

AFFIRMATIVE YOUTH POLICIES

A PROPOSAL FOR THE NEW YOUTH CONDITION

Final document

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Barcelona City Council
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Against a new conception of youth reduced to a transitional period, we now want to state that it is actually a new stage in life. Against the old emancipation aspiration, the aim of which was that the young stopped being it, now our objective is to give them the maximum personal autonomy and to expand the benefits of the new condition to the youth world. The traditional socialising discourse used to want to prepare young people for adult life and to transmit them a series of values. Now our aim is the acknowledgement of the full civil responsibility of the young as the verification that youth space acts as a powerful field of social and cultural innovation and, therefore, the answers that young people about their problems are also valid for the whole society.

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***Some preliminary
words***

It is with great pleasure that I present to you the third and definitive version of this proposal of affirmative youth policies. This has been the result of an internal work process initiated approximately two years ago by a group of people made up by Lorenzo Albardías, Jordi Casanovas, Joaquim Coll, Daniel Fernández, Carles Martí and myself. The first edition of this document was released in February 1998 in a public act held in Casal d'Associacions Juvenils of Barcelona.

During the following months the exposition of our ideas in the youth world resulted in a discussion and contrast that prompted a more elegant and full redaction. This redaction was the reflection tool for the Congress held at the beginning of November 1998 under the motto "The new youth condition and youth policies".

In every stage our initial approaches have been enriched by critics and opinions of countless people (technicians, politicians, associative leaders, and university researchers). We are grateful to them for their contribution.

With regards to the last edition, you will notice that in the theoretical and conceptual parts the new text is more precise and the points referring to the intervention and management model of the new youth policies have been expanded and clarified.

If this is the first time that you are approaching the proposal of affirmative policies you will certainly notice that it constitutes a thorough and emphatic bet aimed at updating the totality of public action in favour of youth. This is a suggestive reflection that, even if arising from the political experience of municipal progressivism in Catalonia, does not confine itself to the local world. On the contrary, it offers a general theoretical and co-conceptual frame and an intervention model that is also valid for any level of the administration involved with youth (local, regional, national and European). Moreover, our analysis of the new youth condition and the values of democratic individualism that pervades this new stage of life of the individual should not overlook the rest of protagonists in social life (opinion leaders; mass media; social, syndicate and political leaders; private companies etc.). Quite the reverse: in this sense affirmative policies also want to be a tool intended to achieve the acknowledgement and development of the contribution of youth to society by all social agents. This has to be made far from today's purely commercial use of youth images or, even worse, the periodical diffusion by mass media of stereotyped information about youth habits and values. Definitely, this is a reflection of a minimalist social speech that this day is widespread in the world of adults and educators.

Finally, I would only like to thank the effort we have all made over these latest years and that now has come down specifically to a new youth policy. Without any complexes, we would also like to use this youth policy to bet on the encouragement of the conscience and sense of the specific sector of those who work both from the Administration and the social private sector, with young people and for young people.

Immaculada Moraleda Pérez
Youth Responsible in the Barcelona
County Council and City Council

Background issues

Origins and evolution of youth policies in Spain

Until the launch in 1979 of the first democratic municipal government the Spanish State did not set into motion a participatory youth policy. That is, a public action in favour of youth (whose own characteristics and social needs are recognised by everybody) out from a conception and a methodology that were obviously diametrically opposed to the previous interventionist praxis of Franco's outlook¹. Youth had a first-rate social leading role in the critique and opposition to the ancient totalitarian regime. From the victory of democracy in 1977 nobody denied the need of constituting specific mechanisms to give an answer to what were called "youth problems" in a generic way. Obviously, the fact that the contingent of youth population started growing swiftly as a consequence of the baby boom of the sixties and beginning of the seventies contributed greatly to this good predisposition. This population explosion reached its peak during the following decade.

Consequently, when the article 48 of the Spanish Constitution was drawn up there was a perfect consensus among the drafters of this fundamental Law and it was in perfect agreement with the social and democratic character of the new State that the main political forces wanted to build. This article states that "the public power will promote the necessary conditions for the free and effective participation of young people in the political, social, economical and cultural development".

During the eighties the new political and administrative organisation of the State was getting defined and co-ordinated and ended up by granting the exclusive competence in youth policies to the autonomous communities. In the meanwhile, the major municipal boost allowed to put into practice the constitutional mandate about youth participation and the principle of positive discrimination in favour of this collective. Despite the insufficient possibilities in youth policies offered by the old Law of the local regime (1955), municipal governments, being the closest Administration to the citizens, decided not to overlook youth problems and realities. On the contrary, they acted with determination. What is more, it has to be pointed out that they were stimulated by a strong social demand. Before 1979 neither councilorships nor youth areas did exist. However, from that date these new departments started spreading all over the peninsula and increased in every mandate. Obviously, the big municipal governments pioneered the execution of a first policy of services for youth (winter and summer holiday activities, improvement and construction of youth equipment, support to new associations, training of specialists in youth work and the sociocultural field etc.). They also pioneered the institutional acknowledgement of the participatory channels that had to be included in youth organisations: the named youth tables and later on, youth councils.

Next step was the creation of better co-ordinated local programmes that were also better provided with funds. They were to be the answer to the numerous demands and the variety of youth social situations. No doubt during this process the celebration of the International Year of Youth in 1985 as well as the recommendations by the United Nations resulted in a special shock for the strengthening of public structures as far as youth is concerned. However, the real starting point of youth policies was the approval of the first youth project in Spain that took place in July 1995, the Projecte Jove (Youth Project) of the Barcelona Municipal Government. As far as methodology is concerned, this project was inspired by the experience of Italian cities such as Turin, Forli and Bolonia as well as the proposals of Bertrand Schwartz's report about the local occupation missions

¹ For a classification of youth policy models (totalitarian, conservative and democratic-progressive) see the introduction of Juan Sáez Marín 1988. *El frente de Juventudes. Política de juventud en la España de la posguerra*, Madrid: Siglo XXI.

in France. Not only a decalogue of good purposes and projects was born, but also a new and original way of making youth policies. That was the starting point of integral policies.

From that moment on the experience in Barcelona was a point of reference for many other municipal governments in Catalonia and Spain, which started creating very similar plans. That is, they created study and reference mechanisms about youth reality, implicated youth entities in this advice and research process and granted a great deal of power to the youth local council. They also worked out guidelines aimed at tackling the totality of youth problems and they made almost all areas to get involved in order to work in a co-ordinated way and, in the field of personal services, to do it in a progressive and compact way. We do not have to overlook that the general frame of the eighties is characterised by a very high rate of youth unemployment, school drop-out and broken homes, what led many young people to a drop-out mentality and refusal of politics. To some others all this led them to a state of isolation or even drugs. For this reason, the main objective of youth policies during that decade was to prevent youth from being expelled from society and being left out. As a result, during the following ten years many municipal plenary councils endorsed, either unanimously or by majority, youth plans intended to contribute to the socialisation processes of youth (by means of youth centres, promotion of associations and leisure activities) and to the various transition stages to adult life. They did it by emphasising the prevention of the possible risks of social isolation (by means of street educators) and promoting the work integration of youth (by endorsing youth occupation plans and improving and generalising compulsory education).

The same philosophy and way of working pushed many autonomous communities, which during these years had assumed the transfer of competitions and resources on the subject of youth by the Central Government. Now they hurried up to draw up their respective integral, global or interdepartmental plan. And, as if that was not enough, the success of this model was made obvious in November 1991, when the Ministers Council endorsed a Youth Integral Plan that was promoted by the Inter-ministerial Commission for Childhood and Youth, the Ministry of Social Matters and the Youth Institute (INJUVE). This plan of central government was aimed at meeting a series of objectives (social and work education and insertion, improvement of the way of life, equality of opportunities, promotion of participation and associations, and the full incorporation of Spanish youth to Europe and the world) on the one hand. And, on the other, a series of legislative projects and reforms, namely the LOGSE, the reform of the military service, promotion of youth employment, regulation of youth information services or the implementation of new fiscal formulas that enabled young people to have access to accommodation.

Therefore, in a little more than 10 years, youth policies experienced a great leap and everyone drew up actions on the subject of youth: from municipal governments to the central state, going through the autonomous communities and some county councils. The old claim of the youth movement that asked the Administration to give 1% of the public budget over to them had been achieved. Politicians and youth technicians, who had started from scratch, set themselves up as one of the most dynamic and innovator sectors of the Administration. They did it up to a point that methodology of integral policies was transferred to the treatment of other social groups (the elderly, disabled, women, children, immigrants, etc.). This way the integration turned into the inspiring principle of personal services. Nevertheless, during 1990 and 1992 youth policies showed signs that they had already peaked. During these years society experienced a fruitful economic period and in Spain a series of international events was going to take place (the Olympic Games in Barcelona, the Universal Exposition in Seville and the European Cultural Capital in Madrid).

Changes signalling a new context

From 1993 at least three objective change axes can be verified.

The first element is the economic crisis, which called the group of social policies into question and obliged to adjust and redefine the effective boundaries of the so-called welfare state. In this sense, public action as regards youth, which was part of the welfare state policy package, was very affected. Moreover, for instance, on a local scale the condensation process of personal services also experienced a change. While from the second half of the eighties it had been promoted by the same youth areas as a strategy favouring the design of a global action and co-ordinated by all the Administration, now it acted against youth policies. In this process the economic crisis resulted in a negative inflection that abolished what was considered superfluous or what was not stated clearly in the new law of basis of the local regime (1985): in many cases logic and unity of the youth discourse were cut into pieces. No doubt this analysis, that will be developed in the chapter devoted to integral policies, will make us think about a new strategy that will allow to reformulate the sector of the Administration working directly in favour of youth, without forgetting the effective boundaries of the welfare state. Anyway, once all elements of our discourse are stated we will go back to the elements that prompted a change of paradigm in the current youth policies. We will do it because these elements are not only internal but also external: they do not only refer to the how of these policies, but also to the youth condition.

The second element, the demographic factor, also started influencing the regression of youth policies. From 1990 the population aged between 15 and 24 started decreasing considerably. While in 1988 there were 6,600,000 people this age in Spain (this country had never had so many young people before), there was a reduction of more than one million by the end of the century and the young population started falling dramatically. Despite this, it cannot be asserted that there was an elaborated discourse of youth policies behind the demographic verification. But it is well known that, in politics, numbers also play their role when prioritising. Nevertheless, this argument has got many back sides.

Firstly, educational processes are complex and these days incorporation to adult life is being postponed more and more. For these reasons, it is world-wide accepted that to this age group between 15 and 24 years another one has to be added: young people aged from 25 to 30 years. This increases the current contingent of young people by more than 3 million. This matter is really complex and it is directly related to the extension of transition itineraries and to what will be called new youth condition later on.

Secondly, even if the argument about democratic regression is accepted, it does not have to be forgotten that historically youth has not been defined as a specific social sector when it was a big percentage of population. On the contrary, youth started getting defined from the demographic revolution initiated on the second half of last century (fall of mortality and decrease of fecundity), when it started decreasing. All this is located in the frame of a general process called modernisation of occidental societies by historians. This process signalled the birth of youth as a social sector and, consequently, an easily identifiable youth consumption and culture. From the end of last century up to now the industrialised world has shown this situation in an upward and universal tendency: training processes are longer and compulsory and have received financial aid by authorities. These days, the contrast can be found in the Third World societies, where age pyramids show a percentage of 40% of the population younger than 15 years. However, this fact does not mean that socially there are more young people because for the majority the step from childhood to adult life takes place almost without any intermediate period, without adolescence². Therefore, in the frame of this process – of a progressive identification of youth as a period of own

² This argument is exposed in Enric's Ucelay Da Cal article, 1988. "Què és la joventut" in the work *Història de la joventut a Catalunya*, Barcelona: Diputació de Barcelona (vol. 1. pp.19-21)

characteristics - the future and close reduction of young people in Europe could mean another step in the assertion of youth as a new stage in life of the individual which, chronologically, has now a substantial length (about 15 years), and an assertive value by itself.

The third change axis is directly related to the definitive incorporation of the last age phase to the young period. Up to date youth policies had not paid much attention to it (many training programmes of leisure time, such as “Juventud en Europa” continue cutting in the line of 25 years) or they had only taken it into consideration as regards social and professional insertion. This axis is called “new itineraries of transition to adult life” by socialists. Until the eighties, the widespread ideal as regards the model of professional incorporation, family emancipation and acquisition of social responsibilities by youth used to come to fruition at the end of the studies (whether professional training, high school, or a degree). In case of boys with less social possibilities or with a bad school trajectory it used to arrive after the military service. Today this scheme does not work any more.

Today the delay in the social incorporation of children to adult life is accepted naturally by young people and parents, whereas in the past it meant a drama. The sociologist Joaquim Casal talks now about trajectories of successive approximation as a predominant way of incorporation to popular classes. He states that this would be summarised in a context where options for youth are confusing, where the trial and error method prevails and where long trajectories of initial training and strong work experience³ are required. As works on this field highlight, all this has resulted in a progressive delay of family emancipation after the 29 years of age⁴. Close to this process, young people turn into individuals who become more autonomous, qualified and precocious in all scopes of life (up to a point that some people are asking again for the broadening of the right to vote to the age of 16). As a consequence, these years are not lived as a period of hardship and shortages any more, thanks also to the overcoming of the old generation conflicts of other decades. Finally, it is of great interest to verify that the three traditional agents of socialisation (namely the family, the school and public institutions) have lost influence outstandingly in front of the growing weight of the market, mass media and new technologies. As Roger Martínez explains, usually this phenomenon is just interpreted from alarmism because of the fear that young people are victims of the ideological manipulation of the merely commercial interest of the big cultural industry. However, this analysis forgets that new generations of young people are the ones that have developed more the critical, creative and symbolic decoding capacity in front of the materials supplied by mass consumption and that, for this reason, today's young people become more autonomous in the growing up process.⁵

³ Joaquim Casal, “Europa i els models de transició a la vida adulta en el llindar del segle”, in the magazine *Balma* nr. 4 (April 1996), pp.41-47

⁴ Luis Garrido and Miguel Requena, 1996. *La emancipación de los jóvenes en España*, Madrid: Youth Institute. See also Antoni Salvadó, 1998. *Condicions de vida dels joves de la regió metropolitana de Barcelona*, Institute of Metropolitan Studies/ Ajuntament de Barcelona, series “Monografies”, nr.I

⁵ Roger Martínez Sanmartí, *L' espai juvenil com a renovació social*, text presented in the Congress “The nova condició juvenil i les polítiques de joventut” (Barcelona, November 1998).

*The new youth condition***Youth, a new stage in life**

In fact from some years ago sociologic surveys and research in Europe show that youth is not a transition period towards adult age but a new stage in life including enough and own elements that turn it into autonomous. Everybody agrees that because of biological and psychological conditions its end has been stretched until the current border of 30 years. This prolongation of the youth condition makes that –as the sociologist Olivier Galland puts it- we can talk about “the formation of a new age in life of the individual”, a period that is lived in a similar way by boys and girls⁶. Broadly speaking, the formation of that new stage as a result of the transformation of the youth condition is characterised by the following aspects. Firstly, common social behaviours guided by a strong individual autonomy (above all in the field of studies, free time and leisure time). Secondly, the wish for multiplying vital experiences –the constant changing of both daytime and night-time scenes- and an intense geographic mobility. Thirdly, the absence of strong social responsibilities towards third parties. Fourthly, prompt emancipation in relational and affective aspects and, finally, a quick mental and physical maturity. Of course, all this is accompanied by two important legal facts such as the majority of labour and penal age and the end of the paternal guardianship as well as the assumption of the fulfilment of the citizen rights at the age of 18.

If understood like this, today the youth condition would not be conditioned. This fact turns into the key of our discourse because traditionally adults have always strongly wished a quick and complete social and professional insertion. We do not have to forget that, next to the inborn elements of biological vitalism -an intense and happy period commercialised by the consumer society of the fifties- our parents have lived their youth as a period of hardship, specially for girls. Besides, there was lack of autonomy against the paternal authority and the restrictions of community social conventions (customs and traditions).⁷ However, these days incorporation to adult life of new generations is made by stages and in an asymmetric way and there are no sex distinctions. Moreover, girls have a strong autonomy when choosing their studies, friends, leisure time, sexual life, consumption etc.⁸ All this involves a radical reversal in the experience of young people, who do not live youth as a period of restrictions any more, but as a real enjoyment. This way, as the mentioned French sociologist explains brightly, the leitmotif of the new youth condition would be to make the most of it in order to multiply experiences.

However, we do not want to fall into self-satisfaction because we cannot state that from now on being young is a doodle. On the one hand, the real situation of some young people is quite different from our description of the new youth condition. On the other hand, reaching this new stage does not mean that young people are free of a series of social problems that before would have just been related to the general difficulties of youth when entering adult age. In fact, the reason for this is that, to avoid misunderstandings, a distinction has to be made between the general youth condition in the West (as an inter-class phenomenon and common to both sexes) and the better or worse social situation of young people in every country or city. Obviously, both of them –condition (what a person is) and situation (how things are going) –are closely related but it is absolutely necessary that they are analysed in a different way. Because, in fact, if a youth condition enough differentiated as a social fact (beyond the diversity of criteria about their features) did not exist, could we speak

⁶ Olivier Galland, 1994. “Adolescence et post-adolescence: la prolongation de la jeunesse” in the collective work *Jeunesses et sociétés. Perspectives de la recherche en France et en Allemagne*, Paris: Armand Collin; Olivier Galland, 1994. “Qu’est-ce que la jeunesse” in the collective work *L’allongement de la en jeunesse*, Paris: Actes du Sud.

⁷ For an outline of which have been the transformations that have led to the inversion of what traditionally has been understood as youth condition, see Joaquim’s Coll article “La juventud comienza ahora”, *Entre jóvenes*, nr. 37 (1994)

⁸ Manuel Martín Serrano and Olivia Velarde Hermida, 1997. *Juventud en cifras*, Madrid: Instituto de la Juventud.

correctly about the need of a youth policy? Therefore, the existence of a determined youth condition is what makes youth policies to make sense and have a foundation. And so, when we are talking about youth condition we refer to youth as a sociologic category that has been historically subjected to changes affecting all young people. But over this category there is a differentiated social situation affecting the way in which each group of young people or every young person lives it and experiences it. For sure these young people, who lack what we will call personal autonomy, apart from being limited as regards their experimental, creative and formative potentialities, will find themselves in an unfavourable social situation to complete the step to the adult stage. For this reason, it has to be highlighted that the fact of living with plenitude and autonomy during the youth stage allows the individual to gain progressive experience to solve uncertainties, try possibilities... Definitively, it allows the individual to be located in a favourable position to the final transition. Even if this final transition has lost central importance in the sociologic definition of today's youth in Europe, it is still a co-substantial fact that in any case we want to deny. However, a very different thing would be to continue thinking that the main task of youth policies is to help young people to succeed in travelling to adult life, that is, to emancipate them from their pre-adult condition. On the contrary, we state that the youth policies are intended to young people as regards young people in a new conceptualisation of the youth fact that goes beyond the mere transition status. We will return to this later.

Therefore, the first consequence of this process that leads to consider youth as a full stage is that adult age is losing the central and referential role that was given before because it was considered the only possible period of self-fulfilment in the life of the individual. However, this leading role has not only been diminished by youth but also by the youth age, what shows that in fact we are facing a much deeper social transformation: an authentic revolution in the stages of life of the individual, what is a phenomenon closely related to the pressing need of new values and a change of epoch. Consequently, young people and grown ups are heralding social changes that make us refurbish the ancient ternary model: youth-formation, maturity-work, old age-retirement and, consequently, the sense of many public policies.

Postmodernism, young people and democratic individualism

If our discourse was excessively simplified the birth of this new stage in the life of the individual could be identified with the extension of the young years. However, it cannot be reduced to this. Youth has not only stopped being a transitional period. In fact, behind this change, that today is recognised by everybody because of its external sociologic manifestations (longer stay in the parents' home and delay in the incorporation to the world) there is a much deeper transformation process: the definite overcoming of social values of modernity.

In fact, young boys and girls are the most obvious example of what the French philosopher Gilles Lipovetsky has called "metamorphosis of democratic individualism". In a few words, this could be summarised as the victory of individual autonomy and privacy in front of the moral, religious, ideological and political restrictions endured by men and women until very recently.

This is a question of the definite sinking of the social and community values of modernity, which has a direct effect on aspects such as the job and the family, the role of women and, as a last resort, the function of the State itself⁹. Up to date these aspects had been essential for the individual and society.

The other side of this process is the pressing need of a new kind of individualism that tallies with our post-modern age and that would be exemplified by:

⁹ Gilles Lipovetsky, 1995. "Conclusion: les jeunes et les métamorphoses de l'individualisme démocratique", in the collective work *Les 15-25 ans, acteurs dans la cité*, Paris: Syros.

- *Full irruption of women in the work world and social life. A radical change of mentality as regards to what traditionally was considered fulfilment and autonomy of women in the family nucleus.*

In this frame feminism gets integrated into democratic individualism of young people and it disappears as a strong discourse.

*In the work frame, post-modern individualist autonomy is shown by the wish of devoting fewer hours to remunerated work as well as finding an interesting job beyond social success and money. Young people give priority to their own self-esteem rather than to social status. As the study *Els valors i les actituds dels joves estudiants de la UAB (The values and attitudes of young students of the Autonomous University of Barcelona, 1996)* shows we are in the step towards a post-materialist scheme that grants a better quality of life to individuals.*

- *The multiplication of family formulas is the most evident consequence of the new affective dimension of young people and of the improvement of interpersonal communication.*

- *Practical overcoming of the generation conflict as a result, on the one hand, of the extinction of the paternal authority model and, on the other, of the end of the protest and counter-cultural movement that was typical during the sixties. More and more relations between parents and children are based on tolerance, transaction and seduction.*

- *Fashion and consumption do not impose a unifying approach, but a much more personalised one. In contrast to the naïve credulity of old generations, new generations have developed a more decoding, critical and interpretative capacity of symbols and messages broadcast by mass media. There is even a certain practical cynicism that leads young people to distrust promises of politicians, parents and teachers and to laugh at them.¹⁰*

- *Post-modernity undermines any kind of fundamentalist thought, understood as the only thought, whether in the religious area or the political and social one. Beliefs and policies are lived in a private dimension rather than in a public one.*

- *The substitution of the collectivism of modernity by the post-modern individualism means the denial of moral understood as a categorical and universal imperative. On the other side, we have a much more autonomous and circumstantial new moral. No doubt the best example of this moral change we are talking about is the refusal of the obligatory military service by young people together with a strong assertion of solidarity towards the Third World. Nevertheless, this process also shows the substitution of a militant associative model by a model of voluntaries (understood as a specific and much more individual commitment) even in the bosom of the same entities.*

Therefore, we see that the emergency of youth understood as a new period in life of the individual is the result of changes in two different levels: on the one hand, in the social structure (the new transition itineraries) and, on the other, in mentality, values and culture. These two transformations have resulted in individuals who do not go through lineal trajectories that are more or less predetermined by school, family and job any more. On the contrary, they go through trajectories that are much more indeterminate and often have status modifications. Some sociologists have called this phenomenon *open biography*. This has been a social transformation in which current young people, who are the main agents of social and cultural innovation, play a leading role. This transformation means to turn definitively the page of modernity.

¹⁰ Jordi David Pérez and Roger Martínez Sanmartí, 1997. *El gust juvenil en joc*, Barcelona: Diputació de Barcelona.

Past and present of youth policies

Acclaim and refutation of the integral policies

Once the social and cultural changes in the youth condition have been presented, we must now again refer to the internal elements which, we believe, also compel us to a change in youth policies, to a new understanding of the *how* of public action. As explained before, since 1985 the main frame of reference on this matter has been the theoretical and methodological one, defined and implemented by the integral policies. Conceptually, that model of intervention meant a major breakthrough, and in its practical realisation it has had some high points in the short story of youth policies in Catalonia and Spain. Notwithstanding this, the fact is that, after little more than a decade, we think it has exhausted great part of its possibilities.

In the first place, because we cannot forget that the basis philosophy upon which integral plans were devised is the one and old conception of the youth fact as a transitional stage. Consequently, they intended to involve the Administration as a body in the task of helping the young to find place socially and professionally in adult life. From this point of view, they were social welfare policies which had the power to involve mayors and city councillors in a more global reflection on what was being done for the young from the town council, beyond pure assistance. Moreover, we must admit that great part of the integral approach has been adapted to other subject matters, such as women or the elderly, which revealed the great conceptual innovation that these policies represented at their time. Even then, they reflect a stage that does not meet the spirit of the new youth condition, by negating this age group its own identity, autonomy, or by always thinking of it as submitted to the goals that cannot be postponed of adult age.

In the second place, because we must not forget that comprehensiveness is mainly a method. A way of acting born out of a conception of the multifaceted individual, certainly global, but, after all, materialised in a work methodology in the inside of Administration. Integrality often means a redistribution of budgetary and human resources for the advantage of transverse policies. Most times, however, the youth areas have been the only ones to assume and accept this new logic, whereas the rest of the Administration has proved enormously jealous of their resources and competitiveness. The ending of this story is well known: after unanimous passing of the comprehensive plans by the council plenary sessions, youth policies have not taken the qualitative leap that could be expected and even, in some cases, they have seen a reduction of the human and budgetary resources provided. A clear perception is sensed today that youth policies have lost enthusiasm.

Because of all that has been put forward, we think it is reasonable to question the practice of comprehensive policies with the object of reforming them. In the one hand, we have just seen it; these young plans are philosophically not updated. And on the other hand, experience shows us, methodologically they are of a great execution complexity, they tend to weaken the management structure of the youth councils and, in their ultimate objectives, they are of difficult performance. Besides, we must neither forget the manifest difficulties of the integral plans to economically combine the extent of their intervention, and therefore many of their parts are limited to simple announcements of good intentions.

Public policies considering the new youth condition

There cannot be the slightest doubt that the changes in the new youth condition have to, in the medium term, lead us to a deep reconsideration of the youth policies, of the way they have been thought of until now. The young cannot just be approached as individuals in *social transition*, an approach which, as Carles Feixa states, <<although it is useful because it allows to see the dynamic and intermittent character of the youth category, it leaves aside the symbolic and cultural aspects

which take part in the definition of youth itself>>.¹¹ All in all, there is a need to beat a weak and evidently incomplete representation of the youth fact which, in the media, social and political fields, often expresses in a merciful attitude when facing the difficulties the young have to become emancipated or, even worse, from authoritarianism, in a disdainful attitude because the young take forever in the parent's home and the latter treat them like royalty.

The statement made about the youth as a new stage in life results mainly in the loss of weight of the discourse on social and professional integration, the old objective of youth emancipation, as a leading and explanatory argument about the reason behind youth policies. However, this new approach does not mean forgetting the employment problem nor the difficulties to gain access to a home of the young at all. We are not postulating, then, an idyllic, happy, conflict-free youth condition, but adapted to the way they live their own reality. It will be therefore necessary to continue thinking of measures for equality (that is, of positive discrimination and of encouragement). Though not obligatorily as a previous step so that the young are no longer young (and join the work-home-family circuit that characterises adult world), but as a way everyone can enjoy better conditions and the wish to increase vital experiences and enrich their biographical itinerary. The delay in the stepping into adult life is not only a consequence of the job difficulties, but also of some new formative strategies and some sociocultural variables of post-materialistic character which make the old work culture relative. Nowadays, young people do not hasten to integrate completely or to socially become adults. Not in vain, adult life has more dependencies, ties and obligations than the youth have, which, in normal circumstances, have nowadays an incomparable formative and experimentation potential. Having no intention to idealise excessively and not forgetting either the risk of social exclusion that certain groups are vulnerable to, a historically positive reading must be made. Considering the rapid transition from school to a factory, workshop or office or, in the case of women, the quick step from daughters into mothers, the lengthening of the youth condition, which means further education and experimentation, offers the individual greater chances to subvert the position which should originally correspond to them in the social structure.

All things considered, it is about not conceiving youth policies as programmes of transition and social and professional integration any more, but doing it in terms of affirmative actions of the new youth condition, that is, policies aimed at fostering young people's full civil responsibilities, creativity, mobility and experimentation. This does not mean, we insist again, forgetting about educational, work or housing aspects, not at all, since they are necessary conditions for the real autonomy of individuals as young people. Something different is the fact that some day they were no longer young, and this is indeed good, but the social responsibility of this step into adult life (to a great extent determined by marriage and fertility) is not, putting emphasis on this, a specific nor exclusive task of the youth policies, but of a general country policy that searches for the real equal opportunities.

In sum, against a new conception of youth reduced to a transitional period, we now want to state that it is actually a new stage in life. Against the old emancipation aspiration, the aim of which was that the young stopped being it, now our objective is to give them the maximum personal autonomy and to expand the benefits of the new condition to the youth world. The traditional socialising discourse used to want to prepare young people for adult life and to transmit them a series of values. Now our aim is the acknowledgement of the full civil responsibility of the young as the verification that the youth space acts as a powerful field of social and cultural innovation and, therefore, the answers that the young give about their problems are also valid for the whole society.

¹¹ Carles Feixa i Pàmols, 1993. *La joventut com a metàfora*, Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya, pp. 43-44.

Affirmative policies: thinking from a global perspective and acting in plurality

On the basis of everything presented so far, we will now begin to state explicitly the totality of the new proposal of affirmative policies. We will do this by developing two big sections. The first one will deal with the contents and objectives of the new policies starting from five great axes which characterise and make the new youth condition positive. The second one will go deeply into a model of intervention and management on the basis of a double objective. On the one hand, improving the knowledge and global reality of the young, clearly in tune with the innovating experience which integral policies represented in this field and, on the other hand, overcoming the traditional lack of methodology in the design, execution and evaluation of those policies.

Orientations

Although the five practical lines that will now be pointed out are the backbone of affirmative policies, their aim is neither reordering the issues which have shaped and shape a global youth policy nor transforming the classic sections which, up to the present day, structure the integral plans (work integration, quality of life, education, participation, etc.). Nor do they pretend to deal with the new aspects which, depending on the different social situations in each territorial reality, may turn out to be more urgent as, for example, the new migrations of young people from the Third World or the problems arising in their teens. They simply mean a first attempt, a first reflection, designed to obtain a particular characterisation of the present youth condition, affirmative elements that pervade the whole of a youth policy.

Autonomy

In the new model of affirmative policies, we are conscious that many young people's actual situation in terms of their material autonomy does not allow them to completely enjoy the new potentialities of the new youth condition in the fields of mobility, creativity, experimentation and even regarding the affirmation of a full and active civil responsibility. Without enough autonomy, the new condition is restricted and minimised in the frame of a model of familiar emancipation which, in Spain (where the welfare state does not favour the economic autonomy of the young), follows an enormously traditional pattern, which means: steady job, home property and formal marriage, previous to the decision of having children. Therefore, and as mentioned before, the new policies are of affirmation of a new stage in the individual's life, now finally in the full sense, but, at the same time, of extension of the benefits of this new condition in the youth universe. They are, then, policies in favour of equality, in favour of the autonomy of all young people. Consequently, the stress must be placed, firstly, on the plurality of measures with the aim of covering the educational shortage of the young having more difficulties. Secondly, on the encouragement of all those self-learning and self-employment initiatives which provide the young themselves with the maximum of responsibilities and benefits and which contribute to rise new employment fields. Thirdly, on a preventive conduct against those classic situations of social risk and young people's health (that is marginalisation, drug addiction or AIDS). Fourthly, on a decisive intervention on the housing field, with a preferential incentive towards rental on valued prices and the building of residences both for students and for young workers.

Mobility

Probably the most visible element of the new youth condition is mobility, almost synonym of urban life, of an intense life pace, of a voracious consumption of new services and of a constant change of scenes, both daytime and, mainly, night-time. Young people move around, get mixed and

travel... They travel massively around Europe in summer, being by far the age group that travels more, but also the one that, no doubt, is more in need of some orientating tools to do things their way, to try out alternatives to the dictates of fashion and industry. Consequently, stress will have to be placed on the promotion of young tourism from which creative, supporting, multicultural and participatory experiences can be derived. This can be obtained through cultural exchanges with specific contents, educational exchanges and the taking in of foreign students and young workers from around the world. However the mobility of this new youth condition becomes evident preferably in the urban space and at night, privileged scene for new leisure and spare time experimentation. Hence, in this area, the priority of affirmative policies shall be focused on the design of night mobility programmes, adjusting public transport services to the needs of the young and the different territories with a double objective. On the one hand, reinforcing the emergency of new sociocultural offers at night and, on the other hand, reducing the high youth accident rate in those hours as much as possible.

Experimentation

In young people's lives there is a growing radical division between a school and formal time (from Mondays to Thursdays) and a big leisure space which embraces the long weekends that begin on Friday afternoons. The so different way in which the young live these two times allows us to speak about an authentic split personality. This aspect interrelates clearly with the fact that they pour extraordinary fun expectations and authenticity into leisure as that time which allows the young to be themselves.¹² An affirmative policy must therefore go fully into this area, often little tangible and ephemeral, of experimentation. This area is, no doubt, the central element that defines and articulates the new youth condition. At this point we believe priority must be set in three levels. First, in the increase of sociocultural offer at night, by opening new educational and sports equipment and services. Second, in a new youth areas policy that accepts once and for all the necessary appropriation and occupation of areas that the young need to carry out to feel them their own. In that sense, the affirmative policy must head the cession of areas to youth groups, offering them those public properties that are now unoccupied. And third, it must provide with areas of access to new technologies and, in particular, to the new navigation and interactive multimedia experimentation tools.

Creativity

The creative, practical and everyday uses the young have to appropriate the material and cultural resources have to lead us to the overcoming of the rigid and elitist division between two aspects. On the one hand, a production that the adult world wants to be always of high artistic culture and, on the other hand, the cultural consumption, the only side of which that can only be seen is the massive and sheeplike one. Making ours the theory of the English investigator Paul Willis about the possibilities and potentialities of a creative consumption and a deep-rooted aesthetics in young people, it is necessary to accept the fact that the public cultural interventions so far regarding the young have been rather characterised by the failed attempt to bring them closer to institutionalised arts (galleries, concerts and museums). This has been carried out in a commendable attempt to democratise the established and prestigious cultural practices rather than promoting the experiences and activities of young people's current culture.¹³ Thus, the new affirmative policies should make the creation and symbolic work of the young the starting point of any cultural intervention. With this judgement, priority shall be centred on two aspects. First, on the boost to new comprehensive

¹² Domingo Comas Arnau, 1996. <<No es oro todo lo que reluce. ¿Qué hace la juventud el fin de semana?>>, in the monographic magazine *Jóvenes y fin de semana*, Madrid, Studies Magazine De Juventud, Instituto de la Juventud, pp. 11-20.

¹³ Paul WILLIS, 1998 *Cultura viva. Una recerca sobre les activitats culturals dels joves* Barcelona: Diputació de Barcelona.

equipment aimed at the production and cultural consumption of the young, especially addressed to those who have more access difficulties. And second, on the promotion, diffusion and exchange of any kind of youth cultural expression.

Civil responsibility

The way in which the young today live and think about their citizen condition allows to fill with real contents what could be nothing else but a concept, the concept of civil responsibility, empty of real significance when applied to other generations which do not have so vitally internalised the foundations of democracy, individual rights, solidarity and ecological and environmental matters. From that standpoint, affirmative policies will have to gather, drive and realise the wish for greater social participation young people show by two means. Firstly, through dialogue and agreement with young entities (and their co-ordination organs) and with all the emerging group realities. Secondly, by establishing new spaces for participation and where young people can form their opinion individually.¹⁴ Thirdly, favouring intergenerational dialogue and the appearance of young people's subject matters, proposals and cultural products in the media. At a different level, the stress will have to be placed on the promotion, encouragement and support of the solidarity initiatives of the young, both of those which take the shape of associative voluntary service and of the ones that are the expression of a punctual and individual wish.

A new model of intervention

This is probably the most difficult and riskiest part; the one of setting a new model of intervention and public management that is able to give an appropriate answer to the new orientations of the youth policy. The experience in the past twenty years, above all a review of the model of macro-areas (1983-1991) that made integral policies possible, proves that the challenge for the ones who work on the youth is to preserve the youth logic in the inside of administration, escaping from bureaucratic perversion and from excessively sectorial discourses. Since, certainly, not everybody who does things for the young is doing youth policy. Many universal services, such as sports or education, have had and do have the young as their main beneficiaries. But this does not mean there is youth logic when the contents of these services are being determined, that is, an analysis of young people's reality and of what their present and immediate demands are. In order to strengthen a social and political discourse about the youth, we propose not only a redefinition of The Youth Unit and its specific functions, but also establishing a methodology of global intervention (transverse) in its design, and a plural one in its execution. In other words, from the administration we want to continue getting closer to a complex and plural youth reality with the aim of offering an also integral answer to the diversity of young people's situations, aim that was the big innovation of the previous integral policies.

The Youth Unit: cornerstone of the new model

In order to introduce the youth discourse into the whole of the administration's performance and to make possible a real reassessment of the youth policies, the previous and essential condition in the new model is to have a service, office or agency run by an alderman specifically for the young. It should not matter whether the alderman is attached to presidency, culture or education. This office should have its own budget, a sufficient number of specialised technicians, and a basic framework of defined responsibilities. Before going into detail about the design and management of the old and new programmes, it is necessary to incorporate a series of previous aspects into the everyday performance of the agency/service/office. Those aspects are an essential requirement for a

¹⁴ Joan Subirats, "Democràcia, participació i eficàcia", Cifa, Nr. 6 (September 1997).

real global performance with regard to the youth, as well as for a systematic and periodic renewal of its contents.

- **Observation of the Youth World**

There is the need to encourage <<a new investigation for the performance>>, what youth Italian policies called in the eighties. That is, an observation without purely intellectual or theoretical purposes, and able to obtain knowledge that can be transferred to the area of public administration. All of this is materialised in the putting into effect of some permanent mechanisms of observation and analysis of the youth condition, both their material condition and their values, lifestyles and culture of the young.

- **Participation**

It must be always pointed out that it is not possible to have a real youth policy without the participation and involvement of the young themselves. This statement is not certainly new, but absolutely inherent of a participation policy.¹⁵ However, there is no harm in repeating it, the Youth Unit is the maximum responsible for making this possible. In this sense, and as is the expression of all the positive things the youth condition has, affirmative policies must be, more than ever before, the vehicle for real prominence of the young and their associative or group forms.

- **Information**

The information and advice programmes for the young must be an axis not only specific but also transverse to the whole of affirmative policies. For it is necessary to get there where the young are, and to permanently pay attention to their new demands.

- **Master plan of the youth policy**

Finally, the agency/service/office shall be in charge of designing a global master plan that, through the new affirmative approach of youth policies, covers both the old aspects of social and professional integration (now conceptually reformulated) and the emerging subject matters of the new youth condition. A plan, therefore, that should be made from the precise knowledge of the youth reality, but also with the complicity of the young themselves and of their associations. The explicit commitment of the rest of the administration will not be forgotten, with which an agreement should be made, at the heart of an inter-sectorial committee, on the delegated or shared implementation of a series of programmes and actions, and establish the corresponding evaluation methods.

Transversality and global management

If the existence of a politically strong Youth Unit is an essential requirement to introduce the youth discourse in the day by day of the administration, the best guarantee to preserve the logic of this discourse is the existence of one or several inter-sectorial co-ordination organs. Thus, the political relevance of the agreements and their technical implementation can be assured. The main objective of the existence of this instrument (inter-areas committee, inter-departmental committee or inter-ministerial committee) is to guarantee the transversality and plurality of the interventions in youth policy. A proposal will now be put forward about the management of the global master plan programmes, on the basis of four possible ways of intervention from the Youth Unit. It is a model

¹⁵ Enric Truñó and Anni Escobedo, 1985. "Diàlegs a Barcelona", Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona.

that can obviously undergo transformations or be applied in stages when taken to the field of practical realisations in each one of the administrations and geographic realities.

- Direct management

There is a need to define better what the own responsibilities are that, usually, a youth agency devises and carries out directly. In the historical order, these would be free time and equipment, association and participation, information and youth tourism, voluntary service and substitute social service, etc. Then, these responsibilities should be applied to new fields, often still to be covered, as many of the ones being carried out today once were. In this sense, an initiative like the Pact for the Night, of the Barcelona city council, is quite representative of the new borders that must be discovered and incorporated in the youth policies. This package of own competencies forms a minimum management level and gives the agency weight at the heart of the administration, a fact that guarantees experience and responsibility.

- Co-direction

It is necessary to think about which other external actions, that is, run by other administration areas, can be co-directed by the youth agency/service/office. We are particularly referring to work, housing or transport policy. Co-direction means that the Youth Unit is the responsible for introducing elements and criteria that assure three aspects. Firstly, the youth logic in the definition and realisation of these policies. Secondly, the optimisation of the transversality that is a matter of vital importance for autonomy. And thirdly, young people's mobility as young people they are.

- Joint venture

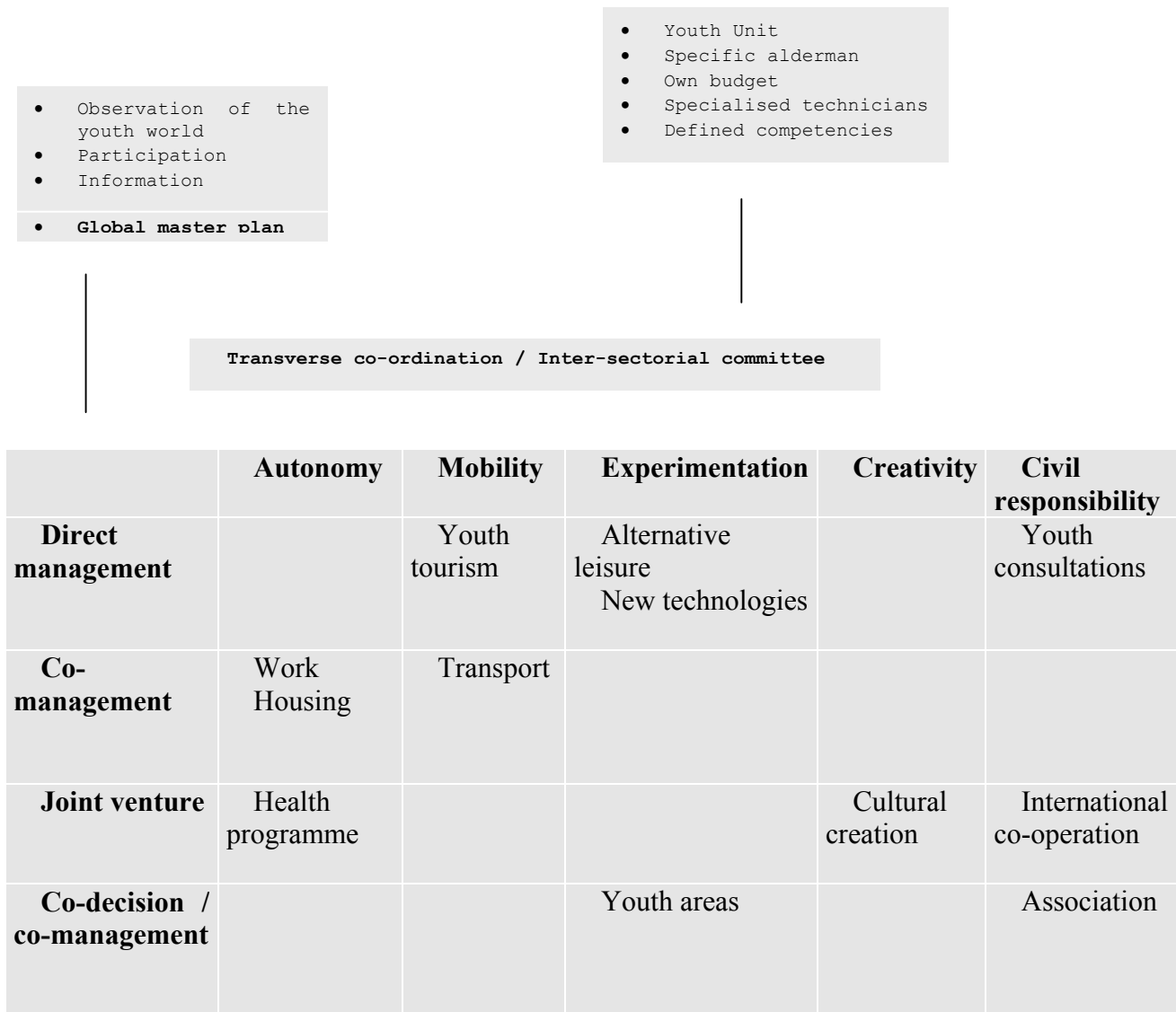
It must be defined in which programmes or actions of the rest of the administration -for example culture, environment, alternative leisure or international co-operation- it makes sense for the youth areas to take part by means of some imaginative budgetary formula such as joint venture. This should guarantee some weight in the definition and follow-up of those actions through its co-financing.

- Co-decision and co-management

An effort must be made to share and arrange the maximum of actions and programmes with youth entities, making them this way share a youth policy. Democracy is not limited to consultation but is extended to co-management. However, the entities cannot either expect the administration to give them an easy life, which means that financially their contribution would materialise, as it is already happening, in some work, often voluntary, in return for a greater prominent role. Besides, co-management should be transverse. That is, it should necessarily expand to the whole of the administration. Even so, a minimum of own competencies co-managed with the entities must be guaranteed from the youth.

It can be seen that this new model hopes to achieve two aspects. The first one is to strengthen the technical-political nucleus with the purpose of boosting a real global action. The second one is a new plural organisation of the programmes and actions starting from the degree of participation of the youth agency in their creation, financing and management (see some examples in Figure 1).

A NEW MODEL OF INTERVENTION



(Figure 1)

Evidently, all of this invites to drop the dangerous illusion of believing that there will be a day when youth policies will dissolve in the magma of personal services. As, in effect, the existence of an area of direct management or of services production from the Youth Unit should not be understood as an attempt to dim the necessary transversality of youth policies, but as a guarantee, a basic condition to carry it out and preserve youth logic. All in all, it could be said it is about applying an enabling transversality that should also include the following elements in the design and the evaluation of the master plan:

- A greater weight of the economic and competence aspects in the diagnosis of the plan, with the aim of solving two especially significant deficits in the previous comprehensive policies.
- The introduction of techniques and methods to improve the weak points of the plan and to gauge and to adequately choose those actions the attainment of which determines the success of the whole plan. Therefore, it is about introducing techniques previous to the definition of the operating objectives and the action plans, the objective of which is to avoid the shaping of a master plan

constituted in fact by programmes and horizontal actions or not appropriate to the needs of the territory.

- The design and development of information systems in order to determine indicators that allow evaluation of the scope of the objectives.

Lastly, it must be underlined that the elements mentioned above will be totally insufficient if they are not accompanied by the following. Firstly, a clear youth political leadership that boosts the design, realisation and evaluation of that transverse methodology. And secondly, the consolidation of an organisational culture at the heart of the administration, able to overcome the traditional resistance to work inter-areas.

By way of conclusion: continuity and break in youth policy

At this final point, it would be useful to sum up schematically all of the arguments that have been discussed throughout this document, with the idea of offering a global vision of the new proposal of affirmative policies. For a greater conceptual clarity, we will try to contrast it in a schematic way with the model that, since the middle of the eighties, has been the big referent on this matter, integral policies (Figure 2). This attempt has the advantage of offering, very clearly, a reading that reveals the strength of the breaking elements but, at the same time, it does not hide nor disregards the continuity points. Because in the affirmative model proposed not everything is completely new, nor a fresh start away from the past wants to be made. That is because we feel heirs and heiresses to the task begun in 1979 and, in particular, to the impulse of renewal and participation introduced by the city of Barcelona's youth project "Projecte Jove de la Ciutat de Barcelona" from 1985.

Nowadays the changes in youth policy are indispensable. However, without continuity lines and ties with our own tradition, it is not possible to raise a culture in youth policy that is auto-reflective and socially useful. And that is precisely what affirmative policies mean to be, that is, to be useful. And if necessary, doubly useful, since, based on a social transformation of the different life periods, they are no longer conceived as a purely sectorial consideration or a specific answer to certain age problems. They go on to involve the whole of administration and to interest the whole of society, part of which young people today feel completely, and with which they want to show their solidarity, contributing their ideas and own values.

CONCEPTUAL DIFFERENCES

| | INTEGRAL POLICIES | AFFIRMATIVE POLICIES |
|---|--|--|
| How do they analyse the young? | As a sociological group | As a sociological group and cultural fact |
| How do they define the youth? | As a transitional period | As a full period of life |
| What is the main objective of these policies? | Social and professional integration | Personal autonomy and full civil responsibility |
| What is the administration's approach to young people's reality? | A global and integral approach | A global and integral approach |
| What is the model of intervention used? | Inter-departments and sectorial management | Transversality and plural management of the programmes |
| What is the action tool used? | The Youth Plan | The Global Master Plan of youth policies |
| How do the young participate in it? | Through specific youth consultation and associative prominence in the devising of the Plan | Through associative prominence but also of all the young in the totality of city matters |

(Figure 2)

In that sense, affirmative policies should be able to lead an intergenerational pact to solve conflicts of interests that are almost inherent to the complexity of urban and city life itself. The young and their associations are a potentially strategic object of the pact that the authorities should not disregard or, even less, approach them in an electoral or populist way. It is true that young people do have problems, although many adults have a lot more of them, but the youth are not a problem. Consequently, the proposals young people put forward today have a clear potentiality of future and also of present. Both the mass media and the private companies should reflect on it and break a one-dimensional and stereotyped discourse. Since the youth space is not only a field of reproduction or social deviation, but mainly a surprising laboratory of innovation and change of the cultural relations that is useful to the whole of society. First of all, though, it is necessary for the institutions and the people responsible for the young to start out in this direction and be able to begin a new period by renewing our view of the young and of the *why* and *how* of our policies. These policies should satisfactorily fit in with the potentialities and needs of that new period in the individual's life, YOUTH, by now in capital letters, as we can no longer give it a minority treatment.