PARTISPACE

SPACES AND STYLES OF PARTICIPATION

Non formal and informal possibilities of young people's participation in European cities

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Thematic Report
Biographies and
Participation

Biographies of young people's participation in eight European Cities

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1. Executive Summary

This report sets out the analysis of young people's biographies of participation. The aim of the analysis was to explore the relationships between young people's biographies, life trajectories and participation. This analysis was based on the assumption that all individuals are embedded in a larger sociocultural context, and the individual biography can elucidate young people's subjective meaning-making in terms of his/ her individual life trajectory and the participation experiences embedded within it.

The Partispace project conducted 96 biographical interviews with young people aged 15-30 years of age (broadly two interviews per ethnographic case study in eight Partispace cities). Sixteen interviews (eight young women and eight young men) were analysed in-depth for this report. The analysis was twofold. In order to consider the relationships between the perspectives of normative institutionalised life-courses, life trajectories and biographies, the first analysis explored whether and to what extent young people's sociocultural and economic conditions support or constrain their participatory experiences, and, then, the learning processes they attribute to participatory experiences both in terms of personal/ individual development and a contribution to community/ societal change. This analysis developed four 'clusters of participation careers' which refer to young people who participate: (1) to 'fight for justice from inside the system'; (2) because they are 'conformists for change'; (3) for 'personal and professional development by care for others'; and (4) in order to 'experiment with new paths for change'.

The second analysis examined the construction of meaning-making of participation in the life-stories of young people in order to understand the 'subjective' – young people's meaning-making, self-presentation, and biographical motivations and experiences – which leads to participatory activities. The analysis developed five 'dimensions of participation biographies' which refer to young people who become involved in participatory activities: (1) as a way to secure recognition in identity-work; (2) as an expression of self-efficacy; (3) as an expression of experiences with (formal) institutions; (4) in order to cope with harmful experiences; and (5) as a positioning between youth culture and habitus.

Young people do not fall into these clusters or dimensions discreetly. Rather, participation careers are conceptualised as young people's trajectories into and through participatory activities which have resulted from particular constellations of structural factors and transitional experiences of entering and/ or changing different participation settings. The clusters of participation careers, which encapsulate young people's participatory experiences and learning, are conceived of as 'dominant modes of participation' through which young people's participation begins, evolves and changes. Dimensions of participation biographies are 'aspects' of young people's meaning-making of their participation - their biographical experiences - which influence their participation in a variety of ways. Young people's meaning-making cross-cuts their modes of participation.

The relationship between individual meaning-making and modes of participation is not causal and nor will meaning-making in particular ways lead to particular modes of participation. Rather, the analysis indicates that there are predominant ways that young people make sense of and attribute meaning to their participatory experiences that are relevant in their participation journeys.

In all, the analysis suggests that participation is not linear and nor is it predetermined by a particular set of factors. Young people, by accident or by design, take up particular modes of participation that relate to the interplay between their biographical experiences and lived lives. They (can) fluctuate (and crossover) between different spaces and modes of participation, but they also present different biographical understandings of how and why they engage in particular types (or styles) of participation rather than others at different times in their lives. Participation is also subjectively-meaningful for young people and, importantly, participation is more often than not deliberate, intentional and a key part of a young person's biography. Finally, fixed distinctions between 'participation' and 'non-participation', and the reductive and causal ascription of certain types of participation to certain people in certain spaces at certain times for certain reasons, do not reflect the complexity of participation in individual biographies. The biographical analysis suggests that it is crucial to go beyond superficial dichotomies of motivated versus de-motivated, interested versus disinterested, political versus unpolitical, and engaged versus disengaged, to acknowledge, understand and centre the complexity of young people's styles of participation in space and time.

Policy and research recommendations from the biographical analysis are concerned with recognising and basing policy and further research on some key features of young people's participation:

- Young people are disenfranchised from formal politics, but they are not politically disengaged.
- Young people opt for non/informal spaces (and not formal spaces) where there is a greater likelihood of social integration and efficacy.
- Young people have a need to be active in spaces and actively involved in their organisation and governance.
- Normative transitions and expectations do not match neatly with biographies of participation and young people become active in spaces which are meaningful (and often purposeful) to them at times when it is biographically relevant.
- Young people value inclusive youth policies and youth work which support and develop their participation through relevant and innovative activities.

2. Introduction: participation through a biographical magnifying glass

This thematic report addresses the core research questions of the Partispace project from a biographical perspective. This perspective aims to further Partispace's understanding of the complexity of young people's social and political participation, and spaces and styles of participation, by exploring participatory activities over the course of young people's lives and the young people's meaning-making of participation in terms of their biographies.

Partispace's analysis of national and European discourses on participation[1] (see Andersson et al., 2016; Becquet et al., 2016) indicates that these frameworks endorse participation in the teenage and young adult years because it is integral to individuals' socialisation processes and is important for outcomes in later life. However, little attention is paid to how young people perceive their social role and interpret their participation in their daily lives and in their particular social and personal contexts. In addition, the prevailing perspective of 'demotivated' young people within European discourses is one-dimensional and neglects a variety of factors that are important in young people's participation - for example, belonging to and recognition from peers, and experiences in and with institutions and particularly with decisions that are crucial for identity-work and self-efficacy. Furthermore, in considering that young people in Europe now are living in an individualised, pluralised and complex world where the life-course is less predictable, further Partispace findings from the ethnographic case studies[2] (see Batsleer et al., 2017) indicate that young people's participation is changing and that dominant discourses on participation must, therefore, be challenged.

Importantly, the Partispace project does not conceive of young people as a homogeneous group with common needs and aspirations; nonetheless, the age group of the Partispace sample includes young people who are in a life stage that is characterised by common challenges in terms of opportunities and changes in life domains (e.g. education, training, employment, welfare, housing, and health). These issues over the life-course, as well as ongoing identity-work, influence the reasons why and the ways in which young people participate in their everyday lives and in democratic spaces.

The young people taking part in Partispace are viewed as active and meaning-making individuals who define their situations, and reflect about themselves, their actions and the lives they live, and as active social actors with their own conceptualisations and lived experiences, complex identities and social positioning. The interconnected relationship between the self and the social world, however, requires an exploration of the meanings of 'participation' for young people in order to understand how these meanings relate to a wider, sociocultural context from a micro-perspective. This interwoven micro-perspective is developed by analysing the narrated life stories of young people in order to reconstruct life trajectories and subjective meaning-

1 Andersson, B., Cuconato, M., De Luigi, N., Demozzi, S., Forkby, T., Ilardo, M., Martelli, A., Pitti, I., Tuorto, D., Zannoni, F. (2016): National Contexts of Youth Participation. Comparative Report. PARTISPACE Deliverable D2.2. Zenodo. http://doi:10.5281/zenodo.48113; Becquet, V., Kovacheva, S., Popivanov, B., Kabaivanov, S. (2016): European discourses on youth participation and their national interpretation in the countries-members of the Partispace project. Working paper. PARTISPACE Deliverable 3.1. Unpublished.; Kovacheva, S., Kabaivanov, S. Arıkan Akdağ, G. and Lüküslü, D. (2016): Commonalities and differences in the forms of youth participation in Europe. Working paper. PARTISPACE Deliverable 3.2. Unpublished.

2 Batsleer, J., Ehrensperger, K., Lüküslü, F., Osmanoğlu, B., Pais, A., Reutlinger, C., Roth, P., Wigger, A. & Zimmermann, D. (2017): Claiming spaces and struggling for recognition. Youth participation through local case studies. Comparative Case Study Report. PARTISPACE Deliverable 4.3. Zenodo. http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1064119

making. Utilising an understanding of biographies as a construct within the dialectic of the subjective and objective, biographical reconstructions can illustrate on the one hand meaning-making, trajectories and subjective interpretations (the micro) and, on the other, structure, society and opportunities (the meso and macro). The current report considers the micro, meso and macro level of young people's biographies of participation. Many studies on participation focus on who participates where and when, but few studies explore how and why (or why not) young people participate in different ways throughout their lives.

Partispace's biographical analysis began during the ethnographic case studies, which analysed summaries of all of the biographical interviews collected during the project (96). The analysis of the summaries centered on young people's self-presentation and motivations and their involvement in participatory activities and derived five overlapping themes ('stories') in order to start to capture the biographical meaning of participation for the young people:

- Self-made wo/man stories refer to young people for whom participation means self-development with pragmatic and/ or careerist motivations. These motivations are further broken down: young people who prioritise their personal development through their participatory activities; those who relate their leadership skills in particular to their participatory activities; and those who aim to make a career from participatory activities.
- Experimentation stories refer to young people who participate in order to explore life in general, their identity, or a specific participatory practice. Young people engage in experimentation in a number of ways: through motion and change, which involves trying new things, places, activities, and social environments and norms; through identity-work, which involves exploring personal qualities, and strengths and weaknesses; and through immersing themselves in an activity (e.g. sport, music or theatre) in order to test potential or limits.
- Doing/ changing/ resisting/ taking responsibility stories include those young people who want to challenge systemic and societal injustices by taking responsibility for working towards change through participation. These young people can 'resist' and 'rebel' but stress also taking responsibility for creating change. This theme demonstrates that young people can both resist and take responsibility, and that their self-presentation is not always neatly aligned with their participation settings.
- Stories of rediscovery of oneself and one's identity refer to young people who use their participation to cope with racial, ethnic, class and gender issues and discrimination and to cope with other personal problems including health issues and bullying. These stories centred on social identities and self-identity.
- Finally, stories of role models (or their absence) include young people who associate their participation with an important figure (through aspiration, inspiration, orientation or conditioning) or the absence of such a figure. Important figures are, generally, parents or teachers, and participation framed in this way is often related to early-life conditions.

By introducing a biographical perspective into the research on the styles and spaces of youth participation, then, the analysis can explore how and why participation unfolds, who (e.g. significant others) and what (e.g. turning points, experiences and family backgrounds) are subjectively relevant to participation and in what way. In this analysis, participation is

conceived as integral to a young person's biography while a biography is, in turn, integral to participation.

The aim of this thematic report is to analyse a small number of the Partispace biographies in depth in order to understand the individual biography by reconstructing it analytically and exploring the relationship between biographies, life trajectories and participation. In order to do so, the analysis used two complementary approaches, connecting the concept of 'biography' with the concept of the 'life-course'. The analytical link between the life-course and the biographical perspective rests on the classical, interactionist assumption that the individual must be understood as a social being who is embedded within a socially constructed world (Mead, 1934/1967). The first approach developed 'clusters of participation careers' by focusing upon the interaction of biographies with (i) structural elements within a life-story, including turning points and significant others; (ii) needs, wishes and desires that inform young people's participation; and (iii) (lived) participatory learning processes and experiences that influence the individual biography. The second approach explored the young people's 'participation biographies' (see von Schwanenflügel, 2015) in terms of how biographical experiences within young people's stories lead to and bring about their involvement with various participatory activities over time by attributing experiences to activities. The second approach developed 'dimensions of participation biographies'. Drawing the findings from the analysis together enabled using reconstructions of biographies for a micro, meso and macro exploration of biographies of participation.

The report comprises six more sections. The next chapter sets out the importance of considering biographies of participation by exploring some statistical findings on youth participation in Europe and by starting to question why young people participate. Chapter 4 summarises the theoretical rationale for the analysis and sets out the methodology and methods utilised in the two strands of analysis. The fourth and fifth chapters explore the biographical data in 'clusters of participation careers' and 'dimensions of participation biographies'. Chapter 7 synthesises the findings and draws conclusions, and is followed by the final chapter which sets out some policy recommendations from the analysis.

3. Relevance of biographical analysis for research on youth participation

Recent accounts about the distrust of European citizens, and young citizens in particular, of established political systems, institutions, and social elites, are numerous (see, for example, Mishler and Rose, 2001). Such accounts concern young people's apparent lack of political participation and put them at the heart a 'crisis of representative democracy'. However, reviewing young people's participation across the eight Partispace partner countries challenges these accounts by providing a more nuanced analysis of the types of political activities (political, civic and so on) with which young Europeans engage.

3.1. Young people's political engagement involvement in Europe

This part of the report briefly summarises some findings from work package 3 of the Partispace study (Becquet et al., 2016), which analysed European statistics (Kovacheva et al., 2016) and discourses (Becquet et al., 2016) on youth participation. The focus here is on the statistical analysis.

The analysis was based on data from the European Social Survey (ESS), wave 6, which was conducted in 2012 in 29 European countries (including all of the Partispace countries except Turkey) with 54,673 respondents. The ESS collects data with respondents aged 15 and over (ie. it is not limited to 15 to 30 year olds or to young people). The analysis indicated that while voting in parliamentary elections remains the most common form of young people's participation at the European level (about three-quarters of all respondents had voted recently), voting patterns vary between the countries involved in the Partispace project. Sweden (90% of all eligible voters), then Germany, Italy and France, have the highest proportions of voters. Switzerland, the UK and Bulgaria have voter turnouts of less than 75%. In terms of young people, the report notes that the age group up to age 29 are less likely to vote in elections than adults (70.4% of all respondents compared to 42.8% of young people). However, when the eligibility age for voting is factored into the analysis, the difference reduces – young people who were eligible to vote and did not vote were 29.7% of this group, which is not that much higher than the 22.2% non-voters in the whole sample. In short, young people are less likely to vote than adults, but the difference is not substantial.

The ESS survey analysis also revealed that young people are less engaged in institutional politics than previously and prefer alternative forms of politics and direct action and activism in politics and civil society (though, notably, only small proportions of respondents had engaged with non-formal practices such as signing a petition or boycotting certain products). In addition, working for a political party, or contacting a political or government official, are less likely activities for young people. Finally, engagement political activities are correlated - contacting politicians is correlated with signing a petition (for example). That does not imply, however, that a 'single a politically active person would pursue all forms of participation' (Kovacheva et al., 2016: 22).

In all, young people are more distrusting of formal political institutions, such as national and European parliaments, now than previously, and more active now in civic associations than in political parties or trade unions (union membership varies from 24.69% in Sweden to 1.98%

in France and 2.36% in Bulgaria). These trends in youth participation led Muxel (2015) to conclude that a new model of citizenship is evident in advanced democracies that is based on 'individualised links with the political system and looser partisan allegiances, higher acceptance of abstention and wide spread of intermittent voting and most significantly, general mistrust towards politics and politicians' (Becquet et al., 2016: 57). Civic participation and informal engagement, in contrast to formal participation, is strongly connected to citizens' perception of lower levels of corruption within these arenas (Griesshabber, 2014). Civic participation in particular is appealing to young people in terms of providing informal help to people or working in a voluntary or charitable organisation (40% of young people in the previous 12 months).[3]

3.2. Young people's background, characteristics and participation

A key criticism of youth participation discourses in Europe, and prevailing concerns about non-participation, is concerned with social inequalities and their impact on rates of participation. Policy makers frequently ignore the close relationship between participation and social background – that is, the links between social inequalities and political and civil engagement. This is perhaps particularly relevant to young people; while policy-makers frame them as 'apprentices of citizenship', they do not acknowledge that not all young people have access to the 'required' processes of socialisation. Access to participative activities, and particularly responsibilities in participative programs, projects or groups, is background-dependent. The secondary analysis of statistics included a number of demographic and socio-economic variables about young people (e.g. gender, age, education, employment status) and their parents (education and occupation) to explore the links between young people's backgrounds and characteristics and participation.

Results from the analysis of various political and civic forms of participation underline that a range of social factors affects youth practices and should be considered in exploring levels of participation. First, gender is a significant factor in most participation in Europe. Men are more likely to vote, contact politicians, work in a party or another political organisation, and join demonstrations. Women are more likely to wear badges in support of a party, sign petitions, work in charitable organisations and provide informal help (Becquet et al., 2016). Second, education is important: the higher the level of education, the greater the involvement in most forms of participation. In relation to education, unemployment tends to push young people away from institutional participation and encourages direct protest actions. Earning a higher income, on the other hand, encourages voting, working for a party or a charitable organisation, boycotting products and providing informal help. Third, various social practices such as religion or individual experiences such as discrimination influence the rate of engagement and forms of participation: for example, young people who are religious are more likely to be involved in formal and non-formal activities, and young people who have suffered from

3 The ESS is undoubtedly useful for assessing cross-country variations in rates and forms of political participation, and the influence of socio-economic and political factors on participation. However, it is limited because it did not focus on participation, per se. Rather, the ESS provides data about the range of non-formal and informal practices within which young people engage. In addition, though it is also possible to examine influences on political and civic practices, it does not include a breakdown of within-city variations in participation and practice. Also, Partispace's focus on forms and styles of participation actively used by young people requires a qualitative methodology and can be only partially informed by the standardised format of the ESS questionnaires. Crucially, also, the ESS does not include a biographical element (Kovacheva et al, 2016). Nonetheless, this context above is important for understanding recent trends in youth participation.

discrimination (or perceived discrimination) are more likely to be involved in a form of protest. Importantly, belonging to a black and ethnic minority group reduces the rate of participation in most forms. There are also different opportunities for young people living in rural areas and young people living in urban areas.

Finally, in terms of parental background, the analysis revealed that political socialisation processes are related to parents' practices and that young people tend to follow their parents' path. In addition, while the influence of parental educational level and occupational status on forms of political participation is unclear, parental occupation status seems to have a stronger impact than education.

3.3. How and why do you people participate?

In general terms, Partispace's secondary analysis suggests that young people are more inclined now to less formal forms of participation and that disadvantaged and marginalised youth are poorly represented in participatory activities. These findings are important for the current analysis and provide some framework for understanding the complex variances of young people's participation. Nevertheless, what remains unclear from the statistical analysis is an understanding of how and why particular personal and social demographics affect young people's participation. In addition, the ways in which these demographics inhibit or bolster participation throughout a young person's life needs to be unpicked. However, the notion of a 'participatory career' (that is, the life stages at which young people 'should' engage with different forms of participation) is itself problematic and reflective of normative expectations of participation over the life-course which, if met, allow young citizens to become 'full participants' in a democratic society.

According to this 'life-course approach' to youth participation, which emerged during early modernity (Kohli, 1985), young people at the age of 18 are awarded the right to exercise full membership of 'society' as an active citizen by voting in political elections. In the context of late modernity, the life-course concept was interpreted as institutionalised constructions of culturally pre-defined patterns, which give meaning and typification to human lives (for example, the binary division between 'child' and 'adult', 'female' and 'male', or 'normal' and 'un-normal' lives, (See Alfred Schutz, Jacques Derrida, for example). Since, however, and according to Bauman (2001), increasing individualisation and pluralisation, and the dismantling of the welfare state, have reduced the possibilities for citizens to engage in self-determination, standard roles and mechanisms of representation, thereby undermining citizens' trust in state institutions and policy-makers. This issue applies particularly to young people for whom the de-standardisation of expected transitions to adulthood suspends their 'full citizenship' status for an undetermined time and compromises their engagement with, and trust in, the political domain (Loncle et al., 2012). The 'socialisation processes' of gaining full citizenship that begin, conventionally, during the school years, with a basic training in representative democracy, and in school councils and similar contexts, and continue through age-based involvement in other participatory structures, such as youth parliaments, youth organisations, issue-based NGOs or volunteering network, are now less certain.

Nonetheless, despite a mistrust of formal politics and less predictable pathways to 'full citizenship' than previously, young people are not indifferent to social and political issues and

the concerns of their peers, communities, and wider society (see findings from the ethnographic case studies, Batsleer et al., 2017). Rather, they are more likely to participate in the private/ public sphere, which they see as (more) open and free, than they are in traditional political realms. However, youth-related policies and research on participation have largely been concerned with adult-oriented, narrow and formal conceptualisations of politics as institutionalised processes of decision-making. These orientations reflect age-based normative life-course expectations of political participation but take little account of the subjective meaning-making and motivations of young people as they negotiate different forms of social and political participation at various points in their lives. In other words, while this normative approach orientates the way public policies support and recognise youth participation, it does not take into account many dimensions that influence socialisation processes and that explain the way young people access the citizenship and the participative activities that these discourses prefer. Understanding youth participation as it exists in European countries needs to go beyond a normative-centered perspective in order to develop a multi-dimensional model of participation that considers individual circumstances, motivations for participation, and the structures within which participation take place. Biographies of participation are crucial for this understanding.

4. Theoretical rationale, method and methodology

The biographical perspective elucidates why and how young people become active participants within their lives, what motivates them to do so, and what experiences and structures lead to certain participative activities (or not). This research aim requires biographical analysis as a methodological perspective and methodical instrument. The current section introduces the main concepts which guided the analysis (biographies, life-course and life trajectory), outlines the data and sampling of the biographies, and describes the methodological framework and the methods of data analysis.

4.1. The meaning and interdependency of biography, life-course and life (course) trajectories

This section presents definitions of the main concepts of biography, life-course and life (course) trajectory and reflects on their mutual interdependency. A biography can be 'a written account or history of the life of an individual' (Denzin, 1989: 10). It can emerge in various documents (Plummer, 2001) such as autobiographies, letters, visual materials, diaries and life stories and can be co-produced in in-depth interviews, such as narrative interviewing as a research technique (Schütze, 1983; Rosenthal, 2004). The concept of biography means the subjective construction of a life-story, an identity process over time linking personal past, present and future in terms of subjective meaning and continuity. It needs to be distinguished from the life-course and life trajectory, however. Biographies are: (1) structured by meaning; (2) based on sequential sedimentation of experiences; (3) subjective constructions; (4) a steady process of re-interpretation, modification, transformation and reproduction; (5) both general and specific; (6) a part of history itself; and (7) constituted of an emotional and physical or bodily aspect (Miethe, 2014). To understand the presentation of a biography and the narrative of a biographer, his/ her statements and story has to be understood as a part of the 'overall context of his/her current life and his/her resulting present and future perspective' (Rosenthal, 2004: 50) in a dialectic interrelation of the experienced, remembered and narrated life-story.

The concept of biography needs to be interpreted in relation with the concept of the life-course, which is understood as the normative and institutionalised order structuring individuals' lives according to different ages, life spheres and social contexts. The life-course confronts (young) people with expectations of transitions and decisions between age-based roles, which are accomplished when young people connect them with their personal life stories in a way that creates a meaningful continuity between prior experiences and imagined futures. For example, youth as a life phase is characterised by the expectation to fulfil specific developmental tasks, one of which is developing the capacity of democratic participation. Institutions such as school, family or youth work have the social task to ensure this development (Kohli, 2007).

Life trajectory means the realised sequence of events and phases in an individual life. It is the result of events, accomplished transitions, life phases and status positions achieved (either in line with, or divergent from, a 'normal' life-course) and of individual action and decisions. Inasmuch as life trajectories include individuals' decision-making and coping with transitions, they include also their subjective experiences and self-conception or identities. In other words, their biographical constructions (see Hagestad, 1991).

The relationship of biography and life-course is dialectic: the life-course provides individuals with 'cues' to which they (have to) refer in their biographical construction – affirmatively or in terms of resistance – in explicit or implicit terms. Individuals must make use of structural givens in order to construct their biographies. They are normative orientation-points and like life events, they need to be appropriated – imagined, balanced and narrated – by biographers. The same event can be experienced and consequently narrated in a very different way. This is an expression of different experiences in life and different self-constructions. At the same time, the life-course depends on and is reproduced in the biographical construction of individuals.

The life trajectory is a result of what happens in an individual life in relation to normative expectations of the life-course and of the biographical-subjective self-construction of individuals. A single narrative in a biographical interview, for example, must be understood against the background of the whole life trajectory and life-story, in terms of identity-work over the lifetime (Hagestad, 1991). Therefore, biographical research is not interested in the 'true', factual life-story, but in the narration of it and the subjective construction of meaning across the life-course. This relationship of biography and life-course corresponds to the dialectic relationship between structure and agency (see, Giddens, 1984).

The relationship of life trajectory, life-course and biography is embedded in social structures and influenced by categories of inequality such as formal education level, gender, race and social status. Kohli (1985) contributed to the development of the theoretical debate on biography recognising it as an instrument of social regulation and as a design template for subjective self-representation and self-authentication that go hand in hand with social structure. Normative life-course expectations differ along these dimensions, so there are different expectations for example in relation to education level for young people growing up in a working class family or for young people growing up in a privileged family. These expectations structure access to necessary resources and thus individual life trajectories and have to be integrated into the identity and biography. In addition, research in an international-comparative context has to consider that the life-course as a normative construct differs in different countries and societies. Therefore, the 'cues' (young) people have to deal are context-depending.

Aiming at deeper understanding of the individual life as a part of a larger sociocultural context, a focus on individual biography is essential in order to enlighten the 'told life', i.e. the subjective meaning-making with regard to one's individual life trajectory and the participation experiences embedded within it. Therefore, in Partispace, the concepts of life trajectory, life-course and biography represent a joint framework for analysing and understanding individual agency in relation to structural phenomena. Participation should be analysed in the relationship between the institutionally foreseen paths and patterns and individual lives, focusing on the interplay of individual and institutional dynamics, which are influenced by both economic and societal factors and formal settings contrasted with subjective meaning-making, transformation and experiences (see figure 1).

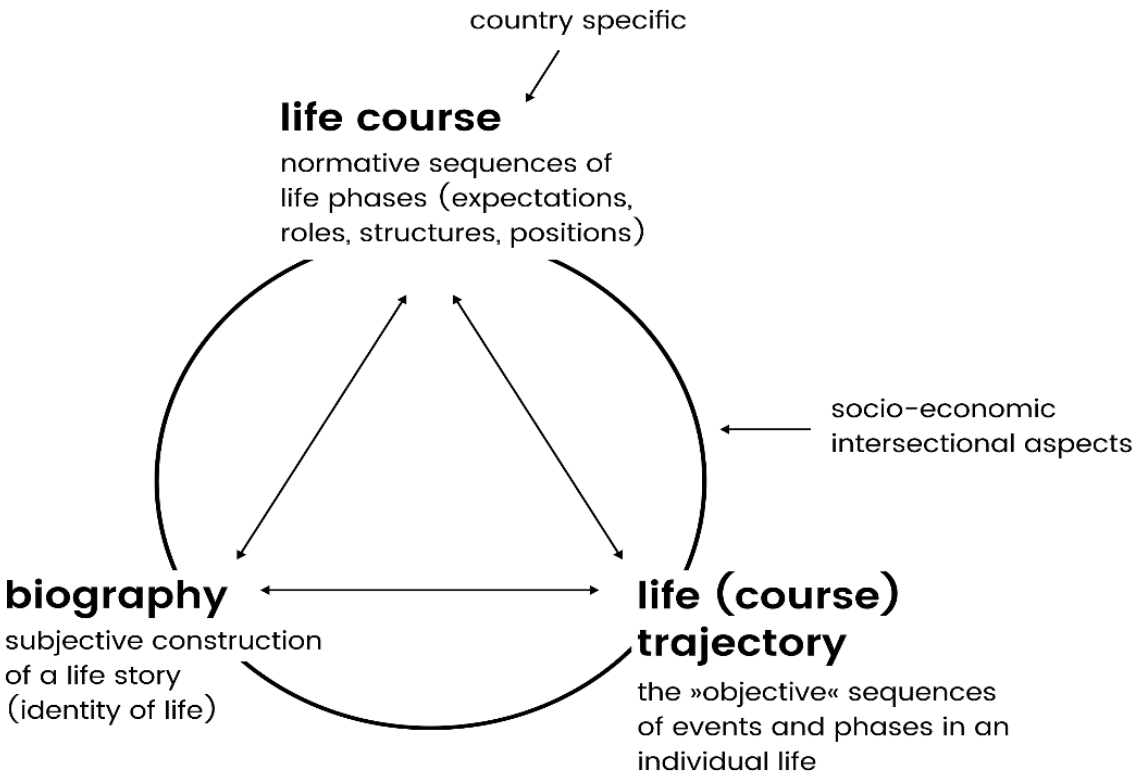

Figure 1. The triangle of interdependency between biography, life trajectory and life-course

4.2. Sampling of biographical data

The reconstructive analysis of young people's participation biographies is one part of the mixed-method and multilevel approach of the Partispace project. The design consisted of the following research elements:

- National research literature reviews, youth policy and discourse analyses (Andersson et al., 2016)
- Analysis of the youth participation discourses at European level (Becquet et al., 2016)
- Analysis of European Social Survey data on young people's participation (Kovacheva et al., 2016)
- Local case studies in one major city per country including: mapping youth participation in the city through expert interviews (N=188), focus group discussions, city walks with young people (N=96), in-depth case studies (N=48; 6 per city) of formal, non-formal, and informal practices of youth participation consisting of ethnographic observation, group discussions, and, finally, biographical interviews (N=96) (Batsleer et al., 2017).
- Action research projects by and with young people. In each city, one to three projects with or by young people were developed (N= 18) (McMahon et al., 2018).

The 96 biographical interviews were conducted during the ethnographic research phase in the eight cities in the Partispace project, and involved young people who were part of the case study groups (broadly two young people per case study). The main sampling criteria for the

interviews were to build a heterogeneous and contrasting sample according to position in the group, gender, age, education and social or ethnic background. This sampled group presents a collection of different experiences, directions and evaluations in terms of participation. Interviews were often combined with group discussions and ethnographic fieldwork.

In the interviews, young people were asked to explore their life stories in order to discuss those biographical issues that could have influenced their participation activities during their lives so far. All of the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The researchers then selected 16 of the 96 biographies taking into account the density of narratives, the activities (formal, non-formal, informal) in which the respondents were involved, gender, ethnicity, and the sociocultural and economic background of the interviewees. This further contextualisation proved to be necessary in order to highlight the wider structural element hindering or enhancing different styles and spaces of youth participation and their interpretation. The 16 interviews were translated into English and they provide the core of the analysis documented in this report.

4.3. Analysing life stories: methodological framework and methodical procedures

The main interest of biography-theoretical research regards how people construct a biography in different cultural contexts and social situations, and which conditions, rules, and patterns of building can be noticed in this process. Biographical studies have been a large part of sociology since the 1920s and 1930s and were further developed by sociologists and educationalists during the 1970s in different research fields. Although a common interest of biographical research is that of analysing the interactive relationship between social structure and individual agency, this has been interpreted differently according to different methodological and theoretical traditions and epistemological interests. There are two main traditions. The first was influenced by the structural studies of the 1960s (e.g. Levi-Strauss, Althusser, Foucault, Bourdieu). Bertaux was one of the first to recognise that as some life-lines do have not a linear course and do not obey some inner logic but, rather, are determined by 'the historical movements of socio-structural relationships' (Bertaux, 1976: 206), lives were worth studying in their very forms. In line with the structuralist standpoint, according to Bertaux, life trajectories were subjected to the effects of socio-structural relationships. Collecting exemplary life stories in a single milieu focussing on 'practices' and not on perceptions or feelings should help sociologists to reveal the patterns of socio-structural relationships influencing life stories. Bertaux adopted this 'ethno-sociological' approach in his 'Bakers' study in the 80s (Bertaux & Bertaux-Wiame, 1981) where the underlying interest was to explain the structuration/ reproduction of society by understanding how individuals interpret and act in given social positions/ conditions. In contrast, however, Bourdieu (2005) argues in 'The Biographical Illusion' that in biographical narratives, the subject (2005) is inclined to consider his/ her life as determined merely by agency and directed by a coherent life project. Bourdieu criticised what he saw as a theorisation of the self in terms of a totalising entity, neglecting the more fragmented, partial, and contradictory logics inspiring the realm of lived experience. He contested that the individualisation debate (e.g. Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1984) analysed practice as the result of rational deliberation and 'choice,' rather than a consequence of the socially derived and implicit logics of the embodied habitus.

The second analytical approach focuses on how individuals construct their subjective identities by reconstructing the meaning-making in biographical narratives. This approach has its roots

in symbolic interactionism (e.g. Mead, Blumer, Goffman). However, there are different theoretical schools of thought animating the debate in biographical research ranging from the socially constructive, to hermeneutic, to more structuralist approaches (e.g. Alheit and Dausien, 2000). Oevermann at al (1979) developed the approach of objective hermeneutics which look for latent structures of meaning in narratives, i.e. where persistent social structures are effective in subjective meaning-making. Fritz Schütze's (1983) narrative analysis instead concentrates on 'processual structures' of narratives. Even if concentrating on the processes of subjective meaning-making emerging from the narrative, these approaches are by no means neglecting the sociality of biographical construction. Alheit (1995) contributes to this theoretical debate, in a precise analysis of Bourdieu's critique of biographical research, by focussing on the concept of 'biographicity' as a synthesis of structure and agency: 'biographicity is the intuitively available genetic structure of a biography. It is the ability of the individual to shape that which is social 'self-referentially', and to place oneself in relation to society. Biographicity means that individuals can continually reinterpret their life in the contexts in which they experience it, and that they themselves experience these contexts as 'mouldable' and 'shapeable' (Alheit, 1995: 216).

In sum, while the first analysis here stresses the relationship between biography and life trajectory, the second approach focuses more on the internal logics of biographical construction and meaning- making (see figure 1).

Methodologically, the data in this report have been analysed following the two perspectives outlined above. First, 'participation careers' have been reconstructed according to how young people have made relevant the participatory activities in their life trajectory, and how these trajectories have been influenced by social categories such as social background, gender, ethnicity, and formal education. The analysis includes also the consideration of turning points, role of significant others, and needs, wishes and desires that inform young people's participation and, the other way round, (lived) participatory learning processes and experiences and their reciprocal impacts on young people motivations (or demotivations) and needs, wishes and desires within the individual biography. This analysis led to 'clusters of careers of participation'.

The second analytical perspective, which complements the first, focussed on the logics of biographical meaning-making itself by exploring young people' participation biographies in terms of how the biographical experiences they present within their stories lead to and bring about their engagement in various participatory activities over time. This analysis led to 'dimensions of participation biographies'.

The biographical analysis utilised a coding process proposed by Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and was informed by biographical reconstruction in the way Gabriele Rosenthal developed (Rosenthal, 1995). The analysis followed these steps:

- Reading the individual interviews, structuring them into thematic units and identifying biographical data (e.g. birth, family, getting to school, first best friend, sports club, secondary school, accidents etc.), directly or indirectly (that is mentioned explicitly or included implicitly). This step also collated available information on respective social conditions, contextual socio-political conditions, social expectations and normalities, for example information on specific processes of migration, social milieus etc. If it was useful

to classify statements of the interviewees in terms of specific life conditions (e.g. a migration crisis), this, too, was included.

- Coding of the initial narrative in a sequential way, which involved reconstructing the told story and asking of the interview how the narrator tells his/ her life-story in a specific sequence and in a specific way that was not directed through questions.
- Open coding of the interviews, particularly looking for decisive moments (turning points) with the aim of elaborating a particular biographical mode of subject positioning, of self-presentation and of referring to participation. This step lead to first hypotheses about the biographies, which were continuously checked using follow-up sequences to confirm or refute them. The viable hypotheses were fixed in coding and memos. While the analytical approach focussing on the meaning-making perspective applied an exclusively inductive coding process, the analysis relating biography to the life trajectory included deductive codes related to structural categories. In this process, the research teams constantly shared codes and their meanings in order to guarantee a minimum of comparability across the research contexts.
- Contextualising the narrative with a list of all the biographical data. For this 'axial coding' the building and relating of categories followed questions such as: How does the narrator position and/ or refers to him/ herself? How does the narrator connect events and experiences in his/ her self-positioning? How are self-positioning and events/ experiences contextualised in time, space and social relationships? What overall form does the life-story take (here it is important to consider that the interview takes place in the present – and thus the biography is being constructed while looking back from the present to the past)?
- Writing a portrait of every interview in order to work out the central points and relationships, analyse results, and to explore aspects and dimensions.
- And finally, comparing analysis in order to look for common codes and patterns.

The first analysis on biographies over the life-course derived four 'clusters of participation careers' (chapter 5). The second analysis of participation biographies derived five 'dimensions of participation biographies' (chapter 6).

5. Clusters of participation careers

The aim of this analysis was to explore *whether* and to *what extent* young people's sociocultural and economic conditions support or constrain their participatory experiences, and, then, the learning processes (and achievements) they attribute to participatory experiences both in terms of personal/ individual development and a contribution to community/ societal change. This analysis considers the ways in which participation unfolds in young people's lives and how their participation careers and biographies interact in their life trajectories.

The analysis was guided by two research questions:

1. What makes and distinguishes routes into/ careers of participation?
2. What are the relationships between participation and other areas of life?

The analysis revealed key 'clusters of participation careers', which have been developed in four sub-sections:

- Fighting for justice from inside the system
- Conformist for change
- Personal and professional development by care for others
- Experimenting with new paths for change

The clusters are introduced below by first providing a detailed exemplary case illustrating the main aspects of the cluster, and then contrasted this case with a shorter 'counter-case' which is similar in terms of biographical interpretations of experiences, involvement and expectations, but different with regard to other contextual or individual factors. This reveals the complex interrelationship between factors relating to participation careers within different contexts. Each cluster is then discussed in response to the research questions, and the conclusions draw together the analysis by proposing a 'cross-cluster' reflection on the biographical interplay of learning processes (agency) and sociocultural and economic conditions (structure).

5.1. Cluster 1: Fighting for justice from inside the system

The first cluster includes young people who, due to personal or family problems, learned early in their childhoods that society is complex and multifaceted. These experiences lead the young people to develop a 'rebellious' attitude towards the injustice they experienced because of their characteristics (e.g. racism, sexism) or in their environments, and an ethical duty to addresses the inequalities that they understand are not personal but, rather, the result of a constellations of disadvantages and biases that affect marginalised groups.

In this way, however, the young people in this cluster have ambiguous relationships with their families, or more specifically their family backgrounds. They have developed a rebelliousness because of particular conditions, yet they also have in common socioeconomic and/ or cultural capital, families who promote and encourage (and can facilitate) their individual and professional development, and experiences of social and geographically mobility, which has allowed them to move with ease to different places and between social milieus. However, the varying local, national and social contexts in which these young people have lived, and social

milieus in which they have spent time, have contributed to their knowing the ways in which racism, sexism and other inequalities manifest in different cultures and societies. In this respect, what may be conceived of as their privileges have also brought about their rebelliousness and commitment to change.

These young people have also benefitted from teachers or other (political) 'significant others' seeing and then encouraging the young people's initial engagement with social issues and sense of social responsibility. This helped the young people start to make their 'fight for justice' public and to move it forward. Importantly, however, by having positive interactions with an institutional school environment or third sector association, and the benefits of their family's capitals, these young people also developed a certain trust in formal institutions and particularly in the power of education.

These experiences appear to have culminated in young people who see the possibility of challenging injustices inside formal institutions and systems, and do not need to rely on 'high-end politics' to change the world. Two young people illustrate this cluster:

- ***Amanda***, who is 17 years old, is the current president of a Formal Youth Representation (FYR) in Gothenburg. Amanda was born and grew up in the city. Her parents migrated to Sweden in the 1980s, from two different African countries. They divorced when Amanda was 3 and her father moved abroad. Amanda describes herself as coming from a 'privileged background' - both parents are very well-educated and have prominent jobs. However, growing up as a young woman of colour, Amanda experienced bullying and racism. Watching a TV program in her early life, she suddenly recognised what it was to be bullied. This was Amanda's first participatory turning point (learning, and then finding resilience and coping) and represents the main starting point of her empowerment process and her engagement in fighting social bias against minority groups. Amanda solved the problem of bullying in her childhood by involving her mother and sympathetic and responsive teachers. At the time of interview, Amanda was a top student, a blogger, freelance writer and lecturer on topics of anti-racism, feminism and social inequality, and she shows great engagement and interest in youth issues and politics.
- ***Amos***, 16 years old, was born in an African nation as the middle child of a family of three brothers. Amos's family migrated to England at the age of 12. His father had worked in a prominent banking institution, had been engaged in his country's politics, and had taken Amos with him during a business trip in a nearby county. This journey was a turning point in Amos's life; when he met a political friend of his father, he started to understand political participation as an individual duty in order to change the world (sense of revolution) and he started to develop himself as a political researcher and leader. His new life in a relatively deprived suburb of Manchester is less comfortable (e.g. his father no longer has a driver). Nonetheless, his new context confirms his politically rebellious attitude and allows him to seek out opportunities (e.g. public occasions) in order to engage and to develop his self-confidence in his desire to become a leader. Amos noted in his biographical interview that he believed that he was born to be a leader. Though he has features of rebelliousness, Amos, too wants to promote a peaceful (educational) revolution to be achieved both through participation in formal political agencies and in alternative non-formal settings.

'Amanda'

Introducing herself, the first thing Amanda notes is the experience of being bullied in kindergarten:

> *Quite early on, I became the victim of bullying due to my skin color and to my hair which is curly Afro hair and this is based in racism, so quite early. And… that is part of what I really want to combat different types of uncertainties or different types of, what should we call the differences in how people treated, like, inequalities in society. (Amanda, Gothenburg, FYR).*

Amanda as a migrant second generations child recognises very clearly that her route to societal engagement, activism, and participation in youth politics is connected to her personal experience. Growing up as a young woman of colour, she became aware in kindergarten of racist and discriminatory practices towards young people of colour and disadvantaged students in general.

At the same time, Amanda demonstrates that she is also aware that her biographical experience is socially ambivalent. While being bullied at school, she also grew up as the beloved daughter of a well- educated mother with a good job and she was an appreciated top student of two middle class schools. This is why reflecting on her personal experience she affirms:

> *Everyone in my family, I have quite a large family, has been quite high up in class (….) Eh, all are well-educated, all have what is called good job in society. [...] they have been given the opportunity and they have taken especially the possibility to get space in society. And what is it, if you have been given the opportunity if you have this possibility, you can spread it to your children [...], but just the knowledge that we are black people and we need to be extra vigilant of racism and other injustices that we may be subjected to. Mother was aware of such things. So it is a privilege in itself. (Amanda, Gothenburg, FYR).*

Amanda grew up without her father when he went abroad after her parents' divorce. Amanda contends, however, that she is satisfied that she grew up in a large and engaged female family, in which she developed also a strong feminist identity and a commitment to gender issues. However, she also expresses some bitterness when she talks about her father and admits that he did not care for her. She makes only short statements about her father, but they are present and appear to be more relevant than the way she narrates them. She relates her father leaving to the start of her taking of responsibility:

> *Quite early I had to take quite on a lot of responsibility, not only at home, not because mom could not handle it or something but I got much responsibility, because I wanted to take quite on a lot of responsibility, and… that responsibility made that I, even at home, wanted more responsibility for the family, but also for my fellow citizens in the school and in the world then' (Amanda, Gothenburg, FYR).*

Amanda's tone and use of words suggest that she intended to present a rather 'straight' narrative of her participatory biography where one experience led quite seamlessly to another. She mentions early on in her biography that her main school experience is when she was being bullied and that that experience launched her engagement in politics and with youth issues.

> *I had seen a program on TV where somebody had been bullied and so, and I just, shit, ey that fits me so I just, to my parents then, or my mother, that I was the victim of bullying or I thought I was and then she contacted the teachers and then it ended. But… it is the basis for that I want to work to change things in society. (Amanda, Gothenburg, FYR).*

However, this development is not so direct; there are several factors that led from her experiences to her engagement without which she may not have followed this path. Being bullied made her aware that individual life experiences are connected to, and situated within, large-scale societal constellations and social trends. For Amanda, political participation is not a matter of choice because being a person of colour in a racialised society *is politics by default*; she affirms that what a person of colour can do is to decide on his/ her *level* of personal engagement. After having committed to her school council all through primary school, she says it '*was a good basis for who I am now*'. A teacher (a meaningful other) noticed her engagement in political issues, and not just issues around anti-racism and anti-bullying, but general issues connected to youth influence and equality, and gave her advice about the FYR. At 13, Amanda made the decision to join the FYR. However, she remarks that her engagement is not limited to the FYR as since then,

> *'I have developed my work in the city. […]I am a freelance writer, I lecture on intersectionality, anti-racism and feminism. As well as young influence. The same I write about' (Amanda, Gothenburg, FYR).*

Her future expectations are very ambitious and connected to political participation and individual engagement:

> *'So right now, I would like to work in two different ways, still quite similar to what I am doing now, I work for the municipality and the state and I also work independently, so I would like to continue with that.' (Amanda, Gothenburg, FYR).*

In her narrative, the experience in the FYR as a '*laboratory of democratic practice*' is extremely rewarding, giving her developmental and educational skills, both in terms of peer interactions and learning processes and opportunities for dialogue with politics, the business sector and society as a whole. Despite her engagement in this formal setting, however, Amanda repeatedly affirms that the existing institutions and societal structures are not always appropriate on an individual level when they follow only a standardised agenda.

Amanda describes herself as a strong-willed young woman of colour, who was able to recognise the experience of being bullied and to act. Also, her mother represented an important reference point and role model, and was a proxy agent for Amanda coping with her adverse school circumstances. In this socially-mediated exercise of agency, Amanda was also helped by a responsive school environment, in which teachers activated to stop the bullying. This way of stopping the bullying reinforced in Amanda the belief in being able to produce certain effects

through her actions and this constituted a large incentive to act agentically in order to cope with her difficulties. It is notable that though she experienced the simultaneous categorical and hierarchical classifications of race and gender, they were mitigated by an element of class and capital. Indeed, Amanda repeatedly frames her experiences in the context of her intellectual engagement with *intersectionality* (Crenshaw, 1989). This concept, coined by the American feminist and critical race and civil rights scholar, Kimberle Crenshaw, analyses the overlapping (or intersecting) social identities and related systems of oppression and power hierarchies.

However, though the reference to this academic term sounds potentially dissonant in the words of a 17 year old student, it is in common usage now amongst activists in this age group. In addition, Amanda is a writer and lecturer on issues of social justice so it is not surprising that she is knowledgeable about how systemic injustice and social inequality play on a multidimensional – intersectional - basis. This is plausibly, however, an indication of the ways in which Amanda's engagement is bolstered by her access to the cultural capital of her engaged and well-educated mother (and female family) who instilled in her the concept of learning as an individual emancipation and a means to combat social injustice. It is still perhaps the case that this explication is rather more academically constructed than lived due to her young age.

Amanda understands her engagement in the FYR both as a tool to future (individual and social) goals and as a pleasant way to live at her age:

> *'[S]o it is like not only a good basis for the future but it is a good now, a very good now, it develops a lot, then you have learned a lot about the administrative, even though I always had an eye on my mail and that stuff I have developed even more, I have become more timely, pedagogical and… and everything, really, it is great.' (Amanda, Gothenburg, FYR)*

Despite this enthusiasm, Amanda does not trust in the efficacy of the action of the FYR in influencing the Municipal Council and says: '*it is like that we report, they report'*. Therefore, she wants to combine the two different participatory agendas - the collective-formal of the FYR with the individual non-formal of lecturing on intersectionality.

'Amos'

The other young person belonging to this cluster is Amos, who is also a young person of colour living in a predominately white society and having a migrant origin/ background and a family with cultural capital and a political tradition. However, the two young people differ crucially in their educational careers and present social status and standing. Also, they are different in the ways in which they describe the first turning points in their participatory career: the negative experience of Amanda's bullying contrasts with the joyful travel experience of Amos, who states:

> *Before I came here [England] I travelled to a country [...] where my dad worked. He worked in business, was like a project manager [and] I had like very good adventures there. (Amos, Manchester, FYR).*

Meeting one of his father's friends who was politically active and listening to him talking about politics represents for the Amos a key turning point in his life; the men assigned him the task of changing the world. This was a real 'epiphany' in his life as he comments:

> *One thing I did take away from him was his experience […] I think one thing I did take away from him was a mission or epiphany and enlightenment shall I say. And it was my dreams, my ambitions point to one word… revolution. And not in a negative way but something positive, something victorious. He said I should change the world. He made me promise that on day I will change the world and become a revolutionary. (Amos, Manchester, FYR).*

During the interview, Amos does not mention the reason for his family's migration to England; however, from his narrative, it emerged that his father had a high social status in their country of origin due to his business work, and that he lost that after migrating to Manchester. Amos says: '*A driver of my […] yeah, the lifestyle over there is very different'*. On arrival to Manchester, Amos describes starting high school and the support he had from his mother as well as struggles with his mother's heart condition. His response to his mother's illness was the decision to become a brain surgeon. Unlike Amanda, however, who was in the top set of students at school, Amos was placed in the lowest stream in secondary school, before he moved up a grade. His grades are still relatively low but he became involved in a sports foundation supported by a local black Olympic athlete. Furthermore, he always availed of opportunities of participating in many local projects in the city. And, when he met the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, he took up a key role as a Member of a FYR, and attended meetings in the House of Commons. Amos's participation seems to strictly connect to his own sense of destiny guided by the influence of many others he has met. Ever since he made a promise to his father and his father's friend that he would change the world, he has been looking for a way to bring together his sense of revolution and his political participation in each aspect of his life.

Discussion: Fighting for justice from inside the system

Considering sociocultural and economic conditions, the analysis indicates that the two young people in this cluster share the same familial cultural capital, but while Amanda as a second generation migrant child can also rely on ongoing economic privilege, Amos recently migrated with his family and has suffered a loss of social and economic status. Despite this, as women of colour are marginalised twice due to the simultaneous, intersecting nature of how they are perceived by others as both racialised and gendered subjects (Crenshaw, 1989), Amanda remarks that she realised very early that her skin colour marks her as 'foreign' and 'other' compared with the 'normality' of 'whiteness' and this lived injustice guided her towards anti-racist and feminist engagement, combined with a commitment to youth and social issues.

Amos does not refer to his skin colour as a factor in any personal segregation and his commitment to change seems to lie in a more general social inequality and newly developed political perspective. Nonetheless, he feels his family's loss of status. However, his turning point with his father and his father's friend, and his interaction with important others, particularly people of colour, are deeply connected to the role modelling of people of colour who succeed in being recognised in the wider community and empowering of the black and minority ethic community.

While it seems that Amanda's motivation to change society comes from the inside out, with a movement from the personal to politics ('*the personal is politica*l'), Amos's expresses itself as more guided by experiences connected to external circumstances (which are nonetheless connected to black empowerment). Due to the different local and national contexts, adopting a

different representation of youth and therefore different youth policies, Amos in the neoliberal youth transition regime continuously returns to certain personal failures in relation to his older brother and his classmates, his disappointing educational experiences, and then later to some failures he experienced in participation opportunities, such as not being elected as Member of FYR on his first attempt. He interprets the moment of epiphany represented by the conversation about revolution with his father's friend and the obligation given to him to change the world in various ways, not least, by desiring to become a doctor in order to cure his mother's illness and also working for the UN.

While Amanda supported by the more inclusive Swedish regime of youth transition could succeed in developing an intellectual and self-confident attitude, Amos is not wholly satisfied with himself. He is more sport- and action-oriented and appears more passionate then analytical in his future expectations. However, both Amanda and Amos are engaged in FYR spaces while maintaining contact to other civil society associations campaigning for youth rights and emancipation. Similar to Amanda, who during the interviews underlined several times the importance of learning for herself and community development and change, Amos remarks that *'Education is the first step in the revolution to change the world. Not a revolution in terms of violence but change'* (Amos, Manchester, FYR).

Both young people have learnt that changing people and making them aware that things '*exist that are not right*' (Amanda, Gothenburg, FYR) are the best ways to change society while taking back the power of acting towards a common goal. Both mark a clear turning point in their biographies, a situation in which they felt seen, recognised and thus understood, and from which they develop their narratives and biographical constructions in term of learning and struggling for justice from the inside of the system. According to Mishler and Rose (2001), who state that trust is learned and linked to some level of experience through lifetime learning experiences, the young people in this cluster do not feel disengaged from political processes or powerless to bring about change, because in different ways, both systems have given them a chance to do so.

5.2. Cluster 2: Conformist for change

This cluster includes young people who have experienced very similar life-course trajectories in terms of same white, middle class background. Socially moderate parents raised the young people in this cluster and they did not express a rebellion against their parents' conservative values. Despite some struggles because of parental illness or separation, they both succeeded in following more or less regular school paths – they obtained their high school diplomas or certificates without struggle, and without experiencing problems in their peer contexts. They began attending events and meetings in different participatory spaces (Léna at a younger age than Betty), and gradually got involved in formal and/or non-formal organisations. These experiences led them to reflect upon various social contexts and to identify their contribution to change what they see as shortfalls or injustices. They hope for a better world that means promoting the peaceful coexistence of individuals and communities with plural identities, while reducing social inequalities. Notably, they themselves have not been individually affected by discriminations and injustices; nonetheless, they feel concerned about them and ethically compelled to address them. The young people in this cluster are generally conformist

in terms of their backgrounds and relationships to their family circumstances and conditions, but working towards social change. Two young people illustrate this cluster.

- ***Léna*** is a 23 year old French woman, who was born in a small village in Brittany, where she spent her childhood and youth. After her high school diploma, she moved to Rennes, the closest university city. She comes from a middle-class, socially moderate family and her parents have never been involved in a social or political organisation. Her participative trajectory began in primary school. At age 20, she entered the board of a FYR at regional level.
- ***Betty*** is a 27 year old English woman who lives in Zurich, where she worked as a language teacher at the time of the interview. She was has born in a lower-middle class, socially moderate family in a small English village. She liked school and was a good student. After her high school diploma, she delayed university for two years because of critical illnesses in two members of her family. When she went to university, she studied languages and chose a university in Scotland. After completing her studies, she took a position as a language assistant in a city in North-western Switzerland. Since she liked living in Switzerland, she applied for a similar position in the canton of Zurich. At a political event, she learned about a self-governed education project belonging to the left sphere (OEC) has been involved with it since 2015.

'Léna'

Léna narrated a regular school path and during the school vacation, she attended the leisure activities centre. Her involvement in the FYR started in secondary school, when she was 12 years old, and lasted three years. The FYR counsellor, who was also the youth worker in the recreation centre, asked her to get involved. It was the very beginning of this FYR group and he needed to find some interested young people. Léna accepted this commitment, not because she wanted to defend a cause or make young people's voices heard but, simply, because she appreciated that the youth worker had asked her and because some of her friends were engaged in this project too. Today, she has some memories of this period though they are vague. The main project she remembered they had planned was a day trip to an amusement park. Nevertheless, this experience constituted a real commitment for her because:

> *We decided on the project. We participated in the actions over a period of almost a year. If we wanted it to happen, we had to get involved and take part in the actions [...]. It was a commitment also to get to something too ... and participate in the dynamics of the commune. (Léna, Rennes, FYR).*

On her mother's advice when she was 17, Léna got training from a local charity in order to obtain the youth work certification to get a summer job she liked: '*I wanted to have a summer job, with young people, children [...] I always enjoyed working with children. So, there was that side, the practical side, but also the relational side.*' (Léna, Rennes, FYR).

After obtaining her high school diploma, she enrolled in a university degree in social careers and youth work. Despite not having a clear career plan, she wanted to go on with her studies. During her second year of studies, she did an internship in Brest, where she was in charge of a career guidance project and advising young people about various possibilities. The choice of the internship was not the result of a career plan but, once again, her mother's advice. Léna's

mother plays the role of important other in making her aware of the importance of being proactive in order to make things happen. Gradually, Léna got more involved in local youth organisations until she was elected as a youth representative at regional level.

At the time of Léna's interview, she had been regularly involved in formal participatory spaces. She had already had a long participatory career, however, because of requests from others. Important actors – the youth worker in the recreation centre, her mother, the supervisor of her internship - punctuated Léna's commitment path. In many ways, she has not become involved in participation on her own initiative or in the schools she attended. Today, she feels a bit ashamed about the reason she did not want to take responsibility at school:

> *I wonder if it was not just being lazy thing and not wanting to finish classes later ... Yes, the shame of saying that ... [...] I lived in the same town as my college, so I could go straight home after class [...] And I never really questioned myself about [...] for me, it was class council and then we finished school later. I did not see the whole dimension the way I see it today. (Léna, Rennes, FYR)*

Despite her parents having never been involved in a social or political organisation, they supported her - especially her mother - and were glad when she started participating in the FYR, '*because it was making people meet people, it was about something'* (Léna, Rennes, FYR). Nevertheless, all her experiences of participation allowed her to define, on the way, her own values and to determine her identity. For example, she considers her university study as a real turning point:

> *My way of seeing the world, of seeing ... really ... society, of everything that was inequality, everything that was animated, Recreation ... Really, it opened my mind. It was the best two years of my life. (Léna, Rennes, FYR)*

Steadily, Léna started to take more responsibility, also because her participations experiences gave her the chance to discover a new professional sector:

> *I know that it was also in my personal interest to learn more and more about various economic and financial issues, projects ... there is that side. And then ... yes, of course there's a personal interest too behind what I want to do later. (Léna, Rennes, FYR)*

Her involvement in public institutions allowed her to work on youth issues and to orientate professional practices and facilities for young people. For her, this was a way to value young people's opinion in the institutions working with them. Léna explains that all of these experiences have raised her awareness about today's world. They helped her to identify what she wanted to change:

> *What I would like very much, is really to work in National Education with popular education. It's something I care about. And I really see all the interest in mixing these two types of education and, in particular, through the YICR, all the questions of orientation ... I think the YICR, not to replace the guidance counsellor and psychologist, but really to bring a fresh look. (Léna, Rennes, FYR)*

However, Léna's transformation and individual development have created a kind of gap between her and her parents:

> *It is more and more complicated to communicate with my parents on things. We have very different opinions on the news. For example, migrants ... I think it is one of the subjects that can create the most conflicts at home [...] I avoid talking about them because I do not want to get stressed out by it. (Léna, Rennes, FYR)*

Léna's commitment seems quite conventional and linear - formal participatory spaces, supported by meaningful actors. She is not a rebel and is not committed to any one cause over another. Despite her mother's advice, she has not developed a proactive attitude or self-initiate. She does not vote in all elections and she does not participate in protest. But little-by-little, due to her commitments, she knows what she wants for herself, for youth and for society. Her convictions take shape and she succeeds in linking her involvement with her professional project.

'Betty'

Betty and Léna have were both born and grew up in a lower-middle class family in a small village. However, Betty's family life is dominated by the serious illnesses of her mother and brother, both of whom were diagnosed with cancer. Betty felt that her brother became the family's sole focus. Her parents spent most of the time at the hospital and Betty took care of herself at home. She reports that as she was already 17, '*that wasn't too tragic'* (Betty, Zurich, OEC). However, after a while, she admits that school with its opportunities for learning and the world of books served as a counter-balance to her lonely family life. After high school, Betty moved to Scotland to study languages. During her studies, she travelled abroad a lot, especially during the summer to work. After completing her studies, she worked as a language assistant in Switzerland and since she liked living there, she searched for a similar position and found it in the canton of Zurich. During her childhood and teen years, Betty did not get involved in any organisations. Instead, she spent a lot of time during the interview explaining how books and reading have always provided her comfort, especially during her family struggles.

As with Léna, Betty's first concrete involvement experience in Scotland was due to a request; many of her friends were Scottish and asked her to participate in their campaign for the Scottish Independence Referendum. Betty's friends opened her mind and helped her to see those human and social values which are now very important for her:

> *They asked me and they wanted to know whether I could vote and so. There was a lot of information and you just cannot ignore it when you live and study in Scotland. And somehow it just made really sense and the more I read about, the more injustice I saw. (Betty, Zurich, OEC)*

At the time of the interview, she has been participating in the OEC Zurich for a year. Betty explains that she came across the OEC *'by coincidence'* (Betty, Zurich, OEC). At a political meeting about social welfare, she heard about the OEC project:

> *'It was about how to help, to help refugees or what you can do as ordinary mortals [...], well here. And I read it a little bit and then I became it actually (at the OEC)[...] I really came to them via that channel and then I*

> *did some research on the web, I thought, yes, that sounds interesting, yes, I simply go there and see how it is.[...]. And then I had to be concerned with the political side, as well, just to know what they want exactly and what they actually fight for. And yes, I liked it'. (Betty, Zurich, OEC)*

Also at this time, however, Betty's commitment became a conscious decision and less a sudden impulse. For the Scottish movement and OEC alike, she read and researched information about them, before deciding to getting involved. Her travel experiences, her involvement in the Scottish campaign and now her commitment to the OEC built little-by-little the values leading her life and to her wish to act against discrimination, inequalities, and injustices:

> *I realized or accepted a bit that capitalism and the systems we have now, for me, well, it doesn't work and I see evidence for it now in England, in Scotland, in Europe, in Switzerland, and yes, it somehow occurred that I say, yes, I think it doesn't work, yes, I don't agree anymore. Yes. That doesn't mean that I really want a revolution or that I'm a real anarchist, I'm really scared of anarchy, well, my heart starts beating very fast. I'm not in favor of anarchy. But, yes, slowly I got there that I think, yeah, really different. (Betty, Zurich, OEC)*

She discovered how participation in a political movement could be strongly connected with her ethical stance against injustice and her joy of working together with *'like-minded'* people. She dreams of a society more interdependent and cooperative: *'You can achieve a lot more with others and sometimes it is much more fun as well.'* (Betty, Zurich, OEC)

Discussion: Conformist for change

Léna and Betty share the same sociocultural background, although the illness problems in Betty's family complicated the biographical decision taken by her regarding her university path. They are both well-educated. Regarding the learning process, they have in common a later development of personal values. They came across participation while pursuing other (educational) agendas and not from starting from a biographical need to struggle for justice and combat inequalities. Both had been asked to engage in activities or projects, or acted upon suggestions, and these first experiences were far removed from their regular activities. Their life stories do not show any turning points, per se, but they develop new values by participating and their first participatory experiences were undoubtedly transformative. In a form of 'learning by doing', they first changed and they then realised that they had done so. Despite sharing this learning process, their biographies are different in terms of the important others they met in their personal participatory path. This could explain the reasons why they do not struggle for the same causes, or in Léna's case, any particular cause at all.

Betty is older than Léna and she travelled a lot abroad, and her more world-oriented attitude has led her to a wider variety of participatory paths. Nowadays, because of her participatory experiences (and particularly seeing the importance of the Scottish Independence Referendum to campaigners concerned with protecting the Scots Gaelic language), she is particularly sensitive to the problem of injustice and discrimination. To this end, she deliberately decided to get involved in a non-formal organisation such OEC.

Léna is currently an education master's student with a special focus in student guidance. She still lives in Rennes and she returns to her family quite often, even if she has problems in joining her new world vision with her parents' perspectives. Her family, and particularly her mother, have been involved in most of her decisions. Her different experiences in formal organisations gave her the opportunities to ask herself about the importance of valuing youth opinions and decisions, as they move towards adulthood. The striking commonality between these two cases is that it is formal education (and a sort of conformity within this institution) and then employment which led them to these forms of engagement. In this way, participation is a professional choice that has the moral and social benefit of allowing them to work towards important societal changes.

5.3. Cluster 3: Personal and professional development by care for others (psycho-social vs professional development)

This cluster includes young people who became involved in participatory activities in order to take care of others. They have in common the will to empower themselves and gain leadership positions, and a learning process that brings them to the acquisition of professional competence in order to take care of others with 'social/ individual' problems. All of these developmental directions reflect a personal improvement for the young people. These participatory experiences also seem to enhance their possibility of self-empowerment with the positive consequence of learning different transversal and proactive skills (also suitable for a future career). The participative and social context – to which these people arrive from different starting points and for different reasons - represents a place where it is possible to boost one's own self-esteem and, maybe, build a professional identity. According to Zimmerman (1990), participation plays a role in fostering positive feelings because it is lived as an empowering experience that provides opportunities to learn skills and develop a sense of control, and can help individuals to cope with their life problems. Participatory settings are identified as natural settings that enable individuals to develop a sense of psychological empowerment.

Participation here can be linked to volunteerism as this cluster includes those who actively and freely try to act on behalf of for others, their community, and the society in which they live. However, in this case, the motivation of helping others is strictly connected to an individual achievement: improving personal skills and competences. This is in line with research literature on volunteerism that argues that is common that people engage also for self-focused reasons such as to gain understanding, personal development, self-esteem. Moreover, this aspect seems to predict a longer duration of their commitment (Elaine et al., 2008).

Two young men illustrate this cluster:

- ***Mert*** is a 25 year old Bulgarian young man with a conservative and poor but supportive family; he is the first one in his family to attend university. Here he finds a significant other (a professor) who puts him in touch with a NGO (turning point). He starts his civic participation as a volunteer. Participation is lived as a learning process, in order to achieve skills to run a leadership position and to boost his self-esteem.
- ***Nathanael*** is a 15 year old Swiss boy with a wealthy, stable core family. He is an excelling student who entered the Scouts early in life. He was bullied at school and his mother enrolled him in the Scouts in order to offer him a new peer socialisation opportunities. The

Scouts represent the main turning point in Nathanael's life as he succeeded gradually in achieving a leadership position there. Participation is lived as an individual learning process as a way to acquire competences and strengthen identity and self-esteem. Within the group, he has developed a strong sense of belonging and solidarity.

'Mert'

Mert grew up in Izmir - the third biggest Turkish city – and defines it as 'modern' (Mert, Eskişehir, NGO) and in a family which comes from a village close to Konya, one of the most conservative Turkish regions. His parents, despite their relatively deprived social circumstances, and presumed low social and cultural capital, and traditional life attitude, are very important to him and he reflects a lot on the importance of education and the values learnt from and within his family.

He considers the geographical and cultural 'distance' that exists between him and his parents as a mind-opening 'advantage'. Concerning his educational choice, Mert appreciates the way his father has supported him. He affirms that he specifically chose to study far from home in Eskişehir in order to learn how to learn to be independent, and live with a friend. Mert's parents agreed with this decision, as they did with all his other choices. He says:

> *The only thing that my mother and father told me was, 'don't make people say bad things about you/us and don't hurt yourself, do whatever you want'. (Mert, Eskişehir, NGO)*

This geographical and cultural separation paved the way for a deeper reflection on his identity:

> *I took some aspects of my personality from Izmir but some others…are completely from Konya. When I look at Izmir, ok, it is a nice town…but it doesn't completely reflect the Turkish culture. On this aspect, I am happy to belong to Konya…My greatest luck is to have a good family…I am where I am today, thanks to them. A discipline, a life style…the education I've got from my family combined with Izmir, and it became a good combination. The discipline was a little bit too much; those kind of people are against change. I do not like that…I've got that from Izmir… (Mert, Eskisehir, NGO).*

Mert considers the support of his family as the driver of his autonomy and strong determination to achieve his goal, taking the best of his parents' traditional origin and a more modern perspective from growing up in a 'modern' city. Mert seems well aware of the importance of education for his personal (and, probably, professional) development and his participation experience. Mert narrates his first participatory experience at school as an opportunity to access many activities that supported him in becoming more responsible and self-confident. After that, he started his association with the NGO, when he was 18 (his first year in Eskisehir) and he notes that before this experience he was very shy and that he could not even talk with foreigners or in front of a public. Despite it '*all start[ing] with a coincidence"*, he reports that he has learnt and has made many efforts to overcome the difficulties he met at the beginning.

When he was going to apply for a part-time student job at the campus, he bumped into a professor looking for a student who might want to participate in a 'K' event. Asked whether he

would have liked it, Mert accepted and, since then he 'has devoted' (Mert, Eskişehir, NGO) himself to K's cause that he perceives as a very innovative project that gives young people's 'fresh brains' the opportunity to produce additional value:

> *I had never heard about EU projects before joining K, didn't knew how that would be good for me… It didn't mean anything to me… distributing blood donation flyers is not so bad, it is a very very perfect activity, but we should be doing something with a greater surplus value. We are young brains, fresh brains. I want young people producing something with their brain. That is how we worked at K. (Mert, Eskişehir, NGO).*

Through these activities he experienced the opportunity to develop those leadership skills (turning point), of whose potential he has always been aware, realising what he calls his 'dream' by becoming the head of the local branch:

> *I knew that I had a potential for leadership, people told me that. But I thought that being a leader meant to yell to other people, to be tough or dominate others… before… It didn't happen in one day… but slowly, I've read books about it… I've learned that leadership wasn't about yelling but… was about creating good relationship. (Mert, Eskişehir, NGO).*

Mert shares the experience of leadership development of specific skills in a participatory setting with Nathanael, but in a slightly different way. Mert appreciates his experience of participation as a possibility to develop specific skills – leadership and coping skills, self-confidence in a 'caring for others' and motivating project, and his autonomy and personal construction of values. Indeed, his self-presentation reveals a constant confrontation with himself as well as his self-capability in relation with others and the world.

'Nathanael'

In the same way, but at a different age and from another context, Nathanael talks about the positive experience of achieving leadership skills through his participation in the Scouts, a group rooted in the tradition of his family as his father and grandfather were in the Scouts. He entered the Scouts when he was in primary school. Remembering that time, he explains that joining the Scouts was an opportunity to do something. During the years, this experience became more and more relevant and his individual and collective engagement grew to a high-energy activity when he achieved the role of leader. Despite the great effort required by being a leader and the related stress, he does not want to quit this role. He is well aware of his responsibility towards the rest of the group and he lives that as a sort of restitution of what participating in the Scouts has meant for him, entering the group as a young boy who was bullied. He perceives the concept of 'being active' as a responsibility towards the others:

> *I think, that's what they've done for me once, too…I think that I don't have the attitude like, 'Yes, I give-, I want to give it back to them!', 'I had fun with them and now I'm a leader for them!', but rather: You're just part of it…and you don't want to quit. It… if you like it. (Nathanael, Zurich, Scouts).*

From this perspective, the experience of participation offers him also the opportunity to position himself through membership, developing and nurturing his sense of identity and accepting further challenges revolving around his biographical growth. Therefore, Nathanael is very proud of the 'new' and promising leader's tasks that he has always wanted to achieve. The Scouts offer him the opportunity to demonstrate his engagement, perceiving a sense of doing worthwhile activities, rewarded by people's positive judgments about him and his future expectations:

> *It's really difficult to explain, but I always wanted to be like the leaders, they-, the leaders have such a strong role model function…I wanted to be like one of the leaders for example, 'I want to go just like you to -, go to the Scouts until I become a leader!', and like, I've actually always said, 'Yes, I want to become a leader!', that's what I've always said'. (Nathanael, Zurich, Scouts).*

Mert and Nathanael share the experience of leadership in a participatory setting, but with a slightly different political meaning. Nathanael does not seem interested in political issues and considers his being active in the Scouts as an apolitical stance. He finally reflects about a possible (political) orientation of the Scouts experience.

> *I think, the Scouts neither are, they can't be right-oriented…well, you cannot be a Scouts nowadays and be right-oriented because you – for example, now we have-, there might be a leader with asylum-, um, who has been in Switzerland for one year now, he speaks a bit of German and maybe he will join us someday to have a look and he's actually a refugee…and I think that it's actually really cool that we do things like that.' (Nathanael, Zurich, Scouts).*

Mert, instead, emphatically defends the assumption that civic activities, even if they should be politics- free (i.e. have no influence on or from 'political control rooms'), have a great impact on the wellbeing of a community and, consequently, should produce changes in some political trends. This belief derives from a particular conception of politics, which seems to be shaped by the Turkish context, his experience at K, and, especially, his recent removal from the leadership due to political reasons: *'if politics harm people, polarize people, it's not a good thing. Normally, it doesn't harm people, but today it does'* (Mert, Eskişehir, NGO).

Discussion: Personal and professional development by care for others

The sociocultural contexts are very different in these narratives – from family background to educational trajectories - and resources and experiences also differ, but the personal needs and interests look similar and suggest that the participatory experience, connected to the act of caring for others, is a way of improving personal skills. Similar starting biographical points brought Nathanael and Mert to commit for caring others, even if there was also a need to play a leadership role (connected to the self, more than to the others). Both experiences are connected to 'caring' and to the search of auto-efficacy (Bandura, 2001) and self-esteem. The trajectories are different because of different influences and turning points, played, for example, by the influence of the familial system (Brofenbrenner, 1979). However, what emerges is a similar orientation to enrich personal skills and to use them in a professional

setting. For example, when Nathanael thinks about his future career options, he believes that the Scouts experience qualifies him to work with children:

> *I would be interested in a job as a specialist, for example, um, um, specialist mmm, specialist for care. [...]Um, that would be actually a really appropriate job…or like head of a day care centre or so. That would be really adequate for me, but I think like, if I'm with the Scouts I actually do enough with children, (laughter), and I have enough siblings, too, who do… well, I don't know, (laughter), who actually-, who are sufficiently exhausting, (laughter)…and it's nothing for me, but even though I would be suitable for it. (Nathanael, Zurich, Scouts)*

The common feature of this cluster, beyond the professional orientation, is the strong connection between the young people's activity in a 'social' space and the achievement of a sense of belonging that goes hand in hand with the process of learning to be a leader.

5.4. Cluster 4: Experimenting with new paths for change

The young people in this cluster, due to their family backgrounds, developed a critical stance to social standards and practices and use participation to emancipate themselves and change minds and behaviours around them. In this respect, they share some small similarities to the 'rebels' in the first cluster. The young people do not share the same socio-economic status and educational trajectories, and their desires to shift away from their families or school experiences appear to have begun during their adolescence through questioning themselves, and their dissatisfactions and passions, and sometimes through self-harming behaviours. During this time, they understood, uncovered or experienced something that resulted in a turning point in the way their perceiving themselves, their family or their environment. In their stories, 'significant others' appear and play different roles. They did not adopt a rebellious attitude, per se, but they did decide at some point to change things while being apart from or at the margin of the environment they were criticising: for instance, becoming a professional free improvisation artist to question classical music standards and a way to learn and practice music, or being part of an Ultra group to influence the perceptions and place of women. Their relation to politics and political organisations are not homogeneous but all of their activities, as they question norms and standards, address a more general political or social question. Through participation, they are trying to position themselves as individuals and to influence other people's opinions and behaviours.

They share values and ways of getting involved in activities. They are looking for intergenerational, intercultural, equal and non-judgmental relations. They want to share advice and experiences not only for a collective change, but also to build themselves as free individuals and to gain a new identity. There is a reciprocal relationship between self-development and collective change. In terms of spaces of participation, non-formal and informal groups are preferred and it seems that the ideal form would be networks but that they have to use more formal organisation to benefit from financial and material inputs. Networking is defined as a way to meet people, to engage in dialogue, to mobilise and organise activities. These young people consider participation first as an opportunity of doing things together and an added value for learning-by-doing and self-learning. They are acting at a micro-level and do not necessary

connect their action to a more global social change. Rather they experiment with alternative forms of themselves for some sort of self-change and, potentially, collective endeavours.

Two young people are included here.

- ***Owen***, 24 years old, is professional musician in a free improvised music setting. Born in London, he comes from a wealthy family which is fond of classical music and arts. Both parents teach and listen to music and enjoy attending concerts. This artistic background clearly oriented Owen's biography: he started playing cello at 8 years of age and double bass at 13. After he completed part of a classical music program at university, his negative experience of that space resulted in him moving to study music in Manchester. During this period, he started to meet people involved in political projects and started to play in experimental bands. Volunteering with a multicultural band in activism with refugees, he uses improvised music as a tool to express himself and to participate. He prefers informal networks to create music projects with professional and non-professional musicians.
- ***Lisa*****,** 25 years old, is a janitor in a kindergarten. Born in Bologna, she comes from quite a patriarchal family. Even if she describes her mother as an open-minded person, it seems that her education was clearly oriented by her father's values. At 12 years old, she started to go to the stadium with her brother and progressively got involved in an Ultra group, in which she is currently very active. She used this group to emancipate herself from her father's control. Lisa was not a good student at school and did not like to study; she describes herself as 'weak' and a 'dummy'. In fact, she need more years than usual to get her higher school diploma. She spent the last three years of upper secondary school in a southern region because her grandparents who lived there were ill and needed help. This geographical mobility gave her the opportunities to flee from her father's control and to experiment with more freedom. Once she completed upper secondary school, at the age of 22, she came back to Bologna and started working.

'Owen'

Owen's current participation results from a progressive emancipation from his family background and his educational trajectory. Some of his personal experiences of learning music remodelled his earlier-oriented path (to be a classical musician). First, Owen explains that during school and college, he enjoyed doing music but was not satisfied to lock himself *'into a room for 6 or 7 hours a day practicing the same things which everyone else is playing'* (Owen, Manchester, IMS). Moreover, he remembers that he was already interested in *'making different sounds'* but *'without realizing that could be music*'. This personal relation to learning and practicing music was progressively reinforced and compelled him to choose free improvisation as a way to express himself as an artist and to share music with non-professional musicians. In Manchester, where he graduated, he met a teacher (a meaningful other), who deeply influenced his relationship to classical standards and, in general, to music:

> *Like I had a really amazing [...] he was…my double bass teacher… he was amazing cos in a lesson we'd hardly ever play or do any music but just chat and actually I think I learned a lot more about music and about people just from doing that rather than getting stuck into just doing things correctly,*

> *but he'd got like a very open attitude around music. (Owen, Manchester, IMS)*

Those conversations probably oriented his definition of relationships; Owen highlights the importance of dialogue and networking to meet people and to do things together. If free improvisation is a way to practice music and understood as a counterculture (a shift from virtuosity and producing polished finished music), it can also be a way to organise social relations. His artistic path goes hand in hand with his politicisation process.

Owen found a space that suited his personality in volunteering, eventually picking up some employment in teaching music to refugees and asylum seekers. The nature of improvised music is central to this, which is why he enjoys it:

> *It just kind of opens up many more questions and there's not really any need to crystallize anything into like a perfect form or idea. You can just make things and they exist. There's just like endless potential. I guess the interesting thing would be to see how far you could push that as well and how far you can extend those networks or uncover existing networks that you might not realise exist, by doing radical art or just meeting people and talking about things. (Owen, Manchester, IMS)*

Owen's biography underlines how his personal experience and 'significant others' – firstly his teacher and then the people he met in experimental bands and networks – led to a counterculture position of trying to change aesthetic standards in the musical arena, by doing free improvisation and learning music standards and by supporting a 'making things together' approach. In a way, free improvisation as a professional musician and 'participatory art' as a volunteer are two expressions of the same political values.

'Lisa'

Lisa's emancipation process regards the patriarchal education model that influenced her whole childhood and behaviour – she presents herself as a weak child, scared by the people around her. Through self-empowerment, she progressively copes with the educational standard that puts women in the backstage. Being a daughter, according to her, has always meant being treated differently to her brother:

> *My father is a 100% Southern man, so obviously the son and the daughter are two different things, of course, the son is the one who deserves full trust and the daughter instead is the one who has to stay home up to 40 years. (Lisa, Bologna, UG).*

Like Owen, beyond her personal experience, there is a more general question - for Lisa, this is about being a woman in a masculine environment in terms of the football arena and an Ultra group. Her father and her brother used to go to the stadium. At 12, her brother brought her with him and she went to her first football match. Progressively, she entered an Ultra group in which she was the 'young sister of'. At 16, she changed group in order to overcome her minority status and to be recognised as 'just' Lisa. As a junior supporter, she began helping senior members in the back-office activities before the matches, and of course singing at the stadium. Then, two years ago, she participated in the creation of the Ultras centre. Since the centre was inaugurated, she has helped in many activities:

> *[T]his space is the headquarter of the group, so if you help the center, you also help the group and vice versa'.* ***(Lisa, Bologna, UG).*** *She is currently in charge of the management of the kindergarten opened within the Ultras Center. 'We wanted to create our place where people could meet face to face and being able to discuss, maybe even argue, because this happens between opposite ways of thinking, different ideas. It was something that I liked very much. (Lisa, Bologna, UG)*

Even if her biography follows a path of self-empowerment, Lisa was not alone in this process. Besides her brother, the two main 'significant others' who influenced her development were women: first, her mother and second a 50 year old woman, who was the only female in the north stand when she entered the stadium. This older woman immediately became Lisa's role model:

> *'She has always been my reference point, even because she was the only woman in the group. You saw her stronger than men, that is, she looked like a gorilla in comparison to the others. She was the one who defeat everyone, the one of which being afraid of, all the men treated her equally. She was an integral part of the group. She was so engaging. (Lisa, Bologna, UG)*

Entering the Ultras means not only supporting a team but is also a way to develop herself and to become a stronger woman able to face others and especially men as equals (her father and the other male ultras). She moved gradually from her personal will to rid herself of her father's educational standards to a collective action in a group that became a 'second family'. This chosen community is a place to meet people of different ages and different conditions, to share values, to build common projects and to grow freely as a person. Participation is a combination of self-help and collective solidarity that gives her the opportunity to learn and to value her capacities.

From her patriarchal value-oriented education and a painful school experience – the way she was constructed – to an active place in the Ultras Center, Lisa's biographical narration reveals how her personal experience and female 'significant others' lead her to empower herself in a group to conquer her freedom, strengthen her identity and change minds and behaviours about women's place in the group. Even if she avoids political discussion and does not describe her participation in such terms, her action could be seen as feminist activism in sports arena.

Discussion: Experimenting with new paths for change

The two participatory biographies illustrating this cluster are different in terms of the sociocultural context enhancing or impeding their participatory path. Owen and Lisa have neither the same family background nor the same educational trajectories. Of course, due to his parents' interest in arts, Owen had more opportunities than Lisa to access culture and to learn from the outside. However, a similar rebellious attitude is apparent in their educational path; Owen was successful at school, but a growing discontent about classical music because of the rigidity of learning methods and classical music standards forced him away from the traditional music profession. In a similar way, Lisa's failures in the school system made her prefer the free self-expression of chatting and shouting in the Ultras group, where she was accepted and

recognised and not considered a 'dummy'. Their current forms of participation are in fact not conforming to their educational path at all. However, the central mechanism of their participative biography permits them to succeed in coping with social standards, reframing their lives and motivating them to transform their self-positioning into collective actions. This process from self-empowerment to collective participation is not linear; there are always some 'comings and goings' and many other aspects related to it.

Owen and Lisa have been constructed by central values which they rejected in order to build their own identity; for Owen, this was about classical music as a dominant and elitist conception of learning and playing music and, for Lisa, this is about patriarchal values as a dominant model to define and control women's places. It is around those two different, though no less troubling, standards that their participative biographies are organised. Significant others influenced the critical stance they constructed to conquer their freedom. If their families played a role at all, the key persons in their learning process are part of the arena in which they feel comfortable: Owen's 'alternative' bass teacher Lisa's older female member of the Ultra group. Then, they privileged non-formal and informal groups to empower themselves, act and progressively innovate in an attempt to influence the status quo. Meeting people, sharing values and building common projects are the pillars of their participation and learning project; about people, they insist on intergenerational, cultural, social or gender diversity; about values, on open and non-judgmental dialogue, freedom and solidarity: about projects, on the importance of doing things together and learning by doing. The main difference between them is about politicisation, which is more present in Owen's biography than in Lisa's one. Their self-liberation is a learning process that feeds their motivations and gives them new opportunities to participate and to extend their individual solutions to others people.

5.5. Clusters of participation careers: conclusions

This section returns now to the two questions which led the clustering analysis (What makes and distinguishes routes into/ careers of participation? What are the relationships between participation and other areas of life?) and the aim of the analysis to explore the ways in which sociocultural and economic conditions support or constrain young people's participation and the learning processes they attribute to their participatory experiences. Many, often intersecting, factors are evident in young people's biographies and straightforward answers to the research questions are impossible.

Nonetheless, the four clusters represent an attempt to categorise for the sake of the analysis, biographies in terms of told stories, sociocultural and economic factors in terms of life conditions (trajectories), and learning outcomes in terms of lived learning processes. What emerged is that a commonality of social and cultural backgrounds does not necessarily correspond to a shared participatory path, and equally, a similar participatory path is not derived from a shared sociocultural background and young people's shared motivations and goals. This means that young people in quite the same sociocultural situations make decisions about and opt for different participatory styles and attribute different values to the apparently same spaces and participatory settings. When a clear *turning point* was evident in the clusters, in terms of stimuli for learning and changing practices, it was often encountered *by chance* (e.g. watching a TV in Amanda's case, or bumping into a professor in Mert's case), or because of meeting people whom the young people consciously adopted as role models (e.g. Owen's

'alternative' professor, Amos's father's friend, or Lisa's 'gorilla' woman), or by following a path inspired by significant others (e.g. Nathanael's mother enrolling him in the Scouts). In addition, although they usually share more than one similar clustering 'element', the young people have been attributed to a specific cluster according to the main factors emerging in their told biography.

In terms of background, Amanda, Léna, Betty and Owen shared the same middle class conditions, yet they fall into three different clusters whereby it seems that that other differences (e.g. ethnicity) are relevant. The nuclear family emerges as the most powerful source of youth self-esteem and proactive identity-work. The will to participate by taking advantage of 'coincidences' encountered in everyday lives seem to be more likely to be based on the trust and confidence that parents instil in their children than on markers of social status. In the third cluster (*personal and professional development by care for others*) both Natanael, born in a Swiss middle class family with a long Scouting tradition, and Mert, who grew up in a poor and uneducated Turkish family, can rely on the same familial supportive environment. It is notable that Mert's parents are less informed about his educational experiences, yet they trust him and give him the space to develop his own personal and professional future. It could also be the case the both young people grew into a sense of leadership in their participatory path that means that both feel enough sufficiently strong and self-confident to be able to care for others as their parents have taken care of them.

Furthermore, the same engagement in a formal institutional path could be due to very different reasons based on the individual life history and family background and could be perceived by the young people with different aims and intensity. In the cluster '*Fighting for justice from inside the system'*, Amanda and Amos have in common that they are both people of colour and have parents with considerable cultural capital, even if now Amanda is middle class, and Amos, working class, because of his changed familial status in England. Both are part of a formal youth institution and deeply engaged in politics around social justice and peaceful revolution through education. They are there because they want to affirm themselves despite their skin colour (explicitly noted by Amanda, less so by Amos, but clearly understandable through the important other people of colour he mentions). They both trust themselves (self-esteem, regained by Amanda through participatory action after her formative experiences, and conferred to Amos by his father's friend who appointed him with the task of starting a revolution) and the institutional system that gave them the chance to feel supported and recognised in critical biographical moments. Very different is the situation of Léna in the cluster, *Conformist for change.* This young woman, with a smooth and relatively linear educational path entered the formal institutional arena as a training setting for achieving other (professional) goals and responded positively to requests for, and suggestions about, engagement (her mother, even if not interested in politics, suggested that she should be proactive and enter formal youth representation, and the youth worker in the recreational centre who was charged with initiating the youth representation who asked her to join it). Very slowly but always present is the process of conscientisation that goes hand in hand with Léna apparently neutral and self-oriented engagement. Gradually, without a specific turning point, Léna becomes aware of and reflects upon the everyday injustices that she recognises in the world. However, different to the first cluster (Fighting for Justice), the final goal is not the utopia of changing the world but, rather, contributing to change the educational system ('to

work in national education with popular education') in order to help to close at least young people's educational gap by counselling them in a meaningful way. Contrasting with this very traditional and education-oriented path towards participation and social responsibility, the last cluster, *Experimenting with new paths for change*, shows that young people who decided to break both with tradition (Lisa's patriarchal family and Owen's classical music traditions) by changing or postponing their education career. Both cases indicate the centrality of important others who made the young people aware that another life was possible and helped them to decide to experiment in finding their own, alternative place and way of living. What these young people learn from their experience is a reassuring and rewarding place and community to which they feel they belong and a different way to approach their lives by combining interests and activities for the sake of their 'second family' and a wider public.

In all cases, young people seem to start from a turning point of some sort that activates engagement, or young people use participation to find a life place and style, (re)define their identity and relationship to the community in which they live, converge or diverge according to their age, individual experience and opportunity of action.

The cluster analysis also suggests that there are other factors at play that, potentially, shape young people's participation within the clusters. Some of these factors have been suggested, briefly (e.g. self-efficacy); the next chapter of this report explores these factors and biographies further in order to understand the meaning-making of young people's participation biographies in terms of their involvement in different kinds of participatory activities within the clusters of participation careers.

6. Dimensions of participation biographies

This chapter examines the construction of meaning-making of participation in the life-stories of young people. This analysis comes from a different biographical approach (see chapter 4: Theoretical rationale, method and methodology) and is not concerned with 'careers of participation' but, rather, utilises Rosenthal (2004) principles of the 'biographical case reconstruction'. This approach argues that the presentation of a biography and narration is understood as a part of the 'overall context of [an individual's] current life and his/ her resulting present and future perspective' (2004: 50) in a dialectic interrelation of the experienced, remembered and narrated life-story. The analysis therefore focuses on the subjective – the meaning-making, self-presentation, and biographical motivation and experiences, which lead to participatory activities in different ways (or, the 'logic' of biographical meaning-making).

Two research questions guided this analysis:

1. What biographical experiences and orientations are expressed by engaging in participatory activities in the cases?
2. How do participatory activities become subjectively meaningful in young people's lives?

The analysis led to five 'dimensions of participatory biographies' which are core categories that emerged from the coding of the data. These dimensions are 'features' of participation biographies and are aspects of biographical constructions that illustrate the relationships between biography and participation – the dimensions are therefore interrelated in different ways. Participation biographies are particular constellations of relations of those dimensions

The dimensions:

1. Involvement in participatory activities as a way to secure recognition in identity-work
2. Involvement in participatory activities as an expression of self-efficacy
3. Involvement in different participatory activities as expression of experiences with institutions
4. Involvement in participatory activities to cope with harmful experiences
5. Involvement in participatory activities as a positioning between youth and adult culture

The dimensions are presented in this chapter as 'figurations'. The term 'figurations' comes from Norbert Elias's (1990) approach in Outsiders and Established, where 'figuration' means the interdependency of relationships, interactions, dependencies and dynamics between collectives and individuals. Figurations are a processual-sociological instrument to analyse social relationship-networks and are used here to describe the interdependent relationship of structure and agency inherent to biographical meaning-making and styles of participatory activities.

The sections below introduce the dimensions, then present an overview of the figurations, and then present the figurations using again exemplary cases, which include detailed examples and shorter examples. Each dimension includes a discussion and the concluding section of the chapter presents an epistemic exploration of the interrelation of participation and biography.

6.1. Dimension 1: Involvement in participatory activities to secure recognition in identity-work

This dimension relates to involvement of young people in participatory activities as a way to secure recognition as part of their identity-work. Engaging in participatory activities is a way to search for or secure recognition. Recognition was a feature of some of the turning points explored in the 'clusters' above and in the current analysis seems to be a necessary, prerequisite part of young people's identity-work. As such, it is – more or less – prevalent in all of the interviews. Keupp et al (1999: 7) understand identity as a process of a constructive self-positioning in a contradictory and fragmented late modernity, in which people have to connect different, disjointed experiences in a meaningful 'whole'. This individual 'connecting work' corresponds to an 'identity-work' (ibid: 9) and is the attempt to create subjective and consistent fits between internal and external experiences, to connect different identity-parts (ibid: 60), and to position oneself between autonomy and recognition. In the research material, identity-work and the need (or often struggle) for recognition becomes visible in different figurations, and is often around the demarcation of other young people rooted in experiences of 'not fitting in' and being different to the majority of peers. Young people use participation contexts to find their own way, to position themselves, and to reach stability and/ or autonomy. It is a way to mark differences and features of themselves and/ or a group and a way to profit from distinction (see Bourdieu, 1982). At the same time, it is a 'fight for recognition' (see Honneth, 1994) and belonging and a search for an identity and, often, a community as part of a wider social context. Four different identity-work figurations are possible:

- The figuration of identity-stabilisation
- The figuration of identity-transformation
- The figuration of identity-diversification
- The figuration of identity-compensation

The figuration of identity-stabilisation

In the figuration of identity-stabilisation, young people use and experience the participation context as a space of recognition, where they are accepted and appreciated for who they are. This gives young people the security and self-confidence to assert themselves also in other contexts. ***Nathanael***, ***Amanda*** and ***Lisa*** are examples of this figuration.

'Nathanael

The strongly framed and organised context of the Scouts seems to be a space in which Nathanael (introduced in 'clusters' section 5.3 oben) feels accepted, appreciated and liked. The Scouts seem to counteract his experiences in school where he felt marginalised as the '*the little one, the cute one*' (Nathanael, Zurich, Scouts) and where he had difficulty asserting himself, particularly with the older, bigger students. He felt in some way relieved of this 'fight for recognition' and belonging in the Scouts where he is a natural member:

> *[A]s a Scout you almost […] don't have the necessity to hook up with a group, [like] at school for example […] your place is among the Scouts so to speak, you know where you belong. (Nathanael, Zurich, Scouts)*

In this way, Nathanael has found a space where he does not have to strive to be popular or to be accepted because it is in some way 'automatic' by membership. The Scouts allow him to belong. Nathanael also talked about how the Scouts have enabled him to develop a strong character and he returns again to the idea of acceptance and the lack of pressure to be popular or 'cool':

> *Nobody (of the Scouts) says that it's not cool or so. And then you have like a strong character thanks to the Scouts […] It's really like that because you really don't care what others think about you and it's, you have such a team spirit. (Nathanael, Zurich, Scouts)*

The Scouts are a relief for Nathanael within a complex, individualised and pluralised world and his activities secure him a place of recognition and experiences of self-efficacy.

'Lisa' and 'Amanda'

For Lisa (introduced in section 5.4 oben), the Ultra group has also been a place of acceptance and belonging since the beginning of her membership, and it has given her independence from home, school and other peers. Lisa enjoys the freedom of expression in the Ultras and a knowing that no one will say what is wrong or right. Lisa's biography also implies finding a positive identity as a woman in a male-dominated space and patriarchal society. In this sense, Lisa fits in also to the figuration of identity-transformation below. Finally, Amanda (introduced in section 5.4 above) notes that the influence of her supportive and socially critical mother allowed her to understand her experiences of racism and bullying in school as a structural phenomenon and personal. That experience gave her the self-confidence to cope with and address racism through political means, and it illustrates an element of personal identity-stability.

The figuration of identity-transformation

In the figuration of identity-transformation, participation activities are connected to the search for a new, transformed, and positive self-image and identity. This process of identity-work is rather more radical than the other figurations in this section because of its basis in absolute change. ***Nassine*** and ***Owen*** are examples of this figuration.

'Nassine'

Vanessa (Nassine), introduced here for the first time, was 24 at the time of the interview, and grew up in a well situated, though fraught, family. While her parents were frequently abroad on her father's working trips and away from her home town (outside Bologna), Vanessa was left in the care of a Muslim-Moroccan nanny. This significant other proved pivotal for Vanessa later on in life. Vanessa moved very for a short time to France when she was 10. At around this time, Vanessa's father started an affair and her mother became depressed. Later her parents separated and her mother went to a psychiatric hospital. Vanessa broke contact with her mother. Vanessa's romantic relationships are the central issue in her life and are the theme to which she returns several times in her interview: '*I'm obsessed with relationships'* she says and notes that she spent a great deal of her life searching for the ideal, *real* relationship: *'to find a person who was looking for what I was looking for, stability, a long relationship, and I lived, live for that'*. Around the age of 13, she met her first boyfriend and started her first relationship that lasted for two and a half years. At age 17, she began another relationship that lasted for three years.

After high school, she started a BA in Philosophy in Bologna, stopped it after a time, and became very involved in the 'party scene'. Vanessa cites a car accident as a key moment in her biography and a time when she started to question everything and, particularly, her party lifestyle. She began to spend more time with a group of Moroccan boys and made contact with her former nanny. Both of those changes were of comfort to Vanessa and she particularly appreciated the moralistic nature of the Muslim men, which she compared favourably to the hedonistic nature of Italian men. After spending time with her former nanny, and starting another brief relationship with a Muslim man, she converted to Islam and became '***Nassine'***. At around age 22, Nassine met a Muslim-Lebanese student and began her engagement with a Muslim NGO. One year later, she married this man. Vanessa's new name, Nassine, is used for the remainder of this analysis.

Nassine is a classic 'conversion story' (Wohlrab-Sahr, 2001). She searched for a new, replacement identity which she relates to her search for a stable, reliable and secure space that she did not find in her family of origin. Her family life was characterised by parental absence, her father's affairs, her mother's periods of depression and the later divorce of her parents – the word 'alone' is used many times in her interview. She talked about her different attempts to find a stable and stabilising space in romantic partnerships, in religion (e.g. Buddhism, Islam and Christianity), and in hedonism. She presents her hedonistic phase as a time of her life she feels she has wasted, and a turning point in her narration. The connection to some young Muslim men, and reconnection with her former Muslim nanny, are happy memories and offered her an opportunity to fill a gap in her life: '*I was looking for something, I don't know what, but I found this*' (Nassine, Bologna, Islamic Youth Association). She describes a memory where she stood in front of a mirror studying her own reflection as another key moment and it was then that she decided, definitively, to be a Muslim. This moment involved a reflection (symbolically and literally) on her past life and making the decision to convert fully and truly to Islam. This, too, was a biographical turning-point (Rosenthal, 2002: 4). Nassine's marriage to a Muslim man and her engagement with the Islamic Youth Association were the starting point of 'Vanessa' becoming 'Nassine': '*It is as if I was starting from scratch, okay, now I'm Nassine, I have a blank sheet of paper, what we put on it? What do I do?*' Nassine seems to want a clear, radical breaking point with her former life, with the ever-searching Vanessa and to be transformed into Nassine, a young woman who knows her place in the world. Here, too, there are elements of identity-stabilisation, Indeed, Islam gives Nassine her entire raison d'etre - she was previously without a '*reason in life to do the things*', while her involvement in the Islamic Youth Association is her '*fundamental reference point*' (Nassine, Bologna, Islamic Youth Association).

'Owen'

Owen (introduced in cluster section 5.4 oben) stopped his (classical) music studies and became active in an underground musicians' initiative. This, for Owen, was an expression of the search for his own, distinctive musical style and way of life as a unique individual. It is connected with the realisation that he did not want to play '*the same things which everyone else is playing'* (Owen, Manchester, IMS) and a simultaneous separation from an identity bestowed upon him by his family and their musical traditions. Owen, too, found a new, transformed identity.

The figuration of identity-diversification

This figuration is concerned with a participation context that is used as an experimentation space, where different parts and aspects of identities can be tried, experienced and lived. ***Mario*** is a main example of the figuration. (***Marcus***, included below in the figuration of identity-compensation, is also an example.)

'Mario'

Mario is introduced here. Mario, 24 at the time of the interview, had a fraught family history also. His parents separated, his father moved to England, and Mario lived with his mother at her parents' house in a relatively deprived location. When he was in Kindergarten, Mario's mother met her new husband and moved to Plovdiv to a house in a less deprived location. When Mario started school, he was a good pupil. After failing entrance examinations in the transition from elementary to lower grade, however, Mario went to a Christian school, which was some distance away from his home and where he did not find friends among his peers. He also sang in a choir (Christian orthodox music). At 13, Mario formed his first graffiti crew and did illegal graffiti. When he was about 16, he formed his first band and some years later, he formed a new band project, which is widely known in Bulgaria. He graduated school and started studying law and his main participatory focus now is in an alternative cultural and music scene , which is also a networking and information space for political activism.

For Mario, different participation activities are part of living different aspects of his identity. Mario says that he did not fit into the more formal context of school and study and particularly the social context of school:

> *I could not quickly fit into the mode of communication, I mean interests of people […] some of them were just plainly rejecting me […] in the end I fitted somehow, but only very partially. There was this clear stratification.' (Mario, Plovdiv, Post Cultural Scene).*

Mario developed a kind of 'double life': in one space, he was a loner at school, in the other space, he found refuge and acceptance in the graffiti scene. Later, he started to study law at university and this part of life meets the requirements of a 'normal, rational' life. Around the same time, he started to engage with underground music, manage his musical career, and build up an alternative space (which is literally underground, in a basement) for underground music. Mario chose to study law because '*I know how things like the biology […] or medical function […] I mean the anatomy, but social and legal anatomy*'. He tries to understand through law how society and politics work. At the same time he feels uncomfortable with the law faculty and '*their reality […] their desires […] they're too pragmatic*'. The environment of lawyers is '*soulless*' in his eyes. The space for underground music is inspired by the idea to create another, better world and is the idea of a pure, authentic and independent, open space where Mario and others can be themselves. It is a space of free speech, political discussion and information and learning. Here Mario feels '*complete as a human being […] more filled with emotion*'. There seems to be two sides two Mario and two abilities: a very structured, clear, systematic and rational side, and an experimental, open, romantic side and the wish to create a better world – he tries to connect both, doing one without neglecting the other.

The figuration of identity-compensation

In a further figuration, participation activities are connected with identity-compensation. This figuration is similar to participation in the identity-work of transformation in terms of looking for a positive self-image and identity against the backdrop of a damaged identity, and grounded in strong experiences of disregard. Examples here are ***Marcus*** and ***Rada***.

'Marcus'

Marcus, 20, lives in Frankfurt, and is one child in an large immigrant Muslim family. Marcus was diagnosed with ADHD in elementary school and was assigned different 'caretakers' to support him there. At 11, he visited a Youth Centre for the first time and stayed there participating regularly in his leisure time. After several incidents in school, at 12, Marcus was sent briefly to a psychiatric hospital where he was medicated for ADHD – this event and afterwards he describes as traumatic and scattered. He dropped out of school several times in his adolescence and sometimes did not go to school again. Dominant in Marcus's narration is his presentation as someone who has always been marginalised and alienated because of his ADHD diagnosis. His compulsory stay in the psychiatric hospital, and the constant presence of different social workers and agents of youth services, have partly determined his life. This seems to be connected with his strong feelings of being 'other-directed' where he feels that his needs and ideas are unrecognised and of no interest. At the age of around 16, Marcus was a member of a Salafist group where he searched for a strong identity in a closed group. He did not find this and soon left. When he was about 17, his family threw him out of the family home and for a time he was homeless until he found a flat financed by a secure housing service. In this phase, he was supplying hard drugs, for which he was arrested. Marcus tried to reengage with school afterwards. He was able to finish his secondary school, however, and to repair the relationship with his family. In all, Marcus's disaffection led him first to a Salafist group and different other activities, into drug-dealing and so on but also, and crucially, the Youth Center, where he found a meaningful place to 'be', and where he felt recognised, useful and successful. His engagement with young refugees at about age 19, during the 'refugee crisis' in Germany, was a way for him to prove (to himself and others) that he is somebody who can help others and who is a valuable member of a wider social context and society, and not just a helpless young man and a '*retarded spaz*' (Marcus, Frankfurt, Youth Centre). The involvement Marcus experiences help him to compensate for his experiences in closed institutions, with the (welfare) state, and with school failure, and supports his identity-diversification processes.

'Rada'

Rada grew up in a middle-class family in Bulgaria. Though her parents got divorced, she notes a strong family connection. Rada started dancing and singing in her school choir at a young age. In 7th grade, Rada applied for music school, started there successfully, and made preparations for courses for an arts school in Plovdiv after graduation. During her training, she worked professionally with a dance troupe and travelled around the country for events. In her second year, Rada left the arts school and started to study ethnology at university where she also went on with her dancing career. She also became part of the University Student Council and was elected as a secretary for the chairperson for two years. Rada notes that she had to leave the arts school and this was a moment of crises for her as it endangering her dancing career and was damaging for her self-efficacy. Indeed, she talks about it but never explains what has actually happened. This experience is the prompt for her activities in the Student Council. Rada talks about her first days at the new University:

> *Right when they got in and I heard them talking I knew that I want to be part of that organization. Nobody asked or begged me into it [...]. I joined on my own initiative and started reading: I read the student councils charter, then I started reading the laws for higher education and realized that I didn't need to drop out of AMDFA, but… So I got hitched with the student council at a general assembly for the whole student council. […] They were all the way up front and there conflict continued even after the meeting, and so I said that in a year or two I'll be up there in front. I told that to a colleague and so it happened.' (Rada, Plovdiv, Student Council)*

Rada does not present her activity in the Student Council as life-changing in her self-presentation. She says the Student Council as '*a phase of your life, but not life*'.

For Rada**,** the activities in the Student Council are a way to compensate; Rada seeks and receives recognition by helping other students and by generating a new activity in her new university. She is - in this way - part of something. Alluding to her leaving art school, she remarks that the lack of information and support, when she needed it, has led her to help other students and to support them in knowing their rights. She fights against '*apathy*' with all of the connections and knowledge she now has. As she calls her involvement a phase, she suggests that her compensation for her bad experience will be successful and after her two year mandate on the Council, she can focus on her other priorities, such as her dancing career.

Discussion: participatory activities to secure recognition in identity-work

In various biographical constellations – against the backdrop of different experiences – there are different needs for recognition. Consequently, young people seek recognition of different forms and in different ways, and they have access to different sources of recognition for their identity-work through participative activities. Identity-work, as an essential part of every person's life, is concerned with finding expression in different aspects of life and biography. Participative activities are in some way adapted and adaptable for identity-work and gaining recognition and are both an expression and element of identity-work.

6.2. Dimension 2: Involvement in participatory activities as an expression of self-efficacy

This dimension is engagement in participatory activities to search for or express a feeling of self-efficacy - or the need for self-efficacy. The dimension is about exploring how 'changing' or addressing something is connected to, if not dependent on, a feeling of self-efficacy and a belief in one's ability to make a difference. Framing of one's life-story within a 'bigger picture' of change – or not – is concerned with the ability feel self-efficacy. The concept of self-efficacy comes from Bandura (1997) who argued that self-efficacy is: (1) the experience of mastery and means to successfully cope with difficult situations which gives one the ability to develop a concept of oneself that is steady and powerful; (2) modelling or vicarious experience, which is the ability to benefit from positive role-models; (3) social persuasion, which is about being trusted and (realistically) empowered by others; and (4) emotional arousal, which means being to work productively with affective reactions to new or demanding situations. Self-efficacy

leads to being able to 'bewältigen' (cope with) [4] one's life and being able to make a political claim (or not). Some of the young people in the biographies do want to change the social world, necessarily, but rather, their own personal or life worlds – in this dimension, this varied 'political claim' is linked to the feeling of self-efficacy. The following examples show the variety of meanings of 'self-efficacy' and 'a wish to achieve change' in two figurations:

- The figuration of achieved personal and political self-efficacy
- The figuration of struggling with personal self-efficacy

The figuration of achieved personal and political self-efficacy

Several biographies present a participation that is expressly political through the motivation to change the world in some regard – political. Participation in these biographies takes place in formal, informal and non-formal contexts, in which the 'personal is political' is evident. The young people in this figuration use the public to fight for their opinions and rights. In the figuration '*achieved* personal and political self-efficacy', the participation activity or context is a political one and the young people interpret their lives within a 'bigger picture' and frame their stories in discourses around the question of 'a good life' for all and social equality and justice. Often those young people reflect on their own privileges and try to channel their anger and discrimination experiences into political activism and a political lifeform (Jaeggi, 2014)[5]. ***Amanda*** and ***Mario*** Illustrate this figuration.

'Amanda and Mario'

Amanda's engagement is strongly connected with her wish to change the world in relation to different forms of racism and sexism and to bring about political progress on that issue. She presents her activism as based on the racist bullying she experienced in school. She grew up with a mother who had a reflexive political and social awareness and conveyed political agency and empowerment to her daughter. Through the formal intervention of school, and her mother's help, Amanda was able to stop the bullying. Amanda's experiences had two important impacts: first, she understood early in her life that racism is a systemic, and not individual, issue, and, second, she learned that she is able to bring about change. These experiences form a basis for Amanda's personal-political biography and a sense of self-efficacy.

Mario's transition from primary school led to feelings of being an outsider. In this time Mario, presents himself as someone for whom '*music […] became an important part of [his] life*' (Mario, Plovdiv, Post Cultural Scene). At a young age, Mario became involved in music and was a member of small graffiti crew. While Mario experiences being an outsider in school, youth cultural activities made him an insider in those scenes with high self-efficacy, compensating for his troublesome other peer-relationships – this resulted in him in leading a 'double life'. In his youth cultural life, he made art, music and had to organise secret activities; in his school life, he stayed an outsider, always alienated within compulsory contexts (see also Dimension 1: Involvement in participatory activities to secure recognition in identity-work

4 For the concept of 'Lebensbewältigung' see the introduction in Dimension 5.

5 The concept of life-form comes originally from critical theory but is used by Jaeggi as an concept to analyse the individual and social opportunities of life-plans and the possibility to interpret them: a life-form is a set of social practices that on the one hand are brought about by individual decisions (e.g. about the life-plan) but on the other by 'collective interpretation patterns (influenced by e.g. specific social, historical and economic contexts).

above). Mario's activities in the music scene give him a place in a community and a way to express himself and to fight his negative experiences

> *You get relief, but you've also created something beautiful. And really, when life's hard, you might recall that and say to yourself 'I'm not such a loser after all.' And you can go to sleep peacefully. (Mario, Plovdiv, Post Cultural Scene)*

The Post Cultural Scene is for Mario is a '*micro cosmos*' where he finds a place to be acknowledged and to experience exciting, interesting events, where he feels alive and special: '*In general the stuff we do, its goal is to make you somehow feel that you're something more.*' This 'more' is connected to politics and information, which Mario tries to implement in the Post Cultural Scene, as he describes the political apathy in his home country as coming from a lack of information: '*Negligence means lack of information, and lack of information leads to distorted and most often wrong opinion.*' Mario is presenting himself as a protagonist who, by his high self-efficacy in the youth cultural scene, is able to change people's minds and thereby tackle the political system through his participation.

The figuration of struggling with personal self-efficacy

Other young people only partly integrate their biography within a 'bigger picture' and often those young people struggle with the thought of changing the world or are not interested in doing so. They focus more on a personal life-plan and its opportunities or lack. In the figuration of *struggling with personal (and political) self-efficacy,* the participation context is one that allows young people to develop and find themselves, and experiment in different roles, but is less about their involvement in a broader, politicised context. The participation contexts in this figuration show elements of struggle (which may or may not be related to a reluctance to engage with a more 'political' context) that seem to be around a lack of self-efficacy. The young people struggling with personal self-efficacy often show distrust in their own decision-making and power and thereby often formulate distrust towards politics. Examples to show this figuration are ***Marcus*** and ***Paula*****.**

'Marcus'

Marcus experienced considerable professional intervention for ADHD. This was, sometimes, supportive, but more often violating, such as the time he was hospitalised, about which he says that *'[his] life started to get weirder*'. He presents himself as someone who has always struggled with a label of 'problematic behaviours' and a number of interventions which have often prevented him from making his own decisions. When he got into contact with the Salafist group, he found himself recognised and with access to clear rules of living, which were legitimised by Allah: '*it's a nice feeling however because you know you're on the side of truth. [...] Islam only forbids the things that are bad for me*.' He says:

> *[A]nd then like feeling at ease, feeling at ease in a group, I really liked that and until now I tell everyone that this time of my life was the best time of my life […] now recently I've been taking drugs, I don't pray anymore [...] Islam only forbids the things that are bad for me.' (Marcus, Frankfurt, Youth Centre).*

Marcus's biography suggests that he needs someone or something (perhaps religion) to guide him because he does not have strength, alone, to make decisions (e.g. to avoid drugs). He needs someone and/ or a community watching over him. The Salafist group seemed to give Marcus a framework for self-development and self-efficacy (though it was a short-lived participation and he soon left and started to use drugs again) by giving him a feeling of being taken seriously in his actions and thoughts. During all phases of his life, Marcus has found the youth centre supportive: '*I always stayed at the Youth Center because I knew if I'm going to the Youth Center I can't screw up as many things*'. Marcus tends to participate in structures which he sees as helpful but not obligatory – thereby he has a problem with political activism in groups. As he is not politically schooled, he does not believe he has the ability make claims to a political position or to reflect in an informed way on his social position. His political activities fluctuate from referring to conspiracy theories, being part of religious fundamentalism, establishing a Facebook group for refugees, and taking part in a football match against antisemitism – his political activities reflect, as his self-presentation, a lack of consistency and are part of search for self-efficacy without a particular political direction.

'Paula'

Paula (not yet introduced) was 17 at the time of interview, and was born in Frankfurt. Paula had always struggled with school contexts and at the time of the interview was starting to find her place in left-leaning circles. Paula grew up in a middle-class family with four siblings. Paula did not go to Kindergarten and at school was identified as a 'highly talented student'. This was a conflictual position for Paula, however, and she presents herself a constant outsider within school peer contexts, which she relates to the negative experiences of being not 'normal' on the one hand (gifted) and a 'problem' child on the other (in the view of her school and the welfare system). Due to her special gifts, Paula says that she was bullied by and excluded from peers, which resulted in psychosomatic problems and she stayed away from school so much in grade six that the Youth and Welfare office intervened. At first, they tried to send her to a special institution for 'difficult young people' but Paula's mother rejected that suggestion and argued to send her to a school for specially gifted young people. It is in this setting – a special boarding school – that Paula remembers a happy time in her life. She was a good student, enjoyed a host of leisure time activities, had friends, and positive contact with a professional youth worker. When the Youth and Welfare Office ended the provision, however, Paula returned to her old school, which was difficult. She says:

> *If you say yeah you lost a leg […] here is a [prosthetic] one, then they do like an analysis and are like oh wow you can walk super well, we're going to take your prosthesis back now' (Paula, Frankfurt, Youth and Student Council).*

Paula still sees herself as an outsider there but during this time had a boyfriend who was active in an ecological-political association (EPA) and introduced her to the space. She became a member of the EPA and in this way became part of the left scene of her city. Through this, she came to know the Youth and Student Council where she is a very active member.

Paula's positive experiences in the special school allowed her to start to overcome her feelings of powerlessness in peer contexts and her damaged self-image; it also helped her to find self-efficacy in activities in a framed, adult-led and activity-based space. In adult-led and adult-

recognised activities Paula finds herself being self-efficacious, such as during her lessons: '*I'm loved by the teachers […] I do a lot during lessons and help keep the lessons going*.' Paula needs this consistent reassurance in order to secure her self-efficacy. She still has difficulties maintaining stable peer-relationships. In political activities, she can unwind and be self-efficacious when she is being led by older (young) people, and here she can have a high output and engage in project-based activities. Paula can compensate her lack of self-esteem with peers through doing something with other (older) young people and secure self-efficacy through work: '*you become friends faster […] especially with the people who you will be working with*'.

Discussion: participatory activities as an expression of self-efficacy

A central question of this dimension has been about the ways in which way young people develop consciousness around issues which are personal and/ or political and the extent to which they then *feel* that they can be become personally and politically mobile and involved. The political involvement is strongly connected to the idea of self-efficacy; experiences of self-efficacy make it possible to make a claim that is about 'changing the world' while the experience of a lack of or struggling self-efficacy can produce an ambivalent relationship to change, that may even affect one's personal world. Self-efficacy here is about feeling enabled and empowered to, and confident about, making decisions about one's own life, presenting oneself as able to make a difference, seeing one's own life in a political and social framework, and aiming to change what is necessary. Under the umbrella of participation and self-efficacy, the different experiences of self-efficacy lead to different self-positionings towards the self and the world. Those activities of positioning manifest in diverse life forms: some young people have a self-efficacious 'political life form', which is defined here as a life-plan and practices emerging from political activism and a political lifestyle (and vice versa) within the individual life/ biography. Other young people struggle with their resources, power and feelings of self-efficacy leading to only partial use of fragments of politics as practice (such as Nassine and Marcus) and little engagement with change in a non-personal, broader context. In this dimension, participation is conceived as a way for young people to achieve change on different levels in a life and world that they experience as somehow needing improvement.

6.3. Dimension 3: Involvement in different participatory activities as expression of experiences with institutions

This dimension is about involvement in different participatory activities as an expression and/or reflection of experiences with institutions. The cases suggest that the different experiences that young people have had with institutions (formal, in the main), influence their motivations to engage and feeling of comfort with different forms of participatory activities. Experiences, therefore, find expression in participatory activities. Experiences in formal institutions or very formalised institutions such as school or professional training settings, but also political organisations, play a particular role; formal institutions require roles (predetermined, such as student, member and so forth) and expectations (e.g. adherence to sets of rules) that do not always correspond to the self and one's needs, and often clash with young people because they are spaces and roles that they have not themselves chosen. If a young person is successful in fulfilling his/ her role and expectations, and if this context fits to his/ her needs (or the other way round), then experiences within these settings can be positive and empowering. If this is not the case – and experiences are fraught and conflicted – they are more

likely to be alienated from such settings and more oriented to informal settings, which they have chosen themselves. These experiences are a form of 'institutional learning' and there are three possible figurations to illustrate how institutional learning and participation interact:

- The figuration of orientation towards formal participation after positive experiences within institutions
- The figuration of orientation towards informal structures after negative experiences within institutions
- The figuration of ambivalent orientation after ambivalent experiences within institutions

The figuration of orientation towards formal participation after positive experiences within institutions

Amanda's biography represents this figuration because of her positive experiences with formal institutions which were helpful and supportive when she was being bullied, and instrumental in ending the bullying. This was, in terms of Amanda's narration, her first positive institutional experience. Her later engagement in several student councils and the youth council seems to be based on these positive experiences – in the sense of fitting in and feeling recognised – in the context of formal structures. She notes that compulsory school - where she was engaged in the Student Council - was a pivotal time in her life: *'I got a completely new role, I would say, and that formed the basis for who I am now, in some way, more or less'* (Amanda, Gothenburg, Youth Council). In this role, she realises: '*I can do good things, I can push it forward and […] I have proven to myself, I can take this role, it is big*'.

For Amanda, the school and student council seems to be strongly connected and a space where she felt empowered and recognised. She speaks of a new role she gets there, maybe in a double sense; she is no longer the little, harassed person of colour that she once was, but an important voice against racism and social inequality. In addition, she is no longer one among others, but a 'big player'.

The figuration of orientation towards informal structures after negative experiences within institutions

Mario is a young person who oriented towards self-organised structures, and this seems to be connected with his experience of failing at times to meet educational expectations and of being an outsider among his classmates. These negative experiences led to his more or less rational and detached relationship with public institutions. He sees himself as someone who engages in *real* politics outside of formal structures. As such, he seems to prefer self-organising and creating contexts for his engagement activities. He describes his graffiti activities as a:

> *'[K]ind of rebellion […] doing something not permitted and you're happy about that […] something beautiful comes out – but it wouldn't have been that beautiful if it was not on this wall and it was not prohibited' (Mario, Plovdiv, Post Cultural Scene).*

The underground music scene of the older Mario is connected to this idea of founding a pure, authentic and independent, open space where everybody can be him/ herself, a space of free speech and political discussion: '*there are other opinions too […] that's what democracy is'*.

Mario connects these spaces with some demarcations from school and university contexts which are spaces he does not explicitly reject but where he does not fit.

The figuration of ambivalent orientation after ambivalent experiences within institutions

Marcus's activities seem to be affected by his ambivalent life experience in and with different institutions and organisations. He presents an entrenched mistrust in institutions, especially public and welfare-focused institutions, with only some exceptions, because these experiences with them have been traumatic, labelling and limiting. His biography is characterised by fluctuations and vacillations in his experiences with others (mainly youth work agents of social services) by whom he felt supported, at times, and by experiences of heteronomy and domination by his father, school and youth services. He presents himself between experiences of the loss of control and loss of power on the one hand and as active and (self-)efficacious on the other hand. He moves between arrest, psychiatry, his parents who throw him out, and the confident claim of individual rights. Getting his own flat and gaining financial support was important to him: 'T*hey actually really help you here in Germany*' (Marcus, Frankfurt, Youth Centre). His activities in the youth centre move between the points of self-assertion and autonomy of *'I can do […] whatever I want'* and frustration that there is nobody who is really listening to him. This can all be read as a power struggle for public space and visibility but also a reflection of his ambivalence towards formal and other institutions.

Discussion: participatory activities as expression of experiences with institutions

The interviews suggest that choosing more organised and formal, or less organised and informal, forms of participation, or creating self-organised spaces, depends on experiences young people have had with formal institutions/ organisations. If they had had the experience that formal institutions are helpful or useful to them, it is more likely that they will choose institutionalised, formal forms of participation later to reflect their interests and issues. Furthermore, positive experiences with institutions can bring about competencies of abstraction and postponing a fulfilment of immediate needs, which are helpful abilities in the future (e.g. helping to feel comfortable in other institutions) and in wider society.[6]

If institutions are experienced as a barrier to addressing one's own issues and personal concerns, or are places of discomfort and discontent, there is a likelihood that young people will develop a more sceptical attitude towards (formal) institutions, and prefer other, informal spaces, or have difficulties when being confronted with institutional demands, such on performance and bureaucracy. Both of these possibilities are strongly connected to the question around the alternative resources of young people – young people with low resources are more likely to become resigned or to seek out a counter- or parallel-world to exist (such as Marcus's drug-dealing connection), whereas young people with high resources are more likely to *create* an alternative world which is productive and even 'conventionally' useful (such as Mario's Political and Cultural Centre). The biographies show that experiences with institutionalised contexts can be decisive if young people develop confidence in them rather than scepticism and mistrust. It seems also that the experience of injustice within formal institutions can

6 On this point, it might be added that many young people living in Europe experienced the last financial crisis which came about as a result of political failure. This has resulted in a mistrust in public institutions, such as banks and politicians. It is to be seen what comes from this concerning participation.

motivate young people to change something in participatory contexts (if they have the resources).

6.4. Dimension 4: Involvement in participatory activities to cope with harmful experiences

The four dimension shows engagement in participatory activities to cope with harmful biographical experiences. The young people marked different activities as meaningful because they helped them to cope with challenging or painful experiences or life phases. In this dimension, the meaningful activities the young people found and/or developed in this phase (most after a while, some during this phase) are ways of coping with harmful biographical experiences – in a more or less active way – some by presenting 'survivor stories'[7] or stories of development from crisis to stabilisation. The term 'coping' is one used in psychological and pedagogical contexts. It means the cumulative efforts of a person, who when confronted with a challenging or stressful situation, copes with it and successfully develops (new) strategies and/ or applies new skills and resources to solve their crises in a productive way. The concept is about the strategies (productive or not) but also about the effort taken (Stangl, 2018). Coping is a procedural approach and an ability to produce and apply experiences, strategies and behaviour patterns. The concept of coping is connected (but slightly different) to the concept of 'Bewältigung'[8]. The concept of 'Lebensbewältigung' means that all actions and activities an individual undertakes to become and stay capable of acting, especially when acting is against a backdrop of socio-structural detachment and exposure to socio-economic hardship (Böhnisch, 2008). Thereby, forms of acting that are socially accepted, but also deviant behaviours, must be recognised as ways of 'coping with life' because they all open up possibilities of becoming or staying capable of acting for those who have less access to normative ways of acting.

In contrast to the concept of coping, 'Lebensbewältigung' refers not only to critical life events that are circumscribed by a certain situation in life, but also assumes that individuals have to face an accumulation of critical biographical and social constellations that make different demands of coping due to the process of socialisation in the life-course (Böhnisch at al., 2009). Coping in the current analysis means a procedural perspective approach to young people reactions to their life challenges, especially within critical events, in order to develop and apply strategies, resources, knowledge and competences. Participative contexts are here spaces and activities in which young people find it possible to work on the demands of life ('coping with life') on the one hand and critical life events ('coping with crisis') on the other hand. Less formal participation contexts seem particularly suitable for questions of coping, because they are (more likely to be) voluntary, self-selecting and flexible compared to, for example, school or family. They are also easier to connect with one's own images, ideas and issues. Four figurations explore varying expressions of coping with harmful experiences through different functions of participatory activities:

- The figuration of coping through political participation

7 'Survivor stories' (Davis, 2005:145; Loseke, 2009) are structured around a notion of 'before and after'. They contain a message about experiences of victimisation earlier in life, but also indicate that the teller, through emotion-work, has come to a new understanding of these experiences, which had led to an identity-change.

8 Bewältigung is a German term. Translated into English it can mean coping, mastery, accomplishment, coverage.

- The figuration of coping through institutionalised participation
- The figuration of coping though participation-hopping
- The figuration of coping through creating or looking for an alternative place

The figuration of coping through political participation

The first figuration of coping through political participation is a way of coping with life-aggravating circumstances with political participation in a strict sense. A figuration in Dimension 2 ('achieved personal and political self-efficacy') showed that some young people frame their issues in a political way and in political terms. Returning to these ideas, and elaborating briefly here, ***Zuhre*** and ***Amanda*** are useful illustrations. In these biographies, structural discriminations are framed politically through activism. By presenting one's life as influenced by political events and social injustice, the young people here can name and classify their issues (by, for example, Amanda's recognition that racism is systemic and not individual). This is a way to distance oneself from individualising one's discrimination (by for example, opting out) and allows at the same time, a way of telling a story, as relevant and socially important, and a way of being 'right' or on the 'right side'.

Zuhre, 22, was born in Turkey into a conservative family as the third child of the family. She is known in family as a 'miracle child'; her mother was advised not to give birth to her as she (her mother) was having heart problems but her mother went ahead and, strangely, always said that her heart problems were miraculously cured afterwards. Zuhre's mother works as a market owner, and Zuhre often accompanies her. Zuhre's father works as a construction worker master. In primary school, Zuhre met a 'leftist' primary school teacher whom she designated as 'one of the most important people in my life'. The development of Zuhre's 'leftist' ideas were influenced also by her older sister who is also in the leftist movement at the university in Ankara and through her consumption of left-leaning media. It is also at that time that she learned about journalists such as Metin Göktepe (killed in police custody) and decided to be a journalist. During high school, she entered into a leftist political organisation. Instead of university, even though she had hoped to do journalism at Ankara University, she decided to gain some independence from her sister (who was always like a 'half mother' for her). That is how she decided to study in Eskişehir. There she became an active member of the student initiative and active in a feminist group within the initiative.

Zuhre presents a biography partly constricted by gender – as a young woman in a traditional milieu. She finds autonomy in a political movement and it helps her to cope not just with her milieu but also with a political transformation and a life-threatening event. Zuhre grew up in a traditional family in Turkey and presents herself as someone who was 'accidentally' raised 'male-like'. During the interview, she implies at various points that she felt dismissed by her family (and particularly her mother) and controlled by her father. Inspired by a teacher in high school, she started to engage with left politics, went to a left student initiative and became very active in feminist and leftist issues. There she felt she could belong and be recognised for being herself. The experience in the aftermath of the Ankara bombing on the 10th October 2015 assured her of her perspectives: '*I cannot hold a gun, I want revolution but it will be through smiling, I will try to persuade people.*' (Zuhre, Eskesehir, Student Initiative). For Zuhre, political engagement in feminist issues seems to help her to cope with her relationship with her parents and with her parents' conservatism. It has also given her the support and courage to be

what she wants to be a modern, independent, young women, with her own self-image and ideas for her life.

The figuration of coping through institutionalised participation

The third figuration of coping is through institutionalised participation. Young people can find their place of coping within (non-)formal participation. Those spaces are often characterised by hierarchy, clear promotion prospects, capacity for a personal CV, and a large amount of predictability and reliability for participants. In a way, these spaces also offer some protection against unpredictable peer contexts 'outside'. Cases in this figuration are ***Paula***, ***Nathanael***, ***Amanda*** and ***Nassine.***

Paula is active in the Youth and Student Council, where she can find friends through activities they share together and where nobody feels threatened by her giftedness. This and Paula's activity in the EPA brings her to friends that are '*just more grown up*' (Paula, Frankfurt, Youth and Student Council) and with whom she feels much '*more on a level*'. Paula, as a former outsider because of being marginalised finds self-esteem in institutionalised participation. In those activities, a set of clear rules, young people older than herself, and partly grown-up supervisors and shared activities, the danger of exclusion is limited. Nathanael's activity in the Scouts[9]**,** Amanda's work in the Youth Council, and Nassine's place in formal participation are other examples. The more liberal and formal religious Islamic Youth Association, presented as the '*mosque Islam*' (Nassine, Bologna, Islamic Youth Association), offers Nassine a possibility to participate and to show in an 'official' context that she is a taking being a Muslim seriously. Apart from this the '*street-Islam*', as she calls it, which she experienced in romantic relationships with Muslim men, has been discriminatory and silenced her. In the more formal and thereby controlled environment of the Mosque as a place for praying, teaching and in a Muslim community working on their public performance, Nassine is safe from such dismissals.

The figuration of coping though participation-hopping

In the figuration of coping through participation-hopping, ***Marcus*** is an example. Marcus does not subscribe to any particular activities or participatory spaces but, rather, engages with them when he needs them. This process is not exactly conscious or self-aware but led by impulse, spontaneity and the strong need of finding a place of recognition and belonging – in the sense of a more or less desperate search. As the need still drives him, he had still not found that 'one' place by the time of the interview and he tended to criticise any activity in which had been engaged previously. The Youth Centre which he has visited throughout his youth is a fluid 'come and go' engagement for him. He claims to have autonomy there '*I can do whatever in the Youth Center, whatever I want*' (Marcus, Frankfurt, Youth Centre). Nevertheless, he always comes back and stays there. He did other activities, sometimes intensively, before he left again. Marcus is someone who participates for his purposes and as long as they work for him, with the possible exception of the Youth Center where he found a steady space, with a variety of leisure time activities, support and information. On the other hand, he claims to dislike the Youth Center and his employees because he does not trust them and emphasises being his own boss in the Centre. It could be read as a struggle and strong need or search for self-determination

9 See Dimension 5: the figuration of being oriented towards an adult culture.

against the backdrop of a life that has been characterised by experiences of domination and heteronomy and the feeling that he cannot rely on anyone, even in the Youth Center.

The figuration of coping through making or looking for an alternative place

Young people who have not found a proper space for their needs and are 'out of kilter' represent this figuration. Their way to cope is to look for an alternative space or to create their space that they can enjoy or where they can find what they need. This is strongly connected with the feeling of not fitting in and the search for finding a new, personal, unique and/ or positive self-image or an identity that is not connected to their site of struggle. Their participation activities have the function of giving them an alternative and new start and to become somebody else. Examples for this figuration are ***Nassine***, ***Paula***, ***Owen*** and ***Mario***.

Nassine's engagement in the Islamic Centre is the result of a long search to find a safe space of belonging, a way to underpin her new identity as Nassine and to show herself and to others that the 'old Vanessa' has gone. Paula's participation contexts help her cope with the 'stigma' of being highly gifted and to find a place of acceptance and appreciation and a positive self-image. Owen's coping was concerned with becoming adult and the necessity he felt to create his own self-understanding as a musician. And Mario created his own spaces where he could live a different part of his life and where he could explore his ideas. Mario's double-life of conformist (law student) and non-conformist (graffiti artist and underground musician) is his way of coping. This could be an expression of Mario's self-conception as a revolutionary in order to create his own, ideal world but he still has to be part of a more established and normative world. He is also showing here that he is not '*loser*' (own words).

Discussion: participatory activities to cope with harmful experiences

The young people in this figuration have taken several different paths of different activities until they found one or some activities that fit and that they experience as their safe space and circle of equals (Amanda), their community (Paula, Nassine), their support in needs (Marcus) and/or their possibility to develop into a new identity (Nassine). In some cases, this activity has to be created (Mario). These activities are described as giving young recognition, possibility for identity-work, life-stabilisation, meaningful relationships and a way to cope. Often the young people put a lot of effort into their search process, which reflects the deep need to find a suitable and meaningful space and activity. Spaces and activities for coping differ - what might be a perfect space for one might not fit at all for another, even if they have similar needs. The degree of commitment depends on these biographical needs; while some see their participation as a lifestyle or life-form that deeply changes their lives, social circles and habitus (Nassine), others present themselves more like participants when they need it (Marcus) and others like part-time participants under special circumstances (Rada). The young people finding these spaces for themselves is dependent on the possibilities on offer, the degree of commitment they are willing to give, what they need for coping, the open or closed nature of the activities, and the resources of the young people within their different (national, socio-economic, cultural) context.

6.5. Dimension 5: Involvement in participatory activities as positioning between youth and adult culture

The final dimension shows engagement in participatory activities as a search for and/or expression of different positioning between youth and adult cultures. Some of the interviewees experienced difficult peer-constellations, especially within compulsory contexts, such as school, for example by being bullied or excluded. The following cases found their participation context within peer-contexts in youth cultures (figuration 1 below) or in more adult-organised and formalised cultures (figuration 2 below). Being an outsider challenges young people not least because young people need to adapt to social circles outside of the core family, to attach to peer-contexts and activities, and to spend their time mainly in school contexts. The young people in the biographies describe how their inability to follow the 'regular path' of making friends sometimes hindered their development of a stable self-concept, and meant that they could not feel safe in groups of the same age and that they feel ashamed of their experiences (described as tertiary victimisation (see Kiefl & Lamek, 1986) – when someone who have been a victim internalises the feeling of being guilty and expresses shame about what he/she experienced). To be rejected in school – an institution, which distributes young people in groups based on their performance – is described by for all of our interviewees who experienced it as painful and long-lasting in their lives.

Some young people are oriented to 'adult worlds', such as formal participation in politics, leisure time or adult-led structures and projects. Many young people present themselves as outsiders to other young people, who are not part of the same activity (perhaps it is a sense of uniqueness or a feeling of a lack of collectivism). Participation in this respect can be a way to look for or to create an alternative context, to find recognition, belonging, acceptance and appreciation. Elias's approach of Outsiders and Established (1990) explores the dynamics of practices that form an Insider and Outsider within interdependent figurations. Young people present themselves as Outsiders within compulsory constellations before they started participating in a meaningfully participative activity. On the other hand, within their freely-chosen, non-compulsory, and thereby (presumably) meaningful spaces, they can present themselves as Insiders, as experts or acknowledged members of something special. Distinguishing from the exclusive, compulsory space, such as school, might be part of being involved in such contexts, a mechanism called 'counter-stigmatization' (see Elias & Scotson, 1990), and a strategy where the 'weaker' group, the Outsiders, try to counter-stigmatise the Insiders, for example by belittling them in some way. This kind of 'other world' is healing, open, interesting and challenging for young people.

Two figurations are relevant:

- The figuration of orientation towards youth cultural scenes
- The figuration of orientation towards adult culture and habitus

The figuration of orientation towards youth cultural scenes

This figuration does not have a great deal of detail because the context of the young people's participation has already been explored. However, young people who engage themselves in youth cultural scenes, such as ***Paula*** with her activity in the EPA and left scene and ***Mario*** who in the PCC, are examples of those who are part of spaces that have a specifically youth-led (and not adult-led) focus.

The figuration of orientation towards the adult culture and habitus

Other young people tend to participate in activities that are framed by older people or adults, such as ***Nathanael*** in the Scouts ***Rada***, ***Zuhre*** and ***Paula*** in adult-shaped spaces with other young people. Again, these contexts have been explored before. ***Nathanael*** is an important example in this figuration. He was outsider at school and sought out a safe adult-led space where he found clear rules, a hierarchy determined by competences, and therefore the ability to be acknowledged: '*your place is among the Scouts so to speak, you know where you belong.*'

The boarding school in ***Paula***'s case contrasted with her previous experiences of being an outsider. Paula did well in this adult-led framework. There is also an element of finding 'coolness' (or not needing it) for these young people. In the Youth and Student Council, and the EPA, Paula met people she things are 'cool' and vice versa: '*because before I always thought like […] there are so many cool people, why do I never meet them [...] and then I met them*' (Paula, Frankfurt, Youth and Student Council). Paula is active in both youth cultural scenes and adult-led scenes but importantly for Paula is that that the people she is around are doing interesting projects and enabling her participation. At the point of the interview she seems less political than looking out for an active, safe, stimulating space and activity, where she can get know people while doing things that challenge her. She says '*you become friends faster […] especially with the people who you will be working with*'.

Discussion: positioning between youth and adult culture

Meaningful activities are often outside of educational institutions (such as school) and within voluntary formal organisations or informal structures. In these activities, young people often find a group where they experience a different milieu, mood and possibility for self-presentation than in compulsory constellation; they are insiders, connecting with other (young) people, are kind of 'cool' and a part of their very own community and space. The cases show some kind of alienation to peers before or as a result of participation. Some interviewees show a special distinction from compulsory school context after their experiences of being an outsider (such as Mario, who never liked anybody from school and does not like making friends at university, or Paula, who dislikes the people from school, and enjoys older people who can teach her interesting things). What is key is that these young people need alternative spaces found in youth cultures or adults habitus activities. They are often, also, addressing previous stigmas around being gifted or 'uncool' or a' loser'. The term 'stigma-management' comes from Goffman (1967) and describes a 'technique to control information'. People who feel themselves different to 'normal people' often feel ashamed and pained because of a stigma.[10] To find techniques to cope with a stigma prevents damage to a person's social and individual identity. The stigma management in this dimension is a re-distribution of peer activities to another meaningful space. Those alternative spaces have other equivalents than the 'normal' school and peer context: to be 'cool', you do not need to be physically strong, male, and so forth, you do not need to hate school and education, and you can excel at activities, interests, development, and performance benchmarked by the specific claim of the space. The 'coolness' of such spaces is more negotiable and accessible – young people build up another capital/ equivalent, alternative peers, recognition from grown-ups, and leisure time. Youth cultural

[10] A stigma can be linked to a visible feature, such as being physically different or marginalised, or an invisible characteristics, such as a sickness, a painful experience, poverty, etc. (Goffman: 1967)

activities in particular seem to be very important for young people who had/ have difficulties within forced contexts – they are voluntary, motivation intrinsically, offer skills and interest and a different 'pool' of social circles, and are often are a safe distance from school.

6.6. Dimensions of participation biographies: conclusions

The five dimensions above are aspects of biographical constructions and it is their interrelation that forms 'participation biographies' (Schwanenflügel, 2015). Understanding the relationships between these dimensions helps us to answer the research questions which guided the analysis:

- What biographical experiences and orientations are expressed by engaging in participatory activities in the cases?
- How do participatory activities become subjectively meaningful in young people's lives?

The analysis suggested that the participatory activities in which young people are involved can be interpreted as a search for fulfilling basic human needs for recognition, belonging, self-efficacy and result from attempts of coping with experiences of harm and limited agency. The biographical constellations from which these activities emerge are situations and experiences of not fitting into contexts in which they find themselves, a lack of recognition or belonging, or in which they do not fulfil normative expectations, e.g. of the family of origin (Nassine, Marcus), of school (Mario, Amanda, Paula, Marcus), of peers in school (Mario, Paula, Nathanael, Marcus) or in university (Mario, Owen). It is striking that in all of the analysed biographies young people narrated their experiences of not fitting into contexts which they did not themselves choose. Their (participatory) activities in that sense are different ways of dealing with experiences and situations. Most of the young people have been involved in contexts where – after a short or longer search – they have found recognition, belonging, or self-efficacy and which have helped them in coping with the biographical constellations they experienced as difficult - except for Marcus, who appeared to still be searching for such a space and/or involvement.

Most of the young people reconstruct identifiable situations, retrospectively, in which they become aware of not fitting in. Rosenthal refers to such situations – or better: narrative constructions – as 'biographical turning points' (2002). Or they refer to life events or conditions described as powerful constraints. In the case of Paula, for example, it was being diagnosed as highly gifted which she cited as the reason for becoming an outsider. Nathanael feels ashamed due to being rather small physically which is in conflict with normative expectations of masculinity. The process of coping with such unsatisfied needs or harmful situations lead young people to move beyond their initial contexts of socialisation like family, school or peer groups. Searching for belonging, recognition and experiences of self-efficacy in alternative spaces and constellations of activity made them go out into public space, sometimes aware of the fact that this implied 'going public' and exposing oneself to and engaging with others. Following Gerhardt (2007: 25), their longing for self-determination and autonomy made them engage and get involved in new contexts which they found while moving in public space. To a certain degree, Nathanael is an exception as it was his parents who sent him to the Scouts at age 6. However, when later his brother left the Scouts, he actively and consciously decided to stay. The biographical impact of going out into public space has different expressions, which depend on previous biographical experiences, available resources and the concept of the self.

They are therefore strongly connected with aspects of identity-work (or to say: they are an integral part of identity-work). The expressions of 'going public' mirror the figurations of interdependence between the dimensions of biographical meaning-making:

If young people choose political or politicised, institutionalised or more informal, self-organised and self-made places and styles of participation to gain recognition, belonging and self-efficacy (or have not found such a place or activity yet), it is strongly dependent on the experiences they had within institutional contexts (Dimension 3). If they have experiences of being able to fit in (or make a fit with) school, its rules, roles and demands that require abstraction from the self and postponing fulfilment of subjective needs, they may expect to find recognition and self-efficacy in formal contexts which are structured in a similar way. If they reconstruct their school career as one of alienation and failure, they may avoid formal contexts and prefer more informally structured contexts. Depending on prior experience they expect to experience recognition or misrecognition, belonging or alienation, self-efficacy or failure in contexts which they assess as similar in their functioning. For example, Amanda experienced school as a place of support to her, which increases her feeling of self-efficacy. On the contrary, Mario experienced school as a difficult space, concerning achievement and peers. He has difficulties to fit in and thereby seeks for alternative activities and spaces to gain recognition and belonging.

The scope of their activities is influenced by experiences of the self-efficacy young people find in other spaces, different from context in which they experienced a lack of agency. They can imagine changing themselves, their concrete environment or society as a whole (Dimension 2). Young people with strong feelings of self-efficacy develop a self-concept as powerful and active. This has an effect on their ideas and what they want to change. At the same time, the claim to change the world, as long as on the basis of democratic principles, is recognised in society and thereby has its very own effect on self-perception and self-efficacy. This raises the chance that young people get involved in social issues and develop trust in public institutions (e.g. councils and parties), such as Amanda. Vice versa, the risk is high that mistrust in public institutions increases as a (side)effect of a lack of recognition of activities (such as in the case of Marcus).

All of these aspects are relevant components of the identity-work of young people. The label 'participatory activities' therefore for is both an expression and element of their identity-work. Whether involvement in participatory activities has the function of identity-stabilisation or of identity-diversification (Dimension 1) depends on the experiences young people have in their lives, their social and material resources and their reflections on experiences so far (see interrelation of life-course trajectory and biography in Chapter 0 oben5 oben). For example, Nathanael has experiences of being recognised in the Scouts and his family of origin. Both for him serve as opposite to his experiences of being rejected by his peers in school. From this results a commitment to the Scouts which has been interpreted as identity-stabilisation through participation. He ascribes his self-efficacy to the Scouts which help him in confronting teasing and being stigmatised in school. For Mario, the establishment of a self-governed place is a possibility to live according to his ideas and wishes which did not resonate with his peers in school. Mario does not turn away from school as such but uses alternative places where he can experience other facets of his life and identity – identity-diversification through participation.

The orientation towards a more youth cultural or adult-orientated culture (Dimension 5) is interdependent with the other dimensions in terms of young people who are active in more formalised, institutionalised and adult-led contexts and orientate themselves towards an 'adult' habitus (see also Lüküslü et al., 2018). Young people who have the experience of failing in adult-led places and/or requiring orientation towards an adult habitus but have positive experiences with peers, tend to search for youth cultural contexts and forms of expressions. Those who manage orientation towards both sides can profit from distinction from other young people. This is as an expression of the general necessity to distinguish from others to experience oneself as an individual and to perform as such. Thus, youth- and adult-led spaces have a socialising effect inasmuch as young people have the experience of being recognised for both their orientation and the respective performance.

The attempt of showing the interdependency of dimensions in general way implies a reduction of the multi-level-interdependency of the interrelation of biography, life (course) trajectory) and life-course. As such, it is useful to consider now how the dimensions are interrelated in biographies. Three exemplary biographies – Amanda, Marcus and Mario – are presented.

(1) Amanda frames her experiences of bullying as racism and discrimination (biographical turning point). Thus, she can interpret her experiences as a societal issue rather than a personal problem. With support of her mother and her teacher, she succeeds in changing her situation. In her narrative, this sudden change is reconstructed as a kind of explosion of recognition and self-efficacy - her 'being different' which has been marked as a stigma (see Goffman, 1967) by her peers, develops into a societal issue on the one hand and, on the other hand, into a political issue whereby she is able to secure her integrity. It stimulates Amanda to work on the issues that she experienced by bringing them into the political sphere (Dimension 2: achieved personal and political efficacy). Thus, her life-story illustrates meaning-making and allows her to use her biographical experience in a way that others may benefit too. In a certain sense, her experiences of discrimination, and then coping, are a framework and resource of meaning in her biography. They allow her to frame the experience of 'othering' in a positive way and to integrate it in her identity-work (Dimension 1: identity-stabilisation). Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that Amanda 'chooses' to get in involved in Formal Youth Representation, a context which is politically recognised while also formalised and structured according to an adult habitus (Dimension 3: orientation towards formal participation/ Dimension 4: coping through political participation/ Dimension 5: orientation towards adult habitus). Amanda's activities to engage as a young woman of colour against racism in the framework of the Formal Youth Representation ensures a high degree of recognition which in turn encourages her to develop the aspiration of changing society as a whole and supports her in a process of stabilising her identity as 'different' (Dimension 1: identity-stabilisation/ Dimension 2: achieved personal and political self-efficacy). Orientating towards a context structured by adult habitus (Dimension 5: adult culture) reflects her wish the distinguish from her former peers in school.

(2) Marcus has experiences of not fitting in – in the form of being diagnosed with ADHD – because of what is framed as a personal problem. Adults and representatives of (welfare state) institutions made decisions for him to define his needs and interests. These experiences culminate in his forced hospitalisation in a psychiatric clinic which he narrates as traumatic and abusive. He was also thrown out of his family's home. Marcus, at least to some extent,

finds some belonging in the Youth Centre which he has been visiting since his early youth. He experiences recognition from single youth workers there and social workers in other institutions during the period of his youth welfare contact (Dimension 3: ambivalent institution-orientation). Marcus becomes a seeker of places of recognition and belonging. For a time, he seems to have found such a place in a Salafist group, an alternative soccer club and a young girls group in the Youth Centre who adopt him as mentor (Dimension 4: coping through participation-hopping). His individual and spontaneous activities of providing support for refugees are not only a way to secure recognition but also to prove that he not only needs but is also able to provide for others (Dimension 2: struggling with personal and personal self-efficacy/ Dimension 1: identity-compensation). Not surprisingly, Marcus tends to orientate towards youth cultural activities, as the adult world seems untrustworthy – even though he sometimes mobilises (professional) adults to support him in cases of need.

Mario, a successful pupil, fails in making the transition to high school and has to go to a school further away where he feels alienated from his classmates. This experience makes him feel like a 'loser' (Dimension 2: low self-efficacy; turning point). His way to cope with the situation is to create his own, alternative, youth cultural spaces (graffiti group, underground music scene), where he can experiment and live his interests, ideas and aspects of his personhood, in which the peers in school are not interested. But he does not 'break' with school or the peers there. Later he decides to study law while at the same distancing himself from the community of law students. The self-created places seem to serve as a counter-world without renouncing the need to still be part of the 'established' world (Dimension 1: identity-diversification). The creation of these spaces is connected to the idea of creating another, better world and contributing to changing the world by providing a space of political discuss and information. This does not involve challenging mainstream society, in the way that Amanda chooses, for example. Instead, Mario creates a parallel society. Mario – in contrast to Marcus for example – seems to avail of certain experiences of recognition and self-efficacy (f.e. family of origin, choir he was part of) that enable him to create and establish own spaces (Dimension 2: achieved personal and political self-efficacy/ Dimension. 4: coping through create own participatory places). Mario is – in terms of the two worlds he inhabits – orientated towards both youth culture and adult habitus (Dimension 4).

These three examples show in an exemplary way the interdependency of the dimensions and figurations that from analysing the life stories from participation biographies. The aim of this analysis has been to show the connection between participation and biographies in terms of elaborating the role of participation for subjective meaning-making in the framework of biographical construction. Finally, by 'participation biographies' (see Schwanenflügel, 2015) the analysis understands biographies as those in which the interrelation between biographical experiences, available social and material resources, and subjective meaning-making are expressed through narrative and emphasised in relation to different forms of participation – and also, it is assumed, through lived lives. In other words, everyone has a participation biography of some sort and it refers to those aspects of biographies in which the public or encounters with the public sphere are made relevant. The dimensions have illustrated dominant central aspects of such biographies (not only but especially concerning participation). Their individuality and interrelation makes a participation biography. In every case, the following questions have been important:

- What connection exists between the individual biography and collective styles of participation? (see Rowley et al., 2018)
- Why is a certain group or activity more likely to be attractive for young people – why can a young person cope with his/her needs and life issues better in a certain social context than in another?
- Which importance do experiences with institutions have in participatory activities and which role does the public sphere play?
- What resources, opportunity structures and significant others are needed to achieve to produce a biographical 'fit'?
- Where and how is the appropriation of social spaces referred to in the narratives in terms of becoming subjectively relevant places?
- How does a young person presents his/her route into participation in his/her narration?

The final section of the report draws together the clusters and dimensions analysis in terms of learning about participation.

7. Conclusions to biographical analysis

The biographical analysis led to the development of clusters of participation careers and dimensions of participation biographies. The aim of the analysis was to explore the ways in which participation unfolds within young people's biographies and how they make sense of their participation in terms of their biographical experiences.

The analysis revealed, unsurprisingly, that no one young person's biography is the same as another. Nonetheless, it is possible to identify how participation evolves through young people's lives and the motivations, needs and desires of participation. The analysis here also partly confirms the findings from the earlier, briefer biographical analysis in the ethnographic case studies (see introduction) which identified self-made wo/man stories of self-development, experimentation stories of exploration and learning, working towards change and justice, coping through participation, and importance of role models (Batsleer et al., 2017). Some of these findings in the ethnographic case studies have been presented in different ways here but are nonetheless very similar. The added value in this report is primarily the deeper understanding of biographies in terms of how progressing through participation careers unfolds and how young people make meaning from experiences with regard to their life story and identity.

Referring to the relation between the perspectives of normative institutionalised life-courses, life trajectories and biographies, the analysis focussed on reconstructing on the one hand *participation careers* which are conceptualised as young people's trajectories into and through participatory activities resulting from particular constellations of structural factors, and transitional of entering and/or changing different settings of participation (Schwanenflügel, 2015: 266). These clusters of participation careers, which encapsulate young people's participatory experiences and learning processes and achievements, are conceived of as 'dominant modes of participation' through which young people's participation begins, evolves and changes. On the other hand, *dimensions of biographical meaning-making* with regard to participation have been reconstructed. These dimensions are aspects of young people's identity-work involved in and resulting from reflecting on experiences. The dimensions of participation biographies are, then, those 'aspects' of young people's meaning-making of their participation - their biographical experiences - which influence young people's participation in a variety of ways. Although there are different expressions and different degrees of centrality and relevance in the individual biographies, these dimensions apply to all the biographical cases. They are thus cross-cutting the clusters of participation careers.

The relationship between meaning-making and modes of participation is not causal and it is not argued that meaning-making in particular ways will lead to certain modes of participation; rather, the analysis indicates that there are predominant ways that young people make sense of and attribute meaning to their participatory experiences that are relevant in their participation journeys. In other words, young people's biographical experiences of participation manifest in ways that bring about a mode of participation that is itself evolving and changing. Indeed, relating modes of participation and dimensions of biographical meaning-making allows for reconstructing *participation biographies* in terms of a 'process of biographical construction in the dialectic between institutional structures and experienced opportunities of participation on

the one hand and the possibility of producing narrative coherence on the side of the individual' (ibid. 2015: 76).

The first cluster (mode) 'fighting for justice from inside the system' is concerned with participation careers of young people who – compared to many of their peers – get involved in more or less organised engagement which is not limited to particular interests but aimed at justice on a larger scale either with a focus on specific groups or on justice in general. In their narratives, these young people refer to experiences of injustice whereby engagement can be interpreted in terms of coping with injustice. This however does not explain why and how they have translated their personal experience into a wider political issue. Here, first, feelings of self-efficacy – or the search for experiences of self-efficacy – play a central role: in many respects, the larger the issue, the more power and control is needed to make a difference. This means, second, that these young people, seem to have had experiences of being recognised by others who referred to them as competent and able to make a difference. Third, these young people have had positive experiences in formal institutions. Formal institutions require abstracting from the personal present to a universal future and to postpone fulfilment of subjective needs. The same applies to political engagement for bigger aims. Apart from this, these young people work for justice within institutions which implies that they are used to moving in institutions without the experience of (or fear of) alienation. Finally, these young people manage to balance between the world of adults and youth culture – or are even willing to engage with an adult habitus if it is purposeful to do so, which may imply an increased distance to youth cultural practices of their peers (see also Lüküslü et al., 2018).

The second cluster 'conformists for change' refers to participation careers of young people who have progressed smoothly through formal institutions, and especially education. While some have experienced critical life events they have to cope with, they have not interpreted them in terms of injustice. They are driven by normative perspectives but they do not position themselves within societal conflicts. In fact, they often do not want to risk their social position. They encounter possibilities of engagement and participatory activities in the course of their educational and professional careers or of organised leisure time activities. Hence, these young people have also had positive experiences with and in formal institutions, and they know how to benefit from recognition within these contexts. They do not refrain from compromising their identities with an adult habitus (ibid.). Their self-efficacy is an institutionalised one inasmuch as they rely on institutionalised roles and activities and the power they entail. Nevertheless, it also includes discovering the political dimension of one's institutional and professional status. Enlarging their educational and professional pathway by social or political engagement brings these young people additional recognition, including recognition on a different moral level in terms of respect in the sense of a valuable contribution to society beyond the fulfilment of standard roles and obligations – enriching and/or diversifying their identities (Honneth, 1996).

The cluster 'personal and professional development by care for others' refers to careers characterised by voluntary engagement in terms of care and responsibility. Doing something for others provides both experiences of self-efficacy because of requiring competence and producing an effect of one's own agency and recognition in terms of a moral return for altruism. Some of these young people have to cope with insecure identities. As well as a moral return, voluntary engagement tends to be embedded in (non-governmental) organisations that provide a feeling of belonging and a 'risk-free' orientation to clear roles and tasks that removes the

need to compete in an uncertain social constellation, such as a peer group. Different from the 'conformists for change' this does not necessarily require engaging with adult-like roles or practices but allows being young, yet in a specific, partly pre-defined way that is open for negotiation and appropriation within a clear set of rules. Experiences with institutions tend to be ambivalent. Although the activities of volunteering tend to be rather organized, these young people have not necessarily had positive experiences in formal institutions; indeed, fact, organized volunteering – including the adults involved – can be experienced as an alternative organisation with different 'types' of adults in an organization that is alternative but accessible.

Finally, the cluster 'experimenting with new paths for change' refers to participation careers in which young people have had negative experiences in formal institutions (failure or alienation). It includes negative experiences with adults representing and working in these institutions. This means that the young people are searching for something different, for different spaces and *relevant* activities in which they can experience recognition and self-efficacy. Consequently, the careers of these young people are characterised by orientation towards more informal spaces and settings, and youth cultural practice rather than adult habitus, and it also implies engaging in creating something new. Without these new spaces and practices, young people do not feel 'complete' and coherent. At the same time, creating something new which is both subjectively meaningful and appreciated and valued by peers, provides the feeling of self-efficacy – of being able to make a relevant difference in the world.

The key learning from the biographical analysis is that young people do not have definitive pathways to participation and nor are their experiences linear or even similar. Nonetheless, young people's biographical experiences – the most common of which have been explored in this report – seem to inform young people's evolving dominant modes of participation in a variety of ways. While recognition, coping, self-efficacy, experiences with institutions, or positioning towards adults and/or youth apply for all the careers, they do so in a different ways and in relation to different social positions, institutional contexts and spatial opportunities. In fact, recognition appears to be the most important factor inasmuch as lack of recognition has been found to be a strong biographical driver while experiences of recognition (and self-efficacy) seem to be necessary to move beyond present and particular needs.

In order to illustrate how young people make sense of their participation within particular modes of participation, two young people's biographies are summarised here. First, Amanda whose biography suggested that her mode of participation was fighting for justice from inside the system. And, second, Nathanael, whose biography illustrated the mode of participation of personal and professional development.

Amanda's lifelong experiences of racism and sexism instilled in her the understanding that injustices are systemic and not individual – that is, that gender, ethnic and other inequalities manifest because of structural norms and not because of individual behaviours or conditions. Amanda's understanding of the structural and the agentic, and the political and the personal, have framed most of her participation. Furthermore, Amanda's formative experiences of being bullied at school because of her skin colour led her to understanding the need to fight back. Importantly, she did so then using formal structures and therefore developed an orientation to these spaces of participation in her adolescence years. Formal participatory mechanisms 'worked' for Amanda in ways that they did not for many of the other young people discussed

in the report. Amanda is, then, someone who fights for equality and against injustice, using the formal mechanisms which she trusts.

Amanda presents a narrative of enduring self-efficacy was developed in her early, family life and through positive engagement with and experiences in formal structures. Amanda learned early on that she could be successful if she tried to address injustices and her self-efficacy now plays a key role in her participation and her political activism. Compared again to other young people, she does not feel powerless or under-confident and utilises her empowerment in her participatory activities. Related to her self-efficacy, Amanda's stable identity within a space, enables her to assert herself, and 'fight her battles', in a range of contexts and ways. Importantly, however, Amanda also found ways of coping with her previous experiences through political and institutionalised participation. Again, she does not individualise her experiences by opting out or retreating; rather she both copes and activates in political spaces and by using the system to fight for change.

Nathanel joined the Scouts at a very young age because of the problems that he had experienced in his peer context in school. His commitment is around helping others, as a leader, in the main. He also experiences comfort, safety and recognition in the Scouts that he does have in other contexts. Nathanael's commitment to the Scouts as a space of belonging is striking and he sees his role as personal and professional for others through leadership.

Nathanel has also found a stable identity (from a previously compromised identity) in the Scouts and it has enabled him to develop there in ways that he thinks will help himself and will help others. Returning to the idea of safety, the Scouts offer Nathanel a way to forge his identity in what he feels is a fractious and pluralised world. It is notable that Nathanel is one of the few young people who devote themselves so entirely to a space (many other of the young people in the biographies are involved in more than one participative space, albeit at different rates). It is clear that Nathanel has found what he needs in the Scouts in terms of identity and personal development. Like Amanda, Nathanel has also found a way of coping with previous experiences through institutionalised participation. These sorts of spaces 'work' for Nathanel in ways that non-formal and informal spaces 'work' for other young people. Nathanel is also oriented towards an adult habitus, wherein he feels more comfortable and, again, safe, and where he feels empowered to help others.

One might ask what qualifies both of these careers as participation careers or even participation biographies. While this seems obvious in Amanda's case, it is less so in Nathanael's (and even less in the case of Marcus, see above). The Partispace analysis can be interpreted in in two ways. First, every individual develops a participation biography in the sense that the individual identity process requires and implies positioning oneself with regard to activities or settings that are addressed as political, social or civic. Second, the biographies analysed here are those of young people who have searched for recognition and/or belonging in 'public' – by choice or by necessity. These young people have all extended their activities in formal institutions beyond the standard role to a degree where they were noticeably 'engaged' and taking responsibility, or they left contexts where something was missing and moved into or through public space until they found a group, a place, a style or an activity with which they could identify with.

The biographical analysis has suggested some key points. Participation is not linear and predetermined by a particular set of factors. This analysis has shown that young people, by

accident or by design, take up particular modes of participation that relate to the interplay between their biographical experiences and lived lives. Not only do young people fluctuate (and crossover) between different spaces and modes of participation, but they also present different biographical understandings of how and why they engage in particular types (or styles) of participation rather than others at different times in their lives. Their 'participation biographies', often concerned with issues such as recognition, identity, self-efficacy, coping, helping and so forth (if not named explicitly by young people), contribute to a mode of participation that is itself changeable and flexible. That is, that the ways in which young people participate and engage in a particular space or group for different reasons than their engagement in another group.

Participation is subjectively-meaningful for young people and, crucially, participation is more often than not deliberate, intentional and a key part of a young person's biography. This is the case for those young people who sought out particular spaces, created spaces, or 'fell into' spaces and decided to stay there. Participation is, therefore, purposeful. It is also evident that getting involved with and thereby contributing to specific styles of participation is a part of a process of seeking a subjectively-meaningful and appropriate place and is dependent on a multi-factorial interrelation.

Finally, the analysis revealed that the fixed distinction between 'participation' and 'non-participation' and the reductive and causal ascription of participation to certain people in certain spaces at certain times for certain reasons do not reflect the complexity of participation in individual biographies. A biographical approach has illustrated that it is crucial to go beyond superficial dichotomies of motivated versus de-motivated, interested versus disinterested, political versus unpolitical, and engaged versus disengaged, to acknowledge and understand the complexity of young people's styles of participation in space and time.

8. Policy recommendations from biographical analysis

The biographical analysis has led to some key policy recommendations.

Recognition of disenfranchisement from formal politics (but not political disengagement)

In his work on social change, Bauman pointed out 'the widening gap between the outer limits of institutionalised control and the space where the issues most relevant to life are … settled' (Bauman, 2001: 203). Public institutions seems to be increasingly unable to translate private life concerns into public issues (Bauman, 2001) and society itself is no longer perceived as a bounded community to which one can feel an ongoing sense of belonging. In this framework, young people's own forms of identification are becoming less fixed, more short-term and singular as they grapple with the individualisation of the life-course and the shift away from structured pathways to adulthood. Collective identities are replaced through processes of individualisation (Beck, 1986). Political systems should consider that the challenges of establishing economic security in conditions of globalisation and de-industrialisation also emerge as a significant barrier to participation, as young people's overwhelming priority is to take charge of their biographical shaping and to focus on study and work in unprecedented ways (Andres and Wyn, 2010). From a biographical point of view, many young people are disenchanted with political structures that are unresponsive to their needs and interests, however they continue to seek recognition from the political system. This means that the political system should take into account their way of being interested in social and political issues through forms of informal, individualised and everyday activities. Analysing the interplay of biography and participation implies a broad interpretation of the latter in order to capture young people's (citizenship) practices today, because they are more likely to be involved in informal socially constructive activity than formal, organised types of participation (see also Vromen, 2003, Roker, 2008). Disengagement mirrors a gap between 'real' politics and its official language and young people's 'everyday' concerns and their informal discursive and practical repertoires.

Formal vs. non/informal spaces, social integration and efficacy (see also, voluntary vs. forced structures)

'Meaningful activities' are presented as firstly voluntary contexts, secondly activities where young people have not just the feeling of but actual power and control (also power over resources) and thirdly where they feel and are acknowledged. Forced participatory contexts have not been named in the research as meaningful. Furthermore the facade of power, such as pseudo-participation and tokenism, are easily identifiable for young people. To motivate young people to participate means to be willing to share power and giving resources.

The need to being active

The starting point of participation is normally not the wish to assume a volunteering position but to look for an alternative group or peer-context where young people find recognition and belonging. Giving young people a space/possibility to design a space on their own or which is appropriation-friendly, is more likely to generate friendships, which lead to other young people's participation. Thereby we recommend implementing public strategies to support young people initiatives, especially self-organised, and not attempting to turn them into formal, pedagogised projects. However, a bridge should be built between informal and non-formal

dynamics and formal tools. If policy-makers tend to favour an institutionalised approach of participation, it should be reframed to include the real way young people are involved. This means developing new organisation, governance, support, and pedagogical methods that include young people expressions and avoid mismatch and disengagement.

Normative transitions and expectations vs. biographies of participation

The findings of the study highlight that many of the interviewed young people are developing a range of individualised and informal strategies to address their concerns, even while they simultaneously expressed a desire to have those in power listen to them, respond to their actions and expressions. The young people exploring their activism and political engagement in alternative spaces and the sense of self-efficacy that they experienced within these participative spaces demonstrate these practices. Informal and non-formal forms of participation are as, if not more, central to young people's participation. Indeed, participation in formal settings is less likely for young people when they have had negative experiences in these settings previously (and particularly in school). In terms of policy there are, then, important challenges to the notion that formal participation is preferable (and meaningful to young people). We recommend taking into account the consistency of such individualised strategies with the dynamic identity building process that young people now follow, which emphasises self-organisation, individuality, self-confrontation. There is therefore urgently needed a shift in focus from the deficiencies of youth to barriers that can precipitate young people's disenfranchisement.

Research agenda for youth participation

New research foci are needed to understand how young people are increasingly becoming moral and political citizens through 'emotional, expressive and aesthetic forms of engagements' (Siurala, 2000: 4) allowing individual processes of identification in times of insecurity, unpredictability and self-fashioning of the life-course. Vinken (2007: 53) had emphasised that participation through 'interactivity and connectedness with intimate circles' is a key point in the new life-course model. Our respondents valued everyday practices and informal engagement when they take place in spaces and networks where they already feel comfortable and hear.

Youth work policies

A more inclusive approach of youth policies should also be implemented to take into account the connection between the consequences of the valued normative pathways of regimes of transition and participation. The findings clearly highlight the effects of education and employment on the level of youth political and civic involvement and on their trust in institutions. Instead of considering young people as 'apprentices of citizenship' or 'citizens in the making' that needs to be guided through strict socialisation strategies (Thomson and al., 2004), policy-makers should develop a long-life learning approach based on a the idea that at each age of life (childhood, adolescence, youth, adulthood), participation can be developed through supportive and innovative activities implemented in the various attended places and spaces. The 'youth development model' that implicitly underlies public policies dealing with citizenship and participation does not suit anymore to socialisation process and experiences of participation. Biographies of young people show non-linear participative trajectories made of short or middle term experiences and self-learning.

As we have found out, young people do struggle to fit in their systems and societies, which is a sign of a highly individualised tendency in society on the one hand and formulates a towards society on the other hand, to make it possible to find a place. Thereby it is an impossible idea to make structures, that offer to participate at the right time and to the right person, but as we saw, open structures, such as open youth work, manifold structures, such as steady organisations with different activities and non-school-based structures, such as leisure time activities, are able to have an umbrella-function for a lot of young people. Those structures need a check on their opportunity structures (such as their openness, their ability to offer power, the presence or absence of powerful allies, etc.)

Furthermore, social youth work often does not reach out to middle-class young people by its profile to reach out for young people from a milieu of deprivation and discrimination. Even though young middle-class do struggle with their families, surrounding and experience themselves sometimes in trouble – they look for support and coping in activities (such as sports clubs, social engagement and youth organisations) instead of explicit youth work to cope within participatory spaces. It is important to invest in such spaces and acknowledge them as youth work, too.

Young people with ambivalent or negative experiences in institutions for social welfare and education (for example school, psychiatry, youth and welfare office) are less likely to trust into formal participatory spaces but tend to less formal (non- and informal) activities. Especially for them open youth work is important as a space to develop, confront and experiment on identity- and relationship-making. Open youth work, as we know from WP 2 and 3, is a sector which is often marginalised economically and in acknowledgement by its lack of 'output' and economic applicability by its latent and low-threshold approach but is worth more investment.

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