Unprotected time of early adolescence and intergenerational relations: a new educational issue

El artículo está basado en una comunicación presentada en el congreso internacional "el tiempo sin protección de los jóvenes en la Unión Europea" [unprotected time of young people in the EU] celebrado en la Universidad de Bolonia (Italia) el 26 de octubre de 2001. Trata de los problemas sociales que suelen presentar los jóvenes de entre 10 y 15 años durante el tiempo en que no reciben en su vida diaria ninguna protección de los agentes sociales. Se presenta tambien un análisis y una evaluación de la política adoptada hasta ahora para solucionar estos problemas. El autor subraya que el valor y el sentido del tiempo no es lo mismo para las distintas generaciones, porque cada una, en su propio tiempo, sufre las acelaraciones y decelaraciones de modo distinto respecto a otras generaciones. Por tanto, el planteamiento del problema relacionado con el tiempo sin protección de los jovenes exige la consideración del modo en que cada generación vive su *propio* tiempo y el tiempo para *relacionarse con otras generaciones*. Al final se presentan algunas sugerencias para la política educativa de la Unión Europea.

PALABRAS CLAVE: ADOLESCENCIA TEMPRANA, TIEMPO SIN PROTECCIÓN, TIEMPO GENERACIONAL, POLÍTICA EDUCATIVA, SOCIALIZACIÓN INTERGENERACIONAL.

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The paper was given on 26 october 2001 at the international congress on "unprotected time of young people in the EU", held at the University of Bologna (Italy). It discusses the social problems connected to the time in which young people (10-15 years) are unprotected by the socialising agencies in everyday life. The policies designed so far in EU countries to combat these problems are analysed and evaluated. The author underlines the fact that time is not equal for all generations, because time undergoes very differing accelerations and decelerations depending on the position of each generation and therefore it acquires a very different value and meaning for each of them. For these reasons, to

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KEYWORDS: EARLY ADOLESCENCE, UNPROTECTED TIME, GENERATIONAL
TIME, EDUCATIONAL POLICIES, INTERGENERATIONAL SOCIALIZATION.

1. THE PROBLEM OF "UNPROTECTED TIME" IN EARLY ADOLESCENCE

1.1. The development of children and adolescents is strongly tied to how they experience time. Time is a life opportunity that can be used in very different ways. Precisely because it is an opportunity, young people's time presents risks that are greater (i) the more the child still has to acquire the ability to manage his time in the most useful and meaningful way for him, (ii) the more the social context in which the child lives is incompetent, unregulated, anomic or chaotic in its use of time. All the scientific research demonstrates that the individual factors and those of context are strongly correlated between themselves, even if the paths can be variable and, in any case, never deterministic.

It is therefore necessary to see how *young people* (term in which I include boys and girls between the ages of 10 and 15) perceive (i) time as a general life category and (ii) *their* concrete time, both in the subjective sense and in reference to the culture (ways of life) of the social context in which they live (family, school, peer group, other realities to which they belong or in which they take part).

Basing myself on the results of several empirical researches, but extrapolating from these, I would like to exemplify the idea by presenting a typology of young people, differentiated according to how they perceive and organise their time (see in particular Donati y Colozzi, 1997, pp. 234-239). The typology can be synthesised in the following way:

- Group A) *Structured (or institutional) young people:* those who perceive time as an opportunity restricted by socialising agents and organise their time according to those restraints. These are young people who demonstrate a certain equilibrium between time dedicated to themselves and to others, they communicate sufficiently with their family, they do their school work, and they have a limited amount of time for entertainment and playing.

- Group B) *Young people who self-schedule their time:* those who demonstrate behaviour more inclined to scheduling their time by themselves, seeing it not just as a constraint of conformity, but also as an opportunity for personal choice. In this case, the young people dedicate more time to informal group or club activities with particular regulated aims (play, learning, sport, hobbies, etc.).

- Group C) *Young Explorers:* those who reduce the restricted time (i.e. school activities, homework, etc.) to the minimum, to dedicate as much time as possible to explorational activities largely dictated by spontaneous and contingent motivations (once they were tied to knowledge of the local area, today they are more connected to "virtual streets"). The greatest leaning is towards

time spent away from the institutions (family, school, church, clubs), to satisfy the needs of curiosity and adventure in the world.

■ Group D) *Unstructured young people:* those who reject compulsory times and in general escape from the temporal ties of the socialising agents. They are young people who dedicate little or no time to school activities, neither do they work or take part in social associations. They spend their time in informal relations, sometimes more tied to the family, other times more with groups of friends, without any long-term planning *(hanging out),* but driven by the need to survive or to show off or succeed in the situations in which they find themselves.

The fundamental distinction is between the first two groups and the last two. The first two groups live in generational time (I will explain this term later on), the other two distance themselves from it or have lost it. The structured young people and those who self-schedule their time do not generally spend time hanging around the streets or use their time irrationally. Conversely, the explorers and unstructured young people are those more inclined to spend time on the street (real or virtual) or live their day without ties and planning organisation. They therefore have an imbalance on the side of unprotected time.

These types of young people demonstrate ways of using time that are significantly correlated with the characteristics of their life context (the more structured and organised, for example, live in more stable families and attend organised club activities rather than not being members of any club or else only being involved in informal peer groups).

The distinction between "protected time" and "unprotected time" underlines a problematic point of view: if the child's time has an acceptable degree of risk or if the risk is unacceptable, in as much as it becomes a real danger. But from which point of view is the time safeguarded or risky (or, again, offers opportunity)?

This distinction can be played from the point of view of the young person (what is risky for him and what is not, and why) or from the point of view of society (in particular, the socialising agents –family and school– and public apparatus, such as the legal, medical, police, etc.). In fact, it is the second point of view that prevails: the unprotected time is that defined as such by the institutions that dominate the young person, while the definition provided by the young person is often considered irrelevant, only presumed and generally virtually ignored. This is demonstrated by the fact that very rarely do the institutional socialising agents realise that the distinction between protected and unprotected time is also a problem for the child: usually parents and educators only realise this when the young person is already in a state of uneasiness, malaise, difficulty, deviance and is asking for help. But this occurs, in the vast majority of cases, only *ex post.* The need the young person has to be "regulated" in his actions by a significant subject outside himself, is often ignored by the socialising agencies as an internal and autonomous need of the young person himself, because the socialising agents have an intrinsic and structural tendency to define the problem of the time of the young person "to be protected" in an self-referring way, as a problem of control outside his consciousness.

Can we introduce a third point of view? For example, the inter-generational one? This is what I would like to explore.

In fact, the protected/unprotected time distinction assumes different meanings according to the semantics of protection. The two most important meanings are that of protection as *control* and that of protection as *promotion.* a) With the first meaning it is understood that the person is in some way

overseen in his time, that is to say he[1] is protected by external agents, made responsible *ad hoc,* in the context of a system of institutional guarantees, more or less institutionalising. b) With the second meaning, it is understood that the person is helped to make his time more meaningful and useful by exploiting greater autonomy, where society does not just watch over him, but suggests paths and projects for personal, interpersonal and community growth which make him more autonomous (deviant groups and sub-cultures also do this, by protecting the time of their members very effectively).

The first meaning, while being very reductive, completely prevails over the second. This occurs not through want or by chance, as I will explain later, but for structural and cultural reasons, which have roots in the deepest assumptions of our modern European culture and corresponding social organisation (Foucault, 1975). Although some people believe that the terms protection and promotion are contradictory[2], I believe that they can be wed to each other in a positive and synergic manner. And it is precisely the inter-generational perspective that helps see how this is possible, because it is from the point of view of the links between the generations that the control and promotion of young people assumes a special positive value.

In today's European society, there prevails a conception of *protected time as time controlled by the socialising apparatus,* while the semantics of *protected time as promotional time operated by young people themselves, in relation to the actors "significant to them"* is almost absent, in a given context. This second meaning is talked about a lot, but those who have recourse to it usually do so in a paternalistic way, because they do not really believe that young people can regulate themselves. *Preventative, punitive, repressive measures, rather than promotional ones, prevail.* In fact, it needs to be recognised that the acceptance of protected time as promotional is vary vague and fleeting, even if, as a general rule, its sense is clear: it ensures that the time spent by young people is a factor in human and social growth, even self-regulating, and not one of dissipation, anomie and deviance. But "to promote time" is demanding and put the security of the adult world at risk.

The difficulties in defining "young people's time" are tied to the phase in the life cycle that the individual person is passing through, or rather the point of intersection between the individual, family and generational life cycle phases in which they find themselves. If, for a small child, time is beaten out, decided and regulated by the socialising agencies (family, nursery and play school), when the person begins early adolescence things become more complicated: the socialising agencies loosen

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[1] Throughout the whole text, "he" refers to both males and females.

[2] Cfr. C. Baraldi (2001, p. 7): "the attempt to integrate the promotion of social participation with the protection of children and adolescents is particularly widespread. This attempt creates contradictions, both in the culture of childhood and adolescence, and in the concrete interventions directed at children and adolescents. In fact, while the promotion of participation makes it necessary to attribute autonomy of directional choice, protection creates the idea of a dependence on the directions of adults". The reason why Baraldi believes that protection and promotion are contradictory is because he observes these concepts (and action systems) from the point of view of the communicational double bind framework, rather than seeing them as concrete social relations that have intrinsic tensions, yes, but these tensions are positive for learning to overcome risk situations (on these deep distortions in the observation of communications, particularly socialising ones: cfr. Donati, 1991, chapters 7 and 8).

their control, but they do not know how to regulate the freedom. The young person must acquire autonomy in spending his time and he has to do it by negotiating with the socialising agents. But up to what point do the latter understand his needs and know how to respond to them?

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Over the last few years there has been talk of *resiliency*. This term alludes to the fact that children and young adolescents are able to bounce back after shocks provoked by "tough interactions" with society (the theme, arising from research initially conducted in Great Britain, has spread as far as Asia) (Banaag, 1997).

The fact is that early adolescence is a special period, ever more vague and critical in our society, which has not yet been properly discussed. It corresponds more or less to the period between 10 and 15 years of age (a period between the end of infancy and the beginning of adolescence, to which correspond very different types of formative systems in the various countries). This age can be seen as a "second birth" for the young person, due to the difficulties associated with the separation from the parents and the acquisition of a greater (going towards full) autonomy. What is needed is an attitude and pedagogy which pays a lot of attention to preventative action when the first, small problems emerge and while the parents are still willing to be involved in a meaningful way. But, in reality, this does not happen, or it occurs in a very small measure, because the young people are in a hurry to grow up and the parents no longer see them as children.

The policies adopted for regulating young people's time are more often than not mere reactions to the unease and difficulties being manifested. If time is dedicated to listening, this is done in recognition of a problem or feeling of unease that has already formed, often in a way that is difficult to reverse. The policies for young peoples' time are very often directed at the young people as a stand-alone category, without involving the parents. These initiatives try to create *specific* congregating spaces for the young people which, besides often ignoring the differences of *gender* (for example, ignoring that girls are less interested than boys in sports, taking it for granted that the interest is the same), isolate the young people from other generations and produce a segregating differentiation of time and space.

The generational dimension now becomes a crucial part of the problem.

1.2. What have generations got to do with it?

Time is not the same for all generations. This is true in two ways:

i)   it is not equal within the world of young people because more and more they perceive the distances between themselves and those who immediately precede and follow them; in brief, even between the various generations of young people, time is perceived and lived in very different ways (see budget time analyses);

ii)   it is not equal between more distant generations (that is between children, young adults, adults and the elderly), because time undergoes very different accelerations and decelerations today, depending on the position of each generation and it therefore acquires a very different value and meaning for each of them.

For these reasons, to pose the problem of unprotected time for young people means entering into the problem of how the various generations live *their own* time and time *relating to other generations*.

1.3. In this contribution, I propose above all to explain the concept of "generational time" as the guiding concept for time policies sensitive to intergenerational relations (par. 2).

Secondly, I would like to examine current European attitudes towards young people's time and the related policies; in my opinion, these attitudes and policies are and remain very abstract and completely centred on the dual concept of freedom/control *(lib/lab)*, rather than being directed at building sensible temporal projects and creating living contexts in line with such projects (par. 3).

From this analysis, I propose to outline new attitudes in time policies for young people that are based on "glocal" contexts of time, identified with a space and rooted in a culture (par. 4). Finally, I will conclude with a few operational proposals (par. 5).

2. To what time are we referring? to elaborate a concept and policy of "generational time"

2.1. The basic argument that I would like to put forward is the following: young people's time, wherever it is spent, is "generational time" and should be recognised as such. In any case, we need to think about it in this light: that is as *specific time for linking* between generations, between the private-family sphere and the public sphere of school, and in general between the subjects in the community that surround young people. It is the time that makes the relations between different generations successful or failures, meaningful or empty.

The starting point, which I believe it is useful to consider, is the fact that a lot of the unease, awkwardness and deviancies in young people, which show themselves in an irrational, anomic and often violent use of time, are the product of the fact that young people no longer feel "generational", they no longer belong to a generation, they do not know what a generation is, they do not feel they share a common, meaningful historical story with a "same age social group" that has its place in the world and –in the future– the capacity to effect society positively. This want is the basis of the identity crisis –more and more frequent and profound– that we see exploding in adolescence and young adulthood. If we analyse the situation carefully, we see that the symbolic referring points and the affective and cognitive instruments needed for building a generational identity are missing for the child, right from early infancy[3]. We therefore have to rethink completely young people's time using the interpretative key of the "generational sense of existence".

Often, when one speaks of "young people's time", reference is made to the things the young person does: what time he gets up, if he has breakfast, if he watches the TV or not, for how long, if he goes

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[3] The growth of violence on a world level (after the 11th September 2001 and the subsequent war on international terrorism) generates in young people the feeling of belonging to a very conflictual world, characterised by a perennial struggle, on which they can have no effect. The reactions can be of various types: there are those who react in an introverted way, internalising the situation as irrational fear and sometimes as their fault (the youngest do this, analogously to what happens when parents argue in a violent way and the children feel that these conflicts are caused by their behaviour); there are those who react in an extrovert way, manifesting aggression and violent behaviour (bullying, vandalism, small thefts, etc.). But, in every case, the identification with a generation that has a "dream", or rather that feels it can build something positive for the future, is missing.

to school, what he does during the day, at what time he goes out, what he does when he comes home, how he spends extra-familial and extra-scholastic time, etc. etc. This is the traditional analysis of the young person's *budget-time*, which is very useful as it enables us to reconstruct how the young person lives and therefore why he knows certain things and not others, why he behaves in a certain way and not in another, etc. etc. But I do not want to speak about this reified time. I want to talk about "young people's time" in another key, that is from the perspective of time seen as a problem of meaning, where every one of them, from childhood, asks themselves where a certain way of living and using the opportunities (including hidden or only potential ones) of the day, week, month, year or life leads us.

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From this second point of view, time is the key to what "makes", what constitutes, a generation: a generation exists if it can live "its" time in such a way as to feel itself effectively generated (by someone for whom it has and maintains a memory) and able to generate its own time, therefore to control the sense of the things that are done, why they are done, to plan what is done (a generation does not exist if there is no intentional "plan" situated in time). In short, to talk about time for young people is to talk about their "generational awareness": if and in what measure this time is perceived by teachers and parents, by all those who are involved with young people, and if it is valued or else negated and removed.

My thesis is that this time ("generational time") does not exist today, or rather, it is being more and more ignored. While all the people who surround the young person ought to be paying attention to the generational viewpoint, instead the time of the individual person is usually seen as that of an individual outside time and space, who can live anywhere and anyhow, and can be standardized. This situation is largely the product of optical distortions produced by the processes of globalisation.

There are, obviously, differences tied to national cultural contexts. For example, the problem of overseeing the unprotected time of young people is felt more in Mediterranean countries than in central Europe, but the interpretation of the situation is different and also the reaction of parents and teachers. Empirical research has shown that the lack of supervision of children by adults is felt to be a problem much more in Italy (66%) and Portugal (62%) than in Germany (only 28% of the total population), but the reactions are opposed: in Italy and Portugal the lack of supervision is seen as a risk and danger, while in Germany it is seen as a positive test for the children (Totman Strie Planning and Research Ltd, 2001).

2.2. We need to ask the question: why has the problem of "young people's time", understood as the analysis and evaluation of how young people spend their daily time between family, school and other areas of life, returned?

There are a lot of reasons, but the fundamental one is that the time spent by young people, not only in extra-familial and extra-scholastic contexts, but also in the family and at school, *produces their social integration less and less*. In European children, boredom and a sense of emptiness grow, many of them suffer depression, some react with deviant behaviour, others seek release in violence, some take to wandering, they run away from home, and in general the number of youngsters who can be considered poor, marginalised and unstable raises. To these needs to be added the growing number of young people who do not integrate socially, because they are part of the army of migrants (fruit of international migrations, asylum seekers, refugees of every type).

It is not yet clear if the non-integrative character of young people's time is due to the lack of social control or if it is the undesired effect of an excessive "puerocentric protectionism" on the part of our social regulatory systems (for example the fact that it is forbidden for children between the ages of 11 and 15 to do any work or to take on certain responsibilities during free-time activities).

Staying in the area of what Europe produces internally, we can remind ourselves of the main things that make young people's time ever more problematical for themselves and for society: the difficulties families have in managing the child and young person themselves, *his/her* times and spaces, in the face of a working day that requires more and more energy and attention, and lifestyle and consumer models that give little importance to interpersonal relationships. There is the now consolidated role of the TV as a substitute parent and the appearance of new media (video games, internet, etc.), which take up more and more of young people's daily lives. We can call all this processes of globalisation, risk society (Beck, 1992) or whatever we want, but the fact is that time is used more and more in a reified and instrumental way, without being thought about in human terms.

The schools themselves do not manage to adopt a quality time suited to the needs of the players involved (children, teachers, families, surrounding community), but maintain functions mainly of control over the time of young people, with images, expectations and practices of a custodial and playful type, of *entertainment,* notwithstanding the efforts made to organise the young person's time in an educational and socialising way.

My starting point is that the difficulties in managing young people's time refer to a group of issues at the centre of which is a fact: time is no longer linear (as when it went from one point to another in a consecutive, intentional sequence, aimed at something), but has become circular (time turns back on itself every day, or rather every moment, it does not have to take us anywhere).

In a lot of countries, attempts are made to control the unprotected time of young people by extending the school day. This measure is often only a product of the problems of parents (tied up at work, absent or far away) and only feeds the senseless circularity of the young person's time. The experiences of extending the school day have only been productive where they have refused to be merely an extension, a simple lengthening, of the activities that are carried out in the morning or during curricular hours, because, in that case, all that is produced is the further colonisation, passivity, regimentation of the young person, through a widened scholastic circular time. To be truly innovative, meaningful, useful, the extended scholastic time must inscribe itself in another time: my hypothesis is that it is linear time that, for the young person, signifies help in rebuilding a historic memory and support in making plans, in entering a "strong" symbolic world where the future of one's own existence is at stake.

The time periods of the young person, even the scholastic ones, have changed radically because –more generally– the sense of time has changed, its scanning, its rhythms, the length of its periods during the day, the week, the year and the various eras of life. And how have they changed?

In order to answer, we need to introduce the notion of *time registers* (Donati, 1994). I categorise them in three types: the *interactional registers* of time are those that consider time as a "communicative event", which lasts for as long as the communication and disappears with it, like the image on a TV screen; the *relationship registers* are those that consider time as the "history of social relations", in as much as they are concerned with the experiences that are born and develop between human relations,

which have their own "duration" and obviously can also die; the *mythical-symbolic registers* of time are those that consider reality in the light of things that have no time ("mythical"), which give an "ultimate" meaning to life because they are felt or imagined as eternal, or rather according to the time of the great symbols that direct human existence without being subjected to the contingencies of the present. Young people have myths, in fact it is precisely at that age that there is a need for myths (whether good or bad is another matter). But the fact is that, today, even the myths tend to be interactive, rather than archetypes: to put it briefly, they belong to the category of cartoons, video games, like popstars and movie stars, they are not the fixed stars which guide life.

Well then, in my opinion, the time periods for young people have changed a lot in a precise direction, marked by the growing prevalence of *interactional registers* of time (time that lasts only as long as a communication) to the detriment of *relationship registers* (time for social relations, which are born and develop and then die, but have a "duration") and, above all, to the detriment of *symbolic registers* of time (time for things that give an ultimate meaning to life, the time for symbols that direct existence in a stable and planned way). Among certain groups of young people, interactional time prevails over relationship time and symbolic time almost to the point of obliterating them.

Generally, young people's time is more and more interactional, and only interactional, with the result being a lack of a generational sense. If the policies concerning time (including the extended time at school) serve only to increase the dominion of purely interactional time, we can expect more and more radical forms of adolescent crisis, owing to the lack of relationship and symbolic time.

In certain environments time passes more quickly, in others more slowly. In certain moments of the day it has more meaning, in others it seems useless. In this overall picture, and in terms of relevance of meaning, where do family time and school time stand *from the young person's point of view*? The former certainly is and remains the most significant (if family time was missing the young person would no longer be able even to have an idea of extra-family time, including school time). And yet there is still the problem of how to connect these two different temporal contexts, with their rhythms, meanings, references and capacity to effect the identity of the young person. What is certain is that, in both contexts, children and young people are still too passive, even when adults say they want to apply a non-passive teaching method: the reason is that, whatever teaching method is used, it is the nature of time –and the balance between its interactional, relationship and symbolic registers– that decides if the young person can activate a certain capacity for development or must simply conform and adapt passively.

The growing prevalence of purely interactional registers (made of temporary, superficial, vanishing communication) proceeds hand in hand with another phenomenon that is radically modifying young people's time: the disappearance of the rites of passage from one age to another. In the past, the passage from childhood to adolescence and then beyond, within the family and outside it, was marked by quite precise rites, which followed predictable rhythms and customs, and to which strong relationship and symbolic registers were attached. The child first left the family to go to primary school, the adolescent on going to high school and university. Nowadays, there is some confusion about when the child and the adolescent leave the family: to the point where the number of teenagers and young adults who remain in their family of origin for years longer than used to be the case is growing everywhere. Normally, the child should "leave" the family at the moment it goes to nursery

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school, and the adolescent when he enters upon the higher levels of education: but this is not said, it is not symbolised by anything, the times of exit-return-staying are uncertain and confused. There is no awareness of these *movements of the times which mark the changes in age and their meaning*: children and young people are like parked cars, "leant" to the school, and there is no social rite which makes clear the sense of the passages and their times as part of a life project. Who can give this meaning?

Evidently not the school alone, nor the family alone. We need to think again about the community, that vague and often invoked entity, because it is in the community that the rites of passage occur and time takes on a generational significance.

Communities have largely disintegrated and are continuing to crumble, notwithstanding the strong counter-reactions. The family too has had to face a process of notable disorganisation, even though a widespread need for a certain reorganisation is now being felt. One could say that the entire social fabric seems to have lost its vital ingredient.

It is as if time was running on empty. So that if, on the one hand, the need for informality is growing, on the other, rigidities are also increasing in a swirling game which increases the speed and disintegration of the rhythms of life, of the entrance and exit from one age to another, from one life cycle phase to another, from one social sphere to another. The fact is that community time has been "made present", one lives the present without a past or a future. What responsibility do the family and the school (even the infant school) have for this new way of living time only "in the present", only as "ordinary time without history"? One feels the need to find new referring points to establish the sense of time, its "registers", because time influences decisively the very meaning of life itself, which will be much fuller if there is co-existence and integration between the three time registers (interactional, relationship, symbolic).

What we know, or rather what we need to relearn, is that the young person needs "stable" time, articulated by attractive passages in order to construct his identity. He needs temporal rhythms as predictable and manageable on his scale as possible. Spontaneity, which is essential for psycho-socio-cultural growth and maturity, can be exercised –and better exercised– with organised rhythms along established paths, otherwise it is no longer spontaneity, but chaos, disorientation, uncertainty and fluctuation.

2.3. In general, the responses of adolescent training systems over the last few years have shown some tendencies that need to be read in a critical light:

- the school has suffered from pressures, internal and external, which have driven it to become a *self-poietic type of configuration,* that is the self-organisation of a "self-contained world", in line with a tendency that risks increasing the replacement (rather than complementary) character which the school has in relation to families (this is the so-called self-referring nature of the school), precisely while teachers are more and more preoccupied and more and more impotent in educating the children;

- the educational methods of the scholastic organisation have demonstrated a marked *tendency to "neutralising time"*, rather than questioning and enriching their own times; in terms of socialisation, there has been a mixing of processes for formalising and making informal educational time, which has led to the loss of much content and value, even if it as produced greater expression and emotional sensitivity among young people.

There is a growing awareness about all of this. What is missing, however, is an alternative organisational model for the education and socialisation of young people in the context of "community time", which is really able to avoid the deleterious tendencies just mentioned. But it is not clear what the term "community time" can indicate. Also because it is precisely the context of community that has become wanting and problematical. So we need to think about training and socialising courses for young people which are more open to the community and less "specialised", although they will have a high educational content and professional outlook.

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2.4. My proposal is that an important key for this new way of thinking must be the intergenerational one. To talk about time means talking about generations meeting: we need to think again about the family, the school, the other living environments of young people, and their times, as a problem of relations between generations. In short: *the ecology of time periods for young people must be an intergenerational ecology*[4].

Let us ask ourselves why, for example, while young people spend more quantitative time with their parents than with their grandparents, it has been observed that they talk (hold a dialogue) more with their grandparents than their parents. One could say that the parents have other things to think about (work, household problems, preparing food, taking care of clothing and furniture, etc. etc.), while grandparents have more time for their grandchildren. But it is clear that this is a false answer. What counts for young people is not the quantity of time, but its quality: this is why they open up with their grandparents, while they converse rarely and badly with their parents. The fact is that grandparents live a generational quality of time that many parents do not have. It is in these mediation functions that the family stakes the value of generational time that it dedicates to young people.

I propose, therefore, to see the problem from the following unitary angle: young people's time must be considered in relation to the changes in the relations between the generations. One needs to leave behind the usual standpoints, by now obsolete and too repetitive, which make young people's time a problem of the parental couple, of the school and the services seen as control apparatus. We need to get away from a "custodial" vision, but without running into the idea that *anything goes* and that young people can "survive better alone" (it is no coincidence that the English talk about *kids on their own*, in place of the American expression of "kids with the house keys in their hand", *latchkey kids*; the two expressions are not, in fact, equivalent).

Substantially: the problem of young people's time is new because, from every point of view, the sense of what a generation "does", the sense of its "lived experiences", and the relations between the generations have radically changed[5]. The times of generational transitions are ever more difficult, and society does little to help young people to work them out. Our society pushes every generation, in

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[4] I am thinking here about the ecology of childhood referred to by Bronfenbrenner (1991).
[5] We have to completely modify the concept of the common meaning of "generation", the one inherited from the 19th Century and made famous by K. Mannheim: cfr. Donati (1995).

particular the youngest[6], "to do it themselves" in passing from one phase of life to another, but we must argue with what, although sometimes called libertarianism or permissiveness, is in reality a form of negligence and abandon.

The solutions to the periods of everyday life of young people must be sought in this context and according to the following perspectives: i) young people need to feel generated, ii) young people need to feel they can create their life and the meaning of the flow of time that pervades them. These are the dimensions of the generational sense that must be there in the parents, in the teachers and in the players in the surrounding community.

The links between the generations that are produced in advanced societies tend to erode what *creates* a generation, that is its historic experience, which is both special and universal. The great challenge, in the new context, is how to build a *Heimat*, that is, a primary life environment, from which the young person can acquire that primary identity which will make them an "actor", not just as an individual, but as a member of his own generation. The sense of his life and many of the aspects that we can indicate as "personal happiness" depend largely on whether they feel they are part of a generation or not.

The difficulties in pointing things in this direction derive from a cultural and mass-media process of globalisation, which challenges every opportunity for creating new communities like "new spaces", even if a widespread need for these "life spheres" is flowering today.

As a general principle, the extended time in school *can build the sense of a generation* more than private-familial time, or private-out of school time in general is failing to do today, dissolving as it is into the mere "interactional register" (lacking relationships and symbolic sense). *But with certain conditions*. I would specifically like to underline two:

a) on condition that the school itself becomes a linking factor between the generations (in the widest school-family link), with the involvement also of the parent and grandparent generations in the varied activities of the extended time;

b) on condition that the school offers occasions for social and communicative relations which are more meaningful that those available elsewhere today, above all than those offered by potential market competitors (such as the TV) or from other purely escapist social spheres, such as the video arcade on the corner (it is the problem of a new interaction between formal and informal relations).

2.5. If one wants to avoid childhood developing without identity and that early adolescence becomes the moment in which the young person searches only to escape from the protected time of the institutions, the daily periods of time must express and produce a new *interlocking* between the generations.

The generations become problematical today, even in their historic existence, because the link that should connect them does not have its own time, does not receive the due temporal attention, and it disintegrates, it fragments, it begins to fluctuate and implodes. Initiatives which develop the time periods for this link are needed.

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[6] See the historical research of Modell (1989).

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The new generations are losing the sense of historic time: young people no longer know anything about the past and they no longer imagine a future. This can be seen clearly in certain episodes, which we do not know whether to judge as romantic or terrible. A while ago, in a school in Milan, two ten year old children ran away from school and nobody knew where they were. The police, who were immediately contacted, found them lying down in a park a few kilometres away from their school and families. They had lain down there to feel closer together, closer friends. A sign that at school it was not possible to live an intense friendship. When they are older they will probably "run away" from the time dedicated to family and school in another way, no doubt less romantic.

Certainly, it is not all negative. The generational crisis also represents a moment rich in new feelings, with possibilities for new links. It is the family that is desperately seeking to mediate between the generations. But, in the long term, it will not be able to do it unless society, and above all the school, shows an equal amount of commitment. The school needs to become more sensitive in its organisation of time, to the link between the generations, so as to build a Heimat for the young person.

At the moment, an attempt is being made in the intergenerational links to make up for the deficiencies and the lack of comprehension and concrete exchange through affection and a certain goodwill, but these are inappropriate, as well as scarce, resources and methods.

One exits a situation such as that which has upset and is still upsetting the local communities only through a new pact between the generations, which makes clear the reciprocal rights and obligations in relation to the changed conditions of life. But such a pact has premises (pre-contractual conditions) without which the pact cannot be reached, or it is constructed badly, or it becomes a work of fiction. These premises refer to a configuration of reciprocity in family relations, and between family and school, which require public recognition and support. They imply a renewal of the alliance between family and society, which involves the school. The pact must be directed at a redefinition of time as a resource that requires attention in the time periods for each player and for the relations between them, so as to manage the problems of each generation in terms of integration and differentiation, autonomy and solidarity, identification and creation of the common good between them.

In short, society must set itself the problem of renewing the dynamic equilibrium between the generations through suitable links between the private sphere of the family and the public one of the social State, passing through the intermediate spheres such as the school. In order to be configured in a physiological way, the generational link requires a precise commitment from each of the parties involved.

The problem of intergenerational equity does not only raise a problem of public justice, that is, what to give children, young people, adults, the elderly in the distribution and redistribution of the collective resources (national or local) present, and what to leave to the new generations or to those that are yet to be born. It raises, above all, *the problem of the relations that the generations can and must have between them, in the private and the public spheres and between the two spheres*, in the perspective of a society that has a decent plan for its future.

What sense is there in speaking about the greater needs of a certain age group, when all the other groups can claim just as many rights? This is not just about taking note of the conflict of interests between different generations, or predicting the perverse effects resulting from certain redistribution practices. *It is about building the possible solidarity between these generations*. And solidarity inspired by

greater justice in every sense. We need a long term reference plan which gives families a stable set of rules so that they are able to set up better intergenerational relations. A new dynamic equilibrium between the generations needs to be designed, or rather, rules need to be decided that are inspired by criteria of equity and solidarity in their reciprocal relations over time.

The watershed is here: *between investing or not in the multigenerational family*, that is, that which lives on reciprocal exchanges between generations, and in a school that is aimed at the link between the generations. Which means, for our theme, *to go from policies of time (family, school and social) that have favoured individual age groups to policies of time that adopt a crossover and universal approach for the life cycle of the generations.*

One needs to ask if public and private decisions pay attention to this perspective, or not, and what instruments we can invent, taking into account their possible consequences, desired and undesired.

If the needs of children, adults and the elderly are placed independently (unrelated) of each other, they can only be in conflict: what is given to one set is taken from the others. The game remains at zero. Whereas, the intergenerational problem requires solutions that total more than zero. It is here that the traditional concept of generation no longer works, and we need to move on to a *relationship* concept of generation. It is not about finding –or rediscovering– a lost equilibrium between age groups in the face of resources that have become scarce (like time), but about rethinking the ways of bringing to fruition and distributing said resources throughout the whole life cycle, so as to render them accessible to all the generations through the exchanges between them, and therefore through flexible and synergic forms rather than rigid and conflictual ones. If there is going to be something innovative in the future, it will be the request for a budget to organise and give greater value to intergenerational time!

With the disappearance of the traditional "growth-stabilisation-decline" sequence between the different ages of life and the correlated social roles, *a new and autonomous meaning of generation*, as a social relationship between age groups that have different life environments and shapes, enters the field. Each generation must now construct its own ways of being, through the diversification of the available time (principal activity, free time and other activities), according to procedures that require specific socio-cultural management. This is particularly true for early adolescence, during which fundamental decisions about their existence (invisible to the eyes of the adult) are taken by the young person.

2.6. What can one do in the face of this situation? It is here that the relationship perspective on generations is very fertile. What is needed is: (i) above all not to reduce the concept of generation to the generic one of an age group; (ii) and then not to define the generation either only in terms of the private world of family relations, or only in the school or public sphere (as impersonal categories of children, young people, the elderly, etc.), but to consider the generation as the *link* between the private sphere and the connected "public" spheres.

When a young person asks "who am I?", they can answer in a variety of ways. They can say "I am just any old child", they can say "I am the child of that mother and father", I am the brother or sister of Tom or Dick, I am a pupil of this or that teacher, etc. etc. It is the whole collection of these answers that define the identity of self (an identity that is, therefore, complex). But these allegiances are not all on the same level, they do not all have the same type and level of meaning: the first answer ("I am

just any old child") does not in itself constitute a generation, it is a generic identity that has little sense, so much so that the child does not think it, or thinks about it last; the others are the more important allegiances and they are the ones that give the child an identity in socio-cultural time-space. Now these identities are neither expressive nor cognitive: they are symbolic. And only the time belonging to the generational link can put them in relation to each other, so as to give the child coherence, an *ubi consistam*, a Heimat. Identity is certainly problematical, but the capacity of the child to develop it should not be underestimated, when he is placed in an adequate interactive *setting*.

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A generation (every generation) is the way in which historic, public events reverberate on private-family relations between descendants and, at the same time, it is the way in which the family brings its games into society, responds creatively to the stimuli that arrive from outside, and produces, in turn, changes in society.

The concept of generation should not be referred only to the private sphere (filial and parental relations) nor only to the public (school, work, social security, redistribution of resources, rights of access to services, etc.), since it refers to both and is, in fact, a fundamental part of their *connections*. Families must do something in the private sphere, the institutions must do something in the public sphere, and both must do something in the relations *between* these two spheres. The biggest problem becomes that of how to configure these connections, so as to make them more viable. As a general rule one can say that:

a) it is necessary to open, in both the private and the public sphere (schools included) what we can call the *"generational question"*: we must establish new agreements –as reciprocal commitments– between the generations, precisely through the changes that are produced in family relations;

b) the commitment of *both* the families and the other players (state, market, service sector) must grow in order to face the generational problem in its public-private connections together.

It is necessary that the search for solutions does not break up into narrow policies centred on the individual age groups (as, for example, when childhood is broken up into first-second-third-fourth phases and specialised initiatives are adopted for each of them), or else on a life cycle perceived simply as an undifferentiated succession of different ages. What is needed is to look at the problems of autonomy and interdependency between the different generations –as defined here– so as to activate positive and virtuous circuits between those same generations. The solutions need to be directed at the problems of interlocking, not at those of the individual parties or the simple hubs of the intergenerational networks. And for the link, "third spheres" are needed, different to the private-family and the institutional spheres (for example, the scholastic-curricular course).

2.7. What will principally inspire such a turnaround?

If a new "generational culture" needs to be produced, one which refers not to the individual's course of life alone (that is to the social age), but to the intra- and intergenerational relations, one must necessarily set out from a premise: one must remember that *the term generation is a concept both temporal and procreative*. The key words here are: time, links, rights and obligations.

I) *A generational culture lives by its own "social time" (which defines the social age and its organisation).*

Generational time is an intermediate time between that of the individual and that of the social institutions. If the generation disappears as a life experience, that is as lived experience and as cultural representation, its time also disappears. The mediation between individual time and that of the

institutions falls into nothingness. This consideration makes us understand the importance the sense of time, its subjective and inter-subjective lived experience and its social representations have for the construction of a generation.

To rethink the culture of generational time means rethinking the symbolic processing that is needed to operate the transitions in the individual or family life cycle, or rather *between* them, in order to achieve improved management of the continuity and discontinuity between the generations.

The criteria of social age (generation in the public sphere) should not operate completely independently from the relations that the age has with the generational position in the specific sense (in family relations). If, for example, one asks: "at 10-12 years old, is a child able to spend its time in unsupervised friendships?", the answer cannot be in any way unambiguous or standard: it depends on the position the child has in the family (what type of support and skill in facing up to risks do the family relations offer him?) and on the position that the child occupies in the network of outside relations (what level of support for a responsible autonomy do these relations offer?) We know that, from the parents' point of view, their children are always children. But society is not like that. Society has its criteria, tied in the first place to social roles. One cannot respond to the previous question by simply looking at the biological date or label on the birth certificate of the child. The policies of time refer to a culture of time, which is different for each social player.

II) *A generational culture lives reciprocal social ties.*

Modern society, one knows, fights the social tie, considering it oppressive and limiting to individual potential. But today we have arrived at a society which finds itself at the extreme opposite. The end of interpersonal ties is also the end of the individual. We need to rethink the sense of social ties, particularly the ties between the generations, which confer a personal identity through time: do we dedicate time to reciprocity between generations? And then we need to consider these periods of time as productive of human development and not as occasions for simply "being together" without any aim. On the organisational front, there are even those, such as J. C. Kaufman (1993), who talk about the need for a "policy of the social tie" at European Union level. The expression remains vague, but the need is clear and it refers to a paradigm of interpersonal and generalised relations which is that of reciprocity, both restricted to the family-relatives and *widened to the generalised other*.

III) *A generational culture needs to express its own group of rights-obligations* (a pact between the generations is needed and not just the attribution of rights-duties to individuals –or abstract collectives– differentiated by age).

Contemporary society, generally speaking, has brought fluctuation to the reciprocal rights-duties between parents and children, but above all to those between descending generations, adjoining or not. A strong obliteration of the duties of children towards parents (at different ages) can be noted and, more generally, of the obligations of one generation towards the previous ones. In Europe, and also in Italy, legislation has tried to strengthen, but usually only on paper, the solidarity owed by parents to children. The intergenerational pact, from the legal point of view, appears full of holes, empty spaces, contradictions, which grow in size the more problematical relations become and/or if they break down. To improve this state of affairs, we need to remember that rights are not perceived in a fruitful way if they are considered as titles of possession by individuals, whether children or adults. Rights are relationships, not things. They are rules, institutionally defined, which specify what people

can and must *do in relation to each other*. Often, in intergenerational relations, rights refer more to *actions* than possessions, that is to social relations which can help or block the action of reciprocal support.

It is in this sense that one can speak about a right of the child to "generational time", *if and to the extent that it* means greater opportunities for meaningful intergenerational relations.

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3. PARTICIPATION AND CITIZENSHIP OF YOUNG PEOPLE: BUT WHERE, HOW AND FOR WHAT?

3.1. Current policies of time directed at young people in the countries of the EU are policies characterised, besides being more to do with control and custody than promotion, by the fact that:

a) they concentrate more on marginal and deviant conditions (the *"street"* children), rather than normal conditions (young people who find themselves *"on the street"*);

b) they are very much more *indirect* policies of time for young people than *direct* policies of time;

c) they are policies centred on the ratification of abstract rights of individual adult citizenship, rather than policies which promote time for an active social citizenship that considers young people as holders of their own relationship rights and correlated social formations.

Let us look at these points separately.

a) The attention of the policies for young people's time, *if and where they exist*, is concentrated on "street children", thus considered because they are poor, abandoned, abused "separated" from their original family (Ruxton, 2000), immigrants and refugees and, for these reasons, potentially deviant. In the social policies of the EU, the problem of "children on the street" (meaning by this expression those children who are not poor, abandoned or "separated", abused, discriminated against, but who, even though they have a family and sufficient material means, do not know how to spend their time when it is not controlled by the family and school and, therefore, "hang out on the street", a position which leaves them exposed to chance events, to whatever happens) is practically ignored. The "streets" can be real or virtual, in the sense that they can be material and physical or else consist in mere communication (you can be unprotected even when you spend time at home alone in front of a personal computer).

b) Personally, I distinguish between indirect and direct policies of time for young people: the first treat time as a derived variable, the second as an independent variable. From this point of view, one can say that the policies of time for young people advanced by the EU are above all of the first type. In the social policy measures which have an effect on the times of life, the main problem that is tackled is not that of young people's time, but their unprotected situation as the fruit, of "poverty" in a broad sense (Unicef, 2000), weakness, illness, isolation, abandonment, abuse. The policies of parental leave are also like this, for example, when they are designed for particularly problematical situations with children, in as much as they give the parents time to take care of the children only because the latter are "unwell". The philosophy is: the work time of the parents takes priority over everything; this can concede time to spend on taking care of children only in "special circumstances". The direct policies of time are instead those where the main problem and the independent variable is the time itself, in the sense that they are aimed at regulating the time of young people and the people that are important to them on the basis of the need to have a life that gives time to the important

things and of the need for the generations to spend time together. This second type of policy on time is clearly under-themed and not very practised.

c) The policies of advocacy of the rights of young people are, in general, characterised by uniformity with the individual and statutory rights of adults. These policies are inspired by forms of participation and citizenship for young people which favour the *institutionalisation* of time, that is a management of time based on the dual concept of liberty/control operated by the public political institutions side, instead of focusing more decisively on organisational forms of time characterised by *social* initiatives, based on the principle of subsidiary character and solidarity between politico-administrative institutions and civil society.

3.2. The dominant line in Europe today for protecting the growth of new generations concentrates everything on the recognition of a wide range of individual rights which are drawn up to the yardstick of adult citizens.

If we examine the principal documents, official and unofficial, the truly surprising thing is the fact that the debate is totally centred on the recognition or otherwise, and on the extension, of these rights. The document drawn up by EURONET (the European network for children)[7] *"A policy for childhood in Europe in the XXI century"*, is entitled "Children too are European citizens". Of course one appreciates the desire "to build a Europe with and for children", but, on the other hand, the limits of an approach that is built on the mere extension –abstract and imitative– of the typical rights of adults to those who are not adults (minors) are obvious.

One remembers rightly the fact that European minors are "invisible". One says: children represent a fifth of the European population and yet their opinion is rarely asked and in general they are not encouraged to participate in political development. Adults do not consider the opinions of children because they do not possess financial power or the vote. It is declared that children are the future, but, currently, they are a secondary political priority, and yet the economic, social, political and cultural development of Europe depends on its 90 million children. The EU believes it is important to "get close to the citizens", but the voice of children is rarely listened to and Europe is still a long way from the creation of a "Europe of Citizens", in which children can exercise their rights and participate as citizens alongside adults. What stands out in the Treaties on the EU is that the fundamental importance is given to the "citizen as worker" and that means that the interests of childhood are not considered in the majority of political areas. The EU finds itself, however, faced with new challenges that will have consequences on the lives of its children.

A policy for childhood in 21ˢᵗ century Europe is proposed, inspired by the following recommendations:

Legal Basis: A new article should be inserted in the Treaties on the EU, which allows the

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[7] Euronet –The European Network for Children– is an association of networks and organisations that support the interests and rights of children, formed initially to put pressure on the decision-making bodies to include subjects relating to childhood in the revision of the EU Treaty of 1995. All the organisations involved share the same preoccupation, that is, that children are "invisible" within Europe.

Community to contribute to the promotion and protection of the rights and needs of children.

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Impact on Childhood: The European Commission should guarantee that all legal proposals and community policies are absolutely compatible with the principle of the superior interest of the minor, considered a priority in the UN Convention on the Rights of Childhood.

Financial endowment: The European Parliament must extend the funds currently destined for young people to children as well and increase the financial resources available for children in the general budget lines and in the programmes. The Commission should evaluate the impact on children and young people of the 2000 Agenda proposals for the reform of the EU budget and develop appropriate strategies. The Commission should draw up and present to Parliament each year an analysis of the EU budget percentage set aside for expenditure on childhood.

Development of Intervention Programmes: The EU institutions should guarantee children the possibility of benefiting fully from any existing or future EU intervention programmes, including those relating to young people and social marginalisation. The Council of Ministers should adopt the Daphne programme for combating violence against children. The European Commission should guarantee that discrimination against children as a social group is subject to EU intervention, as a result of the introduction of Article 13 in the Treaty of Amsterdam. The Commission and the member states should use the new legal basis of the Treaty of Amsterdam (Article K.1) to fight transnational crimes against children.

Promotion of child participation: The EU institutions and member states should involve children and young people in the decision processes at every level through adequate dynamics, and supply the financial resources needed for these initiatives.

Make children a political priority: The European Commission should publish a Communication on the implementation of the UN Convention relating to childhood rights. The Commission should develop instruments designed to evaluate the impact of macro-economic policies on children, taking as a model the progress made in processing the evaluations on environmental impact, both at member state and EU level.

Policy co-ordination: A Unit for childhood should be set up which provides the general guide necessary for the themes relating to childhood within the Commission. The institutions and the member states should develop dialogue with the ONGs and with all the organisations working for childhood.

The rights that EURONET claim are the following:

"Children have the right to live without being victims of prejudice, marginalisation and discrimination.

Children have the right to be recognised as citizens of the European Union through a declaration of their fundamental rights being inserted in the EU Treaty.

Children are entitled to have their needs and interests treated as a priority in the work of local, regional and national authorities and by the European and international institutions.

The EU and its member states have the duty to emend and propose legislation that fully reflects and applies the Convention on Childhood Rights.

The politicians, parties and political groups have the duty of giving priority to childhood rights in their action plans and programmes.

The ONGs and other similar organisations have the duty to develop work of involvement and participation with children.

The ONGs have the duty to promote the rights and needs of children with active support that also includes campaigns on the themes of childhood in the context of European Union development".

The list of requests could, obviously, be formulated in other similar and lengthier ways[8].

What I want to highlight here is that the conditions of children in Europe reveal a situation of extreme weakness not only for poor and marginalised children, but also for those who live in normal conditions. To the point that the absence of promotion of the latter group is enlarging the army of children without sufficient social protection.

But what are the means and instruments needed for greater protection? As the documents mentioned above show, and according to what they say, what is needed essentially are means and instruments for participation and citizenship in the "political" sense that imitate the requests (and language) of adults.

At whatever level, these are today's prevailing slogans. More participation and citizenship for young people are requested: but where, how, and for what?

Once again the adult world "is interpreting" the world of children, but it does it from a viewpoint that has very little truly "generational" about it. The requests for participation and citizenship correspond, in effect, to realities that are quite abstract for children. The viable worlds of young people are still missing.

Quite rightly, almost all the studies, research and reports on children in Europe indicate that current policies are completely inadequate in supplying adequate protection for the time that children spend as consumers; they criticise the economic bent and consumerism of the EU management; and they observe that the protection has had, and still has for the most part, a predominantly physical and healthcare bias (games, TV, etc.), at best, psychological. It is noticeable that little or none of the time protection concerns the social aspect, which is not touched particularly when it means interfering with the interests of the adult work market, production and capitalistic consumption. Programmes are called for which stress the primary and secondary participation of children and young people as "communication", but afterwards one has to observe that this communication model does not lead

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[8] The agenda of "Children for Europe" states: "We demand that the European Union listen carefully to the voices of its 90 million children and young people under 18 years of age. We, as Europe's young citizens, are eager to contribute actively to the development and progress of Europe. We want to change the social, political and economic lanscape of our Europe. In our Europe every child will be respected and listened to and every child will have the right to participate in the democratic process. In our Europe the Union will be close and accessible to this and future generations of European citizens. We are concerned that the way in which Europe is developing creates real risks for the safety, protection and well-being of its young citizens. Twenty percent of Europe's children live in poverty-despite the countries of the European Union being among the richest in the world. Children's rights to protection from abuse, violence, crime, exploitation and pollution within the European Union are far from guaranteed. The development of the single market has brought some benefits but not enough has been done to make sure that young children and young people's specific needs have been taken into account. We urge the politicians and policy makers of our Europe and countries to take action to promote and protect children's rights and treat us equally and with respect. ("Active citizens-children's choices", Belfast Euronet symposium 28/29 May 1998).

anywhere. The problem is to create socio-cultural-environmental contexts that are suitable for the 10-15 year age group. But that is not achieved through the slogans of political participation and citizenship.

Certainly, the unprotected time of young people is that in which they do not have meaningful and valid communication with adults. Young people themselves are often no more than "sounds in the silence" for adults: only sounds, not human voices note, which reverberate in the vacuum without receiving any reply. Sometimes there is manipulative communication from adults interested in exploiting young people in various ways[9].

But it is a mistake, in my opinion, to interpret and respond to these situations with a purely communicational paradigm. Young people need real human and social relations, not mere communication.

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3.3. The Italian experience with national law no. 285 of 1997 (Provisions for the promotion of rights and opportunities for childhood and adolescence) has been emblematic of this line, which in other countries has been developed through different initiatives, but corresponding to an analogous philosophy.

This law has implicitly acknowledged that the initiatives taken by central government have limited capacities. This has happened after recognition that the initiatives that have tried to regulate the time of minors with ad hoc services aimed at deviant and at risk youngsters have failed, just as the punitive measures (penal and administrative) adopted over the last twenty years have had very limited positive effects. Law 285 was an attempt to take a different path: one of interventions organised by local communities and explicitly encouraged to take inspiration from a collaboration between political-administrative institutions and social private subjects (*welfare mix*). What has been the result?

We can separate the two implementation phases of the Italian experience concerning territorial Plans for the implementation of law 285/97 into the two three-year periods 1997-2000 and 2000-2002.

In the first three-year period 1997/2000, the effort of connecting and integrating different subjects, of an institutional, voluntary and association nature, which represents the most innovative content of the law itself, was concentrated on themes that were considered priorities for that phase:

–experimentation of the "a year with the family" project, with the goal of promoting forms of conciliation between early childhood care time and work time, with particular attention to the paternal role and to the theme of sharing the upbringing of the children between the parents;

–the work of supporting one-parent families and maternity choices through the viable minimum contribution aimed at the socio-economic autonomy of those families;

–starting up experimentation in the area of services for early childhood, in accordance with art. 5 of the law, with the proposal for female family educators and the creation of educational structures in a convention relationship with subjects outside public administration;

–the design of interventions aimed at scholastic alphabetisation and socio-cultural integration of the foreign children, divided between the local education authority, the town quarters, immigration service and voluntary associations;

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[9] When I speak about exploitation of young people, I am thinking about forms of affective and sexual abuse, plus the use of juveniles for deviant and criminal activities, as well as simply of the mere self-realisation of the adult.

–the promotion of experiences aimed at understanding the phenomenon of "street children" managed by *Caritas* or philanthropic organisations in collaboration with public social services operators;

–the implementation of territorial socio-educational interventions aimed at preventing and containing social unease among adolescents;

–the continuity and enlargement of socio-educational recovery projects for adolescents subject to criminal proceedings, through the recovery of expression, identity and a non-stigmatising social dimension.

From the initial evaluation of the results of this programme, I believe it is possible to make at least two important observations.

The first observation is that there is a noticeable *gap* between the initiatives, very unequal for the different ages: in fact, while there are quite a lot of services for early childhood, there is a widespread and structural lack of a network of initiatives and services for families with adolescent children between 10 and 15 years of age. The second observation is that the projects and the experiences have been conducted in quite a fragmentary and pragmatic way, following a predominantly "communicational" conception of the involvement of children, that is focusing on their participation in terms of an increase in public communication, undervaluing the intersubjective and vital world relations: the results of this approach have been an even greater uncertainty in their periods of life.

The second programme plan for interventions in favour of childhood and adolescence (2000/2002 three-year period) only partially took account of these results. Other themes were focused on, above all the following:

–the persistence of a competencies fragmentation problem, which makes the project action less effective and, therefore, limits young people's effective enjoyment of social, educational and cultural rights, in that it obstructs an organic and global view of the needs;

–the fall in the birth-rate as a sign of the difficulty in having and raising children;

–the gap between the generations as a problem that limits intergenerational solidarity and provokes insecurity in parents;

–the need for a system of interventions capable of activating community resources and the self-organising skills of the young people themselves;

–the fact that adolescence is becoming an ever more complex evolutionary phase and the one most lacking in training opportunities in so-called free time (which is also the least protected).

Starting out from these observations, projects with the following characteristics have been promoted:

–an organic and global project approach, inspired by a logic of co-operation between diverse subjects;

–the creation of services to help the parental functions, paying particular attention to pre-adolescence and adolescence;

–the implementation of community projects, drawn up and managed by a variety of subjects and aimed at creating occasions for growth for adolescents and their families.

Specifically, the most frequent content for the projects for pre-adolescents and adolescents was directed at:

–facilitating the social and scholastic insertion of foreign minors;

–the qualification of free time opportunities;

–the support of families in their own caring functions;

–sporting disciplines as educational activities;
–the safety and liveability of urban spaces;
–the socio-cultural recovery courses for children in difficulty;
–the promotion of forms of self-organisation for adolescents.

From analysis of the projects, it is clear that awareness of the *family's central* role in overseeing young people's unprotected time has grown considerably. Its role as educator cannot be ignored an d must be valued and supported in every possible way.

The school world is more and more aware of the fact that adolescent fragility requires attention, respect and effective educational strategies in constant collaborative research with the families.

The ever-growing presence of foreign children makes the construction of didactic courses that respect differences more complex, but also more exciting.

Service sector associations have been engaged in building collaborative relationships with the institutions, the local areas and the schools in order to enrich the training and free time opportunities for young people, in the knowledge that only a capillary system of educational opportunities can contrast phenomena of isolation or deviation.

Local town areas have become a stable referring point for the design of integrated courses built through the activation of their own resources and the promotion of competencies, spaces and opportunities coming from the local context and offered by schools, associations and socio-educational services.

At the same time, the legal and health institutions appointed to work on the unease and social difficulties of young people, like the *Centres for Juvenile Justice and Local Health Authorities*, have been involved in formulating and managing projects for inserting young people in difficulty into a system of open, rather than closed and segregating relations, in order to raise the social recovery capacity of young people.

4. NEW DIRECTIONS: TO CREATE "GLOBAL CONTEXTS" OF VIABLE INTERGENERATIONAL TIME FOR ADOLESCENTS

4.1. What to do for 10 to 15 year olds in terms of their unprotected time in European countries?

During the 1990s, in a lot of EU countries, there was an enormous amount of discussions and proposals regarding childhood and adolescence, as a result also of the *Convention on childhood rights* approved by the UN in 1989. Numerous juvenile *advocacy* and protection associations and networks (local, national and international) sprang up. But the theme of time, and the policies of time, was considered in a completely marginal way.

There are two lessons we can learn from the European debate of the last decade:

a) firstly, the process of European integration is still characterised by minimal, and in certain cases non-existent, consideration for the problems of new generations; the EU has sponsored numerous Reports on the problems of juveniles, but it is precisely these *Reports* which demonstrate the limits of and gaps in current social policies for adolescents (at one end you have measures concerning care in early childhood, at the other, those concerned with getting young people working);

b) secondly, the initiatives undertaken have mainly been to do with *advocacy* and claiming abstract

adolescent rights, as individuals and as holders of political citizenship, while effective experimentation of new forms for organising and regulating young people's time, in accordance with declared principles, has been definitely neglected. An example of this is the slogan "cities made-to-measure for children": it produced a few exemplary initiatives, but they were completely precarious in terms of the likelihood of their becoming established and widespread.

The growth of conscience about the rights of children has certainly not moved at the same pace as their effective establishment. The proclamation of the abstract rights overrides any effective implementation of those same rights. What is missing are fixed Observatories for the problems of children, which could provide useful information. In the process of European integration, economics have led and still do lead the way, treating minors as objects for consumerism and relevant economic interests. In short, adequate *governance* has been missing in the area of the social and human problems of adolescents.

But that is not all. It is not just a question of delays and non-fulfilment. There is much more. There is, in my opinion, the fact that a deep cultural deficiency has manifested itself in the EU in the prevailing model of the conception of time, and of the policies on time, for young people.

The policies on time for young people have been welfare policies of inclusion for poor, marginalised and deviant youngsters, not policies promoting social contexts in which the young people can use their time as an effective resource for a life more worthy of being lived.

One needs to start out from these deficiencies in order to understand in what direction it is best to go.

4.2. The deficiencies can be understood if a distinction is introduced between *lib/lab* and s*ocial* time policies.

Lib/lab policies of time are those which subject young people's time to the concession of greater freedom in exchange for greater controls inspired by the equality of opportunity for individual self-fulfilment. Their primary concern is that young people's time is spent without their being the object of discrimination, abuse and exploitation, in the supposition that this leads to an increase in participation and active citizenship by the same young people. But this does not occur. The *lib/lab* model is, as a general rule, only an empty container for initiatives that are possible in the abstract, but always problematical in reality.

The *social* policies of time are those which, without ignoring the fact that the child lives in a context of freedom and controls, propose creating project contexts, with clear objectives, capable of activating the young and involving them in the organisation of their everyday life and the community context around them. Obviously, the importance of the young people being treated without discrimination, abuse and exploitation is not ignored, nor that they are educated with the values of equality and freedom. But this line has more of a community and less of a Jacobin character than the previous one. This underlines the limits of the *lib/lab* path as a predominantly formal, procedural and pragmatic path and it counters it with a line based on the motto: *"it takes a village to raise a child"*. Which means that it believes it is a priority to construct community life contexts in which young people can spend their time protected by an entire community and not so much and not only by specialised socialising agencies, such as the scholastic apparatus, the play, social, health, sporting, repressive and corrective services created *ad hoc* for them.

4.3. In the light of this distinction, one can say that the countries of the EU are still largely assembled along the line of *lib/lab* policies of time for young people, while only in some nations, regions or localities can truly *social* policies be seen. Examples of social policies are:

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- the activation of a scholastic system based on educational communities strongly linked to the local context, as in Holland (Dijkstra y Dronkers, 2000), which become centres for organising the free time of young people as well, without them being imprisoned by the school;
- the experiences of the extended school time, with extra-curricular activities, managed by parents and not just by teachers (like in the Faes schools, in the Provincial Federation of nursery schools in Trento, Italy, and other similar schools) (Macbeth, 1991);
- the creation of networks of families and/or other forms of association, which organise the free time of adolescents, giving them their voice and the maximum autonomy possible in managing their time, within well-defined projects (Hirst, 1997);
- the creation of figures such as the street educators, the free time tutors and, in general, the "network social work" with children (Sanicola, 1994);
- measures that enable the parents, teachers, educators, social operators (sociologists, psychologists, doctors, etc.) to use alternative times to work for organising activities with adolescents[10].

These experiences are characterised by their activating the members of civil society as primary agents for educating young people to use time well, making those same young people protagonists of their time, in relation to the people who mean something to them. But that implies a change in the rules concerning time in the world of work and the public institutions. The special quality that is needed for the change in direction is that of creating intergenerational contexts in which training is carried out through the creation of projects that are able to unite the young person's instances of freedom, spontaneity and exploration with their capacities for internalising, building and experimenting the important regulatory norms of time in a context, which is a context of dialogue (or lack of dialogue) between generations.

These initiatives acknowledge that the rites of transition between one age and another have disappeared and that replacements are needed that function in the same way as, in the past, the adult world signalled to the young person the regulatory symbolic system that must regulate the periods of childhood, adolescence and young adulthood. One cannot passively accept the actual disappearance of a project course for the maturation of young people. Methods are required that, while encouraging contacts between younger and older children, do not give young people the sensation of an "eternal adolescent present", thereby avoiding both childishness at the moment of entering adolescent maturity, and too much responsibility too early, which the child would not be able to maintain. The transition from early to late adolescence (more mature) needs to be gradual and with a rhythm that maintains the balance between dependence and autonomy.

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[10] This line is still *in fieri*. It should constitute an extension of the "philosophy" of parental leave to other figures (teachers, operatives, etc.), who could be taken from their own institutional positions to operate "on the street" and "in the streets" (virtual as well) of young people, continuing to make the work of adolescent support less institutional and more informal.

5. CONCLUSIONS: THE RIGHTS-DUTIES OF GENERATIONAL TIME FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION

Up to this point, time policies for young people have been conceived and managed between two extremes, that of functional specialisation and that of an all-inclusive and abstract policy.

- On the one hand, responsibility for adolescents' time has been left largely in the hands of families and schools, as agents naturally suited to early socialisation; a discussion of the problem at collective (the entire community) level has been missing, especially if we acknowledge that the family and school can confront and deal with only a small part of adolescent problems.

- On the other, the distortions inherent in the use of time by young people have been attributed to economic processes dominated by the market and to globalisation phenomena, proposing, as a remedy for these distortions, the "political" extension to young people of a wider and wider range of abstract rights that typically belong to the adult individual.

The *Charters*, the *Declarations* and the proposals for lists of rights belonging to children and adolescents by numerous public and private organisations, national and international, are proof of this tendency. An example is the document *Recognition of the Rights of the Person in the Charter of Fundamental Rights* drawn up by *Euronet* (The European Young People's Network) as a proposal for the work group appointed to draft the *EU Charter of Fundamental Rights*.

Personally, I think that the line of claiming rights of political and social citizenship for young people is right and necessary, but certainly it is neither decisive nor adequate, because it has to take into account human rights, peculiar to worlds of everyday life.

In fact, what is needed is that the rights-duties are: (i) made concrete and specific to each age (generation) and (ii) conceived and managed in relation to other generations. A policy on time requires a culture of time and the latter only exists if there is a community that creates and recreates it.

In this light, I would like to summarise my suggestions in some *Proposals*.

I)   It is the right of juveniles that time, even that spent in environments not protected by the primary and secondary socialising agencies (family and school), can be spent in contexts adequately equipped on a formative level.

II)   The policies concerning young people's time must be conceived and designed in such a way as to *break the vicious circle of intergenerational deprivation*. In particular, the member countries of the EU are obliged to practise: a) policies of reuniting the families of "separated juveniles" and immigrants; b) policies of "family mediation"; c) policies that promote initiatives which offer children "of the street" and "in the street" ways of socialising their time, both through the extended (but extra-curricular) school time and through the building of communities, networks and ad *hoc social* centres, which involve the primary socialising agents (families, teachers, educators) and members of civil society as much as possible; d) policies that re-examine the juvenile's right to work, providing for forms of social regulation that promote the positive experiences that young people can have in protected working contexts, useful also for acquiring a psycho-cultural and economic autonomy which avoids social exclusion, while knowing how to unite these experiences with scholastic training and participation in associations which will help them mature.

III) In the policies concerning the everyday time of young people, *an intergenerational viewpoint must be adopted*. The contexts in which juveniles spend their time have to be of an intergenerational nature, that is, they must encourage as much as possible the encounter and linking of generations. The provisions, both legislative and administrative, must operate using methods that promote the implementation of rights for young people in the context of a synergy between generations. In concrete terms, one must: strengthen the presence of parents in training institutions; support the presence of tutorial figures, not just adults, but also from other generations, including children older than the ones to be supported; encourage the creation and organisation of associations for young people, with the active presence of parents and adults sensitive and prepared to interact with young people.

As a general rule, the policies on young people's time should be directed at encouraging a quantitatively adequate and qualitatively qualified communication between generations, both vertical and horizontal. The first task for the adult world is to help young people understand why and how time is a resource for them, when they do not have the awareness themselves, do not discuss this problem and do not think about it in a constructive way. Time is a scarce and not unlimited resource for everybody and we need to know why and how to use it meaningfully in everyday life. ∎

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