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Young entrepreneurs owning 2020

➜ Introduction

Instead of introducing the ideas presented and discussed in this paper, I would like to offer my "definition" of what it means to be an entrepreneur. I find the existing phrases, definitions and descriptions just not sufficient. In the changing world that we live in, what it means to be an entrepreneur is changing even faster. However, there are certain attributes that describe an entrepreneur in my mind, so I would like to share those and ask you to think about these kinds of entrepreneurs "owning 2020" and leading our societies. Entrepreneurs are:

restless inquisitors: in order to bring in innovation, one needs to be able to question every aspect of "traditional ways";

confident optimists: when taking an idea from concept to reality, one needs to be ready for all sorts of challenges and face them with a firm belief in success;

co-operative competitors: in order to realise an idea, one needs to scrutinise its downsides and improve it through co-operation with others, while remaining passionate about realising it in one's own way.

I have met such entrepreneurs and I believe we need more of them, and not

only in the business and economics sector, but also in the political and social sectors. This is how I imagine 2020 and on the next few pages, you can read about possibilities and obstacles to such a future.

➜ Changing the education paradigm

> *"Our students have changed radically. Today's students are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach."* (Prensky 2001).

Lately I often hear how our schools are failing in their role to educate, but also in bringing up responsible citizens. Even more so – they are failing to produce successful entrepreneurs. Many countries are undergoing education reforms of some sort in an effort to improve and modernise their education systems. However, the understanding of "improvement" varies, leaving huge space for avoidance of the essence. So, we discuss performance of teachers and how much they are equipped to teach in the IT era. We look into ways to improve standardised tests so that we can more easily identify flaws in the curricula. We are trying to work out how to educate youth today for the jobs needed tomorrow. And I cannot avoid wondering: is this the role of our education system?

Phillips (2009) raises the question of whether "education is essentially conserva-tive, or whether it can be an (or the) agent of social change". I would argue that education can be "the" agent of social change. However, the understanding of what education is would need to change drastically and focus on what indi-vidual learning needs for development and reaching one's potential are needed. It would need to change and involve new technologies and social media as one of the key learning resources and tools. Education, as the agent of social change, or rather "holistic education" – would look different from what we are used to. Major changes would involve greater presence of "learning by doing" in a col-laborative manner and "experiential learning" through co-operation in a learning process fully decided upon by the individual learner. This would imply that the form of education currently known as non-formal education would have a more central role in the overall educational system. Because the value of non-formal education in the context of youth work in the transitional societies of today and tomorrow is in its multiple roles: in developing self-confidence, critical thinking and communication skills, enabling emotional competence development, ensuring taking on responsibility for self and others, increasing employability, developing an autonomous personality, fostering European citizenship, fostering a culture of reflection, encouraging intercultural dialogue, enabling social integration, increasing participation ... is there an end to this kind of list? The future will blur the division lines in the field of education between formal and non-formal, and we will talk about "holistic education" happening in diverse settings on an equal footing. The name of holistic education finally reflects the underlying values and principles of learner-oriented education that engages minds (knowledge), hands (skills), hearts (values) and souls (the essence of whom the individual is).

Sir Ken Robinson (2008) sees the challenge in "not to reform education but to transform it into something else". He argues that a different set of assumptions must be taken into consideration. Instead of figuring out what a country needs, he proposes that we look into what makes people motivated, excited about learning and developing, what drives them forward, which talents they nourish, what they are passionate about. This is a great challenge to pose to ourselves when looking ahead to 2020. Could the premises for the new education system be grounded in

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discovering and cultivating each individual talent in each child and young person as they grow up? Could we create an education system without instilled economic principles that would consequently not necessarily make science a preferable subject to art? Could we imagine 2020 or beyond where having a degree would imply that you have undergone a demanding journey of self-discovery on which you have learnt how to learn and on which you developed yourself as a person? I can. Still, for that to actually happen, we need to rediscover education all over again, taking into account these new circumstances. The decision makers within the central educational institutions need to redefine the purpose and philosophy of education. The teachers need to rediscover teaching and learning interdependence, constantly advancing their own learning in order to be able to offer relevant teaching guidance and support to learners. The parents need to demand persistently and engage actively in an education system that is more responsive to an individual learner. The youth workers need to improve the recognition of learning happening in youth activities, as well as in various non-formal education settings.

Robinson believes that with formal education as it is now, we are systematically (though not deliberately) destroying the capacity to imagine in our children and in ourselves. He says, "we do it routinely, unthinkingly, and that is the worst of it because we take for granted certain ideas about education, about children, about what it is to be educated; about social need and about social utility, about economic purpose. We take these ideas for granted and they turn out not to be true" (Robinson 2008). Furthermore, Robinson claims that our education systems are not significantly improving because decision makers do not understand the main problem is not how to manage the system more efficiently, but rather how to improve the quality of learning. In particular, as he claims, it is crucial to improve the experience of individual learners and treat each school individually and not as a mass. Such an approach he calls, "a shift from the industrial metaphor of education to an agricultural metaphor" and explains, "What happens if you get through to people, make demands of them, give them an opportunity to demonstrate what they can do and connect to their talent? Then you get transformation, that's the paradigm" (Robinson 2008). For an "agricultural" approach to actually work it would require the joint efforts of all involved in the education and upbringing of young people. The parents' role is crucial and their understanding and implementation of this approach would provide it major leverage. Finally, the youth workers, as those who are already being the farmers in this agricultural metaphor, have to play a vital role in providing evidence that it works. The successful process of recognising competences acquired in non-formal education settings would enable such confirmation.

Now, let's add to the equation the technology development and the role it has had and might have on education. Professor Helen Haste talks about five competences that need to be taught to learners in order to help them adapt to the world of change (Haste 2009):

• Managing ambiguity: this is about teaching young learners to multitask and about equipping them not to be anxious when they are in an ambiguous situation. Thus the role of educator and education system is to counter "the single linear solution" as a predominant way of thinking and behaving.
  How I understand this "competence" it would also be very much about encouraging the divergent thinking that Robinson is talking about.
• Agency and responsibility: this is about being an "active agent" interacting with the world and being able to approach one's environment with the confidence of having the competence to do so. It is also about taking responsibility for what is going on as a consequence of such interaction or absence of it.

Thus, I would say that the educators' role would be to create such learning situations and to be the one "instilling" confidence in the young learners.

- Finding and sustaining community: this is about managing the various communities that we live in, including those online. It's about multitasking in creating connections and managing interactions (including using technologies to do so), but also about maintaining those connections.

  I believe the greatest challenge for the educators would be to teach the balance between creating and maintaining connections. Influenced by greater presence of new technologies in our lives, the latter one is fairly neglected.

- Managing emotion: this is about getting away from the idea that reason and emotion are separated, and teaching young people how to manage them both without allowing lapses in domination of either.

  I understand this "competence" as the pursuit of self-development that should be firmly grounded in "holistic education".

- Managing technological change: this is about managing the consequences of technological development.

  This in my understanding means high adaptability to and understanding of changes that technology is bringing in all spheres of our lives.

Clearly, social change is not linear, and we still do not know where the changes that we are experiencing today may take us to in the future. However, as Professor Haste states, young people are becoming agents of their own enculturation and learning. Therefore, one needs to look at education from the position of where the young people are in their relation with the world and from what they already do. So, as she puts it, "we should think of education as bottom-up, collaborative and interactive".[21] Therefore, holistic education needs to be grounded in young people's – and at the same time new technology users' perspective – and be co-operative rather than competitive, collaborative rather than isolated, and highly tuned into technology.

Let's put aside the doubts and imagine this change of paradigm. Even if you are from the Balkans, it would not be extremely hard to picture a plausible future filled with determined individuals in touch with self and compassionate to others. The future, that the science fiction TV series *Star Trek* introduced as a conceivable option, could be one in which values are not framed within the economic playground. This might seem too far in the future. However, the first step which we can expect in 2020 is tangible. One of the starting guidelines is to be found in the "Study on the impact of non-formal education in youth organisations on young people's employability" which recognises and recommends that "education needs to go beyond purely instrumental considerations to provide people with the skills they need for active participation in society and personal development" (Bath University/GHK Consulting 2012). Even today, young people are constantly advancing and innovating when finding their own ways to the relevant information, knowledge and skills that they need. They are confidently using the new technologies to do so and co-operating with each other in order to reach individual aims. It seems that the primary factor slowing them down is the fact that they are obliged to spend significant amounts of hours sitting in traditional classrooms and listening to lectures. If this pre-determined path could be more flexible and less determined, could we imagine "holistic education" happening for young people? The results would most probably be highly unpredictable, particularly at the beginning. An unprecedented mind-shift needs to happen for the young adults going through self-oriented learning processes today. The challenges of maintaining the focus

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21. From video featured on article "Technology and youth: a remix that is changing the education landscape", By Maria Fusaro, 23 June 2009, available at http://www.gse.harvard.edu/news-impact/2009/06/technology-and-youth-a-remix-that-is-changing-the-education-landscape, accessed on 10 January 2013.

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and taking on full responsibility for all possible failures seem overwhelming. That is why, in my opinion, such an approach would work best if introduced at a very early stage of a person's development. Again, parents are central for such a shift to occur.

➜ Young people in Europe today

> "Our societies are far from creating positive social and working conditions in which they can do so [seek 'life-wide' quality of life] – [so] young people expect to rely on either their families or their own ingenuity and resources"
> (Chisholm and Kovatcheva 2002).

There are good chances that the most valuable learning will come from dealing with crises. Therefore, instead of despairing over daily news on how Europe is in crisis and is experiencing unprecedented levels of unemployment, I choose to think about what we can learn from this situation. How did we get there and how can we change it? Therefore, I have decided to look at the situation of young people in Europe today as it is depicted by different EU strategies, instruments and actions. Focusing on young people seems to be the way forward according to the creators of the Europe 2020 strategy.

The strategy sets a headline target of reducing early school leaving and increasing tertiary attainment. As much as I agree with reducing early school leaving, I believe that we have already overdone it with tertiary attainment. Enrolling in a Master's and Ph.D. is becoming a substitute to employment and perpetuates the lack of possibility for starting an independent life. Particularly in the Balkans, it seems that the lower bar for literacy has been moved to the Master's level. Unfortunately, this development also has a side effect in elevating the expectations of these young degree holders that they will obtain jobs at high level positions and then live happily ever after. Therefore, the crucial question for holistic education of the future would be how to focus individuals on their personal development while bringing about an understanding of the importance of each job regardless of the level of technical expertise or theoretical knowledge needed to execute it. The "new" jobs will be created and young people can create them. The end of 2012 was marked by news of Serbia exporting €200 million worth of software, for the first time more than raspberries (€140 million), which have traditionally been Serbia's number one export commodity. Keeping in mind that young people are predominantly those employed in the IT industry, especially the software development branch, it is clear that young people are now leading the entrepreneurial wave.

Let's go through several initiatives springing from the Europe 2020 strategy in an effort to understand how the young people of today are seen by policy makers. The flagship initiative "Youth on the Move" provides a hint that young people should be crossing all sorts of borders – literally, physical borders with passports and those more difficult (inter)cultural ones. Perhaps, also, that young people should be challenging themselves on different fronts and in new environments. The "Youth in Action" and "Lifelong Learning" programmes are providing the guidelines for greater learning mobility, enhanced participation of young people and more and more for boosting their employability. Starting in 2014 there will be a new EU programme and this is an ideal opportunity to make drastic changes and to prepare the way for a new system allowing young people to opt for "holistic education". The "Youth Opportunities Initiative" is fairly straightforward in revealing that youth employability and employment are of concern for decision makers. So, there is quite a lot about youth taking responsibility and leading, quite a lot about supporting their ideas being realised, quite a lot about

increasing their capacity – so, the remaining avenues to explore would be the reach and accessibility of those tools; the possibility of young people to influence their further development; and how those programmes relate to other European, national and local instruments – how well they are networked. Findings from such research might open new perspectives on what and how it should be done.
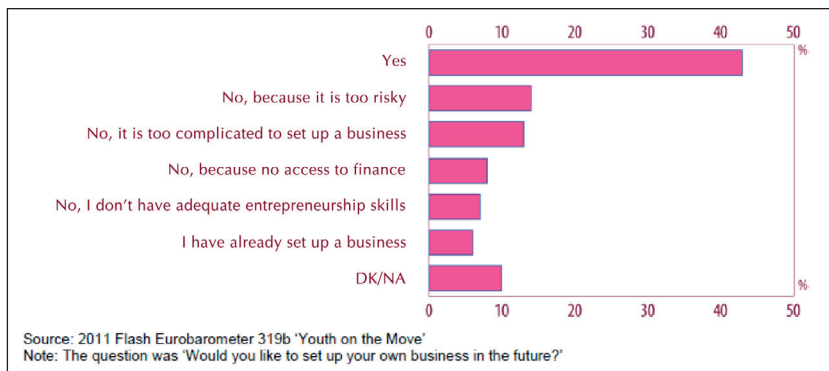
Some research has been done for the EU Youth Report (2010-2012), which was adopted on 10 September 2012. The report calls for youth employment, social inclusion, health and the well-being of young people to be top priorities in Europe's youth policy. The report underlines that "the EU and Member States must do more to support young people, who have borne the brunt of the economic crisis" (European Commission 2012b). Let's look at how the report pictures young people under the headings "education and employment" and "position in society"[22] and what we could "do more".

➜ Education and employment

The share of students is going up while that of young employees is going down. Even with the trend of avoiding the crises by "going back to education" there is still the issue of a significant number of young people that are just "out" – not in employment, education or training. The unemployment rate of young people (aged 15 to 24) is rising, while, according to the report the youth self-employment rates are increasing.

However, a closer look at graphs reveals that the EU-27 average of self-employed is strikingly low even for the most active group of 25-29 (between 8-9%) and with some decline detected when comparing data for 2000 and 2010. It is a pity that there are no further analyses of this trend that would help us understand what 2020 will bring. However, since more than 40% of young people desire to start up their own business (see Figure 1), I believe it is timely to push for decision makers to create enabling conditions and allow for the natural increase of numbers in this area. I will not even start to tackle the question of why so many young people are motivated to start up their own business: is it their response to the crises – taking responsibility for their own employment? Or is it the result of a materialistic and consumerist world – needing to earn more and to maintain the status of business owner, the boss?

Figure 1: EU youth indicator: Young people's desire to set up their own business, EU-27 average, 2011

Source: 2011 Flash Eurobarometer 319b 'Youth on the Move'
Note: The question was 'Would you like to set up your own business in the future?'

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22. The following items are summarised and adapted from the EU Youth Report with the author's commentary regarding possible future measures.

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Nevertheless, involvement in voluntary programmes, special traineeships and internships can help to broaden young people's experience and allow for a smoother school-to-work transition. Furthermore, European, national and local strategies targeting youth should envisage measures for nourishing an entrepreneurial spirit in young people and concrete mechanisms for supporting their start-up ideas. Additionally, possible solutions could be sought in the youth-friendly recognition and validation of learning outcomes accomplished elsewhere, which would reintegrate the young people back into education or employment. However, this would also require the stronger belief of young people and the youth sector in the value of this recognition and validation and consequently their co-ordinated action in this direction. In an effort to gain recognition for youth competences, it might be worthwhile cross-referencing competences acquired through volunteering with those gained while working.

Looking at the global instabilities of job markets and how they might develop in the future, I believe that the experience of young people with temporary contracts and unusual schedules will become an advantage. However, the challenge remains for education systems to foster young people's adaptability to changing circumstances.

➜ Position in society

Young people have become increasingly mobile, engaged in non-formal education and are increasingly participating in democratic life. However, young people's overall well-being is under pressure as they are most at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Even though new technologies are contributing to erasing borders, the fact that physical mobility is also increasing is contributing to the snapshot of 2020 from the previous section. The growing mistrust in the political establishment is forcing young people to find alternative avenues for pursuing causes and policy issues they feel passionate about. This energy and willingness of youth to participate should be nourished by the education system, as well as through concrete instruments implemented under the youth policy framework. As the report conclusions imply: structured volunteering opportunities, involvement in non-formal education and recognition of acquired competences are generating greater participation of young people.

However, while the trend is that, as Peter Lauritzen (2008) noted, "youth work increasingly deals with unemployment, educational failure, marginalisation and social exclusion", it is fundamental to expand on the reach. In the EU youth report, youth work is described as having a crucial role "in supporting young people in their personal education and fulfilment and in consolidating their identity among their peers and within society, as they are encouraged to take an active part in any field of interest to them" (European Commission 2012b). How can we allow such crucial support to be accessible for only 9% of youth? Non-formal education (NFE) and youth work (YW) are attended on a voluntary basis. But if we are not questioning the impact, why do we not question how much they are recognised, promoted, accessible? Would it be utterly blasphemous to also think about allowing access of youth work inside schools as part of the (optional) curriculum? The Annual Growth Survey 2012 (European Commission 2012a) calls for reforms in employment legislation and in education and training. There might be an opportunity here to start re-defining and better positioning the education and youth work fields against the hardliner "economy".

Finally, with all the risks that young people are exposed to and yet with all the opportunities they are managing to build and take advantage of – it is clear that the future is at the very least undecided and changeable. This is exactly where the challenge lies for young people: not to give up and wait for others. And where the chance is hidden, as well: to find opportunities that may not be so apparent, and to continue to create opportunities and advantages in all these seemingly unhelpful circumstances.

So, where does all this leave young people from non-EU Europe? The political leadership of ex-Yugoslav states rapidly strive towards the EU in the hope that as members of this community we will have fewer problems and will reach higher living standards (which they tirelessly promise to their constituencies). When the young people in the EU face such challenges today and prospects for the future are at least uncertain – what can young people from the Balkans hope for? Twenty years after the fall of communism, or Yugoslav socialism, young people are in a less favourable situation and are still mainly ignored by the new elites. However, young people from the Balkans have a profound experience of living in uncertainty and finding their way around in transitional processes. This could become their advantage for discovering what it means and how to live in a united Europe. The young people living in the EU countries, and those not yet in the EU but in member countries of the Council of Europe, are still struggling to take their position in European society – beyond national borders. So, with all the elements described above, there is still the question of European citizenship and responsibility for shaping the future of Europe that lies on young people's shoulders.

➜ Non-formal education and employability

> "Employability is understood here as the relative chance of finding and maintaining different kinds of employment" (Brown et al. 2002).

I believe that the term "employability" is often misunderstood and mixed with actual employment, particularly among young people. Perhaps because the prevailing question for a young person thinking about the future is, "If the end result is not a job then who cares how high on the employability scale I am?" Perhaps we should check if the scale is good? However, we are facing problems with recognition of young people's competences when acquired outside of formal education. Why are we failing to grant young people the freedom and flexibility to pursue their own path of development? Even if we have good recognition instruments and if individuals decide their own learning paths, we should not divert our focus from the education of the young person. Young people will still need support in their learning and we need to discover new ways of providing it.

Non-formal education today is an essential part of the lifelong learning concept promoted by the European institutions. In the context of rapidly progressing and changing societies, Andreas Karsten (2006) gives three primary points explaining the role of non-formal education:

• to ensure the employment mobility of individuals, and to make unemployable "dropouts" of the past employable;
• to keep already well-trained people abreast of new knowledge and technologies essential to their continued high productivity in their respective fields;
• to improve the quality and satisfaction of individual lives through culturally enriching their expanding leisure time.

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Furthermore, apart from the clear pedagogical role, today we look at non-formal education (in the context of youth work) with the emerging political role it is expected to have, while lately the focus is shifting towards employability. In my mind, the only thing such a shift should be about is raising awareness among young people about the competences they are acquiring and developing, about their own learning and ways they can present it and transfer it to different settings. Anything beyond that might lead us to the danger of neglecting the self in learners and concentrating on the job market's demands. While the challenge for all, and not only young people, will be to get into Peter Drucker's *habit of continuous learning* (Druker P., 1994) that would also allow for more flexible employment arrangements. With that in mind, I need to emphasise the importance of employment not only related to economic security but also as a tool for social inclusion – a mechanism that is to prevent potential social crises by providing a basis for shaping relational issues, social participation and social integration.

Youth unemployment in the EU among 15-24-year olds has increased by 50% since the onset of the crisis, from an average of 15% in February 2008 to 22.5% in July 2012, with rates as high as 53.8% in Greece and 52.9% in Spain. Nevertheless, the European Commission is hopeful for the future and through the youth report it noted that "the EU Youth Strategy has reinforced existing priorities at national level in nearly all Member States, which are to create more and better opportunities for young people and to promote active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity. Since the previous report in 2009, Member States have strengthened education, employment and entrepreneurship initiatives aimed at young people. Levels of youth participation in associations and social movements have remained high" (European Commission 2012b). There is the evident need to challenge such an assessment, and to start asking difficult questions – if the situation is not improving then who cares about reinforced priorities and strengthened initiatives? Isn't it time to see if we can and should do things differently?

At the same time, youth organisations, largely concerned with the increase in youth unemployment, turned to assessing how their programmes and activities are contributing to youth employability. The study on the impact of non-formal education in youth organisations on young people's employability provides relevant data and possible guidelines for organisations wishing to focus more on employability (Bath University/GHK Consulting 2012). However, the study remained inside the frame of what we already do and how we already do it, and it only suggests possible improvements within that frame. Unfortunately so, because the data they provided are evidence of many of the possible paradigm changes discussed in this paper. For instance, looking at the table with ranking of skills most frequently demanded by employers (Bath University/GHK Consulting 2012: 42), you will notice communication and organisational skills at the top, while entrepreneurship, adaptability and networking are at the very bottom. I am struggling to understand why the latter three are not higher on the scale. Could it be that these are important for self-employment while as an employee you should only be able to understand tasks (communication) and execute them in a timely manner (organisational skills)? Or is this the short-sightedness of employers coloured by the fact that businesses are on the hunt for "the smartest ones" with the stereotype of the young employees' role which is not to do the thinking, questioning, re-shaping, searching for opportunities, and so on. However, later on, the table on individual levels of skills development in youth organisations has among the top five places "self-confidence" and "adaptability/flexibility" (Bath University/GHK Consulting 2012: 45). Such a finding both proves how well placed youth work is, as well as non-formal education in youth

organisations, but also how "Young people sometimes see the future more clearly than adults. And often they know what they'll need to get there" as Professor Morino puts it (1997). The reality today and, even more, the reality of 2020 will show how important these are. Professor Haste argues, "Competence is not only about skill but about adaptation – means you can adapt and respond to the changes and to the continuity in the world around" (Fusaro 2009). So, we might even ask the question: are employers, in these economic crises, the ones who have the least insight into what is needed to overcome it? Are they the ones without an answer as to what kind of employees they need in order to turn the tables around? Could the motivation of young people to start their own enterprise be grounded in such a detachment between employees and employer? And ironically so, as an International Youth Foundation report noted, because "the real mandate for business should be to invest substantially in broadening the pool of 'really smart' people through improving education and access to education at every level" (IYF 2001).

Nevertheless, there is a great level of match between the employers' demands and the skills that young people have recognised they gained through the youth organisations. Even more so for the young people in those youth organisations (almost half of those surveyed in the study) who have an organised educational and assessment plan for skills development which includes: learners' needs analysis; setting of objectives and expected learning outcomes; a planning and implementation process; and an evaluation. This provides clear guidelines to the organisations that wish to expand on the employability element of their activities. Furthermore, the study finds that the young people and the youth organisations generally use certificates and recording instruments to a low extent and "less than 5% of the sample of individuals had used the European Portfolio for Youth Workers and Youth Leaders in job/internship or apprentice-ships applications (it should be kept in mind that around 50% of the sample had been involved with youth organisations as youth leaders/educators) and 16% had used Youthpass" (Bath University/GHK Consulting 2012). Another important guideline might be drawn from the fact that 50% of young people surveyed had used the Europass CV and that youth organisations tend to record the skills and competences through tools developed by the organisation or through peer reviews. This sets even greater importance on the challenge of making European tools relevant at the local/national level and even more so if the tools are from the youth field and are not binding in any way. Instead of grieving over how great tools are not used for the benefit of all, we might look into how to adapt them to be more accessible and to apply better to the reality and different contexts in which young people learn. At the same time, we need to look at how to ensure that these tools bring the authority and guarantee of a set of competences at the same level as formal degrees. In order to be able to even start envisaging such developments, the youth field would need to undergo "stage zero" which "should include targeted efforts to convince the sceptics among us [youth workers] and reinforce our motivation to actively take on board the recognition issue" (Hadzibegovic 2012).

Finally, I would like to come back to social capital as one of the key elements that enhance employability. Young people have recognised networking as an important skill they gain through their involvement with the youth organisations. Networking is becoming even more significant as it helps in obtaining information about employ-ment opportunities as well as in securing actual employment. And the study finds that it also stimulates young people to undertake more intensive job searches and to consider a broader range of occupations and occupational mobility. I presume

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that a significant proportion of networking is already based in online communities and it is reasonable to assume it will only grow. The potential for co-operative and collaborative learning in these communities is immense. However, we as educators are only starting to tap into it. Mark Prensky explains why is it so: "Digital immigrant instructors, who speak an outdated language (that of the pre-digital age), are struggling to teach a population that speaks an entirely new language" (Prensky 2001). Today, young people are "digital natives" used to receiving information really fast, to parallel processing and multitasking: "They function best when networked" (Prensky 2001). Flexibility and adaptability of non-formal education already enabled youth workers and trainers to develop educational programmes based on online communication and online media. Such adaptability to learning is a quality which will greatly shape the nature of "holistic education" of tomorrow. However, while the new technologies have expanded on young people's possibilities to access and receive information, the question of absorption and actual learning still remains, as well as the question as to whether parallel processing and multitasking allows the sort of focus needed for "real" learning to happen.

➔ Youth and new technologies

> "The real power of interactive communications is people as the ultimate source of knowledge" (Morino 1997).

Morino recognises that computers, mobile phones and the Internet are important and valuable resources. They have contributed to the changes in how (young) people think and how they interact with each other. This consequently demands the development of new competences to do that. However, what makes the new technologies important is the way that people use it. "It is people and their knowledge, relationships, insights, and spirit freely passed from one to another that engender the 'magic' of this interconnected world that the Internet is making possible" (Morino 1997).

Back in 1997, Morino claimed, "access to the Internet needs to be a reality for all our citizens, that the free and unrestricted flow of information and the ready availability of computers for everyone are not simply matters of 'technology'" (Morino 1997). Today, we are speaking of even more convenient access to the Internet, via mobile phones. However, we are still far from the situation where all young people have access to the Internet. Thus, according to Morino, many young people are denied the opportunity to have the experience and the rewards of self-discovery, a higher quality of life, and a renewed sense of community that derives from an interactive sharing of information and knowledge that is highly simplified and multiplied through the Internet.

Morino also notes, "technology can only mirror the society it serves. While computers and the Internet can facilitate great strides in learning, they can't reinvent education" (Morino 1997). This is a crucial point – with all the advanced technology, we would still be at the starting point if we do not use it to enhance the chances and opportunities of young people to learn and develop. The mere fact that access to information and knowledge is simplified does not necessarily mean that actual knowledge is acquired. The technology can only provide faster, accessible and user-friendly solutions, but cannot in itself be the educator. Therefore the question remains: what are we doing or rather what should we do so that young people today gain from being "digital natives" in terms of their development into responsible, self-aware and self-sustaining citizens?

Professor Helen Haste recognises how expansion in new technological tools is fundamentally altering the ways students can interact with the world (Fusaro 2009). She talks about models of how people function, particularly in relation to education, and she makes a distinction between:

- *The human being as problem solver:* a person who by himself addresses the problem, struggles with it, uses logic and other methods, and comes to a conclusion;
- *The human being as tool user:* a person who goes beyond and uses tools to access and interact with the problem and resolves it often with the help and involvement of other people.

Are we going in the direction of being tool users? I believe this approach to problem solving will become standard by 2020 bringing, or rather demanding, changes in how we teach young people. Professor Haste introduces the "idea of dialogue" operating socially as a crucial element of understanding the potential that the tool user has. She also talks about a dynamic triangle that allows continuous interactions in different directions. The triangle is giving to the individual an active role that was not presumed in previous theories on participation which exclusively considered societal and peer influence on the individual and their capacities. Such an interactive and proactive individual has greater chances of becoming what she describes as a "competent citizen" which is defined by four dimensions of participation:

- conventional participation (voting, supporting a candidate, etc.);
- making one's voice heard (collecting petitions, attending protests, etc.);
- helping in the community (volunteering with underprivileged groups, etc.) – also defined as a prerequisite to getting involved in more conventional participation;
- active monitors (talking about current affairs, etc.) – the type defined by youth that were asked about what citizenship is for them and how they participate as a "good citizen".
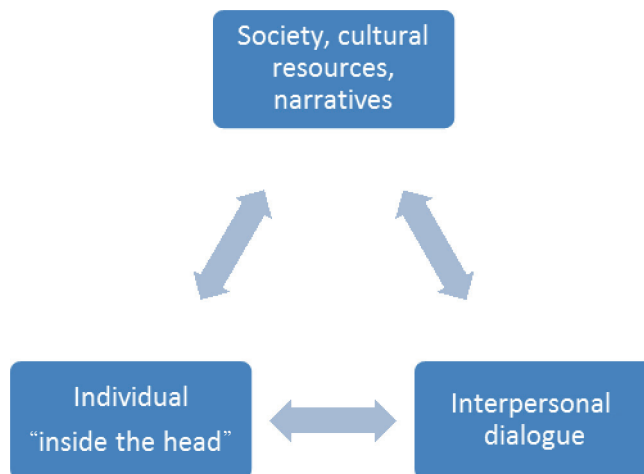
The final dimension relates mostly to the use of new technologies and faster exchange of information and opinions.

"Competent citizens" – young people today, and most probably even more in 2020, consider themselves to be engaged and participating if they share news through social networks and thus impact their online community. I believe there is the risk that this form of participation may become predominant and that young people might become detached from communities other than those online. However,

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with recent developments where online communities active on social networks have sparked gatherings and demonstrations on the streets, this might seem as a superficial fear. Nevertheless, there is the role of educators in the "holistic education" process to offer balance and to increase the understanding of young people about the need for balance in this but in other spheres as well. Professor Morino put it elegantly: "Rather than legislate, we must educate, teaching our young people to evaluate information and to discriminate among offers made in cyberspace, just as they do in real life" (Morino 1997).

➜ Champions of transition

> "It may not be too fanciful to anticipate that the acquisition and distribution of formal knowledge will come to occupy the place in the politics of the knowledge society that the acquisition of property and income have occupied in the two or three centuries that we have come to call the Age of Capitalism" (Cox 2012).

Coming from ex-Yugoslavia and with experience of the transition from communism (or rather socialism) to capitalism, I cannot resist starting this section with reference to Karl Marx. He was, of course, talking about the opposite transition – from capitalism to communism. Marx recognised that there is a period in between that allows a sort of revolutionary transformation of the one into the other, and "corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat" (Karl Marx, 1875) Now, the transition that I have lived through (some claim we still live in it) was also marked by dictatorship, but not of the proletariat. The 1990s were marked by conflicts, the early 21st century by political transition, and for ex-communist and ex-socialist countries very much also economic transition and the appearance of new elites. Only now are there some, but not strong enough or prioritised enough, efforts to look back and see where the children and the young people of that time are, children and youth who were growing up through the conflicts and instability and those that "may still find their lives constrained by the stultifying rigidity of central planning and political conformity without the security and stability of full employment and reliable compensation; and they are exposed to the risks of the new open market and political democracy without yet the rewards" (UNICEF 2002). This quote is from a study named "A brave new generation" published by UNICEF in 2002 focusing on youth living in changing societies and primarily in what was at that time the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) – Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo. An optimistic name was used at that time: "brave generation"; the term that is prevailing now is "lost generation". And it is despite this pejorative term and despite this distrust in the capacities of young people and their power for change, their power for revolution. Now 18 years later, when babies of 2002 are becoming adults in these ever-changing societies, the youth are braver than ever. It has started already, and it is my firm belief that by 2020, young people will be demonstrating courage, enthusiasm and belief in self, will deliberately engage with and benefit from "holistic education" and will largely take on the task of making their ideas reality in the social, economic and political arena. Because the alternative is what young people in the Balkans were largely doing or allowing the system to do to them over the past 20 years. And that is no alternative at all.

I would like to draw a parallel between youth in Yugoslavia some 20 years ago and youth today in (united?) Europe in order to provide some evidence for the "brave"

vision shared above. The opening assessment of youth's position in society in the UNICEF study compares FRY and the rest of the UN: "While leading nations on the UN human development index have experienced an explosion in 'youth power' in the past decade, young people in FRY have remained isolated on the margins of society even while their country has remained isolated on the fringes of Europe" (UNICEF 2002). The authors of the study continue by claiming that it is the right time to invest in young people and to enable them to contribute at the present time and that the state(s) has the opportunity to learn from advanced democracies on this matter. The study presented the dilemma of treating young people as children or as almost-adults while looking into five key areas: participation in society; education; employment; health and well-being; and young people in special need of protection. If we take employment and look deeper into the analyses of the situation in FRY of 2002 and compare it with the youth report discussed previously, quite a few similarities can be found. Here are several of those issues that are challenges for Europe today, but the list is not finite:

- How do we re-define the term "secure and formal employment" to respond to the present distrust of young people in the pension system? How does the understanding of the term correspond to the trend of fast development of new highly diverse jobs and short-term employment possibilities? How is it resonating in the arena of self-employability and freelancing, which seem to be more and more popular among young people? How can all the administration around it become lighter and easier to understand and deal with?
- How do we enable "labour mobility" among youth and empower them to benefit from it the most? How do we change the understanding that the nature of such mobility would be less of a "brain drain" and more a foundation for some new (though functional) system? How do we ensure that "labour mobility" would be accessible to different groups and that it would not discriminate against young women in particular?
- How can we address the issue of child and adolescent labour in a world where adolescence is starting earlier due to greater exposure to information and faster learning and growth of children today? How do we establish a bottom line below which there is no entrepreneurial thinking, learning, acting?

Finally, looking at the actions the study is suggesting should be undertaken in order to boost youth employment, it is very clear – ten years later we do not have any innovative ideas on how to deal with youth unemployment. Paradoxically enough, entrepreneurship is all about innovation and we seem to lack it in addressing the problem of how to awaken it in youth and how to support it in a more systematic way, and all this while young people are largely (more than 40%) ready and wanting to start their own business. There are great examples of young people from the Balkans who already champion innovation and entrepreneurship in striking contradiction to how much they were/are systematically (un)supported (remember the example of software developers from Serbia). Perhaps part of the equation for success for a young person entails the persistence and the stubbornness to make it despite all the odds?

The transitional society from my experience of living in Montenegro was marked by a lot of strategies being put forward and then utterly failing because they were not grounded in "our" reality. Are we in a similar situation today when considering Europe and the transition from national to European? Are we leaving young people on the margins (or letting them remain there) even though they are often mentioned in strategies and in important political events? How much are the EU strategies reflecting young people's reality and how much are young people actually using all the available tools and instruments? If we would dare to try something else instead I would propose to equip and motivate young people to

develop ways to shape future steps to solving unemployment. Let them be the "dictators" of transition from national to European and from capitalism to the new stage(?). Let them collaborate, share, invent, test … and if they fail – well, it would be no different from what we are doing now. In any case, the challenges of a transitional society of a post-united Europe of 2020 would be easier to deal with.

There are several factors preventing young people in taking the leading role in shaping their future. At the same time, these are the arguments why they should be systematically supported to do so. Young people recognise that political elites are without fresh ideas, yet they are reluctant to offer their own. They recognise that neither big companies nor public administration can be relied upon for secure jobs. Young people have ideas how to advance the way of living in the social, economic and political arena. How to fill the gaps with innovative services, how to be a leader of development, how to begin new endeavours, how to engage the community, how to use new technologies ... However, they lack belief in the clear-cut chances in the current system for presenting and implementing those ideas. Therefore, young people do what they can. And that is seeking shortcuts, building networks utilising the human power at their disposal and re-defining the system. The "change of paradigm revolution" will happen. By 2020 young people will have the courage, enthusiasm and belief in self and largely take on the task of making their ideas reality. The only question is, will we adapt our learning environments and equip young people to deliver it or do they need to build capacities in parallel with our increasingly irrelevant education systems?

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