



International Congress Young People Constructing Worlds

“Capacities and Limits of Action for Change”

October, 14 and 15th 2010
Círculo de Bellas Artes - Madrid

The Youth and Society Postgraduate Studies of the Spanish Distance University (UNED), which offers specialized formation directed towards professionals, technicians and people interested in youth studies, organizes an International Congress to promote its objective of integrating research and practice concerning youth.

The Congress offers a discussion platform on the capacities and limits of young people to transform the world in which they live. It is directed to professionals who work in the youth area, experts on youth studies, members of youth groups and associations, young people engaged in collective projects, and students interested in questions related with young people's lives.

Presentation

In contrast to a perspective which treats young people as clients of public authorities, as source of problems or as victims of the society in which they live, this congress intends to increase knowledge on young people as social and political actors, with capacities to transform the reality in which they live, but also subject to the limits that they have to confront to engage in effective action.

In order to reach this objective, three dimensions will vertebrate the general approach of the meeting: first, **reflection and research** on different aspects of young people's lives in current societies, on their needs, interests, and actions; second, concrete **experiences** that reflect young people's capacity to act and, last, **contributions of protagonists** of the youth world, that is, young people themselves and professionals who work in this field.

Contents

The Congress aims to harmonize these three dimensions in the different thematic areas that will be dealt with along the various sessions. These contents are divided in four panels, with the following themes:

Panel 1: Personal, intimate and gender relations: The limits of change?

In this panel we will exchange ideas, data and experiences about today's personal relations of young people. We will focus on three frames of relations: the frame of friendship and family relations, the frame of intimate and sexual relations, and the frame of places, instruments and ways of relating to each other. Analyzing gender and social class differences will be important in all of them.

We will reflect upon the sense and expectations of relations in relation to the dimensions of trust, identity, power and mutual help. In detail, we pose three questions for common reflection and debate:

1. Do young people perceive and live their personal relations as satisfactory?
2. Do current personal relationships among young people have a potential for social transformation?
3. What expectations of equality in personal relations did exist and why were they not fulfilled?

Panel 2: Social Innovations and political creativity

It is expected (and probably feared) that young people may be able to socially innovate, to discover new possibilities of social and political transformation, to create new worlds that are more sustainable and just, the two crucial dimensions of change in global society. Young People is expected to enter public and private spaces of society with a critical and transforming way of looking.

Many questions come immediately into mind in relation to this and we will try to discuss some of them in this panel. Which changes have occurred in the models of public participation and wish for social transformation? In which fields do we observe these transformations? What do they mean and how can we detect zones of political and public innovation and creativity? Are free software, urban art, alternative networks of food provision, green "guerrillas", "critical mass" for bicycle use, town interventions, LGBT movement... examples of capacities to innovate and create? What don't we see, since due to its characteristics, the invention of politics, of public action, occurs where we do not look at or where we do not register with our view? Which capacities do young people need to produce these changes? Which limits do they encounter? When does an action end to be innovative and creative? Innovation and political creativity is equal to subversion? Does social innovation and youth' political creativity have specific gender, rural/urban or class dimensions?

Panel 3: The transformation of community: from users to protagonists

In this panel we pretend to think about processes of social intervention with young people that come up in every local community environment. We want to describe those initiatives and youth models that construct and change the community, the district, the neighborhood. We also want to talk about the obstacles that come up daily, bureaucratic, geographic, environmental, creative... barriers. These and other questions will be analyzed in detail to better understand young people's engagement in the processes of community transformation, in the environments where they live, where they relate to each other and where they become actors of the society.

From this starting point, the panel is considered a space that will welcome all experiences and/or practices initiated or led by young people in their living environment. We will give priority to all those questions guided by a critical perspective as educational criterion, both in the own work with young people and with

society. In the same sense, all reflections that insist on processes of interaction between communities of protagonists and the political/administrative/institutional system will be welcome. Last, we pretend to debate about the importance that people working with or being a reference for young people are able to say “yes” to proposals made by young people.

Panel 4: Are the models of youth programs and policies outdated?

The approach of this panel starts from the increasing feeling that youth changes more rapidly than the capacity of our youth models and approaches to capture it, which translates into intervention programs and public policies that are not able to connect with the real needs and demands of those who should be their main protagonists. The challenge that we face and for which we have to provide answers, is how to design programs and politics in line with the rhythm of the changes that affect current youth, without leaving behind the more disadvantaged young people and insisting in the capacity of young people to conduct these changes.

Starting from this point, the work of the panel will develop in two ways: on the one hand, to think critically why the work done by institutions in this field does not translate, in most cases, into an activation of the young people’ capacities for transformation and, on the other hand, to pose the keys for a new way of working, which recognizes and promotes young people as social and political actors.

Some of the questions we pretend to discuss in this working group, based on the input and experiences presented by participants, are: which strategies reveal as most adequate to engage young people in the formulation and enactment of youth policies?; which should be the priorities in the institutional intervention in youth work?; how can we improve youth’ citizenship and their civic engagement?; which role should play the professionals of youth work in the development of policies that solve individual needs and at the same time pose wider infrastructure questions?

The panels will develop as **plenary sessions**, in which Spanish and international experts will present general ideas and as **working groups**, in which discussion and the participation of all is promoted, through the presentation of selected experiences, communications, and concluding sessions, etc.

Presentation of proposals

In line with this approach, which insists on debate and participation, all people interested are invited to send proposals for participation related to the questions that will be approached in the four thematic panels of the congress.

Proposals can be of different type, such as:

- Written communications on applied work or research
- Narrations of youth experiences or work with young people
- Exposés of projects of young people’ actions of transformation
- Description of good practices in the field of youth work

Proposal with different formats (written texts, videos, etc.) will be accepted, but in all cases it is important that the proposal includes a reflection which invites to opening a debate and to confront ideas among participants within the different working groups.

Norms for sending of proposals:

All people interested in participating should send a summary of their proposal **until June 28th 2010**, specifying which type of participation is proposed, its objectives, the format of presentation and the panel that is considered the most adequate.

The proposals have to include information on the author, her/his affiliation and contact address.

Proposals will be admitted in Spanish and English.

The organizing committee will notify before **July 15th** the acceptance of the proposals and the assigned panel. The final presentation for the Congress has to send before **September 20th**.

Proposals have to be sent to: propuestas@construyendomundos.org

Dates to be remembered

<i>Inscription¹:</i>	<i>May 15th – September 15th</i>
<i>Deadline for proposals:</i>	<i>May 15th – June 28th</i>
<i>Selection of proposals:</i>	<i>until July 15th</i>
<i>Deadline for definitive presentation:</i>	<i>before September 20th</i>
<i>Date of the Congress:</i>	<i>October 14-15th 2010</i>

For more information see website of the Congress:

<http://construyendomundos.org>

Or write to:

organizacion@construyendomundos.org

¹For inscription an online form has to be filled in:

http://www.construyendomundos.org/congreso/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5&Itemid=2