

# December 2017 report

Girona, December 13th, 2017

Projecte realitzat per les universitats:



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## 1. Initial conceptualization of the term

The results confirm the ambiguity and inaccuracy of the use of the concept, although they link their use to three concepts:

- Empowerment and power: access to power. A process from top to bottom, from bottom to top, or both at the same time.
- Empowerment and participation. Different types of participation (individual, community, politics) and agency.
- Empowerment and education. Related to the acquisition of knowledge and skills, capabilities, resources and awareness.

Both theoretical and empirical research has been carried out, basically, in the adult environment. Studies have ignored the multidimensionality of social contexts where juvenile empowerment takes place and have focused mainly on oppressed groups or risk groups.

Despite the inaccuracy in the use of the concept of empowerment in the youth field, some classifications can be established:

- Regarding the main dimensions associated with the concept in the youth field: a) the one of growth and well-being; b) relational; c) the trainer; d) the policy; e) the transformer; and, finally, d) the emancipator.
- Regarding the axes that identify and promote youth empowerment are: participation; the promotion; the interlocution; the support; the accompaniment; advocacy; and, the acquisition of capacities through education.

The essential core of the idea of empowerment refers to two different but successive capacities: the ability to decide; and the ability to act consistently with what has been decided. In order to be able to decide or participate in the decision making and to act accordingly, at least two necessary conditions must be given.

Therefore, real empowerment will always be the result of:

- a) The subject has certain internal, personal or psychological capacities (knowledge, attitudes, aptitudes, values, abilities). Condition of a specifically educational nature.
- b) The environment makes it possible for the subject to decide and carry out his decision: political, economic, legal, material, and also aspects such as social norms and pressures, stereotypes, fashions.

When talking about empowering reference is made to a better distribution or socialization of the existing power. The processes of empowerment must prioritize those people or groups that have less power. Educating in empowerment involves learning to share this power. Likewise, one should be careful: that the fashion of empowerment is not a further clarity of the system so that the people learns to control themselves alone.



## 2. A definition proposal

*Empowerment is the process that increases the chances that a person can decide and act consistently on everything that affects their lives, participate in decision-making and intervene in a shared and responsible way in what affects the community of which is part. This requires two conditions: that the person is acquiring and developing a series of personal capacities and that the means allow him to effectively exercise such capabilities.*

## 3. A pedagogical model for youth empowerment based on spaces, moments and processes.

### Spaces of YE

#### **Especially juvenile spaces / Intergenerational spaces**

#### **Institutionalized spaces / Non-institutionalized spaces**

Formal educational institutions: university, secondary education centres

- Non-formal education or social education institutions: movements and centres of education in the free time, institutions and services of specialized social education.
- Political, citizen, religious associations: political parties, social movements, NGOs, religious confessions.
- Other institutions and cultural, social, civic, sports facilities: museums, libraries, civic centres, youth centres, and sports clubs.
- Shopping and recreation centres and venues: bars, pubs, discos.
- Public spaces: street, parks, sports facilities open.
- The family environment.
- The work environment.
- The virtual space, ICT and the media.

### Moments of YE

#### **Life cycle stages and subperiods.**

- Childhood (up to 12 years)
- Adolescence (12-16 years)
- Youth (16-20, 20-25 and 26-30)

#### **Moments or regular periods of daily life.**

- The night.
- The time to go home during adolescence.
- The autonomy of the weekend or the periods of vacations.



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### **Moments, situations, periods or personal experiences, exceptional or specific.**

- Existential crises, depressive or euphoric states, feelings of failure.
- Disease and convalescence states.
- Get unemployed.
- The first sentimental couple.
- The moment of economic emancipation and the abandonment of family residence.
- Other critical events.

### **Times, moments or social periods.**

- Times of economic crisis.
- Revolutionary periods or social and political change.

### **Processes for the YE**

#### **Macro-level processes: empowerment in youth policies.**

- The educational perspective as a central element of youth policies
- Make possible the actual exercise of recognized rights.
- Foster autonomy and independence. Principle of subsidiarity.

#### **Meso level processes: the YE through groups and institutions**

- Open programs, stimulating creativity and freedom.
- Programs that contribute to the awareness.
- Specific techniques for empowerment.

#### **Micro level processes: ways to act in personal relationships**

- Relations based on trust.
- Learn acting.
- Presence / absence of adults.

## **4. Towards the search for indicators of youth empowerment**

It is part of the framework established in the interuniversity research project The participatory evaluation of community actions as a learning methodology for individual and community empowerment. The phases of the methodological process are:

- Contrast of the indicators with the scientific literature specialized in youth empowerment. Reading and analysis of 297 bibliographical references published between 2000-2014.



- Validation process through expert judgment, where they value the comprehensibility, uniqueness, measurability and relevance of each variable and indicator.
- Contrast of the battery of indicators with the young people through 4 processes of participatory evaluation and the realization of 6 stories of life.
- Results.

Capability indicators are detected in 57 of the 297 revised bibliographic references. The results show that all the initial indicators are confirmed based on the referrals consulted. The variable with more references is self-esteem, followed by teamwork, responsibility and participation. In the last positions is the community knowledge, the knowledge and the evaluation.

#### 4.1. Results of validation by experts:

- No indicator achieves the agreement of all judges in the attributes consulted (table 2).
- 30% of the indicators require revision in its writing, 50% have univocal problems, and 26% measurability. All indicators, except 2, are considered to be very relevant.

*Table 2: Variables and indicators of empowerment*

VARIABLES	INDICATORS
Self esteem	Be satisfied of yourself.
	Be able to deal with difficult or adverse situations.
	Be able to show in front of the other.
	Feeling self-confident.
	Know the own capacities and recognize the limits themselves.
Autonomy	Feeling recognized by the rest.
	Take initiative
Critical capacity	Be able to choose and act according to the own convictions.
	Be able to analyse problems or situations.
Efficiency	Have an own criteria in relation to problems or situations.
	Being able to make decisions to achieve the objectives.
	Be methodical and constant in carrying out the work.
Identity and community knowledge	Achieve the objectives set.
	Understand the history and sociocultural dynamics of the community.
	Know the different agents and organizations of the community.
	Know the services, resources and equipment of the community.
Meta learning	Have a feeling of belonging.
	Be aware of having acquired or improved an own knowledge and abilities.
	Have developed the ability to learn to learn.
Participation	Be aware of the power acquired to act.
	Engage in actions or projects.
Responsibility	Be able to influence your surroundings.
	Assume commitments and tasks voluntarily and realistically.
	Assume functions in groups and groups of which it is a part.
Team working	Be able to share functions and tasks.
	Engage in teamwork.
	Be able to exercise leadership functions in team work.
	Be able to communicate.
	Be able to negotiate and agree.



## 4.2. Validation by young people

### 4.2.1. Participatory evaluation groups with young people

Four groups of young people in different territories and sociocultural profiles (Girona, Barcelona, Ciudad Bahía and Madrid) are formed and a work is carried out during six months, from a process of participatory evaluation, on the concept and the proposal of indicators of youth empowerment.

All youth groups relate empowerment with some kind of personal or group enrichment. They and young people link empowerment with a certain perception of success and / or overcoming and connect it to terms such as security and self-confidence; to have willpower and ability to impose difficulties. The social influence is also recognized.

All the groups validate the definition of empowerment presented by the research team. Incorporate, eliminate or put into question some of the elements. They also validate the battery of indicators of empowerment presented by the research team. The process of understanding the indicators varies between groups, but they coincide in the difficulty of understanding the meta-learning indicator.

In all the groups the subject of spaces, moments and processes of youth empowerment is treated from the experiences and personal experiences. It is related to spaces linked to the family, school and friendship. The extra-curricular space appears in some group as significant because in it young people can establish friendship ties with their peers and allow them to discover, express and put into practice their personal interests. The space of the street is also identified as relevant and, in a way, the associative space is significant.

The processes that appear transversally to the identified spaces are related to overcoming experiences that made the young people have a perception of success, of overcoming, of being important to someone or of feeling well-being. Learning processes and personal growth are identified in all cases, to overcome the studies or to have the courage to abandon them because it was not what they wanted to do. Processes of overcoming adversity or fragility are detected. Some empowerment processes are related to decision making at an early age and with the assumption of responsibilities. Other processes have to do with becoming independent.

### 4.2.2. The collection of data on the empowerment of young people

A quantitative study is also carried out on a sample of young people from Catalonia. The data obtained allow access to the subjectivity of these. The collection of data is produced on an individual level, but the interest lies in the joint result to characterize the group. We work with a final sample of N = 890 young people, aged 19 to 25 (average of 22 years, typical deviation 1.67). For an equivalent random sample, it would be a representative sample of young people from



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Catalonia, of this age group (population 535,706, according to the INE Population and Housing 2011), with a margin of error of 3.3% and one confidence level of 95%.

The questionnaire collects detailed data from the profile of young people, at the socioeconomic, educational, labour, family, emancipation and social participation levels; to later inquire into how they have contributed to their different vital experiences in their empowerment process.

Some of the results you are interested in presenting:

- The young people have a positive self-perception regarding the possibilities of deciding and acting on their own lives and what affects them. Only 2% of young people consider that they are poorly empowered.
- Capacity building is essential to allow empowerment: high levels of training are less frequent among young people who are considered less empowered than in the sample as a whole.
  - The young people with compulsory secondary education, with no job occupation and low income (less than € 250 / month) are considered less empowered.
  - The young people who attend vocational training programs that are active in the job search most believe that they have a medium level of empowerment.
  - The young people who are considered empowered have decent work, enough income to become independent, have finished professional studies of higher education, are undergoing university studies and are emancipated, even if they are sharing a flat.
- The spaces that are most considered conducive to youth empowerment are, in preference order, majority: family of origin, current friendship, leisure associations and labour spaces.
- The vital experiences of personal improvement are also very significant: having lost a loved one, living a family or couple break, migrations. All of them are experiences recognized as experiences that allow you to make relevant learning and make important decisions about one's life.
- The experiences less valued by young people as a source of empowerment are: professional, sporting, cultural or artistic failures; to run out of work; suffer a serious illness, make your own sexual orientation public.
- The application of capacities for autonomous action does not vary significantly depending on the age after 19 years. We can interpret that the formation is not sufficient by itself to guarantee the empowerment, it is necessary that the context allows and facilitate the application of the acquired capacities.

#### **4.2.3. The story of the young people about their empowerment**

The research also includes the voice of youth, through six stories of young people selected from gender, residence, training and work and age variables. Academic, family and health trajectories have been taken into account, and criteria in reference to being and being (communicative skills, time availability and willingness to share). The stories are constructed from successive interviews



with the aim of showing the subjective testimony of young people about events, and the assessments they make of their existence.

An element of high importance is the value that is attributed to relationships. These can be supportive, trusted or conflictive. The latter, as the critical incident, appears as one of the elements that can contribute to empowerment, in the case of receiving adequate support or having the strength to manage it.

Friendship, family, partner, and teachers and other educators are given importance and prominence as significant people at a given moment in life. The work contributes mainly to a feeling of independence, of autonomy and also of responsibility.

The young people attach great value to the environment that offers them diverse opportunities to give way to their concerns. Having a supportive context allows them to do, build, create, participate, open perspectives, and make new friendships. They value community life and the role of associations, the work of technical teams and educators. They recognize the offer of opportunities to act and get involved. Participating in entities and having options to do them is lived positively, because they believe that it fosters the desire to contribute to the community, to establish social networks and discover vocations. They are identified with non-institutionalized spaces such as street, public transport or leisure spaces. They are spaces of open, positive or negative interaction, where they can make their own decisions or face situations where they put their capacities into action.

Recognition, rejection or how they are positioned by others results in certain reactions that allow them to reinforce, reaffirm, contrast or modify their attitudes, their way of being or being in the world and interacting with them. The other's gaze is a constant in interpersonal relationships and when they offer opportunities for action they contribute to their empowerment.

#### **4.2.4. The cinema (and by extension the art) like mechanism of youth empowerment**

At the base of the HEBE website there is a pedagogical foundation based on the cinema as "trainer" of those who learn to see and learn to practice. The analysis of some pedagogical practices based on the cinema has allowed setting up an audio-visual pedagogy workshop, based on empowerment. There is a double dimension between reflection on empowerment and empowerment process.

The pedagogical line that followed, inspired by the hypothesis of the cinema (Bergala), shows that cinema should not be taught from a technical and specialized perspective, but must be explored from a dimension of the discovery of images and of the meanings that emerge through them. The comparative study of different pedagogical experiences based on work in the cinema is presented as a possible line to be developed.





Although the sample of web design participants HEBE (6 young people) cannot be considered significant, a first assessment of the results of the audio-visual pieces created (from a thematic and formal perspective) is that the family or family settings are at the centre of many of his reflections. The emotionality of the pieces, as well as the words that are transmitted to them, also show that a part of the reflection on youth empowerment occurs from an emotional dimension (family, friendships) and not so rational. The newspaper, the portrait and the letter are the most repeated genres in the creation of the pieces of the HEBE website. Genres that connect with emotional dimension. In this sense, the role played by the emotional dimension in the empowerment process is a line in which work with images could bring new approaches.

In the case of the sample, present in the HEBE web site, there is clearly the identification of empowerment spaces with institutional or formal spaces, and not family spaces or those who deal spontaneously and playfully.

## 5. The analysis of the first results

At the end of the project 3 focus groups, one with young people, one with technical teams and, third, have been done with academic teams. A last group of discussion was convened where the 3 focus group converged. It was triangular and contrasted the results of the same. The objective was to be able to know in what way, according to the gaze of the different actors, youth empowerment can be improved. Likewise, it was deepened in different subjects in each of the groups regarding youth empowerment.

The young people give value especially to those spaces that allow them to self-organize, as is the case of associations and also leisure time. Being able to make decisions and execute them is a key element for them and for them. Be able to have vital experiences to be proud of. They also highlight how adult power is managed and claim to be wrong. They value education, if it brings knowledge, security, trust and tools for reasoning. They believe that it is very useful for decision making and its implementation.

The technical teams of youth and education rise that the capacity to decide and to be consistent with the decisions requires favourable contexts. The transfer of spaces of power is necessary; therefore, political will is required. Association space is recognized as a favourable context for the type of experiences it offers and the resources it provides, but also for the recognition it gives to young people. It is necessary to recognize them as capable and valid subjects / agents who can make contributions to society.

The way to activate the empowerment of young people is from the accompaniment. Favourable contexts must be given. The transfer of spaces of power is necessary; therefore, political will is required. That is why it is important to facilitate experiences that allow the learning of autonomy, depending on age, and the characteristics of youth. The importance of the starting medium or



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context is emphasized: conditioning factors such as rent, social capital, the territorial context, which influence positively or negatively in this process. Professionals have a relevant role, but we must review the work of educating so that young people can react to uncertainty and at the same time they feel, and are, recognized and valued.

Academics raise the need for spaces of real participation, so that empowerment takes place, spaces where young people feel called to participate, who are theirs and respond to their interests, not so designed for them but for them. The accompaniment of the professional may be necessary and must be shared. The young people should not be regarded as objects of intervention, but are subject to law. It is not enough to provide them with spaces for participation but instead focus and the way in which to build favorable contexts where one's wants and having capabilities are at stake with the power to do. Transgressing adult power can be a form of empowerment, when one takes reins because it has developed critical capacity and own criteria. Education and training are very important for the empowerment process but not enough; you need to feel involved, be linked to a community, a group, have projects, want to do things and be able to do it in a self-managed way.

There are coincidences between different focus groups. Everyone agrees with the value of the participation of young people in spaces where they can self-organize themselves and where they can put their abilities into play. That spaces that allow them to make decisions and put them into practice; become experience and experimentation spaces, where mistake is a source of learning. In these contexts, adult power can be a facilitator, or not, of empowerment.



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## Document production of the HEBE project

### a) Articles:

- Páez de la Torre, S. (2017). Backstage: acerca de las decisiones metodológicas en un estudio sobre jóvenes inmigrantes y empoderamiento. Backstage: approach to methodological decisions in a study on immigrant youth and empowerment. *Pedagogía Social. Revista Interuniversitaria. Journal of Research in Social Pedagogy*, (30), 197-206. ISSN: 1989-9742, DOI: 10.7179/PSRI\_2017.30.14.  
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#### b) Book chapters:

- Planas, A.; Trilla, J.; Garriga, P.; Alonso, A.; Monseny, M. (2016). “¿Qué dimensiones conforman el empoderamiento juvenil? Una propuesta de indicadores” en Soler, P.; Bellera, J.; Planas, A. (Eds.) (2016). *Pedagogía Social, Juventud y Transformaciones Sociales*. Girona: Pedagogía Social, Juventud y Transformaciones Sociales, pp. 311-318. ISBN: 978 84 8458 472 8  
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- Novella, A.; Úcar, X.; Turon, N.; Rodrigo, P.; Arenillas, M.; Páez, J. (2016). “El empoderamiento juvenil desde los jóvenes. Procesos de evaluación participativa” en Soler, P.; Bellera, J.; Planas, A. (Eds.) (2016). *Pedagogía Social, Juventud y Transformaciones Sociales*. Girona: Pedagogía Social, Juventud y Transformaciones Sociales, pp. 329-335. ISBN: 978 84 8458 472 8  
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Link: <https://goo.gl/AtLBDV>

#### c) Presented communications:

- Rodrigo, M<sup>a</sup>. P. (2017). "La percepción del empoderamiento juvenil: jóvenes con discapacidad intelectual moderada". *Congreso Internacional de Pedagogía Social, XXX Seminario Interuniversitario de Pedagogía Social*, Sevilla, del 8 al 10 de Noviembre de 2017.  
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