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CITIES AND YOUNG PEOPLE

CONCLUDING REPORT

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1. Introduction

The URBACT Programme (2002-2006) is part of URBAN, the Community Initiative that has promoted innovative strategies to regenerate cities and declining urban areas.[1] In total, 210 cities have been assisted by either the predecessor Urban Pilot Projects (1989-94), URBAN I (1994-99) or URBAN II (2000-06). URBACT aims at capitalizing on all these experiences by developing, amongst other forms of exchange, transnational networks and working groups.

In order to capitalize and disseminate products resulting from the activities of URBACT networks, the Managing Authority of the Programme has proposed the idea of thematic seminars. The proposal was approved by the URBACT Monitoring Committee on 11th March 2005. In short, a thematic seminar aims "to bring together several URBACT networks working on a common theme or a common problem."[2]

The first thematic seminar was held in Copenhagen, on June 17-18 2005. I was asked to be in charge of organization, preparation, coordination and monitoring of the event as a whole.[3] Didier Michal from the URBACT Secretariat assisted me as coordinator. Technical assistance was provided by Anne-Christine Lantin, also from the URBACT Secretariat. In Copenhagen, John Vinter Knudsen was in charge of the preparations. Also, the Expert at the URBACT Secretariat Pauline Geoghegan assisted with all her knowledge about the networks.

24 representatives from 5 networks and 2 working groups as well as from 18 cities and 9 countries took part in the seminar. A debate was organised as a part of the seminar with various representatives from Copenhagen, among them four young people from AMUCK, a mentoring project in Nørrebro, Copenhagen. Furthermore, the seminar was attended by an external Expert, Jean-Claude Richez who gave his comments at the end of the seminar.

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[1] http://www.urbact.org/srt/urbacten/home
[2] URBACT Monitoring committee (2005).
[3] Personal website, in Swedish but with summary in English:
http://webzone.lut.mah.se/projects/MS1

Finally, the whole URBACT Secretariat took part in the seminar, including the Director, Jean-Loup Drubigny.

This report brings the seminar to a conclusion. It builds on a background report which I wrote as working material and part of the preparatory work, building in its turn on all the documents sent in to me from the networks and working groups. However, first of all it capitalizes on the presentations at the seminar, so rich in content regarding ideas, suggestions, examples and experiences. Moreover, the report refers briefly to some examples of good practice, but only ones put forward at the seminar and, moreover, ones which I've found sufficiently described (verbally or/and in writing).

2.   Preparation of the seminar – in retrospect

An URBACT thematic seminar has the following four objectives, in short: [4]

1. "to allow each network to learn about the current state of reflections in other URBACT networks dealing with the theme in question …"

2. "to enable each network to enrich its reflections on the theme thanks to an input of knowledge from the other networks …"

3. "to develop favourable conditions for the production, at the level of the Programme as a whole, of a collective European reflection on problems linked with the theme in question …"

4. "to formalize and disseminate products as they emerge from the exchanges of the networks, during the course of the Programme …"

To succeed with these objectives, it is stated that "an URBACT thematic seminar is intended to be a workshop". Learning and enriching each other by working together on the basis of each others' achievements in URBACT networks summarises the idea, rather than sitting and listening to presentations. Thus, the idea demands quite a lot from the participants who are expected to be well prepared and active in the discussions. That requires in its turn a certain amount of preparatory work. A background report had to be produced, fulfilling requirements pointed out in the URBACT Monitoring Committee (MC) document outlining this seminar:[5]

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[4] URBACT Monitoring committee (2005).
[5] Ibid.

1) Introducing the problems to be discussed at the seminar and linking them with major existing work on the theme at the European level

2) Positioning the work underway in each participating network with respect to three or four major cross-cutting issues of interest to all the networks

3) Proposing a framework within which these issues may be addressed at the seminar.

The background report was supposed to be produced by an expert, in a role which includes being "in charge of organization, preparation, coordination and monitoring of the event as a whole". I was asked to become that expert in charge and I accepted it with delight because I do think it's a good idea, in particular the way we were urged to learn by working together in workshops instead of listening passively to a number of presentations.

To succeed, I began with what the MC document describes as to "develop a common format which the networks will use to write their syntheses and contributions to the exchanges". This became a questionnaire, developed in co-operation with the seminar coordinator, Didier Michal. I wanted the answering of these questions to be a part of the learning and enrichment process. It was supposed to give the networks an opportunity to learn about themselves and enable me, again in terms of the MC document specifications, to "find out about the current stage of reflections within each of the participating networks". In a way, the seminar started with the answering of the questions.

The completed questionnaires formed the basis of the background report. They were the prime source for my attempts at "positioning the work underway in each participating network". That positioning, using comparisons, led me to propose the framework for the seminar, or in other MC document words to "develop the seminar's approach to the issues, finding questions that cut across the activities of the networks involved".

The background report started with a description of my work with the preparation of the seminar. Secondly, it then contained an explanation of how I had dealt with my role. That seemed necessary to clarify because of my work as a Thematic Expert for one of the networks involved, "Young people – from exclusion to inclusion" (YPFETI).

Thirdly, the invited networks and working groups were presented. In the next three chapters, I positioned the networks with respect to the three cross-

cutting issues of focus, methodologies and outcomes. On that basis, the seventh chapter presented and explained my selection of three seminar topics. In the eighth chapter, I made some remarks about the European relevance of the three seminar topics by referring to the major existing work at the European level. Finally, the ninth chapter specified the framework of the seminar.

In general, the background report got a positive reception. However, it became also clear that it didn't do full justice to the participating networks and working groups. In a working document aimed at the participants of the seminar solely, that shouldn't imply any big problem as the participants had the opportunity to comment, criticise and make additions. In fact, I took the liberty of being a little questioning in the background report, simply in order to provoke an intensive, lively and fruitful discussion at the seminar.

The preconditions for this final report are different. It won't be aimed at the seminar participants solely but at a much wider and public audience. Moreover, the seminar participants won't get the opportunity to comment and claim corrections. For that reason, I won't try to position the work of the networks and working groups in this final report. I have far too little information in order to be able to do that.

The answers from the networks and working groups to the questionnaire differ substantially. Moreover, a lot of the other information from the networks and working groups (newsletters, reports, guidance documents etc) has been written for internal use. Thus, for an outsider there is often a lack of explanations and background information to make it fully understandable. For a similar reason, it's not always so easy to follow the development of the networks and working groups as the documents too often lack information about dating and authors.

For all those reasons, positioning the networks and working groups for a wider and public audience would require a lot more work, far beyond my task. Without carrying out that additional work, there is a significant risk to make misunderstandings and misrepresentations. I won't take that risk. It's not fair to the networks and working groups.

This decision of mine also depends on a mistake I think we made in the invitation to the seminar. The seminar was not meant to cause new production, the networks and working groups were told repeatedly. Instead, they were urged to use what had already been produced on the theme. In my view, that seriously underestimated the efforts needed to achieve positions,

in particular regarding those networks and working groups that don't deal with the theme of young people directly. The fact that networks and working groups write case studies and arrange workshops doesn't automatically engender positions. Positions have to be produced, often requiring quite a lot of work, also in order to raise support and reach agreements.

Thus, it was a mistake to expect the seminar participants to be able to represent certain positions reached in their respective networks and working groups. Such an expectation could perhaps be raised regarding the networks that deal with the theme of young people directly, at least when they approach the end of their work, but it could hardly be expected from the others.

That changes the approach to the seminar participants. Most of them didn't represent any well-prepared positions, worked out by their networks and working groups. To insist on such an approach would create disappointment because the seminar didn't fully meet that expectation. Instead, they took part because of their experience, skill, commitments and, indeed, knowledge about various practices. In fact, the participants proved to be highly qualified on the seminar theme. Hence, the great asset of the seminar, indeed the basis of this final report, should be described as highly qualified individuals, to various extent aware about the work in their networks and working groups but not necessarily fully representative of certain positions.

3. Presentation of the networkgroups

URBACT consists of 17 thematic networks. Five of them were represented at the Copenhagen seminar: Young people – from exclusion to inclusion (Malmö), Young Citizens' Project (Bristol), UDIEX (Venice), SecurCity (Rotterdam) and Citiz@move (Seville). Moreover, four Working Groups have been established within URBACT. Two of them were represented at the Copenhagen seminar: SUDC (Liege) and Secucities EuroMediation (Turin). In sum, five networks and two Working Groups took part in the seminar. In order to avoid misunderstandings caused by terminology, I will in this report refer to them all as networkgroups. Thus, seven networkgroups took part in the Copenhagen seminar. Information about all of them is available at the URBACT website.[6]

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[6] http://www.urbact.org/srt/urbacten/home

The **"Young people – from exclusion to inclusion"** (YPFETI) deals with good examples of how to change the situation for young people from exclusion to inclusion. As indicated in the title, the networkgroup has a specific focus, although still broad, and doesn't deal with young people in general. In fact, the focus is even more demarcated than that because it deals with teenagers in schools or those supposed to be there (drop-outs). Thus, the YPFETI doesn't focus directly on, for example, unemployed young people, but unemployment could still be important because many of the young people concerned have unemployed parents. Also, the area where they live could be characterised by a high level of unemployment. To sum up, the YPFETI focuses on young people at upper school age who live in areas characterised by social exclusion.

The networkgroup had its kick-off in February 2004. That was also the starting point for the first round of work with good examples, going on during the whole of 2004 and resulting in 19 case study reports. The first round ended at the annual conference in January 2005 where the first draft of the final report was presented and discussed.[7] Thereafter, the second and last round of work with good examples started. During spring 2005, good examples were documented and evaluated at local conferences, in total 17 case study local reports. These formed the basis for the exchange conference, recently held in Gijón, May 20-22.

During the rest of the year, the work with the final report will continue on the basis of new case studies, received information about the cities and many comments. A new draft version will be presented to the coordinators and local researchers at a conference in Helsinki in December. Final versions of a scientific report as well as operational guidelines will then be completed. The whole result will be disseminated at a final conference in April, bringing the networkgroup to a close.

The **"Young Citizens' Project"** (YCP) deals with the participation of young people in decision-making, but it has a less pre-determined focus than YPFETI. In fact, at the networkgroup level, the YCP doesn't focus on any particular group or category. Instead, the focus is on structures:

> The focus of the YCP is not 'young people who for what reason ever do not participate', in fact; we do not know this and have not done any research right at the start of the project to prove that young people do not participate. Instead the focus is on the structures within the cities that allow or inhibit the

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[7] Young people–from exclusion to inclusion – M Stigendal (2005).

participation of the young people. This concept was part of the baseline report: to let the cities involved formulate what problems they have and give young people an opportunity to work on this (and maybe challenge the problem conception) and develop ways that would better fit their needs.[8]

Thus, the YCP deals with young people who are inhibited by structures within the cities to participate in decision-making. What that means in terms of particular groups or categories is up to the partner cities to decide. It's not necessarily because of poverty or involvement in crime that YCP pays attention to the young people. It's because of the structures in the particular partner city that inhibit them from participating in decision-making.

The aim of YCP is "to produce a 'toolkit' of best-practice models for/of young people's participation."[9] This toolkit will provide statutory bodies with "a practical guide to including young people in decision-making processes and devolving power to them."[10] Practical recommendations will be made for engaging young people in the roles of active citizens, defining success, overcoming limitations, producing better communication and facilitating better communication between young people in different member states. The toolkit will be based on the work of young people.

The networkgroup had its kick-off meeting in September 2004. Before that, all the partners had answered a questionnaire and the findings were presented at the meeting.[11] The intention was "to outline commonalities and differences between network partners' demographic, social and economic circumstances, current youth provision and interests in and approaches to young people's inclusion".[12]

During the autumn, focus groups proposals were prepared by the partners on the basis of guidance documents, issued by the lead partner. The first round of focus groups took place in February 2005. A first international working seminar was held in April 2005. At that seminar (in Evosmos, Greece) knowledge drawn out by the first set of focus groups was validated and capitalized through workshop discussions. Also, the work started on finding out about content, target audience and format of the toolkit. Besides three

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[8] Young citizens' project (2005c).
[9] Young citizens' project (2004a), page 3.
[10] Young citizens' project (2004e).
[11] Young citizens' project (2004a).
[12] Young citizens' project (2004a).

more rounds of focus groups, a second working seminar will be held and also a final conference. The networkgroup is due to end in June 2006.

UDIEX-ALEP (Urban Diversity and Inclusion Exchange) "aims at identifying good practices in combating social exclusion in urban environments and developing a learning network to disseminate and promote good practices in Europe."[13] The networkgroup has a wider focus than YPFETI and YCP. However, within this wider focus, a number of cities target young people specifically; namely the cities of Vantaa (Finland), Turin (Italy), Rotterdam (Holland) and Dublin (Ireland).

In order to identify good practices, the networkgroup runs a series of focussed workshops.[14] The first one was held in Finland, March 2004, on the topic "Children and Young People at the Margins", resulting in a report written by the independent Expert Robert Arnkil.[15] On the basis of the workshop a set of good practices were identified and compiled in a case bank.[16]

> It seems that a major common theme in all of the projects is trying to integrate the efforts of otherwise fragmented work concerning youth (or other social challenges). Another very important theme is the participation, empowerment and activity of the target groups themselves, be it youth, children, families, or other.[17]

The workshops after that have addressed other topics.[18] The last workhop will be held in June 2006, in Crotone (Italy), focussing on the topic "The role of ICT for the promotion of Social Inclusion". Besides identifying good practices, UDIEX-ALEP also runs a series of workshops on what good practice means and how to learn from it. For that reason, a paper was written in April 2005 by Robert Arnkil.[19]

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[13] UDIEX-ALEP (2005a).
[14] Eight such topic based workshops are scheduled in UDIEX-ALEP (2005b).
[15] UDIEX-ALEP – R Arnkil (2004a).
[16] UDIEX-ALEP – R Arnkil (2005a).
[17] UDIEX-ALEP (2005a).
[18] The topics "Participation and Empowerment", "Long- term unemployment and Discrimination in the labour market", "Enterprise Development", "Integration of Ethnic Minorities" and "The role of culture for social inclusion". In the autumn, a workshop is planned to be held on the topic "Cultural Diversity, Tourism and Urban Regeneration".
[19] UDIEX-ALEP – R Arnkil (2005b).

Citiz@move deals with the main theme of "The inclusion and participation of citizens". The networkgroup is divided into three working groups working with the sub-themes "The inclusion and participation of ethnic minorities" (WG1 consisting of 4 cities), "The application of good governance and transparency in the inclusion of citizens" (WG2 – 6 cities) and "The application of IT for citizen participation" (WG3 – 10 cities). Each one of these working groups will consider the situation of young people. However, particular workshops have been conducted by WG1, led by Aarhus,

> " … on how to empower youth and what it takes to include and promote participation of the youth in community activities, particularly in areas with social and economic problems."[20]

At the time of the seminar in Copenhagen no verified result had yet been presented by Citiz@move on this particular theme.

The **SecurCity** networkgroup started officially in February 2004 and has as its key theme "Urban security and crime prevention". The main objective is described as to "produce knowledge and share experiences on urban policies for urban crime prevention and security."[21] The networkgroup is divided into five working groups, operating in parallel, of which one is called "Youth Crime and Education".[22] Two workshops have been held in that working group, the first one in The Hague (March 2004) and the second one in Glasgow (March 2005). Reports have been written about both these two workshops.[23]

The **SUDC** is a working group that "seeks to study the stigmatisation of certain categories of populations in our urban centres and to identify the responses provided in terms of the adaptation of local policies to accommodate cultural diversity."[24] The SUDC had its kick-off meeting in

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[20] Citiz@move (2005).

[21] From the URBACT website:
http://www.urbact.org/srt/urbacten/flb/minisite/show?location.id:=1697

[22] The other ones being "Commercial investment in a public setting", "Drugs and Insecurity", "Citizen Participation" and "Fear of Crime, disorder and environment". Unfortunately, the networkgroup hasn't answered the questionnaire which makes it more difficult for me to do full justice in assessing its current status regarding the theme of young people.

[23] SecurCity (2004) and SecurCity (2005a).

[24] SUDC (2005).

December 2004. At the time of the seminar in Copenhagen, it was still in its beginning and no results had been achieved yet.[25]

The **Secucities EuroMediation** deals with mediation practices adopted and tested in partner cities. According to the proposal, the intention is to "enrich the debate and, through the organisation of seminars and the production of information materials, promote the knowledge and the comparison of mediation practices." At the time of the seminar in Copenhagen, EuroMediation had just been approved by the Monitoring Committee and not yet really started.

To conclude, these short presentations show the differences between the networkgroups. At the time of the seminar, most of the networkgroups hadn't come that far in their own processes. For this reason, most of the participants were not able to represent any pre-determined positions on behalf of their networkgroups, and in particular those that don't deal with the theme directly. Only YPFETI and YCP deal with the theme of young people as their main theme.

4. Identifying the seminar topics

In the background report, I identified three seminar topics with regard to the three earlier chapters about focus, methodologies and outcomes. The idea behind the division of these three chapters was to answer three questions:

- **Focus**: What do the networkgroups deal with?

- **Methodologies**: How do they deal with it?

- **Outcomes**: What have they achieved by dealing with this?

I tried to answer these questions in the previous three chapters of the background report, but given these answers, what could be of common interest in each one of the chapters?

In the **first** chapter, the one on focus, I identified perception of young people. Some of the networkgroups address that topic more or less explicitly. For example, the workshop in Glasgow of SecurCity included a vote about how initial thoughts of young people are expressed. The questionnaire issued by YCP to its partners clarified attitudes of adults as the main barrier to

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[25] According to SUDC (2005).

young people's participation. YPFETI has a particular chapter in the draft version of the final report which addresses the issue of perception, titled "What do we think about the young people?"

Perception of young people is definitely a crucial concern to all the networkgroups. Every focus is based on perceptions of young people. For example, what do we mean by youth crime? It's easy to blame young people for destroying property or robbery but what about, for example, truancy? Should truancy always be regarded as bad behaviour? Or could truancy sometimes also be regarded as a justified and perhaps also quite healthy reaction to a defective educational system? Obviously, answers to such questions depend on the perception of young people. What do we believe that they are capable of doing? Could young people really be capable of revealing shortcomings of educational systems? Or do those that start with truancy and continue with crime have evil souls? Are they predestined to a useless life because of the conditions that they grow up in?

Perception of young people includes assumptions about the abilities of the young people, who they are, what they are able to do, why they are as they are, if they should be blamed for anything, in that case what etc. All of us have perceptions of young people. They could be contradictory or more uniform. They could be made aware and elaborated. Or they may operate more unconsciously. Preconceived notions make us think and act in certain directions rather than in others. Our perception of young people has a bearing on how we relate to them, talk to them and what we expect from them. Hence, digging up the assumptions and discuss them was the objective of the first workshop.

The **second** topic was derived from the chapter in the URBACT report on networkgroup methodologies. Is there a single methodological topic that could be a concern for all the represented networkgroups? Yes, I do think that. All the networkgroups seem to underline the need for participation, however accomplished in different ways. Also, the networkgroups have collected a rich variety of examples at the level of individual cities. Even more than that, some networkgroups have created their own examples at the networkgroup level.

In YCP, young people are involved in evaluating case studies. This is described as the main element of the networkgroup.

> The work of our network is structured around focus groups ('laboratories') conducted in each partner city. Over the course of the project each partner is

to run four focus groups in which young people will act as researchers on, or evaluators of, a practice in which young people play a role in decision-making.[26]

The guidance documents include explanations and instructions of these focus groups, as well as hints on how to facilitate them.

At the workshop of SecurCity held in March 2005, 20 youngsters (between 13-15 years) took part in an interactive session which consisted of different steps. The route that followed was guided by a cartoonist who used pictures to illustrate what people were saying.[27]

In WG1 of Citiz@move, young people participate in the local workshops conducted in each of WG1's 4 cities. At the local workshops held in Aarhus, a third of the participants have been young people representing projects and associations. They play the role of "bringing fresh ideas and input which sometimes the authorities and the grown ups cannot see".[28]

The **third** topic stems from the chapter in the background report on outcomes. As expected, due to the current status of work, mostly the YPFETI has had time to achieve conclusions which are also explained and supported. Based on the findings of the case studies, the YPFETI partners have agreed about five success criteria, with a general and European validity:

1. **"Empowerment**: In order to be regarded as good, examples have to strengthen the ability of young people to act by themselves, think independently, make choices, be responsible and stand up for their rights. Top-down solutions, treating young people as objects, have to be rejected.

2. **Strengthened social relations**: Confidence and trust have to be strengthened in the relations between schoolteachers and young people, but also between schoolteachers and parents. This has to be recognised as a necessary precondition for real learning.

3. **Structural changes of schools**: Examples of how to change the situation for young people from exclusion to inclusion cannot be hived off to a

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[26] Young citizens' project (2005b).

[27] For more information about the Glasgow workshop, see
http://www.urbact.org/srt/urbacten/flb/minisite/show?flbid:=572

[28] Citiz@move (2005).

space of their own, leaving the structures of school intact. School structures are part of the problems and have to be changed as well.

4. **Co-operation with the local community**: Schools have to be opened to the local community and get involved in co-operation with citizens, groups, associations (NGOs), companies and institutions. This openness needs to embrace an open mind towards local culture (youth, ethnicity etc) as well, treating it as an asset.

5. **A changed approach to knowledge**: The obsolete approach that takes knowledge for granted and only deals with a passive digestion of predetermined facts, has to be replaced by one that put the emphasis on critical thinking, creativity, ability to take stands, knowledge creation etc. Young people has to be engaged in discussions about approaches to knowledge, what to learn, how to learn it, the needs of knowledge, definitions of knowledge etc."[29]

The identification of these five success criteria as well as the agreement about them is regarded by YPFETI as "the most important result so far" for the evaluation of local practices. In order to be regarded as good, practices have to comply with some of these criteria, preferably all of them. Inversely, practices that run counter to one or more of the criteria will not be regarded as good.

These five success criteria convey the message that a change from exclusion to inclusion doesn't only put demands on young people, but also on the content and preconditions of social inclusion. In the YPFETI networkgroup, inclusion means society. Thus, society has to change as well. The change of situation from social exclusion to social inclusion shouldn't mean the adaptation of young people to a pre-determined and unchangeable society. That is made particularly clear in the last three criteria. The change from exclusion to inclusion has to involve the change of society as well.

How will the other networkgroups deal with the corresponding issues of change? What is participation supposed to lead to? What are the young people to take part in? Has every institution or process in society the same significance in solving the problem of young people lacking participation? And are the problems of, for example, crime possible to solve if the institutions and processes remain unchanged? Are the solutions to the problems of social exclusion and lack of participation only a matter of young people having to

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[29] Young people – from exclusion to inclusion (2005b).

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adapt? If networkgroups don't claim changes of society, but only of young people, is it not a risk that they contribute to maintaining the causes to social exclusion and in that way run counter to their own objectives?

5.   The European relevance of the topics

Besides identifying the topics to be discussed at the seminar, it's been included in my task to "link them with major existing work on the theme at European level".[30] That applies to the work on the **European Youth Pact**, proposed in October 2004 by the Heads of State and Government of France, Germany, Spain and Sweden (Jacques Chirac, Gerhard Schröder, José Luís Zapatero and Göran Persson). The strategy was identified as such in the Commission's White Paper *A new impetus for European youth* and the subsequent Council resolution of 27 June 2002, which set the framework for youth policy in Europe.[31]

At the Spring European Council of 22-23 March 2005 the pact was adopted by the EU Heads of State and Government as one of the instruments contributing to the achievement of the Lisbon objectives. The strategy of the European Youth Pact addresses a range of issues and policy areas that are of high concern for young people, aiming "to improve the education, training, mobility, vocational integration and social inclusion of young Europeans, and to facilitate the reconciliation of working life and family life."[32]

Following up the adoption of the Youth Pact by the European Council, the European Commission adopted a Communication on European policies concerning youth (30 May 2005). The Communication sets out how the Pact can be put into operation, defines actions to strengthen active citizenship of young people, addresses a youth dimension in other policies, lists community programmes relevant to youth policy and examines how to further involve young people in the political process. "For the first time, the European Union can employ a truly integrated policy approach to young people", the Communication concludes.[33]

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[30] URBACT Monitoring committee (2005).
[31] European Commission (2001).
[32] http://europa.eu.int/youth/news/index_1970_en.html
[33] European Commission (2005).

Analysing the various documents of the European youth policy, it's not difficult to find support for the three seminar topics selected above. Indeed, I do find the three seminar topics in harmony with the framework for youth policy.

Firstly, the whole framework for youth policy breathes a new belief in young people. "It is time now to regard youth as a positive force in the construction of Europe rather than as a problem", the White Paper states.[34] In this quotation, the Commission clearly expresses and takes stand for a particular perception of young people. The emphasis is no longer on what young people need to get or on disciplinary actions. In the first place, young people have something to offer. They are not only in the making, but also a capacity in their own right.

"How does one get credit for personal experience that education systems do not formally recognise?", the Commissioner Vivianne Reding, responsible for education, culture and youth asked in a booklet about the new youth policy, published by the DG for Education and Culture in 2002. Obviously, such a question rests on the belief that young people have personal experiences of a value, acquired apart from what they learn at school.

Secondly, participation is classified by the White Paper as the "first and foremost" priority theme. "Participation should be developed primarily in the local community, including schools, which provide an ideal opportunity for participation. It must also be extended to include young people who do not belong to associations." The White Paper doesn't rule out any level in promoting participation. Pilot projects to promote participation of young people will be proposed at every level of government.

During 2003 and 2004, the Council adopted common objectives to improve participation. By the end of 2005, the Member States are due to report on the progress. In its Communication, the Commission highlights participation as one of the keys "in building healthy societies". Thus, URBACT networkgroups able to disseminate knowledge on good examples of participation will be fully in tune with the priorities of youth policy in Europe.

Thirdly, the framework for youth policy calls for changes of institutions and processes of society. For example, the demand for a boost of complementarity between formal and non-formal education would imply profound changes. So would "developing a labour market which favours the

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[34] European Commission (2001), page 5.

inclusion of young people".[35] However, the demand for profound societal changes was stated more explicitly by the small group of youth research experts[36] from different parts of Europe, asked by the European Commission to take part in the White Paper consultation process.[37]

The researchers have a great belief in the strengths of young people.[38] The perception of contemporary young people as passive, evidenced in the decline in the political participation of young people, is rejected, as "all evidence suggests that young people put a growing emphasis on shaping their lives. They do it as individuals, as couples, as participants in changing social constellations."[39] Contemporary young people learn to live another life than expected by the older generations. To understand and bolster these new patterns, the researchers call for a far more holistic youth policy based on the fact that "young people's lifeworlds no longer make sharp divisions between learning, working, loving, playing and living."[40] It's described as a "quality of interconnectivity that is becoming characteristic of the ways young Europeans live and experience their lives today."[41]

As a consequence, new forms of participation have to be developed: "The present challenge of participation is to make the social and collective moments and implications of individual life projects more visible, building bridges where individuality can be realised in a social context."[42] The researchers highlight the need for explorative and innovative research on such developments.

6.   The seminar and its results

Three workshop sessions were held at the seminar in Copenhagen. During each one of these sessions, the participants at the seminar were divided into

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[35] European Commission (2001), page 20.
[36] Lynne Chisholm, Maurice Devlin, Manuela du Bois-Reymond, Gestur Gudmundsson, Irena Guidikova, Francine Labadie, Carmen Leccardi and Howard Williamson.
[37] http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/whitepaper/contrres/research_en.html
[38] http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/whitepaper/contrres/research.pdf
[39] Ibid, page 8.
[40] Ibid, page 3.
[41] Ibid, page 4.
[42] Ibid, page 8.

three groups. One of the groups discussed "Perception of young people", the second "Participation of young people" and the third "Participation and inclusion – in what?". The group discussions were supposed to generate a result. After the session, each group presented the result of the discussions, using a flip-chart.

Two more sessions were held, consecutively, each one with different group divisions, building further on each other and presented in the same way. The change of group compositions was supposed to stimulate different group dynamics, but also give everybody the opportunity to discuss each topic and meet each other, at least once. All the presentations (in total nine), lasting around 10 minutes each, were recorded. Also, photos were taken of all the flip-charts, in sum 33 sheets, and the presenting groups.

The three seminar topics were not chosen because of their strict detachment from each other. On the contrary, they are fundamentally related. Thus, it's not possible to discuss them entirely separately and, indeed, that was not the intention. They were chosen as points of departure for discussions which certainly amalgamated at different points. For that reason, my analysis below doesn't follow the workshop divisions strictly but builds on all the workshops. For example, whenever something important has been said about perception, I have used that as a basis for the chapter below "Perception of young people".

I've listened carefully to all the presentations, transcribed and analysed them. Simultaneously, I've looked at the photos of the flip-charts and the presenting groups. This totality of recordings and photos has been very useful. On this basis, I have actively categorised, selected, traced connections, listened to the tacit languages (explanation below), unfolded the hints, made choices, ripped it all into pieces and put it all together. For that reason, the chapters below don't mirror everything being said which means that I'm the one to blame for any possible misunderstandings, hasty conclusions or other failures.

However, I have tried to remain faithful to the presentations and all the statements below, building on what I have grasped as general agreements at the seminar. In a way, the seminar resulted in a lot of fragments and my task is to integrate them into a whole. Hence, I hope that the participants recognize the fragments and find the suggested whole plausible as well as useful. To strengthen the links to the presentations, I've tried to use similar words and expressions. Moreover, I've used a lot of quotations. In case of

deviations or special additions, I have tried to make that clear. Sometimes I've made my own additions, but then it's clearly mentioned.

Perception of young people

Young people are often seen as problematic. All the groups testified to that. Such perceptions of young people, which I suggest that we call problem-oriented, are very wide-spread and influential. Usually, it's targeted at certain categories like for example immigrants, lone parents and residents in poverty areas. Also, it differs between countries and periods of time. However, the core of this perception is seeing young people as problematic.

"There are too many penalty-based approaches", one group stated, linking it to an underlying perception of young people as problematic. Problem-oriented perceptions also explain the ignorance towards young people without problems:

> "When we have young people with no problems, no one's interested in them. Young people need to have problems before people decide that we need to have money, resources or we should be working with these young people."

Thus, before measures and policies are launched, there has to be a profound rethinking of perceptions. Basically, it's not the young people that are problematic but the perception of them. The problem-oriented perceptions have to be revealed, highlighted and questioned. Otherwise they continue to operate without us being aware of them. Because they do exist and have a force. That was confirmed and agreed by the participants at the seminar, which should be regarded as a very important achievement.

"Collectively we all agreed that perceptions need to change of young people", one of the group stated. And concretely not only one perception is needed, valid for all. Perceptions need to be specific and in accordance with reality, accounting to the real circumstances in which young people live. Young people are not a whole group which should be perceived in the same way. There are groups in society amongst young people who are more marginalised and oppressed. Many different factors need to be taken into account, like categories (ethnicity, age, target groups), culture, values and differences between cities.

But beneath all these specific circumstances, the seminar also highlighted a common core. Just as the problem-oriented perceptions mean seeing young people as problematic at the core, the new core consists of potentials. Basically, young people must be seen as a positive force, having potentials.

In contrast to the problem-oriented perceptions, I suggest that we call them potential-based perceptions.

The seminar assessed the scope and strength of this potential as well. It's not a force limited to reproducing the existing society. Young people should be seen as agents for social change. The potential of young people implies the ability to contribute to innovation of society. The potential-oriented perceptions make young people needed. We need to say that loud and clear.

This perception also counteracts seeing young people as passive, not interested, not wanting to get involved. The majority of young people, given the opportunity, do want to be active, the seminar participants claimed. Again, the circumstances in which the young people live have to be taken into consideration.

In spite of all the good reasons for pursuing potential-oriented perceptions of young people, the problem-oriented ones are very difficult to overcome. Strong causes continue to preserve them. The media was mentioned. Bad news sales and the media always have a lot of negative perceptions and stories about young people. For decades there have been negative portrayals of young people. In that ways, the potential of young people is concealed and overshadowed.

Another reason underlined is the gap that often exists between young people and adults. One of the groups wanted to point to adults in general as the problem. "Adults are the problem", the group claimed. I don't fully agree about that. It tends to make us insensitive towards important differences among adults in terms of class, background, gender, ethnicity, life situation and so forth. Instead of pointing out adults, I find it important to highlight the problem-oriented perceptions as the main problem, indeed represented by many adults.

Participation of young people

One of the groups asked a fundamental question:

> "Why do we include young people in participation? I think we have to ask that question. Why do we do it? Is it because we want it? Is it because government wants it? Is it because young people want it? We have to make sure that it's OK for young people to opt for that. Young people don't have to participate."

It's certainly important to let young people decide about their own participation, but crucially, the answer depends on our perception of young people, which the group also mentions. There is a strong link, the group states, between how young people are perceived and the participation they can have at different levels.

In short, I would like to add, a problem-oriented perception allows young people to participate to the extent that problems are solved. Problem-oriented perceptions tend to plead for solutions from above. In contrast, potential-based perceptions tend to believe in the competences and potentials of young people. Young people are included in participation because it is believed that they can contribute and make an impact. Hence, potential-based perceptions tend to favour bottom-up solutions.

In fact, the link is interdependent. The perception of young people depends on their participation as well. That was stated in the previous chapter about perceptions. The change from problem- to potential-oriented perceptions requires the bridging of distances between adults and young people. That has to be done by the participation of young people. Thus, the changes of perceptions and participation have to go hand in hand.

Such bridging of distances often fails due to problems with communication. As one group said, "there is a lot of inability by adults to actually listen to young people and understand what they are saying." For that reason a lot of knowledge is needed.

> "We need to know what's going in. What are the real issues? What are the real problems in terms of young people? Why do they not want to get involved? Why are they not participating? Do we have the right knowledge, do we have the expertise?"

The lack of understanding could also make adults feel threatened. For that reason, mutual grounds have to be found or created, that are "less threatening to adults as well as welcoming and helping young people to get involved."

Another group drew upon the theory about tacit and explicit knowledge, used by the UDIEX-ALEP networksgroup, to explain the difficulties. The theory was presented at the seminar by the Expert Robert Arnkil, but also in a report written by him on behalf of the UDIEX-ALEP networksgroup.

> "Tacit knowledge refers to 'experiential' knowledge, something that is 'ingrained' in the work practice of the person, and cannot be readily

> expressed in words. It is constituted both from 'know how' and ingrained beliefs, perceptions, intuitions, 'hunches' and mental models of the individual. This type of knowledge is difficult to share, and articulating it calls for special methods, like using metaphors, pictures, symbols, stories.

> Explicit knowledge, on the other hand, exists as words, sounds, audiotapes, documents, codes, algorithms, product specifications and manuals, and can be shared and disseminated effectively. The message coming from the knowledge management debate is that first there is the challenge of 'articulating' the practice (from tacit, embedded to explicit), and this is usually underestimated and oversimplified. Secondly, it is important to have a good transformation process by 'learning by doing'."[43]

Young people often communicate by using tacit knowledge. Adults are much more explicit in their communication. However, the differences between these languages could be mediated by using images and symbols.

In this respect, several groups mentioned the workshop in Glasgow as a good example of innovative communication. One of the organisers, Ian Mc Donald summarised the essence of it:

> "We wanted to do something slightly different which young people could want to get involved in so we brought in an usual facilitator who uses pictures …. to illustrate what people are saying. We also involved young people before the network meeting so they actually know what they are coming into, they are a bit more informed. …. We had a separate session for the young people where we had professional youth workers coming in working with the young people, getting them sort of motivated and a bit of fun for them so when they actually come into the sort of adult set up, they were a lot more opt for it."

In general, participation should be realized in ways which build on confidence, make the young people feel important and raise self-esteem. This was referred to by another group as investing in young people, giving them "the ability to become agents of change". But then, differences between young people in terms of for example living conditions have to be taken into considerations, several groups underlined. In particular, how is it possible to involve young people in living conditions and areas characterised by social exclusion?

A successful example of that is the mentoring project AMUCK from Copenhagen, part of the YPFETI networkgroup. It is aimed at boys with

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[43] UDIEX-ALEP – R Arnkil (2005b), page 3.

ethnic minority background, living in a part of Copenhagen called Nørrebro. 13 boys with ethnic minority background were selected as mentors to younger ones.

> "The mentors were each paired with a young boy (mentee) who has problems maintaining a stable contact to the educational system. The boys also have a minimum of contact with the society outside ´Outer Nørrebro` - in this sense they are well on the way to being excluded by/excluding themselves from the society outside ´Outer Nørrebro`. One of the aims in the project was to get the boys to see the advantages of being included in the outside world through education and employment. The Mentors have worked with the boys for 6 month, focusing on education, self-esteem and personal development, on the basis of each mentee's own competences, interests and wishes. One of the methods used were a competence skill clarification made by the mentees and their mentors."[44]

An important question was raised by a group about the transferability of skills: "How do we then allow them to transfer the skills they have learnt into other areas of participation?" To enable that, participation has to take place within the communities, not separately and isolated.

Furthermore, participation has to be made important. "If you want young people to participate they need to get a sense of ownership", a group stated and that relates to the issue of power, which another group made clear: "Participation without power is meaningless". Without power, participation becomes exploitive, the same group added. That brings us to the third topic of discussion though we can't proceed much further without exploring the context of ownership and power.

Participation and inclusion – in what?

The seminar on young people resulted in a clear message. There have to be changes of structures, systems and institutions. That means changing society, not necessarily due to problems with young people, because even without such problems changes of society are needed, as one group claimed:

> "Young people's participation is part of a more comprehensive process of change … the structures we have now are not working. People are not voting. People are becoming apathetic towards politicians and politics because

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[44] A report is available at the URBACT webpage of YPFETI
http://www.urbact.org/srt/urbacten/folder/list?id:=31

they're not engaging with people … in particular with young people. And young people turn their backs."

Schools were mentioned as one of the most needed areas of change:

"The school environment does not encourage young people to participate in anything. The pedagogy is directed at them. It's not shared. It's not negotiated. They are done to. They are not part of the process. If we are trying to engender and create participative citizens, we have to start, probably in infant school, to allow young people to realise what it is to be part of society, the culture, the institutions. And that doesn't happen and we need to challenge that. We also need to challenge the ethos of the educational structure or let's call it the learning structure."

An example mentioned at the seminar was the one from the YPFETI networkgroup where education was linked to a skate park.[45] The non-profit association The Brewery's Educational Office provided education for pupils without qualifications for further studying on the upper secondary school. The education was organized in the factory localities of the former brewery; nowadays one of the biggest skate parks in Europe.

Generally, the structures of society need to change in ways which enable young people to participate and have power. However, that's not always an easy task. "How do we make formal structures more inclusive to young people?", one of the groups asked. There is a need of innovation because adult structures are "far too boring for them", as the group said. Structures could also be set up in parallel. Among the ideas suggested were young people's parliament and area committees. The general answer from the same group was that the formal codes have to be broken. Using the theory referred to above about different kinds of knowledge, we could regard our knowledge about these codes as tacit and it has to be made explicit.

However, some formal structures could be more difficult than others to make inclusive to young people. For that reason, one group made a distinction between soft and hard:

"It's sometimes very easy to get people, young people really involved in soft policies, easy things to ask them, speak to them about. But the harder issues, one of the examples we had was around security and we know that's very broad. But how do we involve citizens, how do we involve young people in the whole issue and agenda of security?"

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[45] Young people–from exclusion to inclusion – M Stigendal (2005).

One possible answer to that question could be to use young people as role models. Mustafa Jama from Aarhus in Denmark, representing the Citiz@move networkgroup, described such an example at the seminar, a project where previous criminals acted as role models for juvenile delinquents.

Another example was mentioned by Joan Bailey from Luton, representing the SUDC networkgroup.

> "It involves using young people as peer educators. This means that young people aged between 15 and 18 are recruited in schools, youth and community groups and colleges to train as educators. They undergo a basic training programme consisting of about 20 hours in the peer education model. Once trained these young people can work with younger people in their school, college or community group educating them about a range of social issues. Throughout Luton this has been applied to drugs education, smoking and alcohol, a range of health topics, racism and cultural diversity."[46]

As I see it, another solution could be linked to the issue of other competencies than the formal ones, also mentioned by one of the groups:

> "We need to look at other competencies as an example within schools. We have certain success criteria and if people don't meet those success criteria, they are sometimes deemed as failures."

Young people will probably find it much more interesting and attractive to get involved, perhaps in particular in the whole issue and agenda of security, if their potentials are recognized and they are allowed to participate from a position of strength. The group referred to an example from YPFETI of how other competencies could be brought in and recognized. The example, called Success Alternatives, involved eight-graders (age 14) at a school in Gothenburg, Sweden, to work out definitions of other competences than the ones measured by the grading system.[47] The definitions included ability of cooperating, responsibility-taking, ability of solving problems and multi-cultural competence. Moreover, the eight-graders worked out methods for assessing these competences.

I may add that Success Alternatives hints at a solution to the problem, referred to above, about transferability of skills. A recognition of other

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[46] More information about the Luton model as well as copies of evaluations and articles can be obtained by Joan Bailey by e-mailing her on
joan.saferluton@btconnect.com
[47] Young people–from exclusion to inclusion – M Stigendal (2005).

competencies than the ones measured by the grading system would probably enable such a transferability. The issue relates as well to the distinction made above between tacit and explicit knowledge. Much of the skill that young people actually have should be regarded as a tacit knowledge which has to be recognized by being made explicit. Success Alternatives shows how young people could be involved in the process of doing that.

Another way of recognizing the potentials and also clarifying more exactly the needs of change could be to let young people take part in monitoring school standards. An interesting example seems to be the Peer Inspection Group in Sunderland, related at the seminar by Michael Elsy who represented the Hetton & Murton Partnership, one of the YCP partners. The Peer Inspection Group will work alongside OFSTED (the UK Education Watch Dog, responsible for monitoring schools' standards) during school inspection visits:

> The group is intended to play a role in reviewing current service delivery and providing guidance for future delivery. Through the Peer Inspection Group Sunderland Council aims to improve the responsiveness of Youth Services to the needs of young people.[48]

Several groups mentioned the need to involve young people in urban regeneration, also at the European level. As shown earlier in this report, some of the networkgroups have involved young people in their internal work. But how successful will that be? Is it possible to be successful with urban regeneration at the European level by involving young people? One of the groups answered a clear yes to that question:

> "We as adults have to start to question about ourselves and actually sometimes the way we operate is exclusive because we actually like to have the power. We need to start to think about giving up power and actually young people will challenge us but we have got to be able to be open to that challenge without being threatened. We have got to start to let go so young people can actually be equals in that structure and in that delivery. And we also have to be willing and committed to actually change it if we really want young people to participate at that level."

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[48] Young citizens' project (2004e).

7. Conclusions

- The seminar in Copenhagen confirmed the urgent need to reveal, highlight and question the perceptions of young people, in particular as problem-oriented perceptions too often lies behind policies and measures. Basically, the problem is not young people, but the perceptions of them.

- The solution to this problem could be called potential-oriented perceptions. The problem-oriented perceptions have to be replaced by potential-oriented perceptions, seeing young people as a positive force and agents of social change.

- The new European framework for youth policy hints at such a potential-oriented perception. However, it is not stated clearly. The youth policy should most certainly gain in strength if it clarified its support for potential-oriented perceptions.

- The change of perceptions requires participation in order to improve the mutual understanding between young people and adults. The seminar generated several suggestions:

  - Knowing more about young people, the real issues, problems, potentials etc;

  - Creating mutual grounds, "less threatening to adults as well as welcoming and helping young people to get involved."

  - Understanding the way young people communicate by using the distinction between tacit and explicit knowledge;

  - Using pictures as a means of communication between young people and adults;

  - Taking into consideration the differences of pre-conditions, in particular regarding young people in situations characterized by social exclusion;

  - Using young people as role models and peer educators for younger ones;

  - Creating forms of participation which build on confidence, make the young people feel important and raise self-esteem;

- Enabling transferability of acquired skills from one area of participation into others by placing participation firmly within the communities, not separately and isolated;

- Recognizing the potentials of young people by assessing other competencies than the ones measured by the grading system, thus allowing young people to participate from a position of strength;

- Making participation important and connected to power;

- Involving young people in urban regeneration at the European level.

- However, participation requires the change of perceptions as well. The kind of participation offered to young people depends on what they are perceived as being able to do.

- On the other hand, participation also requires the change of the context in which it takes place. That means changing structures, systems and institutions of society. In particular, the school system needs to change. Generally, the changes need to enable young people to participate and have power.

- Hence, the seminar highlighted the interdependence between perceptions, participation and its context, the three topics discussed. Therefore, in order to deal with the situation of young people, changes have to be carried through which embrace as a whole perceptions, participation and the societal context.

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