Mr. Palomar and Youth 2.0: beyond the Faustian bargain

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Abstract: The paper addresses issues related to web 2.0 and social networks in relation to their potential for transformative learning. Through a series of interviews with young activists and socio-cultural workers the paper explores the way technologies are being "adopted" within the Italian society by educational agents and by youth sectors of the population and their impact upon general and specific expectations about where and how learning takes place.

Key words: Non-formal education, Social Networks, Youth

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Introduction

This paper addresses issues related to youth, activism and web 2.0: they are three broad, recent and controversial "categories".

The definition of youth varies depending on the institutional framework. It is translated by international institutions such as the World Bank and the United Nations into the 15-24 age range. Reguillo (2009, quoted in Enghel and Tufte, 2011) provides a critical perspective of the "youth" concept. She claims that three core dimensions should be taken into account when considering youth agency and youth potential leadership in contexts of social change: the processes of precarization / informalization of youth's biographies, dynamics, circuits and ideals; the retrenchment of the social state, and the strengthening of the punitive state; and the discrediting of modern institutions – the school, political parties, labour unions, businesses – as guarantors of "successful" socializing (Reguillo, 2009). These dimensions contribute to problematize the notion of youth as a social group experiencing themselves as social actors and agents of change. In developing this paper, these dimensions will be explored in relation to the future dimension and particularly to what anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (2004) defines as the "capacity to aspire", the cultural capacity to find the resources to overcome the present situation and its limits, a perspective that echoes Hirschman's (1970) notion of "voice": the future dimension, understood as aspiration is essentially a cultural capacity of social groups, a way to "seek to strengthen their voices as a cultural capacity, they will need to find those levers of metaphor, rhetoric, organization, and public performance that will work well in their cultural worlds" (p. 67).

In relation to web 2.0 (the semantic tagging of Internet contents) and social networks this chapter explores issues of critical pedagogy relating them to Neil Postman's words of warning[2] that

> "*all technological change is a trade-off (…) a Faustian bargain. Technology giveth and technology taketh away. This means that for every advantage a new technology offers, there is always a corresponding disadvantage*".

The following paragraphs explore the complex nature of such Faustian bargain taking into account different perspectives.

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[2] *Five Things We Need to Know About Technological Change*, available at: http://www.mat.upm.es/~jcm/neil-postman--five-things.html

From the software designer's perspective the social software user is the group, not the individual (Shirky, 2003, quoted in Benkler, 2006, p. 372).

The users perspective has been framed by Castells as "networked individualism". Castells (2001) suggests that networked individualism is the current dominant form of sociability, noticing that through on-line activities we are acquiring increasing room for contributing to the networks with which we communicate and inform ourselves while in order to understand individuals network visibility and references to other nodes are becoming essential dimensions (Castells, 2001). From this perspective the socialisation dimension and related reflexive processes of identification in emerging networks are closely related to activities and communication exchanges through on-line networks.

Does this perspective encourage more active Internet citizenship (*netizens,* Benkler, 2006) bringing together new opportunities for social learning and social activism along with enhanced awareness of the democratic implications of keeping the Net an accessible, open and horizontal exchange arena?

Mexican-Argentinean anthropologist Nestor Garcia Canclini offers a critical perspective on these issues. He identifies issues of (ethnic, national and gender) difference, inequality and dis-connectivity from a cross-disciplinary, intercultural perspective, asking "how to acknowledge the differences, right the inequalities and connect the majorities to the globalized networks" (2006, p.14).

These issues have crucial learning and education implications as they have a potential for contributing a nonmarket, noncommodified approach to knowledge co-production at a time of increasing privatisation and commodification of education (Robertson, 2009).

According to authors such as Cope and Kalantzis (2009)

"*new media mix modes more powerfully than was culturally the norm and even technically possible in the earlier modernity dominated by the book and the printed page*".

Within this media, in turn, nonmarket approaches to knowledge production and sharing play a crucial role:

> *"A series of changes in the technologies, economic organization, and social practices of production in this environment has created new opportunities for how we make and exchange information, knowledge, and culture. These changes have increased the role of nonmarket and nonproprietary production, both by individuals alone and by cooperative efforts in a wide range of loosely or tightly woven collaborations"* (Benkler, 2006, p.14).

These nonmarket and nonproprietary production process and social networks have been partially summarised in a positive approach to the "hacker" culture such as the one adopted and made popular by Pekka Himanen in his seminal 2001 book *The Hacker Ethic and the Spirit of the Information Age*. While Himanen's hacker's approach deals with developers and Net users that chose the Net as communication and professional medium , most young people today grow up in a world saturated with digital media. Authors such as Buckingham and colleagues (2007) explored how does this world affect youth sense of self and others. These authors suggest that young people define and redefine identities through engagements with technology therefore pointing at a deep impact of digital media use for young people's individual and social identities. This makes it relevant to explore how young people use digital media to share ideas, to learn and to explore in creative ways, to participate in different networks. As such exploration happens in a culturally peripheral space such as Italy and the Mediterranean, it becomes relevant to observe how the emergence of new communication genres and forms, streamline and/or diversify and/or polarise interactions and the way these media offer young people new forms of engagement, interaction, and communication.

Over thirty years ago, questioning the human ability to gather information, to understand and to interact with the world Italian writer Italo Calvino created Mr. Palomar[3]. He closely related this character to questions about the way we look at the context in which we live :

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[3] Italo Calvino's Mr. Palomar appeared for the first time in 1975 on the pages of *the Il Corriere della Sera*, Italy's well known and widely distributed newspaper. Mr. Palomar's character continued to be a feature of the *Il Corriere della Sera* more or less regularly until becoming the title and the main actor of Calvino's book in 1983 (translated in 1985 into English by William Weaver). Mr. Palomar offers reflections based on observations trying to grasp the complexity of the world by highlighting its most elementary features and devices.

"how can you look at something and set your own ego aside? Whose eyes are doing the looking? As a rule, you think of the ego as one who is peering out of your own eyes as if leaning on a window sill" (Calvino, 1985). His questions help in adding a deeper psychological dimension to issues of "networked individualism" (Castells, 2001) and they encourage us to explore the evolutionary dimension of individual and collective practice in growing up and try out agency by interacting through digital social media. What is interesting in seeking analogies between Calvino's character and youth activism is the fact that Mr. Palomar's character is not being defined by the writer in the conventional sense. Calvino provides us with few facts or psychological features. The limited information makes it more evident the fact that Palomar's name echoes the name of a famous telescope. Although this could have not been in Calvino's intention, much of the social media use by young activists can be viewed partly as a telescope function, helping them to to gather and to provide expanded information about the issues they focus upon. In addition, Mr. Palomar's journey and training in exploring different perspectives is reminiscent of youth conditions and/or aspiration as he seems to have abundance of time, a passion for traveling, the ability to observe and to ponder very different objects, and, not least, at times he finds himself in the situation of being the observed rather than the observer.

Through targeted interviews this chapter explores the way communication technologies are being "adopted" in the Italian society by "nonformal educational" agents and by sectors of the youth population and their impact upon general and specific expectations about where and how learning and social agency take place.

Data gathering

As part of a wider study on youth and new media[4], a questionnaire including a focus on social networks has been administered to 1701 students aged 13-24 from 15 (different type of) secondary schools in the Veneto Region (Italy) - 68,9% male, 31,1% female. The main age groups

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[4] The enquiry furnishing our data, entitled "Young people and cross-mediality", was financed by the Veneto Regional Committee for Communications (CoReCom).

are 15 years (36,3%), 17 years (25,3%) and 19 years old students (16,7%). The main findings can be summarised as following:

In terms of membership, more than 4 out of 5 students have registered to an on-line social network: 82,7% of students are members of at least one social network. On average they belong to 2,1 i social networks.

Only 26% of students registered into a social network before their 13th birthday, some of the mas young as 7 years old. On average they register for the first time at 13,6 years of age (most networks require a minimum of 13 years to register).

What do they use the on-line social networks for? The main activity concerns posting personal photos (29,5%). Key activities including posting written sentences and comments, and to share information posted by groups created by other users (16,5%) as well as linking videos already available on the web (16,4%). To a lesser extent they also share news, they indicate where they are located and post personal videos. Photos and personal views are posted more by the female population while the male population is more inclined to re-direct contents that are already available on the web.

Taking into account the networks they visit most frequently, they have on average 661 "friends", with the female population having on average 30 more "friends" when compared to the male population. Usually they hold regular communication with 79 such "friends".

Do they take into consideration "privacy" issues? 45,6% of the students believe that the social newtorks they subscribed to do enough to protect their privacy. Only one out of five students (20,5%) thinks that social networks don't do enough to protect their privacy. The most interesting data is the one third (33,9 %) of students that "don't know" enough about it in order to express their own opinion about this issues.

Data gathering on the use of social networks in nonformal education and activists youth work

I have my personal positive and critical experience with new media. For example I am a member of some Ning platforms, including The Trainer Platform, a networking tool for trainers in non-formal education and youth work including 346 members, and Interculturale.net, a social network that

has developed a community of 782 members who are focusing on intercultural studies and events. Based on this experience and on personal involvement with different activist and social work organisations in Italy and in the Mediterranean, I have established contacts with young people involved in such organisations to implement a first mapping exercise of the relevant spheres of daily – and specifically cultural - experiences that are being affected by the use of new information and communication technologies and social media, including the recent convergence towards mobile devices.

The research schedule aims at including in the near future a series of focus groups and to implement a Delphi design. For the time being five interviews have been implemented focusing on how young people who promote activist and socio-cultural work view the relations among youth, information and social networking technologies and non-formal education activities.

Interviews have been conducted with staff and activists who are members of three different bodies:

➢   the Italian branch of *Amnesty International* whose national secretariat and the persons interviewed are based in Rome;

➢   the *TogethER* youth association, a regional network of youth groups and associations who promote citizenship and intercultural education and information work in the Emilia Romagna Region: the two interviewed person live in Bologna and Rimini;

➢   the *Vedogiovane* cooperative, based in Arona (near Novara, in the Piedmont Region), with operating offices in neighbour cities, an organisation that is running social, cultural and nonformal education programmes, and benefitting from local, national and European grants.

Through structured questions the interviewed staff and activists provided self-reflection about their personal, professional and nonformal learning relations with information and communication technologies as well as analysis and insight about how young people are experiencing them and the way youth perceptions and approaches to new social media have been evolving over the past years.

This paper focuses on positive experiences with social media and new information technologies and with a specific education and social media

dilemma that gained some attention at the time of the interviews concerning educators-learners relations.

Networked practice 2.0

Positive experiences identified by the Amnesty International Italian branch staff are the use of social networks in relation to the organisation of the 2009 anti-Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp demonstration and the 2012 pro-Mexican migrants action.

The January 2009 demonstration[5] organised by the Italian branch of Amnesty International in order to demand the closing down of the Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp was launched through Facebook: Amnesty asked viewers to openly enrol in advance of the event and to dress in orange wearing the name of a Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp prisoner. At least one third of those who participated in the demonstration got involved through the Facebook call for participants. This event sparked further reflection within Amnesty and it convinced Amnesty' staff that the organisation needed to approach social media in a more structured and effective way.

In January 2012 Amnesty International Italian branch promoted an action to support the rights of Mexican migrants[6]. The action included a Twitter message asking "what would you bring with you were you forced to leave your city" (*#cosaporteresti*"). Soon the question became a trending topic and it generated a significant amount of answers.

> "*Feed-back from youth who participated in the actions shows that both Facebook and Twitter communications had a positive impact as they provided opportunities to encourage mobilisation in more flexible ways as well as allowing quick and effective feed-back mechanisms: both Amnesty International staff and youth participating in the actions appreciated the fact that these form of communication opened spaces for expressing thoughts, feelings and proposals and for getting to know how many people like what they do/propose. For Amnesty International it is a way to establish direct*

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[5] http://www.amnesty.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/1673
[6] http://www.amnesty.it/messico_migranti_invisibili.html

communication with supporters and to speed up the spreading of information and the calls for campaigning and action. Nonetheless, this type of relations should be considered 'weak' relations. They need to be regularly 'warmed up' through more personal and face-to-face communication".

Is Facebook becoming less popular in activist and social work because of Twitter? Interviews show that these media are being used next to each other and intersecting each other although there is an actual preference for the opportunities provided by Twitter. Both the Vedogiovane cooperative staff and the TogethER network activists consider Twitter a positive development and an opportunity to promote activism in an intercultural way. TogethER network activists observe that a trend that is inherent to Facebook and the "friendship" approach concerns people' tendency to develop their exchanges within the same affinity group while at the same time search tools such as Google are tailoring their approach to users by focusing on the same priority contents. This is generating an Internet "backyard" culture while Twitter offers more ways to develop cross-cultural information and to share ideas and events across a wider and more open network. This does not mean that TogethER members and Vedogiovane staff are not participating in and visiting various Facebook pages. Often they are using it to promote their video products and activities and to look for collaboration concerning their events. In both cases it is remarkable that the interviewed people were early Facebook users. Over the years they generally grew tired of it as a "personal" space and are using it mainly as a professional and communication tool.

This is particularly relevant in the case of the TogethER members. Coming from various groups and associations that promote intercultural dialogue, they joined forces in 2008 in order to develop a network of such organisations. At the operational level, this is meant as an attempt to go beyond the individual organisation's self-financing habit based on applying for public grants and stick to projects' deadlines in order to acquire increased capacity, long term perspective and, eventually, freedom:

"coming from different associations, our challenge is to establish proper partnerships and to work as a group, being able to involve the various intercultural and second generation entities that are active in the Emilia Romagna Region. We aim at establishing a self-managed youth network and to

be acknowledged as such by the Regional authority. This should allow us to improve our activities, avoiding getting stuck into the usual one-year project financing by Regional bodies."

From an educational perspective, the TogethER network is reminiscent of Dewey's idea that democracy is based on "*associated living*", "*cojoint communicated experience*" although it goes beyond Dewey's claim that what is specifically important for democratic co-existence is that people "*come to possess things in common*" (1916, p. 87). As noted by Willinsky (2004), social and intellectual views of democracy have changed since Dewey first held that "*in order to have a large number of values in common, all members of the group must have an equable opportunity to receive and take from others. There must be a large variety of shared understandings and experiences*" (1916, p. 84). Willinsky (2004) adopts a critical view of this feature of democracy as defined by Dewey and his position seems very close to the one adopted by the TogethER network:

"*we see democracy as a means of governing those who do not necessarily share 'a large variety of shared understandings and experiences. Dewey's sense of the nation as a shared experience tends to limit democracy's inclusiveness, just as his focus on the nation itself curtails a more global approach to this democratic exchange of understandings and experiences*". Both support "*a concept of democracy given to working with differences, rather than seeking a singular truth or vision*".

This shift from seeking a singular truth to working with differences seems consistent with Appadurai's theory of rupture. According to Appadurai (1996) both the electronic mediation of everyday life and mass migration play key roles in the transformation of society. They are interconnected trends with a decisive impact upon the "work of the imagination" as a constitutive feature of modern subjectivity (1996: 3), since the electronic media "*offer new resources and new disciplines for the construction of imagined selves and imagined worlds*". Intersecting mass migrations they result into "*a new order of instability in the production of modern subjectivities*" (ibid.: 4). As TogethER network actvists say:

"We have learned that if you find yourself uncomfortable within the clothes that society gave you have to learn to help yourself and to get organised in order to be able to produce your own tailor made clothes. We should not wait for somebody else to come and adapt our clothes. That is why we are taking the initiative. We have no time to rest".

Further positive experience identified by Vedogiovane staff concern the opening of a "digipoint" (aiconfinidellacasa.blogspot.com), a physical space to provide access to information and communication technologies in a popular neighbourhood in Borgomanero, a 21.000 inhabitants Piedmont town. The initiative got involved 10 young volunteers who consider this both an interesting way of working in the neighbourhood and a learning opportunity.

Common features of these positive practices are often the integration of on-line and face-to-face dimensions, as well as the ability to use digital media in an "open" way, using them to express the questioning of issues that are relevant to participants and that might give shape their communicative contribution to their local and national context. Here again they seem to evoke Mr. Palomar:

"The fact is that he would like not so much to affirm a truth of his own as to ask questions, and he realizes that no one wants to abandon the train of his own discourse to answer questions that, coming from another discourse, would necessitate rethinking the same things with other words, perhaps ending up on strange ground, far from safe paths. Or else he would like others to ask him questions; but he, too, would want only certain questions and not others: the ones he would answer by saying the things he feels he can say but could say only if someone asked him to say them" (Calvino, 1985).

Within this "exploratory" mood, less attention is given to the netizen dimension (Benkler, 2006), to the "open source" (or not) nature of the technology that is being used and implemented through their projects, and, in general, to the ethical dimension of using new social media. This seems particularly relevant in relation to the way social media are being integrated (or not) within and along formal education and their impact upon individual and collective (self regulated) learning.

Although all three organisations have relations with formal education and schools, the staff and activists rarely mention this dimension. The

following question[7] helped to focus on a crucial relational issue: should teachers and pupils be friends on Facebook?

Generally, the young activists and staff that has been interviewed for this paper found ways to respond positively to such question and so do over two thirds (68%) of those who answered the Wired poll.

On this issue, answers were gathered as well by asking two Padua female secondary school pupils (aged 15 and 16) to ask through their schoolmates Facebook pages the opinion of their fellow students. The "no"/"yes" answers ratio by pupils aged 16 was 10/1; by pupils aged 15 was 7/2. The total number of "no" is 17, the total number of "yes" is 3: in both cases more than half of the pupils avoided to answer. Those who seem to care about the issue are in favour of a teacher waterproof Facebook: this is the case for almost 9 out of 10 pupils. Although the test was conducted with a very limited secondary school population, it seems quite significant of two trends:

- half of the secondary school pupils don't seem to find the issue important and the few that are providing a positive answer do so on the ground that the Facebook presence of teacher(s) would not affect their personal experience of that space, they don't seem interested in interacting with them through that on-line space;

- when they do provide their opinion, this is rather different from those expressed by the on-line blog and magazine polls, a preliminary indication that often these polls involve a readership that is not necessarily in touch with the everyday perception of secondary school pupils. Most "no" responses motivate their choice by indicating that teachers would not be able to mind their business and they would violate pupils' privacy while the main focus of the Wired "no" argument was geared around other, potentially illegal adult-adolescent relation issues.

Further discussion

Whatever the technology's (mental, paper, outdoor, digital, etc.) dress, understanding its specific ways of functioning is essential especially for

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[7] as published on-line by Wired Italy at: http://daily.wired.it/aconfronto/2011/12/06/vietare-amicizie-facebook-docenti-alunni-16786.html

those who are particularly interested in non-formal education and social networking as effective ways of learning and/or as activism forms. It is encouraging to see activists and socio-cultural workers trying to understand not only how new technologies and social media work but also how they can support positive social relations beyond the Net and learning through personalised, social and contextually-based interactions.

In "Growing up with Google. What it means to education" (2008), Diana G. Oblinger (Educause) sums up the Net Generation as students who were born after 1982 and who have never known life without the internet. In their own words:

"- My computer is the nucleus of my workspace

- When I need information I go online

- Besides IM or email my cell phone is my primary method of communication

- I'm usually juggling five things at once".

According to Oblinger, although "educators may see students every day, we don't necessarily understand their habits, expectations or learning preferences […]. Today's students bring a consumer orientation to education, which is viewed as a commodity to be consumed, acquired and accumulated", echoing Mark Taylor (2006) [8].

It is crucial to explore a different perspective that does not consider education and its related technologies a commodity. Such perspective implies in-depth and multidimensional reflection about how different issues relate to each other and it is probably best summed up by the thematic circle that echoes the *informal–non-formal–formal* learning continuum and it is marked by four sectors *policy–practices–participants–professionalization* suggested in "Tracks and tools for trading up in nonformal learning" by Lynne Chisholm and Bryony Hoskins (in Lynne Chisholm *et al.,* 2005).

Vedogiovane staff – who runs a YouTube channel featuring youth collective video productions - is quite explicit in reading active citizenship activities and spaces in a multidimensional way:

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[8] *Generation NeXt Comes to College:Today's postmodern student*, available at: http://globalcscc.edu/tirc/blog/files/Gen%20NeXt%20handout%2006%20oln.pdf

"*To plan a youth centre it implies to take into account the physical space and to think about how to organize it, how to fill it, what opportunities it should offer. At the same time it implies a reflection upon how to plan and to use the related virtual space*".

According to Weber and Mitchell (2008) media production contributes to the construction of identities especially through the facilitation of reflexivity in three ways.

"*Firstly, their own media production (both through its processes and its outcomes) forces young people to look at themselves, sometimes through new eyes, providing feedback for further modification of their self-representations.*
Secondly, the source materials and modes of young people's media production are often evident or transparent; the choices and processes that they use reveal and identify them in ways that they themselves might not even realize.
Thirdly, through built-in response mechanisms or simply through audience response, media production invites other people's feedback and readings, sparking a dialectic that is inherent to mediating and reshaping how we see ourselves and how we think others see us".

Weber and Mitchell (2008) perspective meet TogethER activists' and Vedogiovane staff's concerns around the question of whose eyes young people see themselves through and whose language they use to express themselves.

"*A reflexive regard is not necessarily as critical as one might think; it too is shaped by culture and experience. Because we are not always aware that seeing is something we are taught to do and that language is something into which we are socialized, our ability to read and represent ourselves can lose its critical edge. It is, therefore, the ability of media production to occasionally provoke this awareness that makes it so useful to identity construction*".

It is remarkable that none of the staff, youth workers and activists that were interviewed while writing this chapter raised issues or claims concerning an open source perspective on the software that they are using and at times promoting in relation to their activities and media production as if the popularity ad reach-out ability of software would always be a priority when compared to more transformative and accessible perspective.

Lessig (1999) and Benkler (2006) show how the ways in which people use digital media present fundamental challenges to established understandings of property, which in turn, lie at the foundation of the political order and identity questions. These challenges relate to the age-old question of access to knowledge. It seems that identity issues are given priority by the interviewed activists and youth workers over more technologically "structural" access issues.

As we have seen in the case of the TogethER network, issues of social status are being raised every time that we address questions of identity. Generally, there has been an association of the term "identity politics" with activist social movements that are explicitly addressing and challenge social status and identity relations.

> "*They have struggled to resist oppressive accounts of their identities constructed by others who hold power over them, and claimed the right to self-determination (…) Identity politics thus entails a call for the recognition of aspects of identity that have previously been denied, marginalized, or stigmatized. Yet this call is not in the name of some generalized 'humanity': it is a claim for identity not in spite of difference, but because of it. As this implies, identity politics is very much about transformation at the level of the group, rather than merely the individual: it is about identification and solidarity. Issues of representation—about who has the right to represent, or to speak, and for whom—are therefore also crucial here*" (Buckingham, 2008).

While identity politics has been criticized as special pleading or as a diversion from cross-cutting social struggles based on some kind of reification or essentialism (making generalizations about the members of a particular group in order to assimilate them to a given identity) the TogethER network members show a concern for enhancing the fact that people have multiple dimensions to their identities. They are careful in avoiding a specific definition of their own condition as well as in making sure to promote sensitivity to intercultural issues within a broader active citizenship an inclusive framework. Their choices concerning digital media seem consistent with this approach, particularly when they identify and resist what they term "backyard" Internet culture trends.

On the other hand, it is worth noting that none of the activists and staff interviewed is aware of the tools developed by SALTO, the European

network of Youth in Action thematic centres,   including the toolbox. SALTO seems one of the few network that is seeking a collective response to issues of accessibility of to on-line as well as face-to-face technologies: the over 1000 "tools" entered in the SALTO ToolBox[9] present an encouraging scenario that reminds us that a commitment to research and documentation carries with it a responsibility to extend the circulation of the researched and documented work as far as possible. An on-line open database re-defines our perception of the access spirit being it the Mediterranean knowledge temples (such as the third century b.C. Alexandria collection or the XVI century Cairo mosque library at al-Azhar) or more recent Western small-town libraries. Such effort places at the core of the reflection upon technologies the ability to respect diversity and accessibility principles through open-source options, acknowledging different agendas and differing approaches in elaborating and producing information and yet encouraging and making possible dialogue and joint efforts among them.

So far, limited or no attention is being given by the interviewed staff and activists to active citizenship that addresses specific Net and technological issues. Within youth and activist work, so far the response to access to knowledge questions is often an empirical and short term searching that tries to combine quick responses from affinity groups to ways to integrate up-to-date technologies into the organisation's own work. Nonetheless, the power of organisations depend as well on their positioning in relation to the sources of knowledge and on their capacity to understand and process such knowledge. Knowledge is also flow (Castells, 2009) and networked learning can be a good example of the forms of citizenship "co-adaptation" process promoted by the interviewed staff and activists. Ideally, the promotion of human rights, intercultural dialogue and active citizenship has a potential for contributing both to access and to modify the flow of knowledge. This would imply an acknowledgement of the basic power relations and conflicts that affect today's information flow and Net dynamics. Nonetheless, in the lack of interest for inherent Net conflicts (for example concerning open-proprietary approaches to the information flow), we are witnessing a issue-based approach to activism and youth work that

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[9] http://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/find-a-tool/

is not necessarily interested nor sensible to structural conflicts. This is a paradox that suggests further explorations, given the complex approach to social and cultural issues that cuts across the three organisations who contributed to the drafting of this chapter. A conflict is not just a confrontation of two human beings in strong opposition. It is mainly a disposition of mind that "allows thinking in terms of multiplicity and equivalence instead of identity, in terms of function instead of essence" (Benasayag and Del Rey, 2007).

> *"He tries to make his thoughts retain simultaneously the nearest things and the farthest (...) When he is convinced that he has precisely outlined his own place in the midst of the silent expanse of things floating in the void, amid the dust cloud of present or possible events that hovers in space and time, Mr. Palomar decides the moment has come to apply this cosmic wisdom to relations with his fellows. He hastens to return to society, renews acquaintances, friendships, business associations; he subjects his ties and affections to a careful examination of conscience. He expects to see, extending before him, a human landscape that is finally distinct, clear, without mists, where he will be able to move with precise and confident gestures. Is this what happens?"* (Calvino, 1985).

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Interculturale / Trickster
http://interculturale.net/

L'Italia sono anch'io
http://www.litaliasonoanchio.it/
http://www.youtube.com/user/litaliasonoanchio#p/f

Rete TogethER
http://www.retetogether.it/
http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL0359F99C0E803078&feature=plcp

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