many contexts, young people involved in associations and projects act as informal mediators between institutions, services, and local communities. Through their presence in local educational spaces, they help translate languages, needs and expectations, thereby facilitating dialogue between groups that often find it difficult to communicate with each other. This mediating function develops unintentionally but progressively, representing a significant form of territorial agency that strengthens the educational nature of the contexts in which it is exercised.

### **The network dimension of educating territories**

Alongside oratories as places of educational proximity and youth spaces as environments for creativity and agency, there is a third form of widespread education: the intentional construction of local educational networks. Education emerges not so much through localised devices, but through the activation and coordination of a variety of subjects, practices and places that collectively transform the territory into a shared learning environment.

Reflections on collaborative research, for example, show how knowledge production processes can have an educational value when based on listening to everyday practices and the shared construction of meanings (Bian-

chi & Fabbri, 2018). Education emerges as a social practice that takes shape through collaboration, collective problem solving and shared reflection. Studies on urban laboratories, creativity labs and similar initiatives demonstrate that the direct involvement of individuals in exploring, narrating and transforming local spaces fosters civic, relational and symbolic learning, while contributing to redefining the territory's meaning (Poyntz et al., 2023).

One example of this approach is the project analysed by Francesca Bianchi (2025) in Certaldo, Tuscany, called *Viceversa: Towards a Circular Educational Model*. A key part of the project involved creating a local cultural space designed to be a permanent meeting place for educators, citizens, associations, and local institutions. Similar to oratories or youth centres, this space functions not only as a venue for activities, but also as a context in which relationships are formed, practical knowledge is exchanged, and informal learning takes place. Participatory training courses have been set up within this space, consisting of public round tables, training sessions and periodic meetings. These courses are aimed at building a collective skill: learning to plan together. These are accompanied by expressive and physical workshops based on artistic, theatrical and performative practices, which are used as educational tools to encourage reflection, active listening and questioning of stereotypes related to gender, disability, cultural differences and social inequalities. Learning takes place through experience, the body and relationships, with the aim of building a shared educational culture.

Participants communicated with each other through musical improvisation, juggling exercises and performance techniques reworked from Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed.

Further insight into local educational networks can be gained from studies on participatory processes and community care practices. These studies show how participation, when structured as a cooperative and reflective experience, has educational effects on cognitive, emotional, and relational levels (Bianchi, Filoni & Yildiz, 2024). Learning occurs through building trust, mutual recognition and managing differences together, thereby strengthening the capacity of territories to promote inclusion and well-being (de St Croix & Doherty, 2023; Bianchi & Yildiz, 2025). By directly participating in the design and management of spaces, individuals learn to cooperate, negotiate and recognise others, thereby contributing to the development of communities that are more aware and reflective.

These experiences are united by the idea that education is not an additional or external intervention, but an integral part of the social processes that shape territories. They give shape and continuity to what would otherwise remain fragmented: informal initiatives, scattered skills and latent resources present in local communities.

In this sense, establishing local educational networks involves fostering connections rather than merely increasing interventions. It entails linking individuals, knowledge and spaces, transforming the local area into a setting for education and its social infrastructure. This ability to forge links between actors, practices and contexts paves the way for viewing education as a common good, as well as for the collaborative governance forms that will be discussed in the next section.

### **Education as a common good and collaborative governance**

Given that education is a widespread process spanning formal, non-formal and informal spaces, it is becoming increasingly inappropriate to view it as a sectoral service or the sole responsibility of individual institutions. Various theoretical and research contributions therefore converge in proposing an interpretation of education as a common good – a collective resource built through shared social practices, caring relationships, and widespread responsibility across territories.

This perspective allows us to challenge the proprietary and functionalist conception of education based on the ideas of provision and control, shifting the focus to the processes through which education is produced, maintained and regenerated in everyday life. Studies have shown that common goods do not exist in isolation, but emerge through practices of ‘commoning’, i.e. cooperation, negotiation and shared management (Ostrom, 1990; Bollier & Helfrich, 2015).

In the context of education, this perspective encourages us to view education as an interconnected process involving individuals, institutions, territories, and local cultures, rather than as a set of standardised services.

This is the approach adopted by the book *Educational Commons. Democratic Values, Social Justice and Inclusion in Education* (edited by Gianna Cappello et al., 2024) which proposes a paradigm shift in our understanding of education as a field of collective practices (Velicu and García-López, 2018; Locatelli, 2019). The book is the result of the European SMOOTH Educational Spaces project (Horizon 2021–2024) and brings together examples of collaborative governance and educational co-production from various European contexts. It analyses the processes of participation, care, and co-responsibility that emerge between schools, local authorities, and civic networks. The authors interpret education as a process of ‘commoning’, a shared social action that generates relational value, inclusion and social justice, thereby restoring the community and democratic dimensions to educational contexts.

In this context, governance becomes a key issue. Governing education at a local level involves more than just coordinating interventions or aligning

projects. It requires the establishment of collaborative processes that can bring together a variety of stakeholders, interests and perspectives. Studies on collaborative governance and the co-production of public policies have demonstrated that the most effective solutions to complex problems emerge from the collaboration between institutions, civil society and citizens (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Pestoff, 2012). When applied to education, this perspective suggests that the quality of educational processes depends on the ability to form alliances, build trust, and encourage mutual learning among those involved.

In the Italian context, the debate on community education pacts and territorial networks has reinforced this view further, demonstrating that such initiatives are concrete attempts to translate the concept of education as a public resource into shared governance practices. These initiatives transcend the organisational sphere, providing spaces for dialogue where educational values, priorities and responsibilities are negotiated (Azzolari & Zappella, 2020; Boccacin, 2022).

A recurring theme in these studies is the recognition of educational practices that emerge 'from below'. These practices, which are often developed outside institutional circles and are rooted in local areas, contribute significantly to the construction of the educational common good, yet frequently remain on the margins of public policy. Studies on community welfare have emphasised the importance of these practices in maintaining the social stability of local contexts, particularly in situations of inequality and fragility (Donati, 2013; Kazepov, 2015). Governance oriented towards the common good must therefore value these experiences and support them without absorbing or normalising them.

Together, these contributions outline a vision of education as a collective, generative practice that takes place in local areas. Educating territories are the result of educational 'commoning' processes that evolve over time through relationships, conflicts, negotiations, and shared learning. Considering education as a common good and governance as a collaborative process means acknowledging that the quality of education hinges on communities' ability to nurture it collectively, fostering local welfare systems capable of addressing the complexities of the present.

## **Conclusion**

This contribution has proposed a new perspective on education in territories, viewing them as complex configurations in which learning takes shape through the interaction of proximity, youth agency, local networks and practices oriented to the common good. From a theoretical perspective, the article offers a framework that brings together different strands of the

debate on non-formal and informal education, showing how they are connected rather than separate. By linking relational dynamics, organisational processes and forms of local governance, it highlights the broader picture within which widespread education develops and acquires meaning.

In this light, experiences such as oratories, youth centres, associative initiatives and community-based practices play a significant role in generating learning opportunities, fostering participation and supporting the quality of social life. Education grows through everyday interactions, is sustained by the involvement of different actors and is continually reshaped by the creativity and initiative of young people.

At the same time, it is important to avoid overly optimistic interpretations. Educating territories do not automatically produce inclusive or equitable outcomes. Socio-spatial inequalities, fragmented policies and limited resources continue to shape the conditions under which these experiences take place. There is also a risk that responsibilities are shifted onto local actors without adequate support at institutional level.

For this reason, the challenge is not simply to encourage the proliferation of local initiatives, but to ensure that they can be sustained over time, recognised within broader educational frameworks and connected to policies capable of addressing structural issues. Interpreting education as a common good, in this sense, means recognising the importance of shared responsibility, while also acknowledging the need for coordination, support and long-term commitment.

## References

- Addams, J. (1909). *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets*. New York: Macmillan.
- Ansell, C. & Gash, A. (2008). "Collaborative governance in theory and practice". *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 18(4), 543-571.
- Azzolari, B. & Zappella, E. (2020). "Oratori e alleanze territoriali: nuove sfide per una comunità educante". *Formazione & insegnamento*, 18(3), 188-197.
- Bianchi, F. (2025). "New Educational Paradigms after the Pandemic? The Challenge of the Educational Community". In *Proceedings of the Third International Conference of the journal Scuola Democratica. Education and/or Social Justice. Vol. 1: Inequality, Inclusion, and Governance* (pp. 93-102). Associazione "Per Scuola Democratica".
- Bianchi, F., Filoni, M. & Yildiz, G. (2024). Processi partecipativi e salute mentale: opportunità e sfide. In T. Tarsia, A. Nucita (eds.), *Saperi professionali e co-ricerca nei servizi. Otto saggi di scrittura collettiva* (pp. 77-88). Milan: FrancoAngeli.
- Bianchi, F. & Yildiz, G. (2025). Communities and common Consciousness: Exploring commonalities for Pionta Park. In C. Levy and M. Alberio (eds.), *Reimagining the Urban Commons in Italy: Reform, Social Innovation, and Transformation*, Volume 19. Leeds: Emerald Publishing.
- Boccacin, L. (2022). *Generare relazioni di comunità nell'era digitale: la sfida delle parrocchie italiane prima e dopo la pandemia*. Brescia: Morcelliana-Schole.

- Bollier, D. & Helfrich, S. (2015). *Patterns of commoning*. Amherst: Levellers Press.
- Braido, P. (2003). *Don Bosco prete dei giovani nel secolo delle libertà* (Vol. 1). Rome: LAS.
- Capogna, S. (2014). "Verso una comunità educante". *Q-Times Webmagazine*, 6(3), 1-10.
- Cappello, G., Siino, M., Fernandes, N. & Arciniega-Caceres, M. (a cura di) (2024). *Educational commons: Democratic values, social justice and inclusion in education*. Palermo: UNIPA Springer Series.
- Castaldi, M. C. (2025). "L'Oratorio oggi, ponte possibile tra educazione formale e informale. I pilastri dell'educazione secondo il Rapporto Delors nell'ipotesi ermeneutica ed ecologica dell'oratorio". *Formazione & insegnamento*, 15(2 Suppl.), 1-xx.
- Cesareo, V. (1966). [Review of *Per una corretta educazione sociale*, by E. Schwarz]. *Studi Di Sociologia*, 4(4), 45-457.
- Chisholm, L. (2024). *Vite che apprendono*. Calimera: Kurumuny.
- Conferenza Episcopale Italiana (2013). *Il laboratorio dei talenti*. Milano: Paoline.
- Cooper, T. (2018). Defining youth work: Exploring the boundaries, continuity and diversity of youth work practice. In P. Alldred, F. Cullen, K. Edwards, & D. Fusco (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of youth work practice* (pp. 1–15). London: SAGE
- Coussée, F., Verschelden, G. & Williamson, H. (2009). *The history of youth work in Europe: Relevance for youth policy today* (Vol. 3). Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Crescenzo, N. (2022). "The Education/Learning Dilemma. The Non-Formal Dimension in European Youth Policy". *Scuola democratica*, 13(3), 507-526.
- de St Croix, T. & Doherty, L. (2023). "It's a great place to find where you belong': creating, curating and valuing place and space in open youth work". *Children's Geographies*, 21(6), 1029-1043.
- Di Genova, N. (2023). "Il ruolo dei territori educanti e della resilienza nei progetti di contrasto alla povertà educativa". *Quaderni del dottorato sird*, 344-367.
- Donati, P. (2013). *Sociologia relazionale. Come cambia la società*. Brescia: Editrice La Scuola.
- Edwards, R. (2015). *Rethinking contexts for learning and teaching: Communities, activities and networks*. London: Routledge.
- Fabbri, L. & Bianchi, F. (2018). *Fare ricerca collaborativa. Vita quotidiana, cura, lavoro*. Rome: Carocci.
- Field, J. (2006). *Lifelong learning and the new educational order*. Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books.
- Giovannini G. (1987). I molti tempi, luoghi, attori della formazione: un'analisi del policentrismo a partire dall'offerta. *Studi di Sociologia*, 25(1), 3-17.
- Iori, V. (1996). *Lo spazio vissuto. Luoghi educativi e soggettività*. Florence: La Nuova Italia.
- Jefferson, M. & Anderson, M. (2021). *Transforming education: Reimagining learning, pedagogy and curriculum for the post-digital age*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Jeffs, T. & Ord, J. (2018). *Rethinking outdoor, experiential and informal education*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Kazepov, Y. (2015). *Rescaling social policies*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Locatelli, R. (2019). *Reframing education as a public and common good. Enhancing democratic governance*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lodigiani, R. & Riniolo, V. (2024). *Il "posto" degli oratori. Una mappa delle proposte educative e ricreative per adolescenti a Milano*. Milan: FrancoAngeli.

- Margiotta, U. (2011). *Prefazione. Supplemento Formazione & Insegnamento*, IX, 3, 9.15. Lecce: Pensa MultiMedia.
- Margiotta, U. (2014). *Quale bambino, per quale scuola...nel 2020?* In Martiniello L. (a cura di). *L'infanzia in una stagione di crisi* (pp. 213-228). Napoli: Guida.
- Merico, M. & Morciano, D. (2017). Critical youth work for youth-driven innovation: A theoretical framework. In M. K. Smith, N. Kristensen, K. F. Stöckel, & N. R. Johansen (Eds.), *Youth as architects of social change: Global efforts to advance youth-driven innovation* (pp. 43–74). Cham: Springer.
- Merico, M. & Scardigno, F. (2022). *Il continuum dell'educazione. Teorie, politiche e pratiche tra formale, non formale e informale*. Milano: Ledizioni.
- Merico, M. & Scardigno, F. (2025). *Giovani e processi educativi tra disuguaglianze e resistenze*. In R. Bichi, S. Leone, & V. Riniolo (a cura di), *Giovani, disuguaglianze e pratiche di resistenza. Letture intersezionali* (pp. 75–90). Bologna: Il Mulino.
- Mongelli, A. (2021). *Altri modi di apprendere. Sociologia, psicologia pedagogia in dialogo*. Napoli: Diogene Edizioni.
- Morciano, D. (2021). *Youth work in Europa e in Italia: Conoscere per ri-conoscere l'animazione socioeducativa*. Milano: Mimesis.
- Morciano, D. & Scardigno, F. (2023). *Culture giovanili e spazi trasformativi. Una ricerca sui processi creativi che generano il cambiamento*. Limena: Libreria Universitaria.
- Morin, E. (2016). *Insegnare a vivere: manifesto per cambiare l'educazione*. Rome: Raffaello Cortina Editore.
- Mottana, P. & Campagnoli, G. (2020). *Educazione diffusa: Istruzioni per l'uso*. Firenze: Terra Nuova.
- OECD. (2024). *Measuring what matters for social inclusion and well-being: The social economy and social innovation*, Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Ord, J., Carletti, M., Morciano, D., Siurala, L., Dansac, C., Cooper, S. & Zentner, M. (2022). "European youth work policy and young people's experience of open access youth work". *Journal of Social Policy*, 51(2), 303-323.
- Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the commons*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pedone, F., Moscato, M. & Tummillo, N. (2024). *Verso una comunità educante. Riflessioni trasversali tra scuola, università e terzo settore*. In Giancola O., Lagomarsino F. & Siino M. (Eds.), *Education as commons, Selected paper from AIS Education international mid-term conference 2023* (pp. 98-113). Associazione "Per Scuola Democratica".
- Pestoff, V. A. (2012). Co-production and third sector social services in Europe: Some concepts and evidence. *Voluntas*, 23(4), 1102-1118.
- Pope, C. & Houghton, M. (2020). *Rethinking Education: The Challenge of Digital Technology*, London: Routledge.
- Poyntz, S. R., Sefton-Green, J. & Fitzsimmons Frey, H. (2023). *Youthsites: Histories of Creativity, Care, and Learning in the City*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Putnam, R. D. (2001). Social capital: Measurement and consequences. *Canadian Journal of Policy Research*, 2(1), 41-51.
- Thrasher, M. F. (1927). *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Thrasher, M. F. (1936). *The boys' club and informal education*, New York: New York University Press.
- Tramma, S. (2019). *L'educazione sociale*. Bari-Rome: Laterza.

- Velicu, I. & García-López, G. (2018). Thinking the commons through Ostrom and Butler: boundedness and vulnerability. *Theory Cult Soc* 35(6), 55-73.
- Wenger, E. (1998). Communities of practice: Learning as a social system. *Systems thinker*, 9(5), 2-3.