# Styles: Young People's Participation as Lived Practice

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# 1. Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to focus on 'how' young people participate by mobilising the concept of 'style'. Thus, in relation to the over-arching research question of PARTISPACE, we are interested in how young people experience participation in relation to their living conditions, socio-cultural backgrounds, and local contexts of engagement. The starting assumption of our research rests on the premise that young people do participate but just not in ways that adults, policy and formal structures would necessarily acknowledge, therefore we are also concerned with issues of recognition.

'Style' is arguably a new lens to understand youth participation. In tracing its origins, 'style' is an important concept in literature on youth subcultures as made famous in the 1970s by the Centre for Contemporary Youth Studies commonly referred to as the Birmingham School. More recently, with the decline in importance of traditional social affiliations, youth subcultural styles are defined by more hybrid identities around social issues and lifestyle choices. In this sense, it is possible to interpret 'styles of participation' simply as, what young people do, in terms of the different forms of participation young people are engaged in, or their preferences for different methods or forms of practice.

In this report, we explore the contents of young people's participative actions, paying attention to the goals, intentions and processes, to explore young people's "lived practice" (Lister 2008). We demonstrate how 'styles of participation' are largely a reflection of, and are structured by, young people's social context. The relationality of 'style' is structured by the resources they have access to, it is dependent on competencies and involves collective and social processes of learning. Thus, individual performances or particular ways of doing things become intelligible only by ongoing practice, like in a youth cultural scenes certain symbols and places define inclusion or exclusion and become markers of group identity.

In reference to case study material, we also identify how young people transform and engage in processes of re-signification in their struggle for recognition. As crosscutting themes across emerging 'styles of participation' we discuss fluid and temporal forms of resistance, struggle or desire for conformism through negotiation in relation to mainstream authorities, relationships with adults, wider institutions and the city itself. A complex picture emerges of how young people actively navigate processes of individual growth in their transition to adulthood and their quests for active citizenship.

## 2. Introduction

From the 'golden age' of 1960's onwards, due to the expansion of mass education, the increased levels of protest and the following gradual recognition of youth as social actors (Coleman 1961; Côté 2014; Furlong 2013; 2016), scholars and policy makers have shown increasing interest in young people's civic and political participation in society. Since then, youth participation has become a key-topic in every European country's political agenda (see: Anderson et al. 2016) and an overarching theme in the European policies for youth (see: Becquet et al. 2016). Moreover, research on youth participation has produced an enormous corpus of knowledge about the ways young people are taking part in decisions "which concern them and, in general, the life of their communities" (European Commission, 2001a: 8).

Despite this interest, in most public discourses on youth engagement "participation" has been often interpreted more as a "status" than as a "lived practice" (Lister 2008). Few attempts have been made to understand 'how' young people experience participation considering their living conditions, socio-cultural backgrounds, and local contexts of engagement. Furthermore, limited focus has been directed towards practices through which young people enact agency in relation to the opportunities and constraints around them.

Considering this perspective, PARTISPACE has sought to bring to the centre of attention young people's experiences of civic and political involvement. During the last three years, the research team has conducted an in-depth and comparative exploration of a series of practices of participation that young people enact in their everyday life contexts in relation to issues of biographical relevance.

The central research question that has guided the project is, in fact, how and where do 15 to 30 year-old young people participate across social milieus and youth cultural scenes in eight European cities, framed by different national welfare, education and youth policies? Seeking to understand what 'styles of participation' are preferred by young people and in which spaces their participation takes place, the research – conducted through a combination of expert interviews, focus groups and biographical interviews, participant observations and action re-search projects – has focused on 48 initiatives of youth participation across eight European cities including Bologna (IT), Eskisehir (TK), Frankfurt (DE), Gothenburg (SE), Manchester (UK), Plovdiv (BG), Rennes (FR) and Zurich (CH) (see: Batsleer et al. 2017).

These case studies constitute the basis of the analyses presented in this WP6 report intending to contribute to the existing knowledge on youth participation by engaging in a comparative, collective analysis of empirical data in relation to the crosscutting concept of 'style'.

In this report, the concept of 'style' is used to highlight 'how' young people use and make sense of certain forms of participation, as well as to explore the processes through which young people transform practices, which are not commonly recognised as participation in forms of civic and political engagement. Thus the question which was used to guide our analysis is: how do young people use agency to engage in processes of innovation or re-signification of accepted and non-accepted forms of practice and what struggles over recognition emerge for different styles of participation?

Conceiving 'styles of participation' as "lived practice" (Lister 2008) means paying attention to how certain forms of youth participation are experienced, 'made', and transformed by the young

people who choose to engage with them. From this perspective, looking at 'styles' involves the interplay between forms of engagement (i.e. volunteering, building occupation, etc.) and the meanings and aims that young people attach to these forms starting from their conditions and life context.

In the different sections that compose this report, we have sought to pay attention to how these meanings and aims influence the way a certain form of engagement is practiced and lived by the young people. We consider why young people choose to engage through certain forms of engagement, how certain forms are 'used' to participate and which goals these forms are used for.

The rationale for the purposive sampling of the cases is detailed in each of the comparative sections but the selection of cases can be understood as different attempts to explore the complexity that emerges in 'doing' participation; reflecting combinations of self-development and self-help, do-it-yourself and do-it-with-institutions, individualistic and altruistic, political and apolitical, confrontational and dialogical styles of engagement. This path of analysis has enabled some key-concepts to become visible including social capital, learning and development, altruism, individualism, politics and political, resistance, recognition, institutionalisation and normalisation.

More broadly, these concepts combine to show how young people engage with processes of innovation or re-signification to produce emerging 'styles' of youth engagement. The report thus presents, explores and discusses different examples of civic and political engagement, shedding light on how young people really live and practice participation. In doing so, this work is in dialogue with the other reports produced at this stage of the PARTISPACE project which highlight how specific ways of living different forms of participation develop from a combination between young people's agency and life conditions (Cuconato et. al 2018), the available resources that the context offers in terms of spaces (Zimmerman et al. 2018) and how opportunities of participation are framed or organised by adults (Lüküslü et al. 2018).

The following section of this report sets out the state of the art and provides a conceptual overview of relevant literature on 'styles of participation'. Four thematic sections exploring differing productions of 'styles of participation', their relation to context, in reference to data from eight case studies of youth participation, are then presented. Finally, the conclusion proposes a contribution to how 'styles of youth participatio'n can be understood within the current context, followed by recommendations for policy.

# 3. Styles of youth participation. A conceptual overview

**Authors: Barry Percy-Smith and Alessandro Martelli**

*Youth participation has been extensively investigated in recent times, mainly due to concerns for the consequences of the lack of participation in democracy. However, both 'youth' and 'participation' are complex, dynamic, multifaceted concepts and they still challenge the researcher who is looking for a satisfying state of the art. Moreover, if decreasing participation among young people seems to affect particular institutional and traditional forms, scholars tend to underline the existence of informal and unconventional forms of youth engagement and the extent to which young people are already participating in different ways in the context of their everyday lives. In the middle of these two situations, the condition of 'stand by citizen' (Amnå and Ekman 2014) is relevant to the situation of many young people. These developments challenge understandings of participation as involvement in democratic governance processes and instead invite a broader and more critical view on what it means for young people to participate as active citizens. It is therefore useful to understand participation more broadly in terms of its civic, social and political dimensions, shaped by young people's own 'styles' and preference as well as wider societal and state influences. Youth participation hence can be observed in terms of 'styles', that is as a plural perspective which asks for a careful consideration of issues of intentionality, (sub)cultures, identity, homogeneity/heterogeneity, practices and boundaries. By focusing attention on some of the main theoretical positions and definitions in the debate on youth and participation to date, this section of the report attempts to shed light on a wider and deeper understanding of the possible meanings and forms of youth 'styles of participation', by highlighting key factors and processes at play. To that end, we critically review existing knowledge and praxis of youth participation with a view to informing the development of a wider framework for understanding the significance of 'styles of youth participation'.*

## 3.1. Introduction

At EU and national level, there is concern about the extent to which young people are engaged in social, economic and political processes (EU 2001; 2009). Yet arguably, these interpretations are narrowly focused on particular ideas of participation, based on particular social attitudes and values about young people and their status as citizens. Until recently, discourses of youth participation have tended to focus on whether, and how, young people engage in decision-making processes.

There has also been growing concern about an apparent youth disaffection from mainstream social processes encompassing formal political participation (Henn and Foard 2012). Following the representative democratic systems and structures that exist in most European countries for adults, these to a large extent have focused on seeking the 'voice' of different groups of young people both in public sector decision making and research. This has inevitably involved young people 'participating' in adult structures and have resulted in critics asking questions about whose agenda is participation really working and to what extent participation is meaningful for young people and indeed effective as a form of participation, with evidence suggesting that young people rarely get to influence key decision making. Attention in youth participation has been gradually shifting away from mainstream decision-making processes – what has come to

be referred to as 'formal' processes – to ways in which young people participate in their every-day life 'informal' and 'non-formal' contexts of school, community and indeed decisions about their own lives. Wulff (1995) referred to this in terms of young people as "active cultural pro-ducers".

At the same time, as attention shifts from formalised contexts of governance to ideas concerning the everyday participation of young people, interpretations of what counts as participation has also broadened to include youth activities in the public domain. There has been a deluge of academic studies concerning the different ways in which young people participate in local neighbourhood settings in terms of the way they value and use local spaces with increasing recognition that these 'geographies of youth' not only represent different 'styles of participa-tion' in terms of place use, but are also the product of young people's implicit and explicit negotiation with the social and cultural politics in which their lives are played out (Furlong & Cartmel 1997; Loncle et al. 2012). In turn, ongoing global social and economic dynamics, have made young people the "losers of globalisation" (Blossfeld et al. 2005; Sloam 2014; Bessant et al. 2017), and their forms and implications at local levels in biographical transitions and everyday life.

Much of this interest has been given impetus by theoretical developments in childhood and youth studies (James and Prout 1990; Amit-Talai & Wulff 1995; Wyn & White 1997; Loncle et al. 2012) which acknowledge young people as competent social actors and rights holders as citizens in their own right (Jans 2004). These developments have given rise to various attempts to understand youth participation in terms of having a voice and influencing decision-making processes (Kirby 2002; Percy-Smith & Thomas 2010). Yet 'participation' has different mean-ings for different people. In parallel with the prevailing focus on young people's voice and influence on decision-making has been a concern with young people's participation in different societal contexts and processes such as associations, civil society, education and the labour market (Muniglia et al. 2012).

Youth participation has historically taken on a different meaning in terms of participation in sport, leisure and youth work activities, yet in a more benign way in terms of take up of provided activities. In the 1980s and 1990s, the emerging field of children's and young people's geogra-phies (see Matthews et al. 1998 and Skelton and Valentine 1998) defined its agenda in terms of the way in which ideas concerning young people as social actors were given expression in space. As with the work of the Birmingham school some decades earlier (Hall & Jefferson 1976, Hebdige 1979), the focus for young people's geographies was primarily ethnographic, concerned with understanding the cultural worlds of different groups of young people rather than an explicit focus on youth activities as being overtly political. Instead, connections with political debates revolved around the implications for local planning and regulation of public space in which young people were (and still largely are) objectified and treated as a problem to be dealt with rather than being welcomed for their contribution to public life as equal citizens. The extent to which youth (subcultural) activity in public space can be interpreted, also in terms of 'styles', as contributions to public life and therefore understood as 'acts of citizenship' are still the focus for academic debate in ways that contribute to a broadening of the frame of ref-erence concerning participation as well as citizenship (Loncle et al. 2012, Martelli 2013). The boundaries of civic, social and political participation are hence becoming more blurred.

As a result, attention is shifting towards the ways in which young people are eschewing mainstream forms of participation in favour of their own organic and customised 'styles of participation' as they seek to make sense of, and reposition, their own values and practices in relation to society (Percy-Smith 2016; Loncle et al. 2012). This shift in focus to the everyday life contexts of young people is drawing attention to the way in which young people are already participating in society though not always in ways that are aligned to mainstream and conventional (adult) norms and structures (Matthews et al. 1998; Percy-Smith & Thomas 2010). As a result, there is increasing attention on grassroot activist modes of participation rooted in the everyday concerns and interests of young people (Harris et al. 2010). What arises therefore is a significant literature seeking to make sense of what we might call youth participation; in particular, how we can understand the different ways in which young people participate.

It is clear that there are two prevailing strands of academic discourse concerning youth participation. One that is explicitly political and concerns involvement in decision-making. The second is overtly social and concerns the activities of young people as they seek to articulate their own values in city space (Thomas 2007). There is, however, a growing discourse that argues that the personal (and social) is political and therefore results in the greying of these two areas. Our concern here is not to intentionally focus on these debates, but instead to look at the different 'styles of youth participation' across these discourses.

The idea of 'styles of participation' provides an arguably new lens with which to understand youth participation. There have been previous studies that have sought to identify the participation of different groups in terms of, for example, gender, ethnicity and youth cultural lifestyles (Skelton & Valentine 1998; Miles 2000). There have also been studies focusing on the contrasting micro geographies of young people's use of public space (E.g. Matthews et al. 1998). Yet these have been conducted as ethnographies of youth rather than 'styles of participation'. Indeed, these studies did not talk about the youth activities they were studying as participation at all. In contrast, the PARTISPACE project seeks to understand the styles and spaces of youth participation in terms of the way in which young people create/renovate forms of taking part in society through varying combinations of individual interests and collective orientations resulting in concrete practices.

PARTISPACE starts with the assumption that young people (aged 15-30) are already participating, but just not in ways that adults, policy and formal structures would necessarily acknowledge. In doing so, the project does not differentiate between participation in decision-making and participation in social activities, but instead seeks to learn across these domains about the styles and spaces of youth participation. This report concerns the outcomes of the analytical theme concerning 'styles of youth participation'. In what terms and to what extent do different forms of participation constitute styles? How do these relate to young people's motivations and agenda to participate?

In providing a context for the report, the remainder of this section will consider the state of the art of 'styles of youth participation' in terms of dominant discourses that seek to give meaning to young people's participation.

## 3.2 Civic, social and political participation

In essence, the idea of 'participation' is to understand the relation between individual and collective action, often looked at as the relation between citizens and the state. Specifically, the extent to which individuals and groups are able to influence the functioning of the state in order to act in their best personal and social expectations and interest. The tacit 'contract' enshrined in social norms and duties is reflected in citizenship rights and responsibilities, bestowing the right to vote and have one's views and interests represented in decision-making. At the same time, one could argue that the health of a democracy can be measured by the degree of involvement in civil society and participation in public life, which may be seen as largely characterised as social rather than political participation. As Thomas (2007) argues:

> There is a discourse of … participation that is predominantly social – that speaks of networks, inclusion, adult-child relations, and of opportunities for social connection … Alongside this there is an alternative discourse that is more or less overtly political –that speaks of power and challenge and change.

Thomas's attempt towards a theoretical understanding of young people's participation is a useful contribution to untangling the "conceptual confusion" (Ekman and Amna 2012) surrounding the term. In seeking to make sense of young people's own styles and spaces of participation it is useful to unpack some of the differences and debates around civic, social and political participation. According to Loader et al. (2014) political participation refers to activity within or in relation to the political realm manifest in terms of voting, political office, activities that are more or less formal. Yet political participation also involves protests and more informal activities. Participation varies according to its intensity, forms and along time spent in developed activities. Ekman and Amna (2012) make a distinction between 'latent' and 'manifest' participation. Hence, whereas many people may not be active in political participation (manifest), particular issues can spark engagement, referred to as latent participation. For some there is a distinction between engagement and participation. 'Engagement' can be taken to refer to authorities seeking to mobilise citizens in a formal decision making process; 'participation' can be taken to refer to instances where citizens themselves initiate some kind of informal political activity that may in time engage with more formalised political processes. (Adler and Goggin 2005)

Social participation by distinction is arguably often not political in intent, but instead involves the collective activities of a group, involving interaction and social exchange initiated by themselves rather than the result of an external imperative or tradition. These forms of social participation may or may not be beneficial for the community and retain a focus on the intrinsic value for those involved. Hence a group of young skateboarders who come together simply to skateboard could be seen as engaging themselves in a form of social participation. These different forms of participation are not however necessarily static, hence if the skateboard group then decide they want to campaign for a skateboard park then this involves them engaging in a form of political participation. In this sense, skate boarding is not explicitly a participation style rather is something some young people do that can be understood as such.

Civic participation on the other hand involves people connecting with, and contributing to, the life of their community. Adler and Gogin (2005) argues that civic participation involves "citizens working together to make a change in their community," for example through voluntary

action or contributing to activities in a civic organisation such as a church or community group. In recognising civic participation in terms of citizens working together for the good of the community, it could be argued that civic participation by implication concerns both social participation (contributing to social life in the community) and political participation (seeking to bring about change). In turn the propensity for social participation to develop into political participation is influenced by the interplay of social identity and power and – more widely – between individual and collective dimensions of everyday life. What arises are blurring or overlapping boundaries between social, civic and political participation. Cutting across these different forms of participation is "social capital" (Putnam 1995); essentially – forming social connections within groups (bonding social capital), between groups (linking social capital) and outside of the community with wider structures such as political or national institutions (bridging social capital) which enable individuals and groups to connect with the wider socio-ecological influences on their lives.

## 3.3 The participation of young people as citizens in democratic decision making

For young people, participation has conventionally been shaped primarily by age and social constructions of childhood and adolescence as stages in the life course that prepare them for adulthood and a future citizenship status when they can claim their rights to participate (Marshall 1950). Yet developments in sociological theories of childhood and youth draw attention to the extent to which young people have competence to participate now rather than as citizens in waiting or as "proto-citizens" (James and Prout 1990; Jans 2004). Complemented by human rights conventions (such as the UNCRC) transformations in social and institutional ideas of childhood and youth, particularly with respect to their status as rights holders and their autonomous capacities, have changed the status of childhood and youth, asserting their rights to participation as equal citizens. Whilst there continue to be moral panics and unease about young people's 'improper' use of public space, in addition to attempts to engage young people as civic participants in provided activities (e.g. sport, volunteering, youth projects etc.). Simultaneously, as a result of the impact of the economic crisis on national level public funding for youth work there have been cuts in funding for youth work activities (European Commission, 2014), which have affected possibilities for youth participation.

In parallel, there has been a considerable movement towards engaging the views and perspectives of different young people in decision-making processes. Various models and frameworks have been developed to inform and support youth participation such as Hart's (1992) ladder of participation, developed from Arnstein's ladder of community participation, that frames 'styles of participation' according to the degree to which young people exercise power in the participatory process in relation to adults in defining the agenda. Treseder's (1997) model similarly focuses on the extent to which power is shared between young people and adults. Shier (2001) talks about "pathways to participation" outlining different levels of participation from young people being listened to, up to sharing power and responsibilities for decision making. These frameworks have been similarly used to inform young people's participation in research. Whereas some argue that youth led research and decision-making is the ideal, this often results in young people being left to their own devices without adult involvement. On the contrary, developments in participation discourses highlight the 'relational turn' and the importance of young people participating with, not apart from, adults, but with attention placed on how power

is shared (Fitzgerald et al. 2010). Kirby (2002) thus outlines three types of participation initiatives in terms of: consultative, collaborative and youth-led, arguing that these different forms of participation are of value in different contexts.

Some of these youth participation initiatives can be understood as a form of 'civic engagement' characterised as attempts by authorities to engage, (and some would say control) young people as active citizens. One way in which this happens is through encouraging young people to volunteer. This can be seen as a benevolent activity of value to the young person and society alike, yet equally, volunteering has been critiqued as a cynical masquerade of keeping unemployed youth out of trouble (Weil et al. 2005). This argument however does not hold sway with middle class young people who volunteer, for whom volunteering further accentuates social capital. Whilst many young people welcome such initiatives, there is increasing evidence that in spite of some benefits for young people (for example in terms of CV building and 'learning to participate'), impact from their participation is so often mediated by adult agenda and priorities, with the promise of shared decision-making yet to be realised to any significant degree. Customary forms of this sort of participation include youth councils and fora, youth parliaments, and shadow committees, that mimic adult structures and in part seek to socialise young people into mainstream political processes. For many young people these formal forms of participation are abstracted from their everyday realities and therefore often do not yield tangible outcomes in their lives.

## 3.4 Youth participation and subcultural styles

In considering the idea of 'styles of participation' the focus switches to how and where young people spend their time and why. This could be referred to as the cultures or geographies of youth participation. In pluralist societies (young) people do not represent an homogeneous group, rather are differentiated in terms of identities according to gender, class, ethnicity, mobility, sexuality, lifestyles etc. giving rise to sub cultural styles of youth. Following the original work of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural studies (see for example Hebdige 1979, Hall & Jefferson 1976; Cohen 1967) the symbolism and interaction of different subcultural groups in society are characterised by different positions with respect to 'mainstream' society and different levels of power, influence and acceptability with respect to social norms. Studies of youth subcultural styles elevated the importance of these groups and of the relevant socio-economic processes influencing their constitution and evolution in the identities and life course trajectories of the young people concerned. In the 1970s these were closely aligned to class (Hebdige 1979) and gender (McRobbie 1978) and later, race (Watt and Stenson 1998). More recently, with the decline in importance of traditional social affiliations, youth subcultural styles are defined now by more hybrid identities around social issues and lifestyle choices, for example with respect to music (Bennett 2000). However, within the context of austerity, widening social inequalities and austerity across Europe, traditional factors such as socio-economic status, gender or place of birth continue to have relevance in influencing young people's trajectories and therefore contexts and forms of participation. Youth sub cultural studies offer a reconstruction of the 'exotic' lifeworlds, and therefore the informal social participation of these different groups of youth as they meet, hang out and engage in social activities, normally self-initiated (Miles 2000). On the other hand, the expressions of youth subcultural style are in many ways articulations of their social positions, often understood in different ways in terms of marginalisation of disadvantage; their 'performance' emblematic of what Honneth (2005) refers to

as a "struggle over recognition", frequently coupled with a need for 'separation' or, at least, distinction (Hebdige 1991). In this sense for some youth groups, social participation is implicitly (if not explicitly) political. As Batsleer (2010) states: for many young people the personal is still political, though not all and not all the time.

The development of social and cultural geography, and childhood and youth geographies that grew out of earlier youth cultural studies, in turn highlights the extent to which space and place are central to understanding identity and power, with respect to youth participation. According to cultural geographers, youth identities and values are embedded in, as well as shaped by, landscapes and contexts, giving rise to complex geographies of youth (Matthews et al. 1998; Skelton & Valentine 1998). Hence, the rituals of resistance and symbolism of "street corner society" emanating from the Birmingham school become overlaid with "maps of meaning, inscribed with power, sites of transgression, appropriation and geographies of in- and ex-clusion" (Sibley 1995). In this respect youth participation can be understood in terms of young people's actions as "active cultural producers" (Wulff 1995) (participants in their own everyday life choices), as they rewrite landscapes with their own values, choices and identities through situated behaviour. Whilst these youth geographies are essentially social and apolitical, there is potentially an underlying political intent, which could be understood as 'latent participation' and sometimes an explicit participative evolution. In this respect, it is possible to discern a continuum of participation from social to political, within which in some cases 'styles of participation' emerge from a combination of aims and intentions and sets of peculiar practices in the field.

Whilst many studies highlight different 'styles' of social participation of young people (see for example Skelton and Valentine 1998; Amit-Talai & Wulff 1995), there has been comparatively less attention directed to the extent to which young people's 'geographies' and styles of action contribute to public life and therefore potential forms of civic participation. Those studies that have been undertaken have tended to focus on negative aspects of young people's place behaviour, for example by "compromising the moral order of the street" (Lieberg 1995) which in turn invite "regimes of regulation" to manage young people off the street e.g. through Curfews and Anti-Social Behaviour orders (Waiton 2001). According to a different analytical perspective, attention might be directed to why, to what extent and through what kind of initiatives, young people enter participation activities with a collective orientation and adoption of particular styles and stances in relation to power, the ongoing socio-political issues, the city and its inhabitants.

## 3.5 Towards a framework for understanding styles of participation

Across European societies, there is a growing dissatisfaction with existing political institutions (Henn and Foard 2012). Whilst some have argued there is a dissonance with young people in relation to political participation, there is mounting evidence that young people across Europe are politicised and active in politics in a broad sense (Sloam 2013), but their desires for participation are not necessarily satisfied through traditional means (Harris et al. 2010). Sloam (2013) claims that this is partly down to the fact that "young people's values and lifestyles have changed, but politicians, political parties and policy-makers have been unable or unwilling to adapt". As a result there is evidence that young people (and adults) - beside the institutions themselves - are looking for 'alternative' modes of participation in what Cornwall and Coelho

(2006) call "new democratic arenas." These new/renovated forms are often significantly influenced by the use of new technologies such as ICT and social media (Pruitt 2017). These approaches to grassroots participation ('from below') occur increasingly more frequently as a result of the socio-economic crisis and are often shaped by shared experiences or concerns about key social issues such as human rights, environmental issues and social justice. Even when these cases are semi-political forms of participation as they are in in essence interest groups, they frequently involve commitment to bring about change in a collective perspective (Pickard and Bessant 2018) through working together, entailing subjective identification, self-efficacy and "collaborative individualization" (Cuzzocrea and Collins 2015).

To a large extent, these developments reflect a culmination or nexus of social, civic and political participation as young people organically customise their own forms of participation. There appears to be a renaissance in what were once separate arenas of social and political participation of young people, with these different 'fields' of participation coming together to reanimate civic participation and to show interesting forms of neo-mutualism (della Porta 2015; De Luigi et al. 2018). This coming together of different forms of participation both draws attention to the limitations of pre-existing forms of political participation as well as the need for spaces for new forms of participation to emerge and to be recognised and valued. These developments in turn offer an opportunity for more sophisticated and robust theories of youth participation to evolve and it is to that end that the PARTISPACE project and this report is committed.

In setting out the architecture of the state of the art, it becomes clear that the idea of 'styles' is as enigmatic as the idea of 'participation' itself. On one level, it is possible to interpret 'styles of participation' simply in terms of the different forms of participation young people are engaged in, or in terms of young people's preferences for different media, methodologies or creative forms that young people engage with. The consideration of motivations, purpose and the interactions with socio-economic conditions are also important. Furthermore, with respect to the relations between participation and democratic processes, issues of power and performance also come to the fore in how young people seek to express agency, intension and emerging critiques of more recognised or accepted forms. The hybrid nature of the term thus provides an arguably new lens with which to understand youth participation in which the PARTISPACE project makes a contribution.

From this perspective, 'styles of youth participation' correspond with subcultures-in-action characterised by intentions that dynamically impact on surrounding socio-economic situations. These actions have the capacity for transformation and depending on their relation to the outside world feature differing degrees of collaboration, negotiation and conflict. 'Styles' then can be seen and investigated as innovation or re-signification processes or forms of participation developed by young people, with a peculiar focus on 'doing' and combining self-oriented (expressive) demands with social/collective interests in a continuum of positions determined by the influence of personal, contextual and historically intervening factors. Thus 'styles', can be understood as an ongoing interplay between class/social structure dimension (entailing vertical differentiation) and interpretation/agency dimension (entailing horizontal differentiation). They emerge in processes of sensemaking and of 'doing participation' by young people in action.

The four proceeding comparative sections thus provide intricate exemplars, which operate across these dimensions, reflecting combinations of self-development and self-help, do-it-your-

self and do-it-with-institutions, individualistic and altruistic, political and apolitical, confrontational and dialogical styles of engagement as emerging features of "doing" participation. Furthermore, within the analysis of the cases, key-concepts come to the fore including social capital, learning and development, altruism, individualism, politics and political, resistance, recognition, institutionalisation and normalisation. In distinguishing these features, we try to capture the dynamic qualities of youth participation as young people engage in processes of re-signification at the intersections of social, civic and political forms of participation.

In the first comparative section (4), Zulmir Bečević and Harriet Rowley explore the relationship between social class and the formation of youth 'styles of participation', investigating how the conditions of the socio-political context and the access that young people have to acquire resources affects 'styles of participation'. Bourdieu's forms of capital are recalled to conceptualise how in UK and Sweden signifying practices of class are performed by actors who have varying access to social and cultural capital due to the concrete material and socio-cultural contexts in which they inhabit.

The second comparative study (section 5), written by Céline Martin and Boris Popivanov reports 'styles of participation' of young people in France and Bulgaria with regard to their artistic and cultural practices. Their analysis concerns the social, civic and political dimension of youth involvement through art and culture, and the way art and culture serve as meaningful ways for making changes – both for (young) participants and for others groups of young people. The mobilisation of key concepts concerned with learning, do-it yourself and do-it-with-institutions become important ways of understanding these groups struggles over recognition.

Thirdly (section 6), Ilaria Pitti and Yağmur Mengilli consider the interaction between two subcultural groups in Italy and in Germany (respectively an ultras group and a sprayer crew) and the surrounding communities, they highlight how the two subcultures seek to get recognition from the external world while managing to keep a conflictual position. The analysis shows how both the groups handle a double identity expressed through different 'styles' of participation, in order to constantly balance confrontational and dialogical relations with the respective external communities. The concept of resistance thus becomes an important way of understanding the relationship between the self or group and others.

In the final and comparative section (7), Berrin Osmanoglu and Ilaria Pitti analyse two cases of volunteering in Turkey and Italy, describing how young volunteers show in their participation a combination of individualistic and political meanings, in contrast to a more conventional view of volunteering as neutral altruism, and how this assumes specific functions in young people's attempts to acquire an adult identity. By exploring meanings attributed by young people to volunteering according to their needs and conditions, the analysis show their role as active cultural and socio-political producers.

# 4. Structured divisions and youth styles of participation

**Authors: Zulmir Bečević and Harriet Rowley**

*This section is concerned with exploring the relationship between social class and the formation of 'styles of participation'. In particular, we are interested in how the conditions of the socio-political context and the access that young people have to acquire resources affect 'styles of participation'. Social class is mobilised as a key category in relation to how structured divisions organise capital movements with reference to two case studies of young people's participation. We deliberately have chosen two extreme examples from the empirical material of PARTISPACE which occupy opposite poles of the spectrum; a youth council in Sweden and 'The Box', a social care and arts charity for the homeless in the United Kingdom. The first typifies a formal space occupied by the middle class with high amounts of capital whilst the second is categorised as non-formal, where those who are positioned as the working-class, or worse, 'the underclass', have limited access to capital. With reference to the empirical material from these case studies, we use Bourdieu's forms of capital (1995; 2008/1970; 2010/1984) to conceptualise how signifying practices of class are performed by actors who have varying access to social and cultural capital due to the material and socio-cultural contexts in which their practices take place.*

*More broadly, this section is concerned with the debates concerned with the intersection of structural and cultural conditions of youth participation and the role of agency. Through the mobilisation of the concept of 'style', we pay attention to how recognised forms of participation are performed by young people and where the intention behind their practices demonstrates an interruption or attempt at re-signification. In this sense, we recognise the fundamental relationship between class and culture but not in a straightforward, deterministic way. Although we show how access to capital shapes young people's practices considerably, we aim to not position them as passive recipients but instead try to highlight where there is a sense of an emergent critique behind how 'styles of participation' are performed. These instances are often momentary and may not dramatically change processes of reproduction, but particularly for those who are assigned more limiting agentic positions, we argue that these can have diffuse effects for young people's biographies.*

## 4.1 Introduction

In popular discourse, it is often stated that class is not as valid today as it was in the early days of industrial capitalism. Following the postmodern turn, it is argued that in highly individualised societies class has lost much of its analytical relevance (Pakulski & Waters 1996). Instead, people tend to see themselves as individuals rather then members of social groups, or classes. They are positioned as reflexively constructing and re-constructing their identities, creating life plans and taking decisions, shaping their lives according to personal preferences.

At the same time, many studies illustrate that class divisions continue to play a crucial role in the formation of life opportunities for young people, in all aspects of life, from patterns of residence (Wacquant 2007; Furlong 2013; Tesfahuney & Ek 2016; Bečević et al. 2018), to education and employment (Bourdieu 1979/1964; Bourdieu & Passeron 2008/1970; Bunar 2001; Bunar & Sernhede 2013). In a market-saturated global world, trajectories of certain groups of young people have become more individualised than before, particularly in respect

to travelling or choosing from a range of educational and employment possibilities when planning the life course. However, despite this omnipresent cult of the individual, possibility, and choice, social class continues to exert influence on the formation and the outcomes of adult life. Such patterns can be explained in reference to neoliberalism, understood both as an economic doctrine and an ideology that shifts focus from the collective (the politics, democracy, society) to the individual (personal responsibility, self-management/entrepreneurship, changing the self instead of changing the society). This has itself become a grand narrative which obscures class relations, but this process has not made class-structures less important (see Olin Wright 2015).

This piece of writing takes the latter position as a starting point, recognising that as well as being structured through racialised and gendered power relations, class has a crucial impact on young people's living conditions, life choices, and possibilities to participate in society (Furlong 2013). In keeping with this, Bourdieu's theory of capital forms serves as a theoretical framework within which we place the comparative analysis of our empirical cases. According to Bourdieu (1995; 2008/1970; 2010/1984), a class structure of a society is determined by different group's access to economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital. In his texts, Bourdieu writes about other forms of capital, but these four are the most relevant capital forms for our understanding of the relationship between 'styles of participation' and social stratification. Capital can be understood as resources that are distributed in different 'volume' across different segments of the population in a hierarchically structured society. This means that social relationships are to an extent determined by access to, and possession of, the overall volume of capital.

In this section, we use Bourdieu's theoretical tools to understand how 'styles of participation' are shaped by their socio-cultural context. In particular, we are concerned with how access to different forms of capital structures the expression of youth practices, whereby capital forms are traded (or not) to provide opportunities which are potentially meaningful for young people's biographies. More broadly, the process of accumulation of power for different groups means that the discussion is also concerned with issues of social justice. In this sense, we question the relationship between structural determinism and young people's agency, or put more directly, how structural relations predetermine what opportunities are available depending on class position.

## 4.2 Framing the research question and theoretical points of departure

To guide the analysis, we pose the question: how can youth participatory practices be understood through the theoretical lens of capital forms? Examining group and individual practices, actions, behaviours, perceptions and narratives, we identify patterns and tendencies in the empirical material that in different ways express and signify social class. The analysis of the two ethnographic cases puts in focus the lived experiences of the actors, as well as social and cultural conditions that set the framework within which their participatory action takes place.

We position the empirical material in relation to Bourdieu's (1995; 2008/1970; 2010/1984) four types of capital, which we now detail. Economic capital describes an individual's financial assets, it refers to money, income and wealth, ownership of property, and investment assets. Cultural capital exists in three forms. Bourdieu refers to competencies, capabilities and

knowledge that an individual embodies, through a process of family socialisation, formal education and training (knowledge, language skills, manners, taste). Skeggs (1997) in her study of working-class women also notes how discourses of femininity and masculinity have become embodied and can be used as cultural resources. Although gender is not merely cultural, in particular contexts, it can be traded as symbolic capital (see Willis 1977). Cultural capital also exists in an objectified state, referring to possession of culturally valued objects such as art works, books and instruments. Finally, cultural capital comes also in an institutionalised state, through formal legitimation (for example professional titles and degrees), a process that gives cultural capital an objective value which is recognised in the society (Bourdieu 1986). Social capital refers to social contacts and social networks, which can be used in order to attain more resources, advantage in different respects, and achieve certain goals (career goals for example). Symbolic capital can be understood as possession of reputation, prestige and status, which is derived from the interplay between the other capital forms, economic, cultural and social. Put together, these capital forms, which are intertwined and socially transferable – the family and the school being key institutions for distribution and reproduction of capital (see Bourdieu and Passeron 2008/1970) – influence an individual's position in the societal matrix of power relations, and set the framework for obstacles and possibilities in relation to which choices can be made and trajectories created.

In an attempt to not employ Bourdieu's theoretical tools in a deterministic way, it is worth noting that following Skeggs (1997), we see capital forms as essentially metaphors rather than as conclusive descriptors of empirical positions. In seeing the deployment of the term 'capital' as a metaphor we are enabled also to concern ourselves with the affective qualities that are a part of young people's stylistic performances of participation. In this sense, we are interested to explore their attempts to struggle, resist, accommodate or even mobilise the strength of their class-based positions. Thus, by deploying the concept of 'style', we are interested in how participation is embedded, and in some ways, a reflection of social structure, but we also direct focus towards how young people use their agency to create moments of interruption.

Classical understandings of 'style', as made famous within studies of youth subcultures (Hall & Jefferson 1976; Hebdige 1979), recognised this fundamental relation between class and culture - understanding the position certain groups of young people inhabit in a wider matrix of power relations is crucial for adequately understanding how they act (participate) in the social world. Researchers working within the tradition of Cultural Studies read subcultural 'styles' (the Teds, the Mods, the Skinheads, the Rastas) as "reactions to different types of societal changes […] [as] seismographic and packed with meaning" (Lalander & Johansson 2007). The connection between structured divisions and 'styles of participation' is thus not new; landscapes of youth participation, as any other arenas or fields of policy and practice, are shaped by class stratification.

Yet, young people do have agency, despite the restrictions placed upon them by structural arrangements. Therefore, we are interested in how young people adapt and re-signify established structures of youth participation and recognised tools of youth engagement to 'carve out their own position.' Thus although we pay attention to how socio-cultural context shapes relations we try to not under-estimate the role of stylisation in how young people seek to perform participation so it is meaningful to them. In this sense, we want to avoid the criticism levelled at some subculture literature, which predisposes young people's attempts at style

formation as mere symbolic rituals, which are 'imaginary' solutions acted out within the class structure (Clarke et al. 1975; Stratton 1985; Miles 2000). Although, these attempts are not transformative, they are more than deviations that attempt to reconcile demands enforced upon them because attempts at self-performance are increasingly important for late modern youth transitions (Bauman 1995). In this sense, we recognise the importance of the process of how young people adapt existing participative practices and behaviors, utilising available resources to enable 'styles of participation' to be meaningful to their biography. These processes offer opportunities for self-performance or an attempt to be heard, they matter to the individuals involved even if the attempt to make themselves visible is only brief.

## 4.3 Case selection and description of cases

Before the analysis of the empirical data, it is important to set out a justification for the case selection of this comparative chapter. Among the ethnographic case studies included in PARTISPACE, all of them take account of how the socio-cultural context shapes the practices, behaviours and biographies of young people. Each of the WP4 country national reports payed special attention to how the histories and present dynamics of each city produced particular sets of relations that shaped how 'styles of participation' emerged. The sample includes 'university' cities such as Bologna, Rennes and Eskisehir, which typify sets of relations rich in cultural capital in the form of educational opportunities. However, in all three locations, opportunities to trade this into economic capital in the form of employment and monetary rewards is increasingly difficult due to financial crises. Manchester is positioned as the most divided city but segregation along ethnic and material lines is also present in Gothenburg and Frankfurt. Housing is understood as an important factor in segregating particular communities whilst in terms of youth participation, young people, depending upon their access to resources or capital, may have very different or unequal opportunities despite living in the same city. In contrast, Zurich provides an abundance of sites for participation tailored to individual's preferences whilst Plovdiv is culturally rich but with some instability due to distrust in formal political arrangements. All of the sets of relations in these cities structure the opportunities young people have to participate whilst, in turn, their ability to acquire and build on forms of capital which are functional for their biographies.

The youth representation forum in Gothenburg and 'The Box', a homeless charity in Manchester, were deliberately chosen because these two cases exemplify how the socio-cultural contexts produced particular sets of relations distinct to these groups whose members have very different experiences of capital accumulation. The first typifies a formal space occupied by the middle class with high amounts of capital, whilst the second is informal, where the young participants belong to the most precarious segments of society, and thus have limited access to capital. Sweden is considered to be a 'flatter', more equal society, whereas the UK is characterised as highly unequal and hierarchial. However, both cities are characterised as socially and culturally segregated, albeit in symbolically and spatially differentiated ways.

The cases are not intended to offer opportunities to generalise to other similar contexts. Rather, we are interested in how style formation and the process of capital accumulation structured by particular relations offer understanding about how young people adapt and perform participative practices. The cases are noteworthy because they enable us to highlight the extreme differences with respect to the structural conditions and acquisition of capital forms.

To explore these themes, we use data from participant observations, group interviews, and individual biographical interviews. The ethnographic fieldwork was conducted through participatory observation and researcher involvement in weekly activities with the young people at each site. In respect to the Gothenburg youth representation forum, fieldwork took place from June to December 2016 (Bečević), whereas, at The Box, a nine-month ethnographic study took place between May 2015 and January 2016 (Rowley). In the remainder of this section we detail the cases.

The youth representation forum is the main formal and political forum of youth participation in Gothenburg. It was established in 2004, modelled after the City council, with the purpose of enhancing youth participation. Young people ages 12-17, from the ten city districts, each year run a candidature and are voted into the forum. Representatives come from all of the districts. There are 81 regular members. The number of seats are awarded by proportion of young people living in a district. Formal, grand meetings, which gather (or at least are open to) all of the representatives, happen five times a year. These are highly formalised and agenda driven. The forum works on continuous basis through specific committees with varying agendas. Members address issues they identify as important, such as young people's access to public transportation, quality of school food, and leisure activities for young. As a formal setting of youth participation, the youth representation forum has a remarkably low attendance rate, and tends to attract young people from socioeconomically privileged backgrounds. Even though the working sessions of the forum (which are held twice a week) are open to every member, only a small number attend. This core group of engaged members consists of 5-8 individuals that are most often present, being the ones that set the agenda of the forum and steer the work forward. Assisted by a coordinator they discuss, plan and handle a variety of issues.

'The Box' is a social care and arts-based charity organisation for homeless men aged 18-30, in the city centre of Manchester. The history of the organisation, which primarily has been funded by Arts Council bids and national charity funding campaigns, can be traced back to 2004. Although it gained independent charity status in 2009, the charity continues to be in a precarious position in terms of future sustainability due to short term funding agreements. The organisation can be categorised as 'non-formal' as participants tend to not engage with structures associated with the state and in formal/informal 'styles of participation'. The charity aims to promote a flexible approach to engagement through project work, weekly drop-in sessions, outreach work and personalised support. The variety in approach aims to meet the needs of the men's lives, many of which have experienced issues typically associated with those who live in poverty. The nature of the men's living conditions means that engagement in projects is sometimes inconsistent. Thus, the charity offers an 'open door' policy which enables participants to engage as they wish. The majority of sessions observed during the fieldwork period were facilitated by a lead creative director, and were attended by a core group of between 5-10 men who had a history of 3-5 years involvement with the charity. The weekly sessions consisted of a unique blend of creative and relationship based work, which aimed to provide opportunities for accompaniment and progression for the men.

## 4.4 Operationalising class: understanding styles of participation through the lens of capital forms

### 4.4.1 The youth representation forum as a laboratory of competence: cultural and social capital in practice

Starting with the idea of cultural capital, a strongly emerging theme that runs through the ethnographic material of the Gothenburg youth representation forum has to do with observed competencies, capabilities and skills that the members embody and display in their interactions with each other. Generally, every member of the forum thinks that performing well in the system of formal education is important. They are high achieving students, working hard for good grades, with big ambitions and future plans. Here is an excerpt from a group discussion, the conversation revolves around the importance of achieving in school:

> Interviewer: Do you feel pressure to perform? Are you the ones who put the pressure on your selves or is the pressure coming from the environment?
>
> John: I would say it's a combination. I partly have personal ambitions, and then I guess there is some pressure coming from, I mean it more feels like support really, from the parents. They want you to perform well, that is obvious. […]
>
> Osman: I agree about having really high demands on oneself, I really want to perform well. I feel that I have had really good grades before and so, and if I don't continue to perform then it's like no good. I want to keep my grades. […] (GD, Youth Representation Forum, Gothenburg)

Other important skills relating to possession and acquisition of cultural capital that were continuously observed during the fieldwork have to do with social competence, communicative and verbal abilities, and personality traits characterised by confidence, engagement and curiosity. Here is a longer observation from the ethnographical fieldwork, capturing the dynamics of cultural capital in practice:

> Marcus is having a lecture about Rhetoric's, in an open (question-answer-reflection) nd the seven or eight members listening to him are quite interested and engaged in the interaction. This is a learning process characterised by voluntariness, lust, competence, inspiration, engagement. A good example of peer learning and democratic practice. What I am observing, with regards to the lecturer, the content of the lecture, and the interaction between the members, is competence. In a way, the scenario is a stark contrast to the contemporary, predominant narrative about the Swedish school in downfall. I am observing a group of young people (13-17) who on their after-school time (4-6) have come together voluntarily to participate in internal learning activities, educating each other through communicative dialogue, in (like in this particular case) classic, Greek philosophy. The scene is a strong contrast to the discourse about youth disengaged with intellectual history and contemporary society (PO, Youth Representation Forum, Gothenburg, 28 September 2016).

After the lecture, the members practiced debating. Issues such as drinking age, taxes, and the relationship between the state and the individual were discussed. The general interest to take part in the different workings and tasks of the forum (from purely administrative issues to political philosophy and normative issues relating to how society should be ordered), to communicate, discuss, debate, and learn, is what brings the small group of young people together. What the analysis illuminates is a 'style' of participation that builds on voluntariness, on possession and accumulation of – for the context being – 'right' forms of capital, which in turn pre-structures the involvement in a forum where these skills are valued and recognised.

The different capital forms (cultural and social in this case) are of course intertwined and at constant interplay, and as Bourdieu writes, socially transferable. Besides formal settings, the family is a key institution for transferring capital forms between generations, thus contributing to reproduction of class relations. Some of the members of the forum come from backgrounds where discussions and engagement in societal issues are relatively common features of family life. For some, family members are actively contributing to their personal engagement and interests, and have been doing so since childhood:

> Interviewer: Before you said that you have had a privileged childhood. How do you mean?
>
> Amanda: When I say privileged it's like… How should I explain? Everyone in my family, I have a pretty big family, have been pretty high up in class, not excessively high up, but they are pretty high up in class, all are well educated, all have what is considered to be 'a good job' in society. […] They have been given the opportunity and above all they have taken the opportunity to be seen and recognized in the society. And if you have been given that opportunity, if you have that opportunity, then you can transfer it to your children as well. […] (BI, Youth Representation Forum, Gothenburg)

On a couple of occasions during the interview Amanda talks about her experience of being privileged in relation to certain aspects of life, which often encompasses her family situation. Her family has given her many perspectives on things, she says, explaining how her parents have respected jobs, and how she as a child used to watch the news a lot with her mother and sister, which made her "pretty conscious". Her reasoning is in line with Bourdieu's understanding of the family as playing a central role in the reproduction of social order and social relationships (Bourdieu 1995:120).

The importance of family life for accumulation of social and cultural capital comes through also in Peter's narrative. Discussions with his dad, about "right and wrong" and "the society", have been of key importance for his personal interest and engagement in the forum:

> Peter: I discuss pretty much only with my dad. I have younger siblings so they are not as informed. It is not as rewarding discussing Brexit if they don't know what Brexit even means. (BI, Youth Representation Forum, Gothenburg)

Taking a closer look at social capital in the practices of the forum, the importance of social relations and networks in the acquisition of resources, advantages and the pursuit of career goals comes through in number of ways. As a formal setting of participation, the forum functions as a door opener towards participatory routes of the future which is highly appreciated by its members, in terms of contacts and networks it generates. This is where young people with certain kinds of ambitions are given opportunities to start crafting networks with ties towards both politics and business. Participation in the youth representation forum is rooted in a now and linked to the future and future careers:

> Amanda: […] I mean, I could really just skip education completely, because I have like built up my ground. I know, because I have been working for [a municipal company] since I was [age]. I know the board, I know those in charge, and like I know that I will be getting a job there regardless if I apply, I will get a job straight away, do you understand what I mean? It's logical, I have like already talked with them in that way. […]
>
> […] it benefits me as a person a lot and I know that everyone who has been involved in the forum that I know thinks the same. So, this is not just a good foundation for the future, it's like a good now, a very good now, it is incredibly developing. You learn a lot about administration

> […] I have developed even more, I have become more punctual, pedagogical and… Yeah, everything, it's like really good. (BI, Youth Representation Forum, Gothenburg)

For the small number of members who are being most active, the forum also serves the function as a laboratory of democratic processes and practices, as a forum where members – through collaboration, responsibility, dialogue, and interactions with like-minded individuals – gain and continuously develop a diversity of skills. Some describe their time in the forum as extremely rewarding, developing and educational in terms of interactions with peers, various encounters with politicians, the business sector and the wider public:

> Peter: It is great fun to go to the sessions on Mondays and Wednesdays […] But it's fun because there are people that care about politics, in my own age, that are fun discussing with. It gives many rewarding conversations […] dialogues, we have that pretty often. Then I have, or others as well, done different interviews. I was in Almedalen [Sweden's biggest political meeting place] last summer talking, and I was on TV this spring. […] There we can express our opinions in different matters. But it is mainly through dialogues and our political reference group meetings that most is done. (BI, Youth Representation Forum, Gothenburg)

The analysis shows how interactions and practices in the youth representation forum give rise to formation of a participatory 'style' conditioned by a (background related) possession and further accumulation of cultural and social capital. Taken together, the two capital forms examined here have a potential of bringing about symbolic capital (reputation/prestige/status) which facilitates self-realisation in terms of how skills, knowledge, formal education, and credentials can be traded on the market in order to gain power and advantage which influences life opportunities. Most often, high volumes of capital open up routes towards conventional participatory careers offered by society.

At the same time, as much as the forum cultivates cultural and social capital, the young members are also aware of ideas relating to the lack of entitlement and power; their (political) participation is really depoliticised and deals with questions of little controversy to the agendas of political parties. During a discussion on the topic one of the members expressed the view that the forum does not have the authority to make and execute decisions, meaning that the forum, in that particular member's words, is a kind of "lapdog of politics", a square that politicians can cross while claiming to be promoting youth participation. From this perspective, the youth representation forum can be understood as a tokenistic participatory form – as a perfunctory and symbolic effort of youth participation. When describing the forum's relation with the politicians in the City Council Amanda says:

> Plainly speaking I don't think it's working. Some show up, some care and so, but nothing happens. It changes nothing […] It's like, generally, we report, they report. (GD, Youth Representation Forum, Gothenburg)

The meetings that the forum has with the group of appointed politicians with supervising responsibilities are described as merely technical: "we report, they report." The youth representation forum is a formal setting of participation run by a small number of members in possession and continuous acquisition of social and cultural capital. However, for this group of young people the capital forms cannot yet fully be turned over into advantages, simply because they are still under aged and act in an asymmetrical relation to the adult world of party politics.

4.4.2 The Box – tales of the expected and unexpected; (re) producing styles of participation.

The competencies and capabilities displayed by the men at 'The Box' which come under the banner of cultural capital that are valued in the space are quite different from those observed in the youth representation forum. As we might expect, the men did not fare well in the formal educational system and instead suffered a number of "injuries of class" (Sennett & Cobb 1970), leaving with few to no qualifications, they were often excluded or educated in alternative provisions. In this sense, even when considered to be the responsibility of the state, they were already outside of formal systems from a young age. Instead, the competencies and capabilities valued inside the group were techniques of how to survive on the street. From sharing tips on how to sleep at the top of warm lift-shafts of swanky apartment blocks to wedging the door shut in public bathrooms to have privacy whilst washing, the men proudly told stories of how to triumph over adversity. This also transferred in to the form that their 'styles of participation' took; their practices appeared happen-chance but underneath were well planned out whilst when they did work it was electrifying but when they didn't there was a sense of resigned silence which was all too familiar. Such themes are displayed in the following two field notes;

> After being guided round the art installations[1] by the men, I ask Kyle if he and his brother planned the route we would take, he explained that they had been discussing it for weeks but for the audience they wanted to keep an element of surprise 'because that's how you survive'. He further explained how they wanted to mirror the routes you take when you are living on the streets, round the back streets in an attempt to stay off the radar and avoid people's gaze, he remarked 'pretty good huh?' (PO, *The Box*, Manchester, 26 May 2016)

> We went to visit a theatre art-type exhibition but the lads didn't want to go in. The outside of the new centre is very exposed; middle class hipsters sit outside drinking and waiting to go into the performance. We got told to join another queue and wait for the 'community outreach' manager to tell us if there were any £1 discounted tickets left. After twenty minutes we were turned away but most of the men didn't wait around for the explanation. We returned next week reluctantly but the conversation we had about the performance was full of energy, rigour and critique, perhaps what you would expect from those sat outside, rich in cultural capital. (PO, *The Box*, Manchester, 16 June 2016)

The difference between the so-called cultural capital acquired as part of their participation in activities provided through their engagement with 'The Box' is that they do not get transferred into symbolic capital. Unlike the forum members, who will more than likely reap the rewards from their cultural capital by cashing in their educational qualifications and credentials to gain employment, the participants at 'The Box' acquire skills that are no less recognisably of a 'lower standard' but are not able to 'trade upwards' in the same way. Equally, they do not express any desire to become part of the middle-class hipster gang. Such features operating within historic working-class cultures as part of continual processes of othering act as critiques of structural relations, although often implicit, are powerful in how culture becomes conscious. As demonstrated by one of the men who tells a joke about how he thinks artistic credentials can be converted into monetary gains:

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[1] The art installations were made as part of an action-research project conducted as part of PARTISPACE, which aimed to raise awareness of homelessness through displaying visual representations of the lived experiences of the participants' lives on the street.

Knock, knock! (Bangs the table)

Who's there?

Electrician – I've come to sort out your meter

Ah good, I can't pay you but I can paint you a picture.

(PO, *The Box*, Manchester, 6 May 2016)

From such moments of humour, it is possible to infer that patterns of class reproduction are in full swing whilst the young men's participation in the arts or attempts to acquire cultural capital simply hold them in status or at worse make them more aware of class inequalities. However, this narrative is too straightforward and does not give credit to how their styles of performance demonstrated an intention to not simply accept familiar practices of participation but to actually have the last laugh! Although it may be a small act of resistance, it is an interruption nonetheless. As identified in other studies of working-class culture (e.g. Skeggs 1997; Willis 1977) having a laugh at middle-class pretension is another potentially subversive and important feature of how those with less power try to push back. Although, socio-cultural structures in place inhibit the men to formally make use of their acquired cultural capital in the same way as their more advantaged middle-class peers, this does not mean that they did not return to the theatre the following week so they could rival the critique of their counterparts or more simply enjoy such opportunities. Furthermore, their 'style of participation' pertains than when on offer they take full advantage but when asked they are not fooled by the gestures of those in more powerful positions that such opportunities provide examples of genuine 'community engagement' but are just as cynical and able to recognise gestures of tokenism.

In contrast to the youth representation forum, it is also possible to identify how the men's access to forms of social capital - through their participation in 'The Box' - does not catalyse opportunities to further their prospects in accumulating economic capital but can, in fact, do quite reverse. As might be expected, one of the contributory factors, which has led to the men finding it difficult to have a home is lack of family support. The men repeatedly affirmed that 'The Box' was like a family perhaps due to the absence of other familial connections they could depend upon for support. These social bonds also seemed to transfer from the mentality of 'looking out for each other' akin to a sibling relationship that could aid participants to survive on the streets into how the men behaved towards each other at 'The Box'. It was not unusual for participants to confide in George, the facilitator, about a member they were concerned about, or to tell him a story of how they had helped someone in the homeless community out of a precarious situation.

As well as providing support, there was, however, a darker side to the importance of displaying loyalty to the group and relying on this support. For example, some of the men who were starting to lead more stable lives and had found accommodation were aware that by associating with some group members tempted, or worse, meant that they were forced to display problematic behaviours in order to maintain their membership. This may have involved substance dependency or petty criminal activity associated with the survival community. In a cruel twist of irony such patterns meant that as some of men struggled and resisted performing a 'style of participation' which was, in many ways, ingrained and familiar territory, they were forced out of social relations to become outsiders again. As one member who was about to have a baby with his partner explained:

> I know I will have to leave this family in order to give mine a chance, I don't want my son or daughter growing up with these labels and associations with that lot. (PO, *The Box*, Manchester, 22 November 2016)

This is in stark contrast to how forum member's social capital in the form of family connections reproduces opportunities for future generations to benefit. This awareness of the stigma attached to the homeless community means that the men have to disassociate themselves from other group members, which they previously depended upon.

Thus, in terms of participatory practices it is possible to infer that this informal context offers a temporary patchwork solution for the severe problems facing this category of young people. It does not compensate the obvious lack of resources in any considerable way and at best offers a temporary alternative 'home', and a 'family' or at worst further perpetuates cycles of dependency. Although it is important not to under-estimate the importance of emotional support, it remains that due to structural relations it is unlikely that their participation will lead to any substantial accumulation of capital forms. Thus, being one of the most socially excluded and non-recognised groups in society their amount of symbolic capital remains low.

However, there were subtle attempts to manipulate style in how the men's practices demonstrated an intension to invent new responses which put them in more advantageous positions. For example, a more experienced, sub-section of the group started to take a more lead role in activities, wanting to challenge the stigma attached to the homeless community and think about how 'The Box' could be supportive to those at differing stages. Such examples show how despite limited opportunities to capitalise on social networks through their involvement in 'The Box' and the difficulties associated with these, it does not mean the men stylise their participation in a way that further confines them to their class-based position. Although these efforts to resist are unlikely to result into symbolic capital that the men can convert to bring about changes in real terms, they nonetheless represent attempts to use their limited agency to perform 'styles of participation', which are meaningful to their biography.

Furthermore, it is also possible to identify how their participation enables group members to foster a sense of self-belief or have a broader impact in being noticed or heard. As one participant explained about how he felt about his engagement in a creative project, which sought to challenge public perception of homelessness:

> I could go to my mates but I dunno, I dunno this is different. I feel like I should don a shield, climb a mountain and take on 300 and scream, it's a chance to get a point across, a chance to be something else than the mundane. Like instead of just putting up with things and can have a chance to sway a different vote, change the balance a bit. To try and make a difference to something which often doesn't feel in your control. (GD, *The Box*, Manchester)

It is important to not underestimate the affective dimension of what it means for these men to be heard given the power of silence and processes of misrecognition they are accustomed to. Interestingly, similar to the young people involved in the youth representation forum this self-realisation did not have the capacity to be converted into symbolic capital in all spaces. As both case studies exhibit, despite the very different class-based positions and corresponding affordances of power, there was a clear level of disempowerment when participants came up against established democratic political systems. As the following transcript from the discussion after film exhibition, which charted the process of the project shows:

**Audience member:** Who should see it? (in reference to the film), who should be in the audience?

**Kyle:** The lost generation of the homeless.

**Luke:** Anyone at all, urm…I dunno.

**Connor:** Everyone should see, both sides of life, like the good side, and the bad side, there are many different sides otherwise people don't respect where people have come from, I think everyone should have an equal opportunity to see it.

**Audience member:** I was at a meeting the other week and we were told that there is no reason in Manchester for anyone to sleep rough and that is the council's version. So immediately, I think maybe you should tie the councillors down and get them to watch it!

**Audience member:** I don't understand why they say it is not needed…I think there is a belief that support is not required.

**Connor:** Of course, that's the council for you but it does not mean we should not try!

(PO, *The Box*, Manchester, 20 December 2016)

Such instances show how similar to the youth representation forum, the men's attempt to stylise their perfomance in deeply affective ways was still there, despite knowing that it was unlikley to result in tangible change. Furthermore, these attempts were accompanied by a number of universalistic statements. For example, when Connor introduced the film he was keen to assert that if audience members were just to take one message away, it should be this:

We were all born to this world the same and we all take nothing with us.

We need to remember that our actions count more than our words.

(PO, *The Box*, Manchester, 20 December 2016)

Attempts to name issues of representation, which some would say are at the heart of democratic systems, particulary the crisis of the left, are a reminder that some of the men had a keen understanding of how power is operating. Despite knowing their calls for change would likely go unheard or even acted upon, they were steadfast in their belief that 'everyone' should see the film. However, the film has not been aired more than a handful of times. Such attempts to rid hierarchy is relentless from those who continue to bear the brunt of class privilege since for them it is plain that fundamental change is needed.

## 4.5 Conclusion

In this section, we have been concerned with exploring the relationship between social class and the formation of 'styles of participation'. The analysis focused on how the conditions of particular participatory contexts characterised by different capital flows affect young people's practises, behaviours, perceptions, acquisition of skills, competencies and resources. The theory of social stratification as an effect of individual's access to forms of capital has brought about a productive set of analytical categories enabling us to pin down and deconstruct the elusive concept of participation, and relate it to concrete, everyday practice.

The comparative analysis deliberately focused on a youth representation forum and a homeless charity organisation, two participatory settings very different in character. The youth representation forum typifies a formal space occupied by actors with high amounts of capital,

where practice enables continuous accumulation of capital. The charity organisation on the other hand is an informal space, the participants belong to a marginalised group of young people with limited access to capital forms, a reality that forces them to struggle for basic survival. Through this distinction we have been able to exemplify the particular sets of relations and practices that characterise the analysed contexts, and highlight how structural differences influence practice.

We have shown how the young members of the youth representation forum come from relatively privileged and homogenous socioeconomic backgrounds. Thus, when they enter this formal, participatory context they are already in possession of both cultural and social capital. Through active engagement in the practices of the forum they are able to acquire further skills, competencies and social networks which most likely will have positive outcomes for their participation as adults. On one hand, the analysis illustrates how practices are shaped by young people's positioning in a societal matrix of class differences which stands in direct relation to 'styles of participation'. Following Bourdieu, the analysis can be read as a critique of the "biographical illusion", the liberal democratic idea that people are "free" to create their biographies, in detachment from their factual embeddedness in social structure. People are actors, as Bourdieu writes, but within a structure "by which they are profoundly molded" (quoted in Joas & Knöbl 2009:379). At the same time, emphasising the importance of relations between actor and structure when thinking about participation, we have been able to avoid crude, structural determinism, casting light upon the ways in which 'styles of participation' emerge in the intersection between individual agency and social structure. Contemporary Europe is characterized by economic and political developments which have profoundly undermined traditional welfare states and re-shaped European societies towards greater inequality, income gaps and social polarization. These forces have successfully been obscuring class relations without, as we have been arguing in this chapter, making them less important.

We have also seen how the young homeless men at 'The Box' inhabit a subordinated position in relation to economic resources. The practices at the informal organisation they are engaged with need to be understood in the light of recent economic developments, austerity measures, and lack of housing in the UK which especially targets a generation of young people, leaving many unemployed and homeless. The young men's limited access to social capital (relations and networks that could potentially enable advancement towards employment and housing) and cultural capital (very limited achievements in the system of formal education) leaves them with reduced forms of agency. In terms of participatory practices, this informal context offers a temporary patchwork solution for the severe problems facing this category of young people. In this context, through their 'styles of participation', the young men are given opportunity to express themselves and voice their experiences. But since these practices do not lead to any substantial accumulation of capital forms they are unlikely to contribute to qualitative changes in their precarious life situation. However, the young men's performances and intentions behind the form that the 'style' of their participation takes shows how they are not merely fodder in the machine of class reproduction. In albeit small, affective and momentary ways they attempt to resist, struggle and create agentic responses which shapes the form that their 'styles of participation' take on. Although, their attempts at 'style' are not transformatory, they are more than deviations that attempt to reconcile demands enforced upon them. These processes offer opportunities for self-performance or an attempt to be heard, they matter to the individuals

involved, even if they are only visible momentarily. In this chapter we have tried to capture these moments, in an attempt to show their call to prefigure a better world.

# 5. Performing participation: culture and arts as catalysts of alternative scenes

**Authors: Céline Martin and Boris Popivanov**

*This section deals with the role of culture and art as practices through which young people get engaged in society and develop particular 'styles of participation'. Cultural self-expression is researched in literature among the ways alternative movements and subcultures have transformed the existing social and political contexts. Here, we pick up two cases of youth cultural and artistic involvement as different as the ALAB in Rennes and NAD in Plovdiv in order to study the forms of and the extent to which their approach lead to participation in terms of changing the social environment.*

*After briefly presenting the two groups and their projects, the section elaborates the importance of friendship as a driving force of young people's forms of self-organisation, and their complex, alternative stances to the authorities and the mainstream culture. It is in the context of their values and their attitude to the public environment that specific styles of participation of the groups emerge: a 'virtuoso' style in the case of ALAB and 'do-it-yourself' with NAD. The conclusions highlight the role of the 'blurred boundaries' of youth social and political conditions and the positioning of the youth artistic and cultural projects as 'in-between' groups – neither occasionally gathering nor hierarchically closed ones – which sheds further light on the mode of participation where identity and instrumentalisation go together.*

## 5.1. Introduction

This chapter aims at interpreting 'styles of participation' of young people with regard to their artistic and cultural practices. Without limiting the expression to an age category, we know today that these practices can be essential for socialisation spaces and individual and collective empowerment. Highly supported and strongly legitimised today within the framework of youth organisations and the school environment, they are also designed and developed outside of them, giving rise to the so-called alternative movements or subculture (Hebdige 1979).This was the case for the most famous examples, with the hippie movement of the 60s, the punk movement of the 70s or the hip hop culture in the 80s. Therefore, the artistic expression becomes cultural, embodying especially a dress code, sometimes a lifestyle, but also mobilisations or claims.

Across the PARTISPACE cities, there are several examples of groups dealing with culture and art, in the sense that cultural and art activities work as a vehicle of expression of young people in public: the Street Musicians (Eskisehir), the Theatre Group (Gothenburg), Music Group (MGM – Manchester), ALAB (Rennes), the Informal network for arts and debate (NAD – Plovdiv). They are all about self-expression, identity, non-mainstream realisation. Their focus is the 'creative togetherness' (see Batsleer et al. 2017: 79) which means that it is through concrete performance that their political messages are conveyed and thus urban context is influenced.

We chose to present in comparative perspective two of them – ALAB and NAD – as the specific and ambivalent relation of their style to cultural and political norms seems for us particularly important for exploring youth participation. ALAB presents an alternative way to do popular

education through the means of art activities with social transformation as the outcome. Respectively, NAD expands cultural self-expression to forms of influencing the cultural scene of the city and the ways music and politics are perceived by the public. Both groups produce alternative scenes. It is our aim to show that cultural production is mutually connected with developing alternative scenes, and through which, doing culture becomes doing participation. Therefore, we need to demonstrate (1) the social, civic and political dimension of ALAB's and NAD's involvement through art and culture, and (2) the way art and culture serve as meaningful ways to produce change – both for participants and for others.

The social link can be regarded as constitutive for participation, and moreover, social relationships are established to be more intense in insecure and/or precarious non-mainstream circumstances (Paugam 2013). We also draw on Willis' view (1990) that artistic creativity is an everyday activity communicating the meanings young people invest in their life spaces, social practices and group identities. Through the 'social link' lens we analyse how cultural expression is related to alternative scenery and then to participating in public, and what concrete things it tells us about this kind of participation. So our general research question is: how and to what extent does the cultural and artistic approach of young people lead to participation in terms of catalysing alternative scenes and, in a broader sense, changing the social environment?

After a brief presentation of the methodology used in the framework of the PARTISPACE project as well as the case studies, we will go through the type of projects of young people and the different profiles of the protagonists interviewed. What are their practices, their areas of interest, their objectives through artistic expression? In the second part, we will show what their commonalities and differences are in terms of values, motivation and group organisation. In the third part, we will propose an analysis of their relation towards cultural institutions or towards institutional representatives more generally. Based upon this accumulated understanding of commonalities and differences of youth groups' practices, we try to answer the question of whether a particular participatory style can be observed as a common feature of geographically quite distant case studies.

## 5.2 Profiles and practices of two youth groups

In this work, we draw on qualitative fieldwork methods: we mainly conducted interviews (both individual and group) and made participant observations in two case studies, for a six-month period in the first one in Rennes, France, and for a twelve-month one in the second, in Plovdiv, Bulgaria.

Our first case study concerns the ALAB, an initiative created by the French association L'Eprouvette, a 2015-established structure focusing on inter-cultural relations and non-formal education. We got to know the first edition of this project during its experimental phase. It was particularly interesting to follow this initiative: ALAB is an attempt to renew participation practices and opportunities for young adults (18-25 years old), and to make them "actors of their own culture" (terms used by the project leader during the presentation meeting with future participants in September 2015).

Indeed, with the ALAB, young members of L'Eprouvette intend to develop a facilitating framework for hearing the voices of young people. Art and culture are the levers to form the collective experience of a group of young adults from diverse social and cultural backgrounds that is to

embark on this six-month project. Between December 2015 and May 2016, participants experimented in alternative or more institutionalised cultural venues in the city, organising and acting in events in the fields of cinema, theatre, dance, visual arts, and music.

The objective of this initiative "by young people for young people" was to gain autonomy of the young participant at the end of the experience by actively imagining a project that would meet an identified need, e.g. an event. At the end of this time of experimentation, the group of participants must establish its working rules and make public proposals. For the ALAB initiators, the pedagogical dimension is considered to be framing the artistic performances. During the process of learning, young people may develop soft and technical skills, take responsibilities, speak more freely inside a group, gain confidence in their abilities as well as some expertise on video technologies, acting, improvisation and writing. No artistic skills are required from the young participants and it is up to them to decide of the time they would take devoting to the project. To put it otherwise, the learning that takes place is shaping their 'style of participation'. In this sense, their practices are more important than the value of the aesthetic goal or aim. Cooperative knowledge resources are valued as a form of "collective intelligence". (Field journal, ALAB, Rennes, Sept 2017).

By autonomy, we mean support to self-reliance of the participants in their ability to take responsibility and make proposals taking into account the needs of a public. The 'supervisors' from the project team are removed gradually so that the group might feel free to act. The leaders define the course of the ALAB as a semi-directive framework shaping and evolving itself through the influence of the participants.

How do young people know about ALAB and how do they become 'participants'? The team of L'Eprouvette conducts information campaigns in order to present the project to youth workers and young people. They use social media (Facebook and others), leave flyers and posters in bars and cafes, contact universities and youth structures in the city. When young people are interested, the two coordinators propose meetings with volunteers intended to give more details of the project and check young people's availabilities because the involvement usually takes at least 15 hours per week. The focus falls on the ambition since it is not promoting one's artistic skills but developing collective abilities with artistic and cultural approach, which is the idea. Afterwards, if the demand is greater than the possibilities (limited to maximum 25 persons in a group), the coordinators have to choose. Volunteers explained to us they sometimes feel uncomfortable with the selection process as it reminds them of the labour market procedures.

During many workshops, participants were able to produce a short film, following games of improvisation. For example they discovered different styles of urban dance (locking, popping, breaking, tutting), but also of "dance forum". Pictorial arts as graffiti, drawings, paintings and music (through composition and recording) were proposed too. The artists leading the workshops were chosen with respect to their pedagogical approach and their very creative ideas. These are often still emerging figures and therefore little known to the public at large. The cultural forms (dance performance or play) are selected with the aim to develop young people's critical thinking or political consciousness. Shows could touch upon racism, sexism or different forms of domination in society.

The L'Eprouvette team are students, job seekers, civic volunteers (3 men and 2 women) between 19 and 26 years old. Most of them have a higher education degree and previous experience in the cultural, artistic or political scene. With their education, internships, experience of mobility abroad, engagement in various associations, these young people belong to a comparatively high social stratum, in spite of their extremely modest living conditions and their precarious status. Only one of them earns enough money to contribute to the project of the association.

Our second case study concerns the Informal network for arts and debate (NAD) a loose artistic network of Bulgarian young people. The group started as a very bottom-up initiative, centred on artistic expression. One of the first stages was the getting together of several unschooled musicians, who formed a rock band in 2012. Some of them had been involved in the local graffiti subculture. The band plays in a syncretic genre, combining several types of alternative rock, metal and folk; its lyrics are heavily socially-loaded. Networking with other bands and performers from other arts, as well as venues, the loose group was formed. We managed to observe the group and follow its activities from its very launch in October 2015 until October 2016. It found a home free of payment in an established alternative bar in the second largest Bulgarian city, where the group stages not only musical concerts (ranging from metal to hip-hop), but also other types of performance arts, public readings, and discussions on current topics.

The group is non-hierarchical, although it has its clear informal leaders. It is not part of a project and instead is funded on a do-it-yourself basis. This includes revenue from tickets for events and merchandise. Members of the group have contacts with artists, venues and promoters in other parts of the country and sometimes stage events beyond their hometown. They view their activities as not only artistic, but also as providing opportunities for young people to participate and express themselves. They see doing art as they do as an important mode of self-expression and making one's voice heard. But they do not view art as only a matter of preference – they generally believe that music or literature has to carry messages that can help people make sense of their lives, and especially messages making them question received opinions.

There is a strong sense of alternativeness, underground, and opposition to current mainstream culture, both artistic and more broadly social. In addition, NAD is greatly about a certain lifestyle, feeling good, including partying; it is a 'scene' as much as a stage. The nucleus band of the network places a special emphasis upon the presentation of its songs and albums – from the images on CD covers, to t-shirts, promotional videos, web pages, etc. The same can be said about the events organised by the network, which are intended not to be the generic concert or public discussion, but rather to make a thematic impression upon the audience. That is how collective branding turns into an appeal for collective identity.

NAD members, too, generally come from middle-class backgrounds (some upper-middle) and are students, young employees or workers in the liberal professions, aged 23-27. The group is predominantly male which is hardly surprising given that rock music is generally heavily masculinised.

## 5.3 Values and forms of self-organisation. The role of friendship.

When asked about the story of the project, the ALAB participants explained how they were already friends before the project started meaning that these relationships formed the basis of the group. In this example, friendship is a form of social cohesion that comes out of the private

sphere to become institutionalised (Bidart 1997). Friendship involves integration for each member and an interplay in which members mutually legitimise each other's words. Therefore, ideas and values circulate quite easily among the participants and thus they become an intrinsic part of the project. The ALAB acts as a production and testing ground for sympathy and elective affinities. On one side, staying "among peers" to deal with their actions, governance and decision-making can be considered as an elective process reducing the openness to other young people, but on the other side, their friendship means freedom of acting and possibilities to remain consistent with their perception of life.

We can say that friendship is the focal point of the project. In a risk society (Beck 2001), friendship is crucial in people's own participation process and gives them strength and confidence in their own experimentation. This point makes the link with the French studies on the values of young people who prioritise friendship and social relations (Cicchelli 2001). In our case, the ALAB's coordinators are friends before being partners. They share the same interest for art, culture and youth policies. The group members expected from each other to share similar values:

> Friendship, solidarity, freedom, conviviality, a democratisation of culture in the sense of involving people directly to make culture. Sharing, horizontality relating to others. (fieldnotes, *ALAB*, Rennes).

Two people have the position of leader and coordinator because they were the first to elaborate the project and possess a contract to do that. Leadership is somewhat conditional. Due to their current initiatives, they believe that they work in a way which they created themselves. Leadership is to be perceived in terms of this atmosphere. Otherwise, "to have a boss" for them refers to frustration and unhappiness.

In the words of one of the leaders:

> After this project, it will be difficult to go back in traditional work with a boss on your back. (GD, *ALAB*, Rennes).

Society is not a source of motivation. Regarding young people's difficulties in the labour market, the project leaders do not expect improvement. They have to combine their abilities to find a place and become visible with their critical approach, so in some manner reconcile (keeping to) 'values' and (building a) 'future'.

> The most important thing is to have fun. The ALAB is also a stepping stone, a first activity, a way to professionalise yourself, a way to give meaning to what you are doing. The priority is not money; rather, the priority is to be a key element in the chain, not a simple performer. (GD, *ALAB*, Rennes)

> I wanted to say something global, that is, if we find ourselves here... there is indeed a convergence at the level of the projects, at the level of the values we share. But we are in this reality of the ALAB, that is to say that we are all ... we've all just finished our studies, and we're all finding it hard to find work. (GD, *ALAB*, Rennes)

> I think the labour market was not as big as you would wish anyway [...] I'm thinking of E's motivations, my motivations, but they could combine with the motivations of... […] And the route is almost .... (*Search for a word*) .... do not be afraid of the word but ... entrepreneurial, in any case, enterprising. To create an activity in order to stay close to your values. There is a big pile of failure in youth policy, the world of culture, and trying to dig a straight furrow in there…. (GD, *ALAB*, Rennes)

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The feeling of being on the threshold of life with shrinking professional opportunities is to be perceived together with the consciousness of the value of being together and share similar viewpoints and attitudes but also make activities on this basis. These rather collective values coexist with some more individualistic forms of motivation to succeed in a context marked by unemployment, including for young graduates. The question of living in line with their values is very important for the project team young people, who are very concerned about making sense of their daily activities. For them, experience in accordance with their values means freedom.

In sum, we can state that the ALAB participants' values centre on solidarity, community, and horizontal decision-making, but also on creativity, self-expression, and personal success. This is a peculiar combination between communitarian-oriented and liberal individualist values, but it seems not to be an exception among today's youth (Martinot –Lagarde 2008). We were able to observe the abilities of these young adults to form and support a substantial network around them, perfectly mastering the codes and practices of their professional environment. Thus, they fit the image of what a French study describes as *virtuosos*: "young people who have the ability to train themselves, to analyse, to intensify their political thinking, and above all, through innovative practices, to enlist more peripheral audiences"[2].

NAD, on the other hand, is clearly counter-cultural and opposed to all kinds of power – political, judicial, social, and economic. There is a punkish attitude against "the system". One of the informal leaders of the network told us:

> … politicians, who are, you know, representatives of the will of the people, you know, executors of the people's sovereignty, they pervert people's ideas and desires through the institutions they form. For me, the connection between politics and people consists precisely in the desires, problems and tasks that people want to solve. But in practice people do not find solutions for all these things, because politicians abuse their power in order to preserve some status quo. (BI, *Mario, 24, NAD*, Plovdiv)

Interestingly, the same respondent has studied law and has been on an internship at a law firm, where he was disappointed with what he identified as rigid and impassive following of the rules, rather than a keen interest in upholding justice on the part of lawyers and judges:

> He [the lawyer] was explaining the case to me quite disinterestedly and was emphasising entirely the facts… It didn't matter if you are guilty or not but rather what you had done and what the opponent's lawyer had claimed. (BI, *Mario, 24, NAD*, Plovdiv).

He also formulated a positive and somewhat utopian vision of politics centring on what he called "speech", which involves directly addressing people and relating to their issues and desires.

The lyrics of the rock band that forms the nucleus of the network tackle broad ideological topics, but also pressing issues confronting young people today, like education, the job market, and precariousness. They use both folklore motifs and lines from famous socially-conscious poets. Furthermore, both the band and the network employ imagery from the former USSR and greater Socialist Bloc, albeit at a critical distance. In all, this provides for values in line with a certain sort of anarchic socialism.

> Awakened by the 'taxidermied' delegates

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[2] Fréderic Chateigner, extract from INJEP public conference debate, 08.06.2017

they are selling me circles but they seem like squares.

This is perhaps the main verse of their debut song "Squares" – intended as a symbolic discontent with the socially formative mechanisms of media and institutions. From there, the online distributed band's so-called "Manifesto of Last-First" additionally exploits and structures a conscious opposition to the whole status quo in Bulgaria. Nevertheless, the interviews we conducted show that members of the network, including its leaders, have also internalised values from the mainstream (liberal) culture. These include expressing your own individual subjectivity, a glorification of creativity and making new, original things, "being yourself", being authentic.

> Our chief ideology is to be independent, not falsified, not reduced to products, non-capitalist in its attitude so to speak, and under 'capitalism' I mean consumerism. A kind of purity. It's got to be about music, music that's just how it is… not about music that aims to be something else... I mean… the idea is to be yourself… (BI, *Mario, 24, NAD*, Plovdiv)

The network is also not averse to commercial activities, seeing them as inevitable in today's world. One of the group's informal leaders made the following reflection, independently corroborated by the other leader:

> Well, in the end for each product… so that your investment can be returned… in our case the investment is time, equipment – and you need money for that gear – money for some lessons perhaps, transportation, rehearsals… well you see some serious investment is needed for doing music. And if you want some financial returns from that music, you have at some point to look upon your music as a product, you have to advertise it the way they advertise a product, you have to promote it and to find the best way to make some financial benefits from it. That's how it is; nobody likes to talk about it, but that's the way to build a successful scene… (BI, *Philip, 26, NAD*, Plovdiv)

The distinction between "attempts against the system" and "organisation in reality" is bridged over, and it is meaningful for the way the 'style of participation' of the band is produced.

The other informal leader also talked about crafting something like a "mythology" around the band, so that the audience views its members akin to what he termed "demigods". For him that was not about achieving financial success or what is termed a 'cult' status; rather, it was part and parcel of how 'authentic' art works.

Still, perhaps the key values for NAD remain solidarity and social awareness. This is clearly expressed in the band's "Manifesto of the Last-First", in which they address the 'generation' of all people who have been born or grown up during Bulgaria's transition from state socialism to capitalism, which band members describe as a period of fear, precarity, illicit domination, mutual mistrust, and social disintegration. The manifesto ends thus:

> If we succeed not to forget our human nature and the fact that everyone is equal to his or her neighbour, we will be able to turn this country – and the world itself – in a dream come true. We are the last-first, bloodied by words, insulted by reality, but with heads over the miry sea. The burden is on us. We don't have the right to fail.

NAD members see few outlets for achieving such goals via the traditional instruments of government, local authorities, and education system. Some representatives have told us that they have experiences with college education as too formalistic and textbookish. On the other hand, their memories from high school include many positive experiences. Members envisage the

network and the loose 'scene' it has created as a space that can effectuate such solidarity. They see art as a special vehicle in bringing people together and letting them interact in a way that is free of the trappings of illegitimate power. The above quote from the Manifesto synthesises all these notions: the unjust political process – its negative reflections on young people's growing-up – the need of regaining humanity – the chance of friendship bonds.

NAD organises its activities completely informally. It has not received state or municipal funding and is not a part of a formalised project with a timeline. The events are organised on an ad hoc basis – starting from personal contacts with venues, promoters, bands, authors, etc., or from some current topic in the news, in the case of public debates. There is a certain 'division of labour' within the group, but it is fluid.

As we observed, the 'style of participation' of people within NAD is also a certain (loosely defined) lifestyle. It includes going out for drinks at certain underground bars or public parks, partying hard without being obnoxious to others, camping at less frequented beaches at the seaside and going to so-called 'free festivals' in the mountains. All of that only further empha-sises the 'alternativeness' sought by NAD members, which almost always includes intensive communication and interaction among fluid groups of people. In fact, one respondent told us he sees partying as a way "to make other people happy". According to him, such group lifestyle can bring people out of the ordinary every day and make them feel they are "something more". In addition, he argued that an underground scene has the advantage of bringing together people with peculiar types of personal experience diverging from the common rut, who, by sharing it with the rest, can enrich each other and expand their views of the world. These reflections go in hand with Miles' observations (2000) of young people's responses to fragmentation, risks and global uncertainty in constructing identities through the important instrument of lifestyles. We emphasised the role of friendship as uniting link of both groups in their cultural self-ex-pression. At the same time, the norms and values shared by the group members suggested at different motivations and thus different perceptions of what they try to achieve through culture beyond the self-expression: search for alternative engagement into society (ALAB) and for en-gagement in an alternative society (NAD).

## 5.4 Getting in touch with the public environment and the authorities

As we saw in the previous discussion, the ALAB project was born from a critical experience with their social environment. During some internships connected with political or volunteer engagement, participants observed some limitations on which they wanted to concretely work to overcome. These are related to uneasiness in giving young people responsibilities, effects of intergenerational tensions or infantilisation processes. The political aspect of the project emerges here because of directing youth participation towards developing decision-making and self-expression capacities.

The main objective of the ALAB is to encourage youth emancipation through their involvement in a collective adventure. The members of the ALAB can be regarded as an example of eman-cipation process, because they expected to act on their social environment and give other people the possibility to express their creativity and be recognised. They consider that some structures for young people no longer allow this because of their logics of functioning. Actually, their relations with institutions are not based on an open conflict, but rather on a long-term strategic dialogue.

Today the ALAB keeps on developing despite a context of high precariousness of jobs supported by the state (job cuts announced in August 2017 in France). Indeed, the project was not supported immediately by public funds. Thus, the above-mentioned 'virtuosity' of the coordinators and leaders was tested during the first year. A permanent insecurity threatened the project from its very start, due to a lack of public support.

> Elected officials and bureaucrats for the city X, at the beginning, they nearly laughed at us initially… Now, they are asking us to be part of plenty of projects, they are chasing after us (laughs). (GD2, *ALAB*, Rennes)

However, the future looks uncertain due to differing albeit not opposing visions of initiators and policy-makers. At the end of this first experimental year, we noticed that the 'authorities' referred to the L'Eprouvette association as an exemplary project – not on an artistic or participative level, but as a way of bringing together young people and elected representatives, a regular leitmotiv in public discourse. Here Williams'(1977; 1980) notion that new possibilities present themselves within the cultural forms while political forms need to catch up with these cultural forms is relevant. The ALAB project cannot live on its own resources since it is a completely free programme for all participants. The municipality is ready to fund it although sectoralisation of youth policies prioritises 'youth action' rather than cultural self-expression. It makes young participants dependent but nevertheless not trapped in compromise. Developing strategic styles between conformism and innovation is their response to the challenges of the political environment. This has much to do with the struggle for recognition.

At political level, it is accomplished through the convergence with the political agenda. The networking capacity of the city's youth sector played a major role in the project's development and attaining legitimacy. Researchers, youth workers, workers supporting youth employability, elected officials and civil servants were drawn in and regularly consulted. A form of advocacy coalition emerged from this networking. There is a consistency between the objectives of the project and the implementation of the "youth pact" of the city (a framework document that lays out the main orientations of the municipal youth policy). This clearly expresses the town's will to support projects led by young people, citizens' expression, and creativity. However, this support focuses on temporary and specific initiatives, rather than on ongoing projects like this one. The ALAB thus show a contestation of 'accepted' and 'non-accepted' meanings but they coexist together. These meanings then enable the ALAB to have biographical meaning for different actors in different ways.

At space level, the place of the action of the project is central for the city and recognised by the artistic and cultural milieu as a laboratory of emerging projects. During the first edition of ALAB, they benefited from the attraction of the public and the attention of the municipality. It is not only a place for artistic projects. This big building, a former faculty of sciences, is known in the city centre as a space, which welcomes various emerging projects and social initiatives. It is acquiring the function of a springboard for many people who want to make their work visible and in this sense, enjoy some public and institutional recognition. In its absence, the ALAB project would not have taken place, because it required flexibility, which most institutional spaces would not allow. Three rooms were dedicated to the project during the 5 months. Participants were able to set up their venue based on their proposal and their recovery approach. This development was very important in the appropriation phase of the project and the group dynamics.

Another important factor was the ability of the coordinators/leaders to persevere and to develop new communication tools. Young people studying in design, video, webmastering, etc. supported the visual creation and enriched the image of the project. It resembles NAD attempts at 'branding' and self-promotion and enables the perception of a somewhat contradictory style, both counter-mainstream and conforming on other levels in the struggle for recognition.

As we have seen, getting oneself heard is among the chief motivations of NAD, too. In terms of getting the message out and reaching the public environment and authorities, NAD has a somewhat different approach. First, we can say that given their counter-culture approach critical of almost all existing systems, NAD has not sought much contact with authorities; municipal or central. The network maintains no formal relations with such entities, except when requesting permission to hold an event, etc.

Second, even though the activities of ALAB and NAD both take the shape of art/music events or public discussions, their styles differ a lot. Whereas ALAB functions more or less according to a schedule and a distribution of roles and tasks among its members, NAD has a self-professed quality of being "chaotic". It has no fixed schedule, agenda or deadlines. The Bulgarian network is much more fluid, with concerts and other events arising when there is need or opportunity for them. Members told us they are satisfied with how things are turning out in that respect, although they also expressed a desire to more systematically order their events from now on. Audiences are generally growing in numbers, and the frequency and geographical range of events has increased, reaching what some respondents view as an "optimal" frequency for their capacity. But NAD members also expressed a strong desire and ambition to keep reaching more people. They think that what they are doing is relevant not only to people with "underground" sensibilities, but rather for "everyone", thus in effect affirming a universalist aspect to their values and 'style of participation'. But, as we said, the goals for this type of participation are not only artistic and related to lifestyle. NAD members explicitly state that they want to raise awareness, give people "information", and "educate" them. They are critical regarding the objectivity of mainstream media outlets.

NAD people, let us state it once more, have a typically 'do-it-yourself' attitude about them. They seem to be more at home in a comparatively more spontaneous, no-rules environment, which is in line with their views about the nature of creativity, expression and communication among people. Such spontaneous and 'do-it-yourself' milieu corresponds with their idea of a good community. This community might be fluid in terms of structure, roles and membership, but NAD members have a strong sense of 'place'. They consider having a home for the network (the underground bar they re-designed) as vital both for the network's internal health and the effectiveness with which they can get in touch with the external audience.

The personal backgrounds of the members of the two groups are somewhat different. In their biographies, NAD members have significantly less experience with activism, volunteer work, and especially – with membership in political parties. ALAB participants are more openly eager to become professionalised, whereas although NAD members have the desire to create well-crafted and packaged artistic works and events, they are reluctant to be viewed as 'professionals'. Relations with institutions are actually an important part of presenting comparably the two cases as they allow us to outline the differences of approaches and the different routes both groups follow in order to develop their cultural self-expression into practices meaningful for

others. While ALAB emerges as 'alternative' and 'cooperative', NAD insists on being 'counter-institutional' and 'oppositional'.

## 5.5 Conclusion

In sum, we can note that the two case studies presented us with a meaningful array of similarities and discrepancies. Both groups highly value horizontal a-hierarchical structures and decision-making. Solidarity is key for them, both within the group and the greater society. Social links (in terms of Paugam 2013) prove to be their leading form of social capital conditioning their inclusion in the life of the respective city. Both groups are all about sharing experiences. And of course, each of them views art as a vital form of participation and do not restrict art's significance only to aesthetics and self-expression, but rather see social and political stakes within it. It is just this perception of art as an everyday practice (Willis 1990) which 'politicises' their activities and introduces issues of belonging, differentiation and self-assertion in society.

From here, the styles of the two groups diverge. ALAB is much more structured and orderly than NAD. If ALAB is sleek and polished, NAD is raw and messy. As we said, we can contrast ALAB's character of virtuosos, with NAD's 'do-it-yourself' attitude. ALAB tends rather to develop a certain kind of 'do-it-with-the-institutions' elements of style. In the ALAB case, culture enables collective expression and participation as a democratic process, as a widening-up of spheres and possibilities for getting engaged. With ALAB, participation is related to 'finding a place', to elaborate 'offensive approach' for finding solutions in order to stay 'visible'. NAD has common points with Manchester's MGM, a hub of an improvised music scene, which also keep to non-hierarchical modes of activity and fluid boundaries between musicians and audience, and stands as a politicised project because of its alternative relationship to the powerful cultural institutions (Batsleer et al. (2017; 206). On the other hand, Gothenburg's Theatre Group of politically conscious young people with passion for theatre and willingness to address the biggest issues facing the city presents another field of comparison. The latter, quite like NAD, is concerned with "spreading the message to the world" and reaching a wider audience through exploration of political issues (ibid 2017; 79). NAD is the less professional group than ALAB, yet it is the more ideological and ideologically conscious one. While ALAB is focused on transforming social practices through art and culture, NAD seeks to develop and maintain identity and belonging through art and culture.

Taking into account commonalities and differences, both groups suggest on a theoretical level at the interdependence of structural and cultural aspects of youth conditions, which stands as a key issue in style-related scholarly discussions. Both ALAB and NAD develop ideas and practices not coinciding with current institutional priorities and preferences of their respective national and municipal authorities (in the former case, priority is given to exemplary short-term projects not on artistic or participatory levels; in the latter – to support for mainstream and most popular cultural trends). And both manage to open up and maintain a niche of their own. Thus, they have a certain transformative structural effect. But at the same time, structural imperatives influence emerging forms and practices (in the former case, objectives of the project more or less correspond to the basic principles of the city's youth policy; while in the latter, counter-cultural claims go together with appropriation of important mainstream culture elements, in the range from fashionability to advertising).

Thus, the case studies generally confirm the importance of 'blurred boundaries' of youth social and cultural conditions. In a sense, we work with 'in-between' groups. These are neither occasionally gathering individuals for the execution of a concrete task nor a hierarchically organised closed communities. Criticisms in literature that subcultures today have declining influence are justified in quite many respects. In our cases, ALAB and NAD participants all have goals and belongings (sometimes even professional careers) outside the groups. Getting engaged in these groups, ALAB and NAD, however plays no accidental role. It refers to a specific identity and particular group style formation. Here, the boundary between 'expressive' and 'instrumental' is blurred. Both are realised through performance. Developing 'alternative scenes' is the vehicle through which cultural expression becomes instrumentalising. One and the same practice obtains different meanings and results from different motivations of one and the same people. Instrumentalising the groups for their personal goals and interests, participants nonetheless develop a 'feeling' of belonging to these groups, express themselves through being part of them, create shared meanings and symbols. This way, culture and art appear to be the forms through which a complex (including 'virtuoso' and 'do-it-yourself' varieties) participatory style emerges.

# 6. Beyond subcultures: youth styles of participation between resistance and recognition

**Authors: Ilaria Pitti and Yağmur Mengilli**

*Since the 1970s, the concept of subculture has acquired a relevant role in youth studies and has been widely used to highlight youth capability to criticise and question existing, common cultural norms through daily practices of participation in communities sharing a common "focal concern" (Hall & Jefferson 1976), that is a specific interest and cultural taste around which a given life-style is developed. Defined in terms of a new form of collective identification that emerges within a mainstream culture, subcultures are groups that are enough homogeneous on the internal level and heterogeneous in relation to the outside world to be able of defining consistent distinctiveness and identity (Hodkinson 2002).*

*While trying to elaborate styles of behaviour and structures to distinguish themselves from the outside, subcultures engage in a dialogue with the external world through which both instances of resistance (Cohen 1972) and recognition (Honneth, 1992) are expressed. The relationship between a subcultural community and the external world gets thus a central importance for the understanding of the subculture itself.*

*From this perspective, the section considers the interaction between two subcultural groups – an ultras group in Bologna and a sprayer crew in Frankfurt – and the respective outside communities trying to underline how the two subcultures seek to get recognition from the external world while managing to keep a conflictual position. The analysis shows how both the groups handle a double identity expressed through different 'styles of participation' in order to constantly balance the conflictual and dialogical dimension of their relation with the respective external communities.*

*In relation to the report's general perspective, we understand the concept of 'style' as the process of appropriation and (re)signification of the tools of participation on behalf of the young people. In comparison with classic studies on youth subcultures (Hebdige 1979; Hall & Jefferson 1976), we are not concerned with the analysis of the two subcultural groups' style of consumption (i.e. clothing, music), but instead focus on the process leading these young people to transform their "focal concern" in a tool of civic and political participation.*

## 6.1 Introduction

Literature on youth participation has extensively shown how young people express their civic and political interest through a very differentiate range of actions. While some of these practices are commonly understood as forms of engagement, the process of recognition of the more unconventional and less immediately political behaviours as legitimate forms of participation has taken more time and it is still not complete (Dalton 2008). During the last two decades, a change of perspective on youth practices has been fostered, among other processes, by the recognition of the complex interactions between life and politics (Giddens 1991), which has led many scholars to highlight and stress the civic and political implications of a series of daily behaviours, identity choices, and lifestyles.

Within this debate, also youth cultural expressions have started to be understood as means used by young people to express their idea of society. Thus, we intend to contribute to this perspective of analysis exploring the interaction between youth participation and youth subcultures. In so doing, we seek to highlight not only how subcultural lifestyles are expressed through participatory behaviours, but also how participation fosters changes in the relationship between subcultural groups and society, leading them to engage in a more open dialogue with the 'external world'.

The concept of 'subculture' refers to a subsample of cultural - material and immaterial - elements (i.e. values, knowledges, languages, rules of conducts, lifestyles) typically elaborated or used by a given sector or segment of a society, such as a social class, a local community, an ethnic minority, a political, religious, or sport association, a professional group, or a deviant community (Hall & Jefferson 1976; Gallino 1983). Similarly to culture, a subculture entails a specific framework of thoughts, costumes, practices and codes of social interaction that have been commonly defined as folkways, patterns (Hebdige, 1979), "standard models of behaviours" (Nadel 1951), and "public traffic of meanings" (Geertz 1998) through which a collective norm of behaviours is defined and transmitted.

According to the studies of the Birmingham school (Hall & Jefferson 1976), each subculture is nourished by symbolic material, paradigms, and patterns of conduct deriving from the dominant culture, which are first selected and then reformulated in new configurations that can be more or less distant from the original dominant culture. Although a hierarchal relationship exists between the dominant "parent" culture and the subcultures emerging within it, subcultures do not just receive and assimilate the dominant values and lifestyles, but they also express dynamics of competition, contrast, and rejection (Clarke et al. 1966). In relation to the dominant culture, a given subcultural group can thus stands for a differentiated and specialised variant or a clear expression of opposition and deviance[3] (Arnold 1970).

Proposing and sharing behaviours which are visibly different or in open contrast with the ones of the dominant culture, subcultures have often been looked with suspicion and a negative stigma has been applied to many groups showing subcultural models of behaviours (Cohen 1955). This has often been the case for many youth subcultures emerged from the 1970s to nowadays, that the dominant (adult) culture has often labelled as deviant styles of conduct to be eliminated or normalised. On the one side, dismissing the cultural dimension of youth subcultural practices, dominant culture has attempted and, in many cases, achieved to stigmatise, marginalise, and even make these youth subcultures disappear (Hall & Jefferson 1976; Hebdige 1979; Dal Lago 1990). On the other side, through parallel attempts of assimilation, commodification, and normalisation (Hebdige 1979), dominant culture has often managed to slowly reconduct or transform youth subcultures into "socially accepted" norms of behaviour.

The relationship between a subculture and the external worlds is thus characterised by dynamics, which are apparently contradictory. On the one hand, producing their set of shared values, rules of conduct and lifestyles, subcultures create and reinforce a symbolic boundary between them and the rest of society, represented by the dominant culture (and the other subculture). On

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[3] The concept of counterculture is sometimes used to define those subcultures which assume a completely oppositional/deviant position in relation to the dominant subculture (Hall & Jefferson 1976).

the other hand, subcultures seek to carve a space for themselves within society and thus expresses instances of recognition for a certain (minority) perspective on the world (Marchi 2014). Indeed, rather than forms of subverting existing society, subcultures should be understood as attempts to stay within existing society in a different way (Hebdige 1979).

In their attempts to balance between instances of resistance (Hall & Jefferson 1976) and instances of recognition (Honneth 1995), subcultures act as *bricoleur* (Hebdige 1979; Clark 1976) who appropriate, adapt, combine, and re-signify prominent objects and discourses in order to create their own 'style'.

While classic studies on youth subcultures have been mainly interested in looking at stylistic definition as a process of adaptation of elements of the dominant culture on behalf of subcultural groups, we are concerned with the analysis of the process through which subcultures transform their own "focal concern" (Hall & Jefferson 1976) in a form of socio-political engagement, re-signifying their own practices, actions, objects in terms of tools of participation.

Young people need to face these processes of translating own practices into recognised activities or actions, this is what Lothar Böhnisch conceptualised as 'coping with life'. Böhnisch developed under a specific historical and socio-political condition in the 1980s the concepts of coping with life ('Lebensbewältigung') and condition of life ('Lebenslage'). Both are connected to the which includes the rationalisation of work and the welfare state could not guarantee that the 'normal' life course (school – vocational training or academic studies – work) would lead to a successful social integration all over the life span. Based on that background coping ('Lebensbewältigung') means that all actions and activities of an individual are connected to the pursuit of staying capable of acting (c.f. Böhnisch 2008). Referring to this perspective not only socially recognised forms of acting, but furthermore socially misrecognised subcultural practices must be recognised as a way of 'coping with life'. This perspective opens possibilities of keeping in a critical situation the capability of acting while refusing or missing the access to normative acting. How individuals' cope with life depends on their condition of life ('Lebenslage'), which means the material, social and cultural resources an individual has access to for becoming or staying capable of acting. Thereby an important question is how conditions of life ('Lebenslagen') are recognised on a social-political level: the way how problems of life are recognised in society and how they are answered by social-political attention and support measures has an influence on the possibilities of individuals to satisfy their interests in the given social context. So subcultural communities and their struggle for recognition based on the collective practices of resistance is a way of coping with conditions of life and with societal structures. Recognition has a normative and a psychological dimension as when a person is recognised, its normative status such as being an autonomous agent means to embrace a positive attitude towards a certain feature (c.f. Iser 2013). Recognition has another dimension, namely a psychological importance, which depends on the interaction with others subjects and their feedbacks, and the society as a whole. The failure of experiencing adequate recognition is an expression of rejection by the surrounding or the societal norms and values. This misrecognition affects the subjects in their identities, so recognition is a "vital human need" (Taylor 1992; 26).

From this perspective, we will explore how two subcultural groups – an ultras group in Bologna and a graffiti crew in Frankfurt – transform their traditional repertoire of action – namely, the cheer and the graffiti - in tools of engagement, attributing new meanings to their own practices. The analysis shows how young people re-signify practices, which are not usually perceived and

understood as participatory tools, elaborating a specific 'style of participation' which expresses a claim for recognition and an attempt of resistance. In so doing, we intend to explore how youth subcultures seek to resist to cultural assimilation and normalisation while achieving social recognition, analysing their attempts to remain faithful to their identity while fighting social stigmatisation.

## 6.2 Methodology and context of the research

The graffiti crew in Frankfurt and the ultras group in Bologna are two case studies conducted within the PARTISACE research project. Amongst all the case studies conducted within the project, both the graffiti crew and the ultras group can be understood as two subcultural groups inasmuch as they are organised around a common focal concerns (graffiti and football). They adhere to a "subcultural tradition", which define and imply the adoption of a specific lifestyle and norms of conducts, and they use their lifestyle and cultural artefacts to set symbolic boundaries differentiating them from the rest of the world. Despite the definition of these symbolic boundaries, the story of the two groups shows also interesting attempts to start, through participation, a dialogue with the external world and to seek recognition not only within the group. From this perspective, the two case studies underline both dynamics of persistence and processes of transformations of traditional subcultural modes of actions (Hall & Jefferson 1976).

The two groups have, in fact, been selected to analyse the process of re-signification of practices which are not commonly understood as legitimate or recognised tools of participation.[4] Among the various case studies conducted within the project, the stories of these young people are those that appear more exemplificative of a process of transformation of a daily stigmatised behaviour into a tool of engagement and participation. Indeed, both ultras groups' and graffiti crews' practices are not only misrecognised as tools of participation, but they are often perceived as forms of vandalism, violence and understood as expression of apathy and disengagement.

The analysis of these case studies, on the contrary, allows us to highlight how instances of participation and interest in society are present in a series of young people's daily, micro-behaviours that effect the surrounding community that are often not recognised as such. From this perspective, the two case studies are illustrations of dynamics, which are concerned with informal case studies within the PARTISPACE project such as the informal girls' group in Frankfurt and the football fans in Eskisehir. However, in comparison with other case studies, the ultras group and the graffiti crew have engaged in a more explicit process of transformation of their practices as a tool of participation, which is leading them to elaborate their own 'style' of engagement through a process of resignification of their daily behaviours. Cheering and graffiti are becoming tools, which these young people use to manifest their presence in the city and express their ideas about society and the world around them.

The first case study considered for this paper focuses on a graffiti crew in the city of Frankfurt called the 'Hoodboys'. The 'Hoodboys' are an informal group of young men, who got to know each other during school time by the shared youth cultural interest in graffiti. There are two different stages of crew members: the core group and the new comers. Within the group is a

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[4] This chapter focuses on resignification processes, however the two cases are examples of traditionally male-dominated youth cultures in which however recently more and more young women have become involved. Especially, the ultras case in its particularity could be read also as an expression of the femininisation of the ultra culture (Pitti 2018).

tendency of what they call a "generation change", caused by the growing age of the core crew (24 – 27 years) members in connection to their (future) career planning. The socio-demographical background of the crew members' is diverse: few parents who have a university degree; many others are engaged in mostly blue-collar jobs. Some did not finish the Lower Secondary School, but both of them are working. All group members are engaged in work, apprenticeship or studies and are therefore busy with their education or occupational life.

For the individual members of the 'Hoodboys', the crew is one of their peer contexts, which is always connected to the practice of graffiti. Spraying as a shared collective activity distinguishes the 'Hoodboys' from the other friendships. The difference between 'normal' cliques and the spraying in a crew is connected to the aspect of finding compromises and coming to a common denominator as the crew is collective with public perception and therefore serves for representing the crew within the local graffiti scene. As graffiti is about positioning oneself within the city and the perceived impact of the image upon its environment, fame is a central aspect of illicit graffiti. The group has developed a double identity as they run a 'legal' crew as a kind of business brand which accepts commissions and earns money and the other 'illegal' one, which for them is connected to recognition in public space. Spaces and practices are deeply connected for the 'Hoodboys'. Furthermore, they have a legal place for relaxed collective spraying and do illicit graffiti within the city to represent themselves and to feel at "home".

The second case study considered for this chapter focuses on an Italian ultras group, composed by the supporters of a football team participating to the *Serie A* championship, the main professional league competition for football clubs in Italy. The terms ultras is the Italian word used to refer to professional sport fans who 'in addition to supporting their team, go to great lengths to enrich the experience of the match for themselves and the others' (Cere 2002; 8), usually organising choreographies and consistently following their favourite team during championships and tournaments.

The group's story dates to the early 1970s. Since then, although going through several highs and lows, the group has managed to remain the most influential community of supporters of the considered football team. The group's sympathisers compose a large community of about 1500 people. However, this analysis focuses on the very 'core segment' of the group, namely on those supporters that are engaged in the group on a daily, also through "Freccia".

"Freccia" was a formerly abandoned bowls club located in front of the stadium that the group has occupied at the beginning of 2015. Within the centre, the group organises a series of leisure, social, and cultural activities (music events, book presentations, popular gym, a kid's corner during the matches) aiming at fostering a relationship between the 'ultras world' and the 'non-ultras' and at sharing their culture, ideals, and values with the surrounding community. After the occupation, the centre has progressively become a familiar place for the members of the core group, who meet at the centre every evening after work, and before and after any football match.

After one year of illegal occupation, the Municipality has decided to grant the space to the group for 4 years through a formal agreement that has fostered a process of "partial institutionalisation" of the group that, as we are going to explore in the following paragraphs, is challenging the traditional subcultural identity of the group.

Concerning the members of the ultras group, male supporters are overrepresented in the sample, which is composed of 7 female fans and 28 male ultras. The supporters are aged between 18 and 30 and, in general, have a working-class background. Many have dropped out of school after the completion of the low secondary school and, as for the occupational status, they are mainly employed as manual workers, but a relevant number of them are working in the informal sector and some are unemployed.

In relation to the two case studies, the fieldwork has been conducted combining different qualitative methods. For what concerns the ultras group, an ethnographic research has been conducted between September 2015 and September 2017. Moreover, about 15 biographical interviews have been realised with the members of the group. For what concerns the 'Hoodboys' the ethnographic research started in May 2015 and ended with and action research project in April 2017. A group discussion and six biographical interviews were conducted with the group members. On the basis of these materials, we will discuss how young people transform their subcultural focal concern in a tool of participation, achieving recognition while defending their identity.

## 6.3 Transforming the "focal concern" in a tool of engagement

Football fans' and graffiti crews' ways of acting in the public scene through cheering and drawing illicitly on walls is not usually understood as a form of participation. On the contrary, common discourses tend to stigmatise their behaviours as mere forms of deviance, often strengthening the social marginalisation of these groups of young people. The research conducted within these groups has allowed, instead, to highlight how young people perceive their practices as means to show their presence in the city: while cheering is considered a way to express one's devotion to his city, graffiti is presented as a tool to act on the city.

In managing their relationship with the external world, both the 'Hoodboys' and 'Freccia' have engaged in a process of transformation of their daily behaviours in tools of civic and political engagement. This process has implied a series of efforts, on behalf of the two groups, to show the "good side" of their practices of cheering and graffiti, that is to make more explicit to the external communities that their daily practices are not only expression of vandalism and violence, furthermore of positioning within the city and appropriation of space.

In the case of the graffiti crew, the process of re-signification is connected to the paradoxical phenomenon of graffiti as an aesthetic practice, which should be recognised as such and an illicit identity-establishing activity labelled as vandalism. The struggle of recognition of graffiti as artful and getting commissions for that, while keeping the illicit form of graffiti as a form of positioning, fame and expression within the local scene, is a central challenge the group needs to cope with. Furthermore, the recognition of their way of appropriating the city is criminalised and seen as smearings, instead of recognising the effort of these practices. Almost half of the group members are involved in theatre or self-organised collectives, so doing art and being an artist is for some related to graffiti, whilst others declare graffiti as a crew issue and an identity-establishing activity. Connected to this idea and contexts of graffiti, the group founded next to their illicit group a legal brand to do graffiti.

As graffiti can be writings or drawings that have been scribbled, scratched, drawn or painted illegally on a wall or other surfaces, often within urban areas, it can range from simple written

words to elaborate wall paintings or characters and many more. Within the city of Frankfurt there is no recognition, acceptance and furthermore no intention to understand the 'Hoodboys' specific way of doing graffiti. For the group illicit graffiti is about "the individual writing of letters and 'tags' for territorial marking" of their crew for fame:

> graffiti is not art, when people describe graffiti as art because of the characters [figurative elements] and trees in the background, but the style in it, the letters, nobody sees the letters, this is always smearing. But this is graffiti and if you say 'this is art' it doesn't make any sense, graffiti are letters and if you make a caricature with it, it needs to be as fucked up as your style [individual way of doing graffiti] is." (Sprayer, Frankfurt, OP/CW: 886-891).

From the group's perspective, graffiti is often reduced to artificial elements without recognising the affective genesis of a piece. A consequence of doing illegal graffiti is connected to high risk, working fast and precise and leads to a conflict with the law "illegal is that you get a fucking report […] illegal gives you this kick which one needs or we need" (Sprayer, Frankfurt, GD: 425ff). As the group members are growing older and form more adult social bonds, they desire a more relaxed and less criminalised lifestyle. Richard says that "sometime it gets too much with the police and at the end of the day it is stupid, one grows older and cannot go on like this forever." (Sprayer, Frankfurt, GD: 559f.).

An ambivalent topic is the relation of the group to art. Some describe art as a possibility to professionalise the graffiti skills while others distinguish graffiti strictly from arts, graffiti is a lifestyle for them. Graffiti is used as an expression, which is described as going beyond art, because it is something more personal than commercial art. It requires from its audience to wonder the meaning of its meaninglessness and the sense of, at a first glance, its senselessness. But, the aspect of the formalisation of the group is in form of a crew – persons involved in a particular kind of work – in a legal form to undertake commissions, is based on the desire to start a dialogue with the wider society. A negotiation process is about how far one gives his style up to match with the mainstream or the existing perception of a commissioned work.

> you have to decide for yourself if you are willing to give up your own style and to make you socially acceptable with what you are painting and if you like to capitulate under the dogmas of the society and say ok to keep track of commercialising or to earn money (Dominik, Frankfurt, BI: 1750ff.).

In this way, it is a compromise to keep both paradoxical elements of graffiti in existence. Resignification means in this case to partly adopt ideas of the society and convert them into one's own idea of selling one's competences, while keeping the identity-establishing way of doing illicit graffiti.

Concerning the ultras case study, the process of resignification of the group's daily practices in tools of participation has occurred mainly through the creation of the ultras centre, which has allowed the ultras to present their idea on the city and on society to the external community, going beyond existing prejudices concerning football fans communities. The opening of the centre on behalf of the ultras community has helped the group to show that their love for the football team and their city can represent a powerful and relevant resource for the community rather than a problem. To achieve this goal, the group has transformed its daily practices and structure in recognised participatory tools.

For example, a process of progressive institutionalisation of the group has started at the end of 2016 when, after one year of occupation of the former bowl court, the group has sought to obtain an agreement with the local Municipality to manage the place for the following four years. The bargaining with the Municipality has resulted in an agreement through which the two parties have formally stated their mutual obligations and has implied major changes in the group's status, both on a formal identity level and for what concerns its internal dynamics. First of all, in order to have the possibility to use the space, the group has been asked to get the status of association, which is to identify a group of people in charge of managing the centre and of enacting the points of the agreement signed with the municipality.

> We have decided everything. They [the municipality] have understood that we are doing this for everybody's good, for the good of the city and that we are doing beautiful projects here. So it is a victory, because they will let us managing this place as we want, but they want us to create an association, to say who is in" says the head of the group presenting the results of the agreement with the Municipality (Fieldnotes, Ultras case study, October 2015)

Ultras communities are usually organised as informal subcultural groups, where the membership is not formally defined through cards or other documents and the request of the municipality has created many discussions among the members of the group. While few of them have decided to join the association in order to keep the space, the vast majority have decided to avoid becoming part of an institutionalised group since this transformation would, in their opinion, completely change the nature of the group.

> During a chat with Alberto, one of the ultras boys, he tells that he has not joined the association, because he has seen it as a sort of surrounding. "We are ultras, we are ACAB and all these things and then you sign a contract with the enemy?" he tells adding that although he understands it was the only way to keep the place […] he prefers not to be included in that list (Fieldnotes, Ultras case study, November 2015)

Beyond the changes concerning the formal identity level, the process of progressive institutionalisation has implied also a "tuning" of the group's activities aimed at being recognised as "good guys" by the local community. The occupation has not been immediately welcomed by the neighbourhood and the group still feels the need to act in a way that would not threaten the existence of the centre.

> We can do what we want, but we know that they are just waiting that something stupid happens to close this place. Because it doesn't matter what we do, for them we remain the scum. We can't afford to be so stupid!", Luca [male, 21] says to scold Nicola [male, 24] who, while being drunk, has punched another boy during a party at the ultras centre (Fieldnotes, Ultras case study, June 2016).

From this perspective the group has engaged in many attempts to present the "good side" of the ultras culture to the surrounding local community through projects aimed at providing services to the people inhabiting the area (i.e. the gym and the kindergarten) and cultural events (i.e. concerts) appealing also to the non-ultras community.

> Giorgio tells me that they want "Freccia" to become a space for everybody. "One can be ultras and citizen of Bologna and so the place can be an ultras place and a place for all the citizens of city" he says. (Fieldnotes, Ultras case study, June 2016).

In both case studies, it has been possible to witness how young people start to develop a style of engagement using their practices of cheering and graffiti in ways which are accepted by the

external world and combining them with meanings and goals that are recognised by the external communities. Seeking to achieve recognition, young people taking part in the graffiti crew and in the ultras group have thus modulated their behaviours in order to communicate with the external world.

## 6.4 Remaining a subculture: practices of conflict and resistance

The process of re-signification of behaviours highlighted in the previous paragraph occurs also on another level, turning again the cheering and the graffiti in practices of participation. In this case, however, the young people do not express claims for recognition, but instances of resistance, trying to defend the existence of their subculture in the city and to counteract the risk of normalisation of their identity entailed in their own attempts to communicate with the "external world".

For what concerns the graffiti crew, for example, graffiti is for the group connected also to illegal actions to represent the crew by spreading one's name around the city, search for a spot which brings fame and with claiming the city and making own rules.

From the groups' perspective there is a huge difference between drawing legal graffiti to practice and develop skills and illicit graffiti which is based on being skilled, working under pressure, risk and precision: "you need to work faster and more precise, you have this pressure and another approach as when you think about hanging out hardly while painting" (Dominik, Frankfurt, BI: 928f.). Furthermore doing illegal graffiti is for the group a mark on society and political in a non-traditional way:

> graffiti is basically political, it's in its nature, because it questions the right of private property, every graffiti is political, even if it's not intentionally political […] it expresses a resistance with colour against the state authority' (Maximilian, Frankfurt, BI: 1771-1787).

This is connected to the desire of a different understanding and tolerance from the external world and the city concerning public property and public perception. Dominik states that graffiti is

> about bringing people to identify themselves with it although it is against the norm, anyway it is about to get a different understanding of public spaces and of property without being convicted for that. Everybody is happy about a city ghost, but on the other side one criticises if there stands somewhere Frankfurt with two middle fingers […], but nobody is interested in the message of the creator. […] if the society would support people and claims a better [way of doing graffiti], so that it is not just about speed and maximal spreading, one can use this medium [spray paint] to take up political themes" (Dominik, Frankfurt, BI: 1421- 1430)

Therefore, one needs to create a different understanding of graffiti and property, so that it can be used as a medium to transfer political messages, when understood and recognised by the society. Graffiti is perceived as changing the look of the city "you just change the look, one do not change the function" (Sprayer, Frankfurt, GD: 1326f.). The appropriation of the city is for the crew something which is connected to the illicit nature of graffiti and invisible in its genesis. Furthermore, scene-specific members are able to decipher these markings and have therefore a different perception of the city: "you hop on a subway and you see the pieces of your colleagues and you feel home, this is simply the community" (Sprayer, Frankfurt, GD: 417f). Marking the city is obvious for everybody, but the sense behind it is only visible to scene-members "no

regular human being, who has nothing to do with it, who has no reference to it, gives a fuck about letters" (Sprayer, Frankfurt, GD: 1624-1625). According to this expert knowledge, the group has a graffiti based orientation in the city, which they themselves call a "parallel society" (Sprayer, Frankfurt, GD: 173). The orientation in the city and navigation to gathering spots is described as

> if I call and ask 'where is this and that?' [...] Then he doesn't say 'yo it's on the street so and so' no he says: 'it is from the tag of blah blah, you need continue walking and 50 meter on the right there is this piece of blah blah and there left on the duplex house, where my tag is, yes there, thereee you need to go." (Sprayer, Frankfurt, GD: 130-134).

Graffiti is something which conquers the city in its own way "graffiti lives from the illegal and cannot escape it, this art form takes the city in its own style" (Sprayer, Frankfurt, GD: 1548-1550). Practices of conflict and resistance within the graffiti crew are invisible in their genesis, but sustainable within the city. Resistance is connected to a high risk, because it needs to be done on the sly where risking one from police, building owners, other writers and passers-by is paramount. Risking one owns life for representing a crew is a strong commitment and a deep sign of trust. Being in a crew and conquering the city is a group-identity-establishing process marked by loyalty and the steadily refreshing of belonging by seeing each other's marks within the city: "over the time more and more people joined us, but we remain loyal to us, stayed together. Some people left, but the core stayed ever since and therefore we experienced a lot together, this is graffiti" (Sprayer, Frankfurt, GD: 16-20). Graffiti can be seen as a mode of obstinacy expression which does not care about consent and is about belonging, community, trust, friendship, coping with life and an own way of shaping the and participating in the city.

For what concerns the ultras group, the attempts of talking to the external community and actors started by the ultras group have resulted to be effective and the group has acquired a good level of recognition in the neighbourhood and from the local institutions. For example, it has been recently involved in a series of roundtables to discuss the future renovation of the area around the stadium together with the municipality and other associations of citizens. However, the acquired social recognition is also bringing the group to lose part of its subcultural and conflictual identity, with the risk of becoming like a "scout group".

> While discussing with Leonardo about the projects carried out at the ultras centre, I tell him that what they are managing to do is impressive. He thanks me for the compliment, but then he adds "remember that we are always ultras, we are not a scout group" showing proudness also for the less "acceptable" behaviours pertaining to the ultras subculture (Fieldnotes, Ultras Centre, Bologna, April 2016)

To avert this risk, the group has put in place a series of practices of resistance aimed at maintaining their subcultural identity by resisting processes of "normalisation" to the ultras culture.

> They need us inside the stadium because we are part of the show, but they want to control us, to normalise the ultras [...] We will never be the way they want us to be" tells Guglielmo during a meeting at the ultras centre. (Fieldnotes, Ultras Centre, Bologna, February 2016)

As previously said, the centre is used by the group as a means to show the "good side" of the ultras movement and the practices of resistance put in place in this context have to consider also the need to maintain a respectable and good behaviour. Within the ultras centre, the resistance is mainly carried out by constantly stressing the connections between the activities and projects

and the values of the ultras subculture, but also including a series of subcultural elements able to distinguish, for example, an "ultras concert" from any other concert.

> The concert of this Friday at "Freccia" is a special event that is periodically held also in other self-managed centres of the city. During these special events, "trash" music is played […] The usual "schedule" of the event is interrupted by two episodes that appear aimed at reaffirming the ultras subculture distinguishing the centre from other self-managed spaces of the city: during the evening the ultras boys have sung some stadium's choirs and, at the end of the event, they have lightened two smoke bombs with the colours of the Bologna's team (Fieldnotes, Ultras Centre, June 2017).

Different practices of resistance are, instead, enacted outside the centre and especially at the stadium, which is always reclaimed as a "different thing" from the ultras centre. Within the stadium, the group reaffirms its subcultural nature through a series of actions that stress the less accepted aspects of the ultras subculture, such as the conflictual attitude toward the police or the violence toward other groups of supporters.

> Choirs against the police or the opposite groups of supporters are common at the stadium, but they never sung at the ultras centre where only pro-Bologna songs are sung. […] Similarly, the fights with the supporters of other teams never happen at the centre. […] The stadium and the ultras centre are two related but separated spheres of the group's action, where two different styles of self-representation are played (Fieldnotes, Ultras Centre, Bologna, May 2017)

In a similar way to what is observed in the graffiti group, it is possible to notice how the identity of the ultras group become partially "split" in order to both obtain a social recognition and maintain its traditional subcultural traits. The young people involved in these case study use the same practices in two different ways, attaching to the graffiti and the cheer different meanings.

Both the graffiti crew and the ultras group try to maintain symbolic spaces where the more controversial elements of their subculture can be expressed. In these spaces, the behaviours of the group – that is the cheering and drawing graffiti– are re-signified as practices of resistance. Furthermore, they are the expression of the struggle between keeping a subcultural identity with misrecognised practices, while re-signifying elements to cope with the challenges and requirements of the external world to get recognised.

In line with the studies of the Birmingham school, resistance is understood as an attempt to change existing power relations in the relationship between the subculture and the external world's dominant culture. However, while the Birmingham school has mainly highlighted the processes of symbolic resistance enacted by subcultures through the appropriation and adaptation of cultural artefacts of the dominant culture, the analysis of the case studies shows how the two groups carry on their attempts of resistance mainly through a "tuning" of their own collective behaviours, which, from time to time are interpreted as tools of dialogue or of conflict. In other words, to the same "focal concern," are attached different meanings depending on two different but combined goals the groups seek to achieve.

## 6.5 Conclusion: Resisting while resignifying for recognition

The analysis of the history of "A Freccia" and of the young people participating in the 'Hood-boys' group allows us to shed light on the civic and political dimension of youth subcultural

practices, showing how the groups of organised fans and graffiti artists have become relevant actors in the civic and political scene of their cities.

The history of young ultras and graffiti crew can be interpreted as youths' attempt to "unpack and ground" their disaffection in projects and actions that allow them not only to express dissent or disaffection, but also to regain a power in shaping their lives and to claim recognition for an identity that goes beyond stereotypes.

In front of an 'outside world' that stigmatises their behaviours as 'forms of uncivility', young ultras and young graffiti sprayers not only start to take part in and form own subcultural, closed communities where they can feel accepted and safe, but they also engage in a process of transformation of those behaviours in tools through which they can express their idea of society and reclaim their presence in the city. Making sense of what is available to them and trying to cope with their marginalised condition, they elaborate their 'style of participation' by re-signifying their focal concern in a tool of bargaining with the external world.

Their stories are, in fact, proper challenges to the outside world, to the 'Others', and to their ability to recognise the claims for participation coming from (materially or culturally) marginalised subjects. Starting from the idea that subcultures can be considered as the "litmus test of the malaise of youth" (Marchi 2014, p. 18), or a reality in which juvenile malaise finds expression in amplified forms. It appears possible to highlight the emergence, among the ultras and graffiti crew involved in this research, of trends that exemplify dynamics concerning contemporary young people and, in particular, their relationship with the public sphere, understood as a space in which to give voice to one's malaise by asking or elaborating a solution.

Like the ultras and the 'Hoodboys', the vast majority of young people "are disrespectful, coarse, unsettled. They are also, happily, hooligans. They don't want to give up their more carefree and instinctive side, their less cautious and conscious side" (Marchi 2014; 142) and the process of re-signification of their daily behaviors in practices of engagement gives them the possibility to keep the elements of resistance within their practices while finding a way of participating in society; a 'style of participation'.

# 7. Beyond "neutral altruism": politics and individualism in youth style of volunteering

**Authors: Berrin Osmanoglu and Ilaria Pitti**

*This section aims to discuss youth styles of participation through an analysis on volunteering. The study of two cases, a social centre in Bologna and an NGO youth branch in Eskişehir, will explore how volunteering acquires individualistic and political features, in contrast to a more conventional association with neutral altruism. These features are defining characteristics of young people's styles of participation and are constitutive of the process of re-signification of volunteering as a recognised form of participation. Among the various factors influencing the process of re-signification of forms of participation, this study will more particularly focus on the goals and experiences of young volunteers.*

*Volunteering has been widely recognised as a form of participation especially since it has been accepted that it reinforces, through civic engagement, collective action and common good (Putnam 2000). Yet, meanings attributed to volunteering and values associated with it are embedded in specific historical social and cultural contexts and are eventually subject to change. Recently, volunteering became the subject of debates with respect to its conventional core values. It has been argued that increasing individualistic motivations for engagement and the politicisation of volunteering reveal the changing nature of volunteering as a form of participation.*

*As an attempt to contribute to this debate, the chapter seeks to answer the following research questions: which meanings do young people attach to their practices of volunteering? And how do these meanings re-shape their practices?*

*In so doing, this chapter explores the role of contemporary youth attributing meanings to volunteering according to their own needs and conditions, and consequently developing a particular style of youth participation, shaped by individualistic and political aspects.*

*We will argue that, as active cultural producers investing in the field of volunteering, young people re-signify the meanings and functions of volunteering as a form of participation. The way they are practicing volunteering, in other words, their style of participation, is as much as the result of the pre-existing logic of volunteering, social, economic, and political changes, but also the solutions they invent according to their needs, conditions and resources. The empirical fieldwork provides elements concerning their goals and experiences in volunteering.*

## 7.1 Introduction

Especially from the late 1990s a flourishing debate around volunteering has emerged in Western countries focusing on the boundaries distinguishing this practice of involvement from other ways of being active in society (Eliasoph 2013, Cnaan et al. 1996, Handy et al. 2000), trying to define the personality traits and socio-demographic characteristics of volunteers (Cnaan and Handy 1995), and exploring their motivations for engagement (Hustinx 2005, Hustinx and Lammertyn 2003). On the basis of these studies, many scholars have argued how the nature of

volunteering is undergoing profound changes as a results of a series of broader social and cultural transformations emerging in the contemporary relationship between the individuals and society in terms of processes of individualisation (Beck 1992, Beck et al. 1994).

In particular, two main evolutions of volunteering have been commonly highlighted in recent sociological and political science literature. First of all, literature has widely debated how the decision to volunteer would have become driven by more and more individualist motives. Among others, Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003) has suggested that late-modern society's dynamics would have impacted on volunteering fostering the emergence of new ways of being civically active, where the focus shifts from the volunteering as a collective activity to the volunteer as an individual actor. Due to the individual and structural reflexivity implied by the late-modern societal arrangements, volunteering would be less "naturally inscribed in collective patterns of behaviour" and more embedded in a frame of reference based on the "individual world" becoming a "self-induced and self-monitored event within a self-constructed biographical frame" (Hustinx and Lammertyn 2003;172). In this perspective, motivation to volunteering would emerge from "a complex interplay that is both altruistic and self-interested in nature" (Hustinx et al. 2010; 421) and the practices of volunteering, beyond aiming at solving other people's problems, would also today constitute a tool to cope with biographical uncertainties and for active self-realisation. In particular, analyses suggest how volunteering would be often instrumentally used to improve one's social network and to acquire skills and built up professional relationship in an increasing competitive labour market (Cnaan et al. 1996, Cnaan and Handy 1995).

A second change in the nature of volunteering has been mainly highlighted by a series of political science studies that have started to reflect upon the boundaries between this form of civic engagement and politics. In the late 1990s, Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) found that volunteer activities grant citizens with the possibility to acquire political skills and are thus an important mean to promote political participation, functioning as a "school for democracy". Extending this perspective, scholars (Eliasoph 2013, Henriksen and Svedberg 2010) have recently focus their attention on the processes of politicisation of volunteering, suggesting the need to rethink the boundaries between it and political activism. From Eliasoph's perspective, for example, contemporary practices of volunteering would be better understood as a form of political activism where the relevance of "the doing" is stressed.

These analyses have contributed at deepening the understanding of volunteering, disembedding it from the discourse of "neutral altruism" (Henriksen and Svedberg 2010) in which has been framed for decades and showing how volunteering can be loaded with individualistic and political meanings. These studies have, however, rarely taken in consideration the interplay between the changes intervening at modifying volunteering and the transformations of youth in contemporary society. In other words, youth volunteering has been often explained without considering the specificities of the subjects enacting the practices – that is the specificities of 'youth' - and thus applying the same categories and theories used to explain volunteering of other age groups. Youth studies have, instead, highlighted how the analysis of youth behaviours need always take in consideration the peculiarities of the stage of life young people are living in terms of phase of transition to adulthood (Furlong 2009, Côte 2014), as well as generational specificities defining the characteristics of youth in a given social time (Mannheim 1928, Wyn and Woodman 2016).

This section aims to re-introduce the contribution of youth studies to the analysis of the current features of volunteering. Drawing on the findings emerging from two ethnographic studies realised in experiences of youth volunteering in Italy and Turkey, we aim to show how processes of politicisation and individualisation of volunteering assume specific functions in young people's individual attempts to acquire an adult identity. We will see that these processes are also shaping young people styles of volunteering.

The piece of writing is organised as follows: After the presentation of the two case studies, the article explores how youth practices of volunteering become a tool the young Italian and Turkish people use to experiment solutions for self-development and for political participation and thus to cope with the obstacles and uncertainties they encounter in their paths toward adulthood. In the concluding paragraph, the implications of these findings for the analysis of youth and youth participation in contemporary society will be discussed.

## 7.2 Methodology and context of the research

Among the participatory settings studied within the framework of the PARTISPACE project, volunteer work appears in very different contexts and content or settings and activities. The fieldwork showed that volunteering is not only widespread as a form of participation but the discourse of volunteering is also very much diffused among different forms of participation and moreover, sometimes it is practiced without being necessarily recognised as such. In its most conventional/ traditional form, volunteering appears within formal or institutionalised settings such as the NGO youth branches in Plovdiv or in Eskişehir. In public youth centres such as in Rennes or Eskişehir, young volunteers are rather involved in youth-oriented event organisation or helping youth workers. Moreover, youth representation is also identified as a volunteer activity. Among modern (in contrast to conventional/traditional) organisations or contexts, regarding their objectives some are more easily associated with the realm of volunteering due to their aspects of "volunteering for others", such as the French group organising courses for asylum seekers, the social centre in Bologna helping refugees, or the 'Open Educative Collective', a project of public education started by young volunteers in Zurich. While these latter cases seem to correspond to "volunteering for others", other cases are rather cases of "volunteering for one's own purpose". But volunteer work is also identified within settings more involved in the organisation of group-oriented activities than public oriented ones, which seems more like "volunteering for one's own purpose", such as 'Gothenburg Free Sport Association', 'Bologna Extreme Sport Centre', 'Political Cultural Centre' in Frankfurt or the 'Ultras Centre' in Bologna (see Batsleer et al. 2017).[5]

This section is based on the practices of volunteering emerging in two of the case studies conducted within the PARTISPACE project: a self-managed occupied social centre in Bologna and the youth unit of the local branch of a national NGO in Eskişehir. The two cases have been selected because they not only reveal similar individualistic and political aspects in the practices of volunteering, but they also allow us to explore how volunteering acquires these meanings. In terms of their activities, both cases correspond to the realm of conventional volunteering

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[5] Batsleer et al. (2017) identify, within the case clusters, the Bologna Social Centre under the cluster of "Living in a social alternative as a political model" and the Eskişehir NGO, under the cluster of "Between service of humanity and service enterprise". Among other aspects, these clusters also emphasize the two style features this chapter of the report is dealing with; political and individualistic.

inasmuch they work for the common good. One, being a formal setting, the other, a newly created structure by young people themselves, their differences allow to control the organisational structure as a factor influencing values associated with volunteering. The purpose of this study is not to prove the generality of the phenomenon in as much as possible different settings, but to explore more in depth how, in a given context (influenced by social, economic and political conditions), the perceptions, strategies and actions of young volunteers structure the meaning of (re-signify) volunteering. In line with this aim, the focus will be on the goals and experiences of young people practicing volunteering in these two specific settings.

In terms of empirical fieldwork, within the centre in Bologna, an ethnographic research has been conducted between April 2015 and September 2017. Participant observation has been combined with the conduction of 10 biographical interviews with the young people participating in the centre's activities. For the youth unit of the NGO, the research unit in Turkey has conducted ethnographic research, including 5 in-depth interviews, 2 group discussions and 2 biographical interviews, between December 2015 and September 2017.

The first case study considered for this paper focuses on a self-managed social centre born in 2012 with the occupation of an abandoned barrack located in the city centre of Bologna, Italy. The occupation was initially started by a group of about 15-20 young political activists, but it is currently involving more than 100 young people through different projects. The young people participating in the social centre are mainly aged between 20 and 27 years old. In most cases, they are university students or recently graduates in search for their first job. Within the social centre, the young people have started a pizzeria, a microbrewery, a library, an organic garden, a bike-repair shop and other projects addressing specific needs of the (young) people inhabiting the city, which can find in the occupation a space where to meet and spent time in a free, safe, and economically affordable way.

Beyond addressing the young people's needs, the social centre also hosts projects aimed at helping more unprivileged segments of the population. In particular, many young people are involved in a self-managed social dormitory for homeless that has been opened within the occupation's premises in 2015. This contribution will specifically focus on this project and on the meanings of the activities carried out by the young people within the shelter for homeless people. The shelter can host up to 20 people and during the last two years, a total of about 80 people have spent a period of time in the social dormitory. Most of the helped people are migrants and asylum seekers. The social dormitory is kept open around the clock by the young people, who organise themselves in three daily shifts. A school of Italian, a help-desk providing legal support, workshops and training activities for those who wants to learn a job and several leisure activities are organised by the young people to ease the social integration of the hosted people. In so doing, the young people seek to provide migrants and asylum seekers with something more than just a room where to sleep and a hot meal, fostering their self-activation and self-empowerment.

At the time when the research was conducted, the social centre and the social dormitory projects were in an illegal position and the occupation was under the menace of eviction for a couple of years[6]. The local institution has always been scarcely receptive towards the claims of the young

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[6] The eviction eventually occurred in August 2017. Since then, the group has started a bargaining with the local municipality to obtain a new space to continue their projects.

people asking to regularise the occupation, while the local community – and especially the people residing in the neighbourhood where the centre is located - has demonstrated its solidarity, creating even a committee for its protection.

The second case is the youth unit of the local branch of a nationwide humanitarian NGO located in Eskisehir, Turkey. The youth unit of this particular local branch was created in 2010. The establishment of the unit is the result of the initiative of a professional director, a young adult who identifies himself as a youth worker, hired by the local administration, in order to promote youth activities. However, instead of conventional practices of humanitarian and charity work, this young director chooses to adopt some unusual strategies for the NGO in order to appeal volunteers. Prioritising global connection and international mobility for young people, and aiming to benefit from youth opportunities provided by the EU, such as funds and EVS, as well as other international networks, volunteering activities are presented in a different framing. While the content of the activities was still related with humanitarian and charity work, such as blood donation, helping disadvantaged people, or environmental protection, volunteers were oriented to organise these activities within a project logic, including its writing, funding, and coordination phases, but also encouraged to include elements of innovation and creativity. Successful in appealing to some young people's aspiration, the unit quickly attracts many volunteers, mostly university students, followed by high school students. The number being fluid in time, the youth unit consisted of a very active core group of ten young university student and a second layer of another regular ten. The number reached at its heydays around 100 relatively frequent participants as well as other occasional ones, including both university and high school students. However, towards the end of the fieldwork, as a result of an intra-institutional conflict, the core group has stopped its activities, and eventually the director resigned.

With a long historical past, the NGO as a nationwide structure, enjoys wide legitimacy and considerable resources. While its legitimacy originates from a variety of sources such as public trust, good relationship with successive governments and membership in an international network of NGOs, its resources consist on both material and human resources, including large numbers of professionals and volunteers. Compared to the volunteering rates and civil society material conditions in Turkey, this NGO is an exceptional case. However, due to the perception of youth within the administration of the NGO as well as the hierarchical organisational structure, these favourable conditions do not exactly reflect on the young volunteers of a local branch. The organisational structure is very centralised and hierarchical, including a powerful centre in the capital city; but local branches' establishment depend mostly on local initiatives. Yet, local branches are still financially and administratively dependent and controlled by the centre. In terms of youth policy, the NGO has been recruiting young volunteers for its humanitarian and charity activities and organising free camping activities for disadvantaged young people for decades. During the last two decades, following the changing norms and capacities in national youth policy, especially with the EU candidacy process, the NGO also seemed to attempt some change, such as promoting the creation and proliferation of youth units, university clubs and high school branches, which started within the Eskisehir branch with the recruitment of a young director. However, not being formally represented in local or central administrative structures of the NGO, youth units do not have a say in the decision making process of the organisation and do not have autonomous structures, which also explain the easy and sudden disappearance of the youth unit.

In the next part, the two case studies will be considered to show how volunteering, beyond being aimed at helping people in needs, becomes a powerful means of personal growth and political struggle for young people when other paths of self-growth (i.e. labour market) and political expression (i.e. formal political structure) are perceived as ineffective or difficult to access.

## 7.3 Helping myself while helping the others: an individualistic style of volunteering

The first objective, is to discuss the individualistic meaning of volunteering shaping young individuals' style of participation among the two settings in question, showing how participation can become a tool to solve issues strictly related to their biographies and the difficulties they meet in their paths towards adulthood[7]. From this perspective, it is more the relationship between volunteering and youth difficulties to access the job market which emerge from our case study that is analysed. Both in Italy and Turkey, young people are experiencing growing difficulties in reaching the classic thresholds of adulthood and, in particular, in entering the labour market. While in Italy, the crisis and the austerity measures introduced to deal with the economic downturn's effects have resulted in an increase of the share of Italian young people dealing with prolonged unemployment and precariat; Turkish youth have to find their way to adulthood in a job market becoming more and more competitive and, at the same time, still unable to absorb the growing number of graduates who experience the phenomenon of underemployment (see Kovacheva et al. 2016). The two cases show how their experience in volunteering respond well to their needs and goals.

In the presentation of the self-managed social centre, it has been mentioned that many projects started within the occupation are specifically addressed at answering the needs of the young people in terms of accessing affordable leisure and cultural activities. However, regarding the practices of volunteering carried out within the social dormitory, it is possible to notice how activities aimed at providing help to people in need can become means to solve also personal problems due to a scenario that does not offer other effective solutions. Concerning the social dormitory and the Italian context, it is mostly focused on the relationship between youth participation and job difficulties that this phenomenon emerges in a more visible way. Volunteering inside the homeless shelter represents for many young people also an occasion to develop professional skills, test their capabilities and build a network able to open job opportunities, but also doing it 'in their own way', that in their own 'style'.

Many of the young people volunteering inside the homeless shelter are, in fact, university students or newly graduated in search for their first job. Most of them are studying to become educators, social workers or to work as project managers in NGO, but they are experiencing severe difficulties in finding a job due to the economic crisis, which has severely affected youth possibilities of finding a (stable, well paid and meaningful) job in Italy. Participating in the activities of the homeless shelter gives to these young people an instrument to deal with the

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[7] Similar findings have emerged from the analysis of the biographical interviews conducted with young people engaged also in other forms of participation (see Biographies report), suggesting – in line with other studies - that the combination between individualistic and collective goals can be understood as a trend concerning different expression of youth participation in contemporary society (Dalton 2008; Norris 2003).

uncertainties characterising the Italian labour market during the years of the economic and financial crisis, offering them a possibility to cherish and practice those professional skills that are not still valued by the job market.

> Many of the young women sitting at the table of the social dormitory are graduated or are studying as educators or wants to work in NGO as project managers. All of them are, at the moment, without a job and they share their difficulties in finding an occupation. One of them says that "at least here [at the social dormitory] what we have studied worth something" (PO, Self-managed social centre, Bologna, 10 August 2016).

For other young people, the participation in the volunteering activities becomes a powerful networking tool able to open job opportunities.

> We spoke about the social dormitory with my friends at the university and we came in group [at the call for volunteers]. Some of them have started then to volunteer and some are developing a career, that is for example Irene, a very close friend of mine, she is in Greece now and she is working with the migrants. She is doing a stage and thus many things have started from here (BI, Marta, 26, female, *Self-managed social centre*, Bologna).

Volunteering also acquires an individualistic function in relation to professional aspects also for those who have already entered the job market and who are employed in positions that are related to their educational path. For example, many young people already working as educators and social workers decided to join the social dormitory project. More than a tool to develop or practices their professional skills, these young people have found in volunteering a way to do their job in a way that they perceive as "more meaningful".

> Davide, one of the volunteers at the homeless shelter, works also as educator in an institutional shelter for refugees. Speaking about the differences between his work and what he does at the social dormitory, he tells me that the latter is "like breathing fresh air" because at the social dormitory migrants are "treated like real people". He says that the institutional shelter is so overcrowded that is almost impossible to work with the migrants and that people arrive and go so fast that it is difficult to help them in a meaningful way (PO, *Self-managed social centre*, Bologna, 20 September 2016).

Concerning the Turkish case, while volunteers of the youth unit mention altruism as a factor for their engagement in the activities of the NGO, they specifically underline that it is not a sufficient reason for their regular involvement. The benefit or satisfaction of participation perceived by these volunteers is identified as personal development, rather associated with professional skills corresponding to some job market requirements and a managerial discourse. These are skills such as leadership, entrepreneurial capacity, time management, budget management; or characteristics such as self-esteem, self-expression; or activities such as building network, meeting influential people, experiencing mobility.

This perspective is in line with the appropriation of a particular project logic for the organisation of volunteering activities within the NGO. Almost all the activities organised by the youth unit is framed as a project. They believe that a project logic can be applied to any kind of issue, including humanitarian and charity activities. The youth unit even organised "project writing" seminars for new volunteers. A project is perceived as an approach or a tool, through which almost all of the valorised skills, characteristics and opportunities mentioned above are acquired and which is perceived as useful for job opportunities. One of the volunteer express the benefits of project writing and coordination as follows:

> Now, before starting a task, I can analyse the risks. When I decide to take a step, or not, I do it more confidently […] we will all graduate from university, and when we will apply for a job, I will probably be the one to be hired. Because, I have already written a project, I coordinated it, I did the division of labour, I had a schedule, I organized its budget. You did nothing, you just focused on your grades. (EI, Narin, *Volunteer*, Eskişehir)

The association of self-development and advantage in the job market, is very common among volunteers. In a highly competitive job market conditions, they believe that volunteer work and civil society experience will be an asset in their job application and they are very confident about being hireable. According to a volunteer, his experience is as almost the equivalent of an internship:

> This is something that the head of Coca Cola's human resource department has said […] civil society experience will be a major advantage/ asset for recruitment/ being hired […] it used to be being graduated with good grades from a prestigious university […] but the private sector doesn't have time to loose, they prefer to hire experienced people, that is why I believe that people with civil society experience will be hired. (GD, *YBN*, Eskişehir)

Doing network is also a recurrent theme during the interviews and discussions. As a part of the activities they organise they also create opportunities to meet influential people. While some of the volunteers attribute to that opportunity a more instrumental meaning, expecting an immediate retribution, such as contact for eventual job opportunities, others rather value the experience as a contribution to their self-development. As an illustration to the latter:

> I have the opportunity to meet good and important people. I don't mean to benefit from them as contact. Two week earlier, we realized a project. I would never had met the mayor, or taken picture with him. I've met him, we listen to him, the governor was there too, there were a lot of professors, we listen to them, it was a great opportunity for us. That is why I am here. (GD, *YBN*, Eskişehir)

This strong individualistic tendency being present, activities organised are still within the realm of conventional volunteering and focused on collective good. Even if volunteers are particularly attracted by the idea of writing and coordinating a project per se, the content of a project is either the inclusion of disadvantaged young people, or blood donation among young people and with young people, etc. Even if they are attracted by the mobility activities offered, especially to learn foreign language, for the experience or cv building, as a part of the European voluntary service, their mobility consists of volunteer work abroad.

Both cases included in this study reveal thus a strong association of individualistic motives and interests with volunteering, which is perceived as a way to fulfil immediate as well as anticipated needs and interest. On the one hand, precarious material conditions of the youth translate as a search for affordable social activities and even more basic material needs such as housing, for which volunteering itself responds directly to the need. On the other, volunteering also acquires a more instrumental form for more anticipated future needs, such as finding a job in a context of competitive labour market conditions, which then become a mean to develop professional skills or to create networks

However, this does not mean that individualist motives have replaced collectivist ones. As mentioned in the introduction, many studies highlight that individualistic motives and interests coexist alongside with collectivist/altruistic ones in the decision and practice of volunteering.

Constituted mostly by university students or recently graduated young people, our study confirms these analyses, highlight how, without necessarily being the primary driving force in volunteers' activities, in both cases altruism appears as a motive of involvement. Even if individualistic motives and interests are more visible and more explicitly expressed we also observe that volunteers from both cases, value their respective collective enterprises and their association with a larger community. And even if young volunteers do not identify their activities as a conventional form of altruism, they perceive their volunteering practice as a form of collective engagement and of doing good for the community.

## 7.4 Being political while avoiding politics: the political style of volunteering

The second part of this analysis focuses on the political functions that volunteering acquires when the opportunities for political participation available to young people in a given context are perceived as difficult to access or ineffective. Reluctant to engage in conventional politics, young people included in both case studies develop, during their experience in volunteering, political skills which enable them to negotiate their place within a particular setting or environment.

Concerning the Italian occupied social centre, on a first level the practices of participation observed in the social dormitory can be considered as totally ascribable to the realm of volunteering insofar they consist in providing unprivileged people with an accommodation, food, legal and work orientation, language courses and similar kind of help. In fact, the activities have been started through a "call for volunteers" open in 2015 where the word 'politics' was never mentioned and the people participating in the project spend most of their time helping the hosted migrants and refugees in ways that appear similar to those of many other services targeting people in needs.

In this perspective, the activities of the homeless shelter seem to correspond to the idea of volunteering as just neutral altruism commonly diffused in the public discourses on youth practices of solidarity. However, the need of portraying those activities as a form of pure benevolence, free from any political meaning and goal appear more like an efficient strategy of recruitment of new members enacted by the core segment of the group rather than a real de-politicisation of the social dormitory project.

> Talking about the projects started within the occupation, one of the activists tells me: "people are less interested in words and more interested in facts […] Sometimes it is more important to do something and invite people to participate than write [political] treaties and documents. […] Through the projects we got in touch with different worlds that would never approach us otherwise" (PO, *Self-managed social centre*, Bologna, 15 June 2016).

In fact, if at the very beginning of the project the political meaning of the activities appears almost hidden, the same political nature is then reintroduced and constantly affirmed by underlining the differences that distinguish the help offered in the homeless shelter from the services provided by the institutions. While for the first year of activities, the political nature of the homeless shelter was never really stressed in its public presentation, the following public statement, published by the group on its social media account one year after the starting of the project, explicitly highlights the connection between the volunteering activities carried out and political activism.

> This is not just a homeless shelter; it is the place where people have found dignity again, begun or started again on a path towards autonomy, reacquired confidence in themselves. […] What we have done this year goes beyond what is commonly called "volunteering". Here we do solidarity, social activism, mutualism to meet needs that are neglected by the institutions, needs that are addressed only through emergency policies (Homeless shelter's public communication, *Self-managed social centre,* Bologna, 20 December 2016).

The creation of an opposition between what the young people do in the homeless shelter and what the institutions do through the social service, load the practices of volunteering enacted within the social dormitory with a political meaning. In other words, providing accommodation and food 'in a certain way' (that is, through a certain 'style') becomes a way of being politically active.

> A young volunteer of the shelter explains me the internal organisation of the social dormitory and tells me that: "each room has just two beds. We did not add other beds because we want to make the shelter a human and fair place. We believe that this is the way a person should be able to live, not in overcrowded dorms like the public ones" (PO, *Self-managed social centre*, Bologna, 05 August 2016).

Through their volunteering activities, the young people involved in this case study express their ideas on the management of social frailties through actions and words that become more and more explicitly political. A progressive 'abstraction' is, in fact, noticeable in the 'themes' that have been at the centre of the homeless shelter's actions during the two years of activity. While, during the first six months, assemblies were mostly centred on practical issues concerning the daily needs of the hosted people – such as how to organise the weekly cleaning shifts or collect food –, the volunteers of the homeless shelter become progressively responsible of organising political events.

> During the assembly, Andrea reaffirms that the homeless shelter's volunteers have an important role in the organisation of a series of events that are planned in the next months around the issue of migration, including a local and a national public assembly and a demonstration. "Concerning these things" – he says – "we have to be the protagonists" (PO, *Self-managed social centre,* Bologna, 11 August 2017).

This same politicisation is mirrored in young volunteer's participatory behaviours that assume a more explicit political nature over the time, allowing the young people to experiment themselves as political actors approaching slowly a word – that of politics – that, at the beginning, they perceived as distant, inaccessible and scaring.

> Stefania volunteers at the shelter since two years […]. Describing her path of participation, she tells that, when she moved to Bologna, she first went to an open assembly of [another local grassroots political movement], but she felt bored by the "nineteenth-century language", referring to the too much ideological political discussions on which this group's action was based. Moreover, she was doubtful of the "old-fashioned" political practices of this group, which was mainly active through protest action. "Then there has been the call for volunteer at [the social centre] and everything started, everything changed" she says, stating that she felt at ease in [the social centre] because, at the beginning, "it was just about helping". Stefania is now also very politically active […] She tells that "politics is still a bit scaring, but less than I used to think" affirming that through the social dormitory she has had the possibility to "get closer to the beast in a slow way" (PO, *Self-managed social centre,* Bologna, 09 September 2017).

From this perspective, volunteering acquires a clear political meaning at least at three different levels. First, it becomes a mean of recruitment, evaluation and formation of new member that the political group strategically uses. Secondly, it becomes a mean of social critique towards the political system insofar it allows to show that a different, "more human", way of managing a certain social problem is possible. Third, it becomes a way to explore progressively a political identity on behalf of young people who perceive the political system otherwise inaccessible.

For what concerns the Turkish NGO, political engagement does not appear as a motive of involvement for volunteers of the youth unit, and neither as the primary focus of their activities. On the contrary, a very strong negative perception of conventional politics exists and they adopt a militant anti-politics policy for their own youth unit. On the one hand, this stand towards politics corresponds to the conventional principles associated with a humanitarian NGO and this is valued and recognised by the upper administration as well as policy-makers in general. But on the other hand, the research revealed that this is also the result of a general lack of trust in conventional politics among youth, the current state of Turkish politics marked by strong polarisation, but also from the instrumental political connections of the NGO. It is important to remind that these young volunteers choose this particular institutional setting for their participatory activities, well aware of its conditions and benefit from its advantages. At first, they distinguish themselves from the upper administration with their 'style' in terms of organisational and political aspects of their activities. But later on, as far as the members of the youth unit succeed (feel successful with their achievement) in their activities and feel empowered, they start asking for a say within the NGO decision-making process and autonomy for the youth unit, and engage in some sort of political struggle with the upper administration.

In terms of their youth unit setting, young volunteers claim that it is absolutely politics-free. They are proud of that decision that they present as the key of their success in attracting volunteers. They say that otherwise there are prejudices and fights. According to them, politics prevents potential volunteers to join and lead some others who are already in, to left.

> There is no politics here. When we enter through that door we suit up our NGO jacket (metaphorically) and no one ask which party we do support. I am a volunteer under the roof of this NGO. No one is discriminated based on her/his political opinions. It has been 2/ 2.5 years now that I am being here, no one has ever asked about my political views or suggest me to go to a political meeting. (GD, *YBN*, Eskişehir)

Even when the principle of anti-discrimination of the NGO is the topic of discussion, a reference is made to political affiliation as a question that can create problematic dynamics. The negative perception of politics is not limited to their volunteering activities or their youth unit. During our fieldwork, in almost all interviews with volunteers, politics has been associated with a negative connotation. Most of the volunteers expressed explicitly that they are not willing to engage in formal politics.

> If politics harm people, polarize people, it is not a good thing. Today, politics polarize people. If one day there is some kind of politics which unify people, which involves respect for different views, then I would do politics. (BI, *Mert*, 24, *YBN*, Eskişehir)

However, their experience led them to acquire political skills. Due to their negative perception of politics, politics as "a set of ideas" seem to be depreciated. However, "politics as doing", is valued. They progressively specify their field of activity as youth-oriented, and youth policy as an "above-politics" matter. On the one hand, they realise projects aiming to increase or promote

youth participation in decision-making process at different public institutional levels. On the other, they organise helping activities, which also promote youth participation. But they also pay particular attention to adopt innovative and creative methods, and to diffuse them, which they believe is underdeveloped due to the education system.

> Everybody says "you can't change the world […] you can't save the country". But actually I really want to do that. For example, I believe that the politics of education is bad, and I want to do something. But I want to do that not through ideas but through action. (GD, *YBN*, Eskişehir)

However, trying to negotiate a place within the institution has led to a conflict with the upper central administration. It is important to mention that the escalation of the conflict was also due to a tension within the upper administration related to the national political context. The head of the youth unit has been removed by the president of the local branch; this removal has created an interruption of the activities of the core group, and eventually the manager resigned too. After this experience, these ex-volunteers break the code of silence, they start to denounce more explicitly the lack of youth representation in the administration, political ambitions of top administrators as well as their nepotism and corrupted practices. Young volunteers' resentments crystallise into demands for rights and they were thinking of creating their own association.

In both cases, it is thus possible to highlight a tendency toward a more or less explicit and a more or less conscious re-politicisation of volunteering, which from being a tool to avoid politics becomes a way of changing the way of doing politics.

First of all, in both the case studies, it has been possible to observe how volunteering is instrumentally used as a tool to "avoid" politics (Eliasoph 1998). Like many of their peers in Western countries, Italian and Turkish young people generally show low levels of trust in politics and institutions. In relation to this negative perception of formal political structures, volunteering becomes a tool young people use to try to change the world, without "getting their hands dirty" with politics. Although with different nuances, in both case studies volunteering is fuelled by sentiments of refusal and disappointment towards politics.

On a second level, however, exactly the refusal of politics that moves youth volunteering load their practices of altruism with a more or less explicit political meaning. In both case studies, it is possible to see how volunteering becomes a tool to "do politics" in a different way and how, through volunteering, young people acquire "political skills", developing a critical thinking on the deeper roots of the problems they aim to solve and on the solutions that institutional politics proposes to these problems (Verba et al. 1995, Theiss-Morse and Hibbing 2005).

## 7.5 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to discuss the changing nature of volunteering, through the perspective of youth conditions and practices and how they translate in different 'styles of participation'. In our two case studies, despite highly different economic and political contexts, similar youth conditions, such as problems of insertion in the labour market and lack of trust in political institutions, seem to have influenced the goals and experiences of young people practicing volunteering. The analysis of the two cases showed how acquisition of personal, professional and political skills is strongly shaping young people's processes of appropriation and re-signification of volunteering.

The differences between our two cases are not limited to the political and cultural contexts, or even to the organisational structures of the two settings and the difference in terms of youth cultural scenes. There are also significant ideological differences, which translate into the characteristics of the skills acquired during their volunteering experiences. While a leftist/mutualistic understanding is shaping personal, professional and political skills in the social centre, among the young volunteers of the NGO, a managerial discourse is predominant. However, these skills are in both cases acquired in an informal process, and their approach to politics, notably with a focus on the 'doing', is shaped within the structure of volunteering.

Young people as active cultural producers investing in volunteering are thus contributing to the re-signification process of this form of participation. More specifically, in these case studies we can see how a given form of participation changes its concrete nature when young people attach to it new meanings and goals. A 'style' of volunteering which combines altruistic and individualistic meanings appears from young people in Eskisehir and Bologna's use of this tool to cope with their condition of individuals asked to become adults in two unwelcoming social scenario. At the same time, a 'style' of volunteering develops from the way these young people use an allegedly neutral tool of engagement to achieve political goals and to make their voice heard within and outside their organisations. In this perspective, volunteering remains influenced by the classic logic of helping people in need and working for the common good, but analysing it in terms of 'style' allows to show how the tool is concretely shaped by, on the one hand, the local contexts and the conditions of youth in those contexts and, on the other hand, the existing structures of political opportunities and the position of young people in these structures.

# 8. Final Conclusion of the Report

The central research question that has guided Partispace is; *how* and *where* do 15 to 30 year-old young people participate across social milieus and youth cultural scenes in eight European cities framed by different national welfare, education and youth policies? The comparative thematic reports produced at this stage bring the analysis together to understand distinctive aspects implied within this question. In relation to 'where' Zimmerman et al. (2018) provide a comparative analysis of the spatial dimensions of youth participation, Luküslü et al. (2018) are concerned with social milieus in their report which considers local constellations of youth participation whilst Cuconato et al. (2018) investigate the interaction between young people's agency and life conditions through analysis of young people's biographies. This report addresses 'how' young people participate by mobilising the concept of 'style', focusing on young people's experiences of participation as 'lived practice' in consideration of their living conditions, socio-cultural backgrounds, and local contexts of engagement.

Put simply, we have found that the concept of 'style' can be used to explore, in greater depth, how young people 'do' participation. As Lister (2008) notes, public discourses on youth engagement tends to interpret participation more as a "status", neglecting more dynamic qualities when enacting agency, in relation to opportunities and constraints present within young people's lives. In contrast, our analysis has highlighted 'how' young people use existing practices, whilst undertaking processes of re-signification so that parts of their lived experience become meaningful. By analysing these processes of innovation or re-signification as emerging 'styles' of youth engagement, the report presented varied examples of civic and political engagement, shedding light on how young people really live and practice participation. The question that remains for the conclusion, is what can be learnt from undertaking this comparative analysis of youth styles of participation?

In setting out a framework for understanding in the second section, we recognised how 'styles of participation' reflect a culmination or nexus of social, civic and political participation as young people organically customise their own forms of participation. This hybridity is important and can be seen to be producing interesting new sets of relations. The dissatisfaction in political institutions across Europe, coupled with changing youth lifestyles, has led actors to look for "alternative modes" whilst there seems to be a renaissance in what were once separate arenas of social and political participation of young people to reinvent forms of civic participation (Sloam 2013; De Luigi et al. 2018). In this report, we have not only been concerned with young people's preferences for expression informed by their motivations or goals but also how combining these self-oriented (expressive) demands with social/collective interests produces a continuum of positions determined by the influence of personal, contextual and historically intervening factors. Thus, in the four thematic sections we have shown how 'styles of participation' are produced through complex processes of sensemaking, conditioned by an ongoing interplay between the class/social structure dimension (entailing vertical differentiation) and interpretation/agency dimension (entailing horizontal differentiation). As young people engage in these processes, we found that interesting combinations emerge which feature varying degrees of self-development and self-help, do-it-yourself and do-it-with-institutions, individualistic and altruistic, political and apolitical, confrontational and dialogical styles of engagement.

In understanding how these processes emerge, our analysis highlights the importance of how 'styles' are developed in relation to context, the degree of re-signification or re-appropriation will depend on how young people are positioned by themselves/others and, in turn, the level of negotiation or conflict which results. For example, young people in privileged positions use their involvement in Gothenburg youth representation forum to further access elite spaces whilst graffiti sprayers in Frankfurt use an otherwise illegal act of vandalism as a form of artistic and political expression denoting symbolic forms of collective resistance in non-traditional ways. In this sense, akin to subcultural styles, their expressions become a 'performance' of what Honneth (2005) refers to as a "struggle over recognition" but the level of conflict will depend on the extent that conformism, negotiation or the need for separation takes hold. Much of this has to do with the extent that the young people look for recognition, within and outside of their group and, in turn, the possibilities they have at their disposal to gain legitimacy.

Pressures to operate within these sets of relations also impact how young people formulate their participative actions to suit their own means and competencies. For example, in section seven, the analysis explored how in contexts of decreasing labour opportunities, volunteering does not simply have altruistic goals but is a way to acquire skills, captured by the phrase "helping yourself whilst helping others". Yet in paying attention to the concept of politics, we showed how in young people's efforts to avoid traditional ways of doing politics, they contribute to social change in different ways than those associated with traditional democratic forms.

In taking this further, the analysis also showed how young people were engaging in acts of transformation to adapt 'styles of participation' at the group level to negotiate their own needs and to incorporate their subjective meaning and changing situations. The experience of doing this, the conflict and negotiation in their struggle over recognition thus provided an opportunity for informal learning, akin to Dewey's (1916) notion of the importance of experiencing democratic participation. In section five and the case of the ALAB, an alternative cultural form of popular education in Rennes, we identified, how in the group's attempts to remain viable, they were provided access to platforms of recognition in the form of state recommendation or funding and in doing so, carve out a niche of their own. However, this move involved compromise as the municipality was ready to fund attempts of youth policies to promote 'social action' rather than forms of 'cultural self-expression'. Such challenges within the political environment meant that the lead coordinators developed strategic responses that have the capacity to oscillate between conformism and innovation so that they remain viable but retain legitimacy for the young people.

It is in these moments of lived practice exemplified within this report, that the relationality of participation comes to the fore – between self and others, of positioning and being positioned. For example, in section four which features 'The Box' in Manchester, where one of participants at the exhibition of their film from their action-research project which depicted experiences of homelessness, pronounced, "If you only take one message away today - we were all born to this world the same and we all take nothing with us. We need to remember that our actions count more than our words." Thus, in the analysis we highlighted how the participant was keen to assert to audience members a universalistic statement which demonstrated his understanding of how power operates despite the reality that he knew such calls would be unlikely to change material or epistemic differences between himself and audience members. Such attempts to be recognised thus involve claims for visibility in the public on a cognitive level and an emotional

level. These personal and political formations are negotiated at the group level but have personal biographical meaning. In this sense, we argue that their expression is important for showing emerging critiques of accepted modes whilst presenting new possibilities for forms of civic action.

In various ways, these attempts to be recognised are at the heart of the concerns of PARTISPACE. Indeed, the project started with the premise that young people do participate; they are often just not recognised as such. In many ways, through mobilising the concept of 'style' we were able to show how young people's participation is a reflection of social position largely governed by socio-economic factors and the transitionary status of youth. In this sense, young people's efforts at stylisation are attempts to stay capable of acting within current conditions by translating practices into recognised activities or actions, conceptualised as a way of "coping with life" (Böhnisch 2008). Yet, our analysis of these cases has also shown there is a disquiet or "malaise" (Marchi 2014), which creeps through in explicit and implicit ways that could be akin to residual and emergent "structures of feeling" that demonstrate an emerging critique from young people of dominant forms of participation. These processes of re-signification are essentially the "lived practice" of participation (Lister, 2008) - they are to do with feeling, connecting, sense-making with others and towards others, and they are constructed in performance, and expression (Williams, 1977; 1980; Anderson, 2014). They occupy nexus points where boundaries are being blurred between previously separate arenas in which mental and ideological transformations can take place. For these reasons, there is much to learn from understanding 'styles of participation' as elaborated in PARTISPACE.

# 9. Policy recommendations

Analysing different forms of participation using the concept of 'style' has shown the importance of capturing the hybrid and diverse ways that young people 'do' participation. There are differences in chosen forms of expressions dependent on how these means fit and strengthen individual and collective identities e.g. in artistic collectives, youth councils, subcultural practices and voluntarily engagement. Yet, they are also reflective of young people's social positions and structural constraints, including inequalities of life chances, risks particular to youth transitions, as well as historical and present conditions of European cities. The report has captured a diverse array of "lived practice", showing how young people's forms of participation reflect these conditions but also where they have expressed agency through processes of re-signification, which provide opportunities for new civic actions to emerge. However, as we have argued, the common challenge faced by both accepted and emerging styles of youth participation, which to differing degrees involve conflict, negotiation and conformism, are issues of recognition. The policy recommendations are thus directed at these concerns.

In order to highlight the ways that styles of participation are reflective and constrained by current conditions we propose that:

- **Youth participation needs to be promoted through structural efforts combating poverty and social exclusion whilst organisations need support for sustainability:** Participatory practices are neither 'free' nor equally accessible to all young people. Young people's styles of participation are conditioned by their positioning in social space and related to their access to resources. Similarly, support is needed for sustainability of diverse provision at the local level particularly in terms of funding. Those working at the grassroots level, often engaging vulnerable groups using un/conventional means, need to be sustained on a long-term basis and given opportunities to use their expertise and work in partnership.

- **Youth participation and volunteering are not solutions to the idea of "youth as a problem":** The individualistic use of practices of volunteering are often driven by instrumental goals and used as a tool to solve a series of material needs. This trend appears to be fostered by discourses that promote youth participation as "the solution" to the problem of young people's integration into society, particularly understandings of how this transitionary phase needs to managed or controlled. Although volunteering/participation can respond to some young people needs, it should not be used as a patchwork solution to broader structural issues in contemporary society.

We have noted that the diversity in styles of participation reflect a culmination or nexus of social, civic and political forms of practices, which are blurring the boundaries between previously separate arenas. To enable these to grow we promote:

- **Youth policy and actors to recognise conflicts as claims of participation:** Diversity of practices reflect different needs, feelings, meaning-making processes and claims of belonging and struggle by your people. There are potential conflicts between individuals or within groups as well as between individuals/groups and institutions. These conflicts are not barriers towards participation, rather they need to be recognised as moments and

claims of participation. The idea is not to prevent, inhibit or solve conflicts, these moments of 'lived practice' create opportunities for transformation or at least self-performance which are important for identity-making.

Finally, processes of re-signification and new emerging critiques which show elements of more traditional forms of participation as well as new opportunities for revitalising civic action need to be recognised and legitimised by a range of means including;

- **National and local youth policy to provide spaces responsive to needs whilst promoting existing usage of public space to foster emerging styles of participation**. Young people need free places to develop themselves and their projects. Cities need to provide "breathing spaces" where young people can explore their interests without being criminalised and can feel more part of the city. Furthermore, there need to be efforts to foster the appropriation and re-signification so that young people can experiment with crafting emerging styles of participation. Policy-makers need to negotiate power with young people so that existing spaces can accommodate their needs, ideas and demands. Especially, in the inner city, there needs to be space where consumption is not compulsory, that can accommodate multiple use and where young people can develop different ways of being part of the public. Related to this, multiple forms of expression including more flexible structures, efforts to *really* empower and listen to young people, which avoid tokenism, need to be promoted. The emergence of complex processes of re-signification encapsulated by the mobilisation of the concept of 'style' in this report demonstrates the importance and potential of practices situated at the boundaries. For example, those which use different aesthetic forms can operate on different cultural levels, which can disrupt or intervene in more standardised political forms. It is important that we move towards new ways to recognise and legitimise these efforts, which do not disturb their power and relevance for revitalising civic space.

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