



# PARTISPACE

SPACES AND STYLES OF PARTICIPATION  
Non formal and informal possibilities of young  
people's participation in European cities

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## Youth participation training module

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Further information on the project is available the project website <http://partispace.eu>

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## Introduction to the training module on youth participation

This module has been developed from the Partispace research on spaces and styles of youth participation, conducted in eight European cities between 2015 and 2018. The research was undertaken by a team led by Andreas Walther of Goethe University Frankfurt and funded by the European Union under the Horizon 2020 programme. The aim of the module is to use key findings from this ground-breaking project to support learning and development amongst youth workers and other practitioners working with young people, as well as students of youth policy and practice. In the research, we learned about the interaction between policy and practice at the local, national and European levels. We learned about the settings in which young people participate and the purposes of that participation. We learned about the kinds of young people who participate and the rich variety of ways in which they participate. We learned about how young people, and those working with them, understand participation, and how much that is different from the dominant ‘official’ understandings. Above all, we learned about young people’s experiences of participation, and how those can be made better.

We began our research with the working assumption that youth participation is a much broader and varied category than the version that dominates in official policies and strategies. That assumption was confirmed and reinforced by our research, and underpins the whole of this module. Participation (even if young people do not use the word much themselves) means so much more than joining groups, organisations and activities that have been defined and established by adults as spaces for young people to ‘participate’. In particular, it includes a whole range of ventures that are conceived, imagined and led by young people themselves.

The module is built around a series of themes that enable students – individually or in groups – to explore some of these issues in depth. Throughout the module we want to encourage reflection – not only on our research, but also self-reflection on your own experiences, assumptions and practices. The module is structured in a way that enables students to work through it in their own time, or as part of a tutor-led class or an independent study group. It includes full access to a range of materials produced by the Partispace project, including published and unpublished writings and original data, as well as other relevant publications.

In what follows we outline the units of the module, including the methods of learning and assessment. There then a ‘workbook’ of learning resources and a list of references.

### **Learning objectives:**

1. To develop an understanding of the wide range of activities, styles and spaces that can be considered as youth participation.
2. To learn about the biographical and contextual factors that enable or encourage youth participation.
3. To reflect critically on issues of power, autonomy and control in participatory groups and activities involving young people.
4. To achieve a better understanding of the role of the worker in supporting young people’s participation and autonomous action.

## Methods of learning

Throughout all Units of the module we have tried to build in a strong emphasis on interaction, reflection and dialogue – with fellow students, with colleagues, with the literature and with the examples from the Partispace research.

As part of the Core Assessment there is an opportunity to pursue a practice-based action research project through the module and to document your learning as part of your final assessment. (Details of this assignment are outlined after Unit 3). There will also be a final assignment involving a 4000 word reflection on your learning from this module (see Unit 8).

## Assessment

For those taking this as an assessed module, the assessment consists of three parts:

	<b>% of total marks</b>
<b>i) Learning from the action research project:</b> <b>40%</b>	
a. Either 3000 words written assignment Or	
b. 20-minute speech produced on a video	
<b>ii) Submission of a portfolio</b> including your response to each activity including your reflective diary	<b>20%</b>
<b>iii) 4000-word final assessment</b>	<b>40%</b>

### **Guidance on completing the module:**

This module has been designed to enable and encourage critical reflection, including personal reflection. Throughout the module there are activities to engage you in thinking about and making sense of what you are learning. These are important in helping you to process and deepen your understanding about youth participation. It is a good idea to keep a notebook to record notes, thoughts, reflections and key points of learning as you progress through the module. It is possible to ‘dip in and out’ of the material as well as following the module sequentially.

You should keep a portfolio with your observations, reflections on activities, reading, learning, your own photographs of sites and people you meet in the course of your studies. This will be part of your final assessment.

### **Preliminary Activity**

Often learning is more effective when it is related to our own experiences. Before starting the first Unit, we suggest that you spend an hour thinking about your own perspective on youth participation and note down your thoughts and ideas.

1. What does 'participation' mean to you? What does it involve?
2. Why is it important for young people to participate?
3. What opportunities are there for young people to participate?
4. What issues and questions have arisen for you in undertaking this exercise?

We suggest that you keep these notes in your portfolio, so that you can refer back to them during the course of the module and reflect on how your thinking may have changed.

## A) Training Module

### Unit 1: What is (youth) participation?

#### **Youth participation: definitions and discourses**

What does participation mean? The concept of “participation” derives from the Latin words ‘*partem capere*’ which basically means “to take (a) part”. However, it is quite difficult to define when a behaviour can be understood as a “taking part”, that is what forms participation can take and to which extent an action can be considered and recognised as participation. In fact, participation is a contested concept and many have attempted to define the boundaries and the contents of this fascinating, but vague term.

When it comes to reflect on what do we mean by “participation”, one needs to consider that definitions are never neutral, but reflect values, ideas on society and power dynamics between groups. Discourses around a concept, in fact, are specific ways of addressing a given social phenomena which exclude other ways of seeing and understanding them (see also Glossary entry, ‘[Discourse](#)’).

In this perspective, definitions of “youth participation” are necessarily influenced by the ways we understand “young people” - as individual and as political actors - and their role in society.

In Partispace’s [Wp2](#) report, you can find a detailed review on main definitions and discourses on youth and youth participation emerging from the literature and from the main national and European policies on youth civic and political engagement. In the workbook, activities 1A and 1B are proposed to show how many nuances the term (youth) participation can have, as well as to reflect on how these definitions mirror different understandings of young people’s position in society.

#### **Activity 1A**

In the workbook, we provide a range of definitions of (youth) participation by different actors, written from different perspectives, for different purposes. Definitions are given first without contextualisation. Read them and identify key differences, as well as commonalities: What do they say, and what do they not say? What could be advantages and disadvantages of each definition? What ideas of young people does each definition reflect?

[Go to Workbook activity 1A](#)

### **Activity 1B**

Discover from where each of the definitions come from by reading them with their related contextualisation. Now that you know who has elaborated a specific definition, discuss how the content of the definition is influenced by the authors (who elaborated the definition?), the context (when and where has a definition been elaborated?) and the purpose (what idea about the role of young people in society is mirrored in the definition?)

[Go to Workbook activity 1B](#)

## **Youth participation: your definition**

### **Activity 1C**

In the Partispace research we were able to identify some distinct groupings of participatory activities.<sup>1</sup> Here we describe the main features of these groupings and give an example of each. Read the descriptions and look at the linked examples.

What do you think are the important differences between these examples? Would you consider all these as example of young people's participation? If no, why? What criteria did you use to evaluate them? What is your definition of participation?

### **1. Representations of interests as rights and obligation**

One common type of participation for young people is through organizations such as youth parliaments and student councils, as well as youth wings of political parties. These are institutional settings in which young people can articulate their own interests and act as representatives for their peers.

In Gothenburg (Sweden), a formal youth representation, modelled after the City council, is established. The FYR involves young people aged 12-17 which are voted and elected by their peers. The FYR is composed of 81 regular members coming from the 10 districts of the city. Formal, grand meetings, which gather (or at least are open to) all of the representatives, take place five times a year. These are highly formalised and agenda-driven. Members address issues that they identify as important, such as young people's access to public transportation, quality of school food, and leisure activities for the young. A small group of the most engaged members meet twice a week in the town hall. Assisted by a coordinator they discuss, plan and handle a variety of issues.

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<sup>1</sup> These consist of the 'clusters' identified through the analysis of the 48 ethnographic case studies conducted in Partispace. The comparative [WP4 report](#) provides an in-depth description of each cluster.



## **2. Fighting within and with the political system**

In some cases, young people engage also in a direct confrontation with the political system, taking part in youth sections of political parties or in small self-initiated political groups and social movements. Politics is at the centre of these activities, which directly call into question the political system and its structures.

In Rennes (France), young people have started to take part in an emerging social movement. The people participating in the movement think that, in reaction to the crisis of the representative democracy, it is important that people regain control of the politics by showing their presence in the public space.

## **3. Living social alternatives as a political model**

Alongside the disillusionment of many young people with mainstream politics and ways of life, many also have a high level of awareness about social issues and their own potential to be agents of social change, ignoring the political route and living their alternative vision of society, often rooted in ideas about social and environmental justice. The lived model allows participants to make concrete counter experiences against that which is established, demonstrating to the public that a different social order is possible.

In Bologna (Italy) a group of young activists have occupied a disused barrack located in the city centre. After having cleaned and renovated the space, the young people have started different projects aimed at other young people as well as to unprivileged segments of the population. Within the occupied building, where concerts, seminars, and workshops are held, they have opened a self-managed shelter for homeless people and refugees, a school of Italian for migrants, a micro-brewery and an organic pizzeria, a kindergarten and a library.

## **4. Producing and negotiating own spaces**

In some cases, young people come together to create their own spaces by the means of their own forms of expression. In these cases, young people participate in the life of their city through daily actions and in the attempt to “carve” their own small world in the city’s landscape. The spaces they produce and negotiate allow them to do something together, exchange ideas and thoughts, show their presence in the city and situate themselves in a different manner than they do in their everyday life.

In Frankfurt (Germany), a group of young people participating in the graffiti crew “the Sprayers” have transformed their interest in tags and street-art in an expression of their presence in the city’s urban landscape.

[Watch the video about The Sprayers](#)

## 5. In-between service of humanity and service enterprise

Rather than waiting for the authorities to respond to their needs and demands, many young people turn to self-initiated voluntary, self-help or peer support activities. These forms of participation often involve the voluntary commitment of young people in service of others and may be provided under the umbrella of traditional non-profit organizations.

In Rennes (France), young people have started an association to autonomously deal with the lack of public services for migrants and refugees. Through the association, which does not receive funds from public institutions, young people provide French courses and cultural activities to asylum seekers. To learn more about this project, [have a look at the pictures in the workbook](#).

## 6. Exploring interest, developing and performing skills

These can be characterized as youth scenes formed organically by young people around shared interests and associations and involving expressions of identity. Within Partispace, we have met, for example, young people taking part in dancing and musical initiatives and in groups practicing (extreme) sport. Through these activities young people are articulating their values and sense of who they are, and through their performances and use of public spaces they can be understood as contributing to public life.

In Gothenburg (Sweden), a group of young people interested in parkour and free running have started an association that promotes these sports. The group uses the facilities of a public action hall (a space for all kinds of sport) to train and practice, but the young people also move through the city landscape “conquering” the space by bodily manoeuvres.

## 7. Pedagogically supervised infrastructures for young people

Many groups of young people may be considered as socially excluded, in that they do not have access to the same opportunities as other young people. They may be deprived of basic social goods such as housing, care or income, and some of them talk of feeling invisible as their situation goes unrecognised. Also, young people as a generational group often experience their lives as subordinate to adult power and authority and do not feel their ‘voices’ are heard. In these situations, some young people participate by engaging in activities that involve navigating the margins of citizenship, in pursuit of social justice, inclusion and equality. The activities of these groups may involve explicit confrontation with ‘authorities’, as well as everyday struggles for survival.

In Manchester (UK), a group of very marginalised young men who are experiencing homelessness have found a space to develop relationships and to express their creativity in the project “The box”. During the weekly meeting organised by the social workers, these young people have the opportunity to tell their stories and exchange ideas by means of various artistic means, including installations in the city. To learn more about this project, [have a look at the pictures in the workbook](#).

**Fieldwork activity:** Take a break from reading and wander into town. Stay alert to noticing any groups of young people, where they are, what they are doing. Why not go over and say hello, say you are interested in finding out what young people experience about having places to go and things to do. Think of some questions you might want to ask them, such as: how important is it for them to be able to use public space? Are they able to do what they want to do in city space? To what extent do they feel young people are able to contribute to and participate in society as equal citizens? What does participation mean to them? Thank them for their time and consider exploring a contrasting part of town and repeat the exercise.

[NB: Be aware of how young people respond to you and be careful not to put yourself in danger; you may wish to consider going with a friend.]

**Reflection:** As a result of your learning in this unit and your experiences on field work, what connections can you make between youth cultural values, participation and citizenship? Make notes in your portfolio of your thoughts on this.

## Unit 2: Who participates?

The Partispace research showed how young people engage in participatory activities for many different reasons, which are influenced by their own backgrounds and experiences, what has happened to them and the stories they tell themselves and others about their own lives. For some young people ambition and achievement are important, for others it may be more about finding a place where they can engage in activities they find meaningful.

Looking at the individual biographies we find life stories in consonance with the normative ideas of the good, ordinary, and safe childhood. But we also find the opposite; personal narratives characterised by problems and raptures, crises and conflicts, losses and struggles of various kind. However, what brings many of the biographies together are the practices of meaning-seeking, meaning-making and identity construction, which are central in all cases. Participating through various styles and forms is fundamentally about figuring out who one is in relation to the outer world, about finding a place of belonging, recognition and acceptance, about being and doing things together with like-minded equals. Arriving at this place is for many interviewees characterised by a history of participating in contexts where they for various reasons have not felt at home. Therefore, they have continued to seek further, until eventually finding a community that has become their own.

**Activity 2A:** Study the selected participation biographies **in the workbook**. Reflect on what brings Amanda and Johanna into participatory groups or activities. Think about their background and social context and analyse their biographies in relation to participation. Write down your notes considering their background (age, gender, ethnicity), social and family context, and personal motivations for participation. How much is deliberate or intentional, and to what extent have they gotten involved by chance?

**Reflection:** What conclusions can you draw from reading these short biographical accounts? According to you – what is important, what stands out in relation to participation? Are there any obvious patterns in terms of what appears to have influenced Amanda’s and Johanna’s motivations and experiences of participation? Think about your own work with young people. To what extent are different groups of young people visible, involved and supported? Are there any groups that are not involved that you could try and engage more?

**Activity 2B:** If possible, carry out your own biographical interview with a young person (this could be a friend, a neighbour, a fellow student or a young person with whom you have been working).

Consider what the information you receive might tell you about the person's motivation to participate in different ways.

**Note:** When doing an interview, it is important to be well prepared. You need

- a short **interview guide** containing questions related to different aspects of the interviewee's life (themes such as childhood, friends, school, family, leisure time activities, future plans and ambitions, and other topics you would like to find more about)
- a **recorder** which will enable you to focus on the interactions between you and the interviewee
- **informed consent** - from an ethical point of view it is crucial you make sure that the interviewee has understand the interview-context: why you are doing the interview, what it will be about, how it will be used. Further, the interview is completely voluntary and it is up to the interviewee to decide what she/he wants to talk about and what not. **Anonymization** is of central importance when conducting interviews: the interviewee needs to be assured personal name and other sensitive information will be properly anonymised if you share your findings with a wider public, regardless of form.

We have so far considered some fundamental patterns concerning young people's participatory routes. In the following four units, we will explore some key threads that pervade different forms of participation. These allow us to begin to look in more detail at the underlying dynamics at play when young people participate and include issues of power, political agency, learning and development, and community and belonging.

## Unit 3: Whose agenda? Power and democracy in groups

Issues of power are relevant throughout all participatory processes. From a certain perspective, any relationship between individuals can be understood as a power dynamic where being or not being in the “powerful” position determines one’s possibility to exercise an influence on the situation. Different categories such as class, gender, age and ethnicity all play an important role in defining power relations in a participatory process.

In this unit, we focus on power dynamics between young people and adults, as well as power dynamics amongst young people. Starting from the question “who sets the agenda?” we explore issues of power and control, leadership and autonomy, manipulation and (overt or covert) conflict. Using examples from case studies and action research projects, we are going to reflect on power dynamics within different participatory processes and on their influence on young people’s possibilities and ways of engaging in society.

Concerning formal contexts of engagement, young people’s participation in the decision-making is often limited to a mere consultation led by adults. Similarly, in non-formal contexts of engagement, such as in youth work, the agenda is still often driven by what adults think is better for young people and opportunities of real negotiation of power are lacking. Informal contexts can offer greater possibilities for young people to exercise power and authority over the agenda, but issues of power and authority emerge also in youth-led initiatives as power dynamics intervene in the ways in which groups function.

The unit will first consider power dynamics between young people and adults and then takes in consideration issues of authority emerging within youth-led initiatives. In Partispace’s glossary, you can find a broad definition of the concept of **power** that may help you theoretically frame the following activities. In the workbook, we propose references to relevant literature on power.

[Go to activity 3D in the Workbook](#)

### **Power dynamics between adults and young people**

#### **Activity 3A**

In Partispace, we have analysed many initiatives of youth participation where young people participate alongside with adults. These adults can be representatives of the institutions, youth workers, teachers, older politicians, volunteers, activists, and researchers. Look at the following examples and consider:

What power issues arise?

How do different relationships between adults and young people influence youth participation?

How are power dynamics handled?

### **Example 1**

The possibilities of the Manchester's youth formal representation members to develop their own topics and forms of negotiation are low. The groups of young people that participate in activities very often follow discussion agenda that is defined by regional or national representation bodies and structured ahead by the youth worker. Most activities take place in the town hall where also "adults' politics" is done and the process of participation in formal context is controlled and interrupted when diverging directions come to be undertaken.

### **Example 2**

During our fieldwork in Frankfurt we [the researchers] met a girls group in a youth centre, whom we wanted to involve in an action research project. As they had a conflict with the centre, they developed an on-off-relation to the professionals and the centre. [...] We arranged a first meeting outside the centre with the girls [...] to collect some ideas for an ARP. First ideas were to travel to Amsterdam for legal drug consumption, or to Berlin to visit another youth centre and make a film to document their experiences. We asked them to develop and write another proposal, ending up in forcing our intention on the group and trying to make them realise that this is a great opportunity, despite them never really being engaged nor interested. [The project never started].

### **Example 3**

The activists of the self-managed social centre in Bologna have decided to participate at the meeting of the council of the neighbourhood to defend the occupation from the risk of eviction [...] The discussion between the activists and the neighbourhood's president goes on also after the meeting with the activists strongly claiming to the president to intervene in defence of the occupation [...] The president, a woman in her 60s, approaches the young female activist in front of her, saying "Calm down, give me a smile", treating her more as a daughter than as a political actor.

### **Example 4**

At the LGBTQ-lab in Gothenburg, young people's own initiatives and ideas about activities are the beacon and the organizing principle for the professional leisure time youth work. Youth workers play important role as facilitators and supporters for the group but, apart from this, the group functions completely autonomously, having the possibility to decide what to focus their agenda on.

### **Example 5**

After one year of occupation of the abandoned building, the Municipality has decided to grant the young people with a three years agreement where certain duties and tasks are specified. However, as explained by them, this agreement was largely secured thanks to the good relationships existing between one of the adults of the group and the Municipality's council member which is responsible for sport and leisure projects.

In these examples, it was possible to see how relationships between young people and adults within participatory processes can take very different shapes depending on who is the adult, how age-hierarchies are set within the group, and the ways adults perceive their positions in relation to young people. Example 1 shows a case where possibilities of youth participation are particularly limited and where adults keep strongly and explicitly the control on the agenda. Example 2 refers to a story full of “we’s”, where the researchers play a crucial influence in the whole participatory process of the group, which would not start without their intervention. Example 3 presents a situation where power dynamics are less explicit (because hidden in kindness), but still present and able to dismiss the role of young people as legitimate political actors. Example 4 shows instead a more balanced approach to leadership and hierarchies which provides young people with more possibilities to define key-issues within their community. Example 5 describes a situation in which youth participation is influenced by relationships of power between adults.

### **Activity 3B**

Turn your attention on your organisation and your community to think about relationships between young people and adults in term of existing hierarchies and power dynamics. To what extent are young people able to participate according to their own objectives, and to set the agenda? To what extent is their participation determined by adult invitations to engage and by adults providing a framework? How do power dynamics between adults, and between young people and adults, influence youth engagement?

### **Power dynamics between young people: leadership and hierarchies**

When it comes to analysing power dynamics within youth participatory activities, a commonly accepted assumption is that youth participation needs to be less controlled by adults with young people able to exercise higher levels of self-determination. What is perhaps less considered and problematized are the power dynamics between young people in youth participatory initiatives. In other words, the absence of adults does not guarantee that decision-making processes occur in a democratic way and also youth-led initiatives and projects have their own power dynamics with young people taking on leadership roles and in some cases in ways that can replicate dynamics when adults lead.

### **Activity 3C**

In this activity, we explore power dynamics in youth-led initiatives looking more closely at what happens when young people have the power and control over their activities. Read the following examples and consider how decisions are made within the group. Are all these processes democratic? How do different kinds of leadership emerge? Why do some people emerge as leaders? What are the consequences for young people’s participation?



### **Example 1**

Among the young people of the ultras group Luca (male, 20) is the natural leader: he is very charismatic and has proven his courage and loyalty to the group in different occasions. He is perceived as a good leader, beloved by the other young people and he is able to handle responsibilities related to his role. Luca has, in fact, all the skills expected by a good ultras leader: courage, perseverance, loyalty and the right amount of recklessness. Luca is the one who is always ready in case of fights, but he also knows when it is not the case to act stupidly, he knows what is needed to organize the next choreography at the stadium, he thinks about which choirs to sing. [...] Despite the fact that he is one of the youngest members of the group, his word is rarely contradicted during discussions and the others pay attention at not questioning his authority even when their ideas are different.

### **Example 2**

The volunteers running the social dormitory for migrants and homeless are engaged in the organization of the next "movie dinner". "Movie dinners" are an activity aimed at raising funds for the project: paying a small sum, one can enjoy a dinner cooked by one of the migrants hosted in the dormitory and watch a movie from the country of origin of the migrant. The organization of the dinner implies several steps (decide the menu, buy the groceries, cook, prepare the Facebook event, make, print and distribute the flyers, take track of the bookings, collect the money, choose and find the movie). Although everybody has a role, someone needs to coordinate the activity and it is not an easy process. [...] When the distribution of the roles/tasks starts during the weekly assembly, few people volunteer for participating in the organization of the "movie dinner" with people remaining silent and looking around trying to avoid the eyes of Valentina, who is asking who wants to be involved and coordinate the group. At the end, Benedetta, who has already coordinated two other "movie dinners" and who, at the beginning of the assembly said that she didn't have too much time to be at the social centre because she needs to study for an exam, says that she is ok with taking care of the organization of the dinner "since nobody else seems willing to".

### **Example 3**

Talking about his role in the Youth organisation of a national humanitarian NGO, the leader of the group describes how his leadership style has changed with time: "I took a position of responsibility. Having that position contributed a lot to me because I knew I had the potential of leadership and the others said so too. But I thought that being a leader meant something like storming about, being sulky or tough, like dominating. During club meetings, while Özlem was the chairman they continued pleasantly, giggling but my friends told me that when I entered the room, the room became tense and some kind of a fearful place. [...] In that situation I thought, 'Do you want to be a good leader, to appeal to a good population? If you want that, you need to change your temperament.' I mean I learned that leadership isn't done by storming about or saying do this or that by force, in a disagreeable way; and I knew that I had to do that. [...] I learned that leadership stemmed from a harmony within the club, from bilateral relations, nice relations and not yelling. What I assumed leadership is before was

saying ‘Get that thing from here, do this, that should be this way’. However, later I learned that real leadership was saying ‘Let’s do this, let’s move this together’.”

#### **Example 4**

When the researcher met the young people participating in the LGBT-lab in Gothenburg, they asked them if they would be willing to be involved in the research project. The young people, although interested, replied that they needed time to consult the members that were not present, because decisions are always taken in assembly.

These examples show different dynamics of power within youth-led participatory projects and groups of young people. While example 4 testifies a case where decisions are taken in very democratic and horizontal way, the other examples refer to situations where hierarchies amongst young people become particularly visible and where some young individuals emerge as leaders. In some cases, leadership styles assume a quite autocratic mode to the extent that there is only scope for young people to participate on the terms laid down, with little opportunity for democratic engagement within the group. In other cases leadership develops more organically in response to a perceived need for someone to provide direction, vision and momentum. In this perspective, examples 1, 2 and 3 show how leaders – even when they have a more autocratic leadership style – emerge also because other young people are not willing or able to exercise leadership. This puts focus on how power dynamics always develop from the action of the powerful and the reaction of the powerlessness (Bourdieu 1998).

One may of course ask whether leaders are always required or whether a group can collectively lead itself. In any social group, even without established leaders, there will be a struggle for recognition as different views, ideas and objectives struggle for primacy. How these are reconciled and negotiated for the common good may depend on the group’s ability to engage in what Wildemeersch *et al.* (1998) call ‘participatory social learning’, which refers to the ability of a group to solve its own problems through communication and dialogue.

#### **Reflection**

Considering your community or your organisation, are there leaders? Who are they? What are the characteristics that made them emerge as leaders? How would you describe their style of leadership? Does their leadership style limit other people’s engagement? What would happen to the group without the existing leader? What did you find from this activity? What issues and questions arose for you concerning leadership and group dynamics?

## **Core ASSIGNMENT: Action Research project with young people**

As indicated in the beginning, the assessment for this module involves 20% of the marks for a portfolio of information and reflections, 40% for the final activity (Unit 8) and 40% for learning from undertaking an action research project with young people. You can undertake this project at whatever stage of this course you like, however, it might have more meaning and resonance if you begin the project at this stage, whilst you are undertaking the different Units.

### **Activity: PARTICIPATION AS LEARNING IN ACTION: Developing your own action research project with young people**

Action research is a type of research that involves experiential learning from practice by inviting critical questioning of thinking and practice. A good way to do this is to set up a project with young people as a context to learn together. This activity therefore concerns you setting up and facilitating an action research project with young people about an issue or concern they feel is important, with a view to them learning about what participation might mean as they seek to find solutions. You may approach this project activity as you like, however, the following provides one set of possibilities for how you might do this:

- You might start by bringing a group of young people you work with together to share their thoughts about what participation means to them, as well as experiences of having a say and making change happen. Perhaps invite reflections on what is important for young people to have a say about, when they have been involved in trying to change something and what affected whether that happened or not.
- You could then introduce the idea of doing a project and see whether they want to get involved. If so, perhaps invite them to discuss ideas for something that is important that they want to try and change. Equally, they may want to do a project that involves them researching their own local context and where and how they like to participate and what affects that. They may even choose to do a project that explores young people's views and experiences of 'participation' itself.
- You should emphasise that it is up to them to lead the project, to decide how they will do the project and decide what support they need and when.
- Perhaps suggest that you come back together as a group to review progress and to discuss what has happened. If you want to be creative you could set up an ongoing story board for young people to document their project process. You might also want to provide a camcorder for them to use so they can use video to record what they do. They may of course decide on some other media (but do be open to creative possibilities).
- You might want to see whether you can identify some resources to support young people (for example a camcorder, but also refreshments for when they meet) and whether you undertake the project work as part of your on-going youth work, school or community activities.

For your own part, you should consider keeping a reflective diary about your experiences and reflections with this project. As you do so, use the learning from this project as an opportunity to ask critical questions of yourself about youth participation, and some of the issues and complexity at play. For example, you may wish to consider: How do you feel about giving away power and control and letting young people lead? Were there any difficult situations, and what were they about? When did it feel OK to actively intervene and when not? What issues and questions arose for you as a youth work professional? What challenges and barriers do young people experience as they undertake their projects and how were these resolved? What are you learning about what participation means to young people and what affects their participation as active citizens?

**Note:** Keeping a reflective diary is important for the final assessment of this project.

The project can continue as long as it needs to be. It would be good however to allow this project to run alongside your study in this module. You may then want to share some of your questions and queries with these young people, for example, inviting questions around issues of power when young people participate. If the young people involved in the project move on, then that's fine, you can reconvene with another group.

**Assessment:**

The rationale for this project is to provide an opportunity for learning with and from young people in the real time of practice. The assessment for this project will account for 40% of the total course marks.

You can choose whether to provide a written account of 3000 words based on your learning from the project or a video film in which you provide a 20 minute speech instead of a written essay.

This assignment can continue as you pursue the rest of the Units in the module.

## Unit 4: Participation as political agency and social action

In this unit we focus on participation where a central purpose is to influence public decision-making, to engage with political processes or to bring about social change (for example changes in policy, in service provision, or in public attitudes or awareness).

One interpretation of how young people can participate in decision making and change processes has focused on input and involvement into adult governance processes, for example through youth councils and parliaments. But the world is not only shaped by professionals. There is a growing body of evidence highlighting the diverse ways in which young people organise and engage actively and creatively in response to issues they feel strongly about. In contrast to suggestions that young people are not interested in politics or social change, the Partispace research has highlighted the extent to which many young people seek to activate their political agency, although often not in ways that fit with mainstream politics. Young people are not apolitical beings, on the contrary. Many case studies throughout Partispace exhibit evidence of political agency and social awareness, as well as ethical and critical stance towards perceived deficiencies of current arrangements. Many of the participation projects open up a micro-political space of solidarity where young people can engage in concrete work for change.

**Activity 4A:** Spend a little time thinking about the opportunities young people have to genuinely influence change in their everyday lives as well as at a larger societal level. What different modes of participation come to your mind? In your experience, what methods of engagement are most effective?

### **Social action: Examples from Partispace**

#### *The Youth Entrepreneurship Foundation (Bulgaria)*

The Foundation was created in 2013 by six young people with a small donation from one of the leading economists in the country and president of another large foundation. The main goal of the organization as stated in their Statute is “encouraging youth participation”. In the few years since its formation, the Foundation has become recognizable in the city and is a preferred partner by other non-governmental organizations.

They have won public recognition by their monitoring of the work of City Council in Plovdiv and the various committees established by the Council. Other activities are organizing entrepreneurship training for young people and lectures by prominent experts. The Foundation acts as a platform for communities seeking creativity, productivity and increasing public good through collaboration. The young people who created the group have different work experience and different backgrounds.

In their action research project, they wished to explore the link between entrepreneurial and civic actions through finding a market solution to a particular problem. They invited young volunteers to identify a problem, design a feasible solution, initiate actions to implement the solution and negotiate with adults to support them. The group chose the issue to renovate a run-down school yard and make it a place for young people to meet and enjoy after school.

[Watch the video about The Foundation](#)

### **Non-profit parkour association (Sweden)**

The association started as an informal constellation of friends with a passion for parkour and free running. In 2010 the group started to receive requests to do shows in Gothenburg, and an interested public started asking about parkour lessons. In 2013 the association became official. The association is characterized by both informal and non-formal participation. The organization is run by the practitioners who have designed and built the practice grounds in their in-door training facility. Micro-level democracy is another characteristic of the group, the organization derives its legitimacy from listening to individual member’s voices and ideas. The association teaches parkour lessons to practicing groups with varying skill levels. They do public shows and competitions, indoors and outdoors. The association is also engaged in a number of volunteer projects. They arrange summer camps, specially inviting newly arrived unaccompanied refugee children to participate. They have also been on various volunteer trips.

[Watch the video about the Free sports association](#)

### **Reflection:**

What do these different examples tell you about forms of engagement, self-organization, social action, and politics?

Now go to Activity 4B in the Workbook

## Unit 5: Participation as learning and self-development

In this unit we focus on participatory groups, activities and processes where a central concern or focus is individual development – confidence, skills, career paths, personal struggles, resources and opportunities. Participation is fundamentally about being active – through taking part and making a contribution, or by seeking to influence or bring about change. At the same time young people are often motivated to participate by their own personal struggles for identity and development. Following the logic of ‘communities of practice theory’, Lave and Wenger (1991) refer to this as ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ through which individuals gradually acquire the skills and experience they need to contribute to the community. The drive for self-determination and agency in one’s life can be a powerful driver for choices and action. In an increasingly competitive world in which biographies are uncertain and individualised, acquiring resources and social capital can be imperative. Conventionally, acquiring the means to do well in life has focused attention on education and, more recently, gaining experience. Yet, participation can also yield benefits in terms of building individual confidence, sense of self and pursuit of meaningful life tasks such as joining a group in the pursuit of social justice or fighting for rights and support as a result of one’s own experiences. For example, the young person arriving in a country as an asylum seeker without any support might be motivated to establish a refugee support centre. Such scenarios are not only about ‘addressing an issue,’ but also about making sense of their own experience and giving meaning to one’s own values in the context of wider groups and society. In the PARTISPACE project we experienced numerous examples of ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ playing out in different ways.

Taking responsibility for their own participation in youth led projects can throw up issues for young people concerning their own abilities in two ways. First, through engaging in action, young people come to realise the reality and complexities concerning participation and what change projects involve. Second, through participatory action, they have an opportunity to realise their own abilities in the real time of practice. This may involve becoming aware that there are limits to their own agency, but equally, that they can do more than they think they can do. This may for example, involve realising that they can use their own power and creativity in responding to problems. To that extent the experience gained from involvement in various small scale projects can provide an important learning ground.

A substantial part of the learning that occurs when young people participate is not about how to achieve something, but about pursuing hopes and dreams and learning from the journey. Young people’s participation is essentially a personal learning journey, a search for meaning and belonging, for power and self-determination and for making sense of who they are in the world. Arguably, the social phenomena of young people’s groups and actions are matched in importance with the underlying psycho-social realities that bring young people to participate in, and contribute to, the groups they are in. This journey of self-discovery is about young people seeking to give meaning and purpose to their lives. Being a part of something (sense of family and community), creating an ideal space within the micro spaces of society. As one project researcher observed: “Participation is rooted in biographies, questions about ‘Who am



I? How much am I able to give?' The amount of necessities and claims of maintaining [the project] is a subject of discussion from a personal rather than a political view."

Groups provide safe space for young people to be themselves whilst also understanding what this means in relation to the group and wider society. These creative tensions can give rise to inner and social conflicts that are at play when young people participate and manifest through experiences of inclusion and exclusion. For example, in the context of young migrants, participation becomes an inner and outer journey of cultural reconciliation with respect to conflicts surrounding social identity as well as an intergenerational learning process as young people seek to mediate between the need for cultural reanimation for social integration and on the other hand respect for parental culture and tradition. In these situations, where young people have to negotiate a hybrid identity, participation becomes a sort of coping strategy. In such situations, the group offers a resource on which to draw positive support, though for example debating these issues with others facing similar experiences.

**Activity 5A:** Consider the extracts **in the Workbook** and think about what the underlying motivation might be for participation in these different contexts. Bear in mind there may be multiple benefits from participation.

**Reflection:** What are some of the underlying motivations for participation you can detect from these extracts? How are these manifest in specific 'acts of participation'?

To what extent do young people have opportunities for different types of participation that enable them to pursue their own personal learning and development needs? To what extent do these need to be provided or just realised by young people in the spaces of their everyday lives?

Whilst some critics argue that more formalised youth participation initiatives such as youth councils and citizenship education are merely attempts to mould 'good citizens' (Gifford et al. 2013) rather than genuine examples of autonomous action, there is evidence that they provide worthwhile experiences for young people taking part. Evidence shows, however, that when participation is less formal the alignment with individual interests and personal development goals is more salient, as young people have more opportunity to shape and influence their own participation. Thus, collective participation has meaning when individual purposes come together in solidarity. This theme is explored further in the next unit.

## Unit 6: Participation as community and belonging

In social sciences, the concept of “community” is as vague as that of participation. According to Ferdinand Tönnies community consists in an organic natural kind of social group whose members are bound together by the sense of belonging, emerging from everyday interactions covering the whole range of human activities. In Tönnies’ perspective, the solidarity nature of the social relations in communities would be replaced by large scale and impersonal relations in industrializing societies. For Mannheim, community is any circle of people who live together and belong together in such a way that they share a whole set of interests. For Stacey (1987), “community [...] is a fusion of feeling and thought, of tradition and commitment, of membership and volition. Community is founded on people conceived in their wholeness, rather than in one or other of the roles, taken separately, that they may hold in the social order.”

Relationships appearing within communities inherently entail a series of elements which are necessary for the development of participatory processes: close relations, organised interactions, strong group feeling, sense of belonging, solidarity and mutuality, feeling of sharing a common cause or interest. In this perspective, communities are often the starting point of many participatory processes.

Looking at youth participation as community and belonging means, in the scope of this module, shedding light on those processes that can bring an organic natural group – a community – to become a participatory actor in the local context.

**The task in this unit is to reflect on what constitutes a community, and whether a community can become a political actor.**

### Activity 6A

The following texts describe three communities we have met during the Partispace project. Each of these natural, organic groups has developed a specific participatory process within their local contexts. We propose you to imagine how this has happened, considering these three questions:

- **Which** practices of political and civic engagement have they enacted? (Practices)
- **Why** have they started these participatory processes? (Motivations)
- **How** have the institutions and other people reacted? (Interactions/Results)

### Case 1

A case study conducted in Bologna (Italy) has focused on a community composed by the young supporters of a local football team. The studied community consists in its core of about 35 people aged between 18 and 60, with a large predominance of young people also occupying leading positions in the internal hierarchies (20 out of the 35 people composing the group are aged 30 or under). The group has a rigid hierarchical structure and is composed predominately of males: just six women (3 young women and 3 adult women) are involved in the group's activities daily. Most of the young people participating in the community have a popular background and, overall, the community is stigmatised for being "just hooligans". The group share a strong sense of belonging to the city, which is expressed in their support for the local football team.

### Case 2

A case study conducted in Frankfurt (Germany) has followed a community consisting of about 30 young people aged between 18 and 40, the majority being between 20 and 25. Most of them are university students from an arts university in [city C] and from Goethe University Frankfurt. In addition, most of them are involved in some kind of left-wing or artistic activism.

### Case 3

A case study conducted in Eskisehir (Turkey) has looked at a group composed of young street musicians of Kurdish origins, from the south-eastern region of Turkey. This is a group composed of young musicians of Kurdish origins, from the south-eastern region of Turkey. There is also one musician with a refugee status, migrating from Kirkuk, Iraq. The group is composed of all men, with the exception of one woman who we were told joins the group occasionally. However, during our fieldwork, she was not present. We were being told that the group members like to have some musicians come and join their core group. The members of the group came to Eskisehir for higher education (with the exception of M. having refugee status); some of them are still students, others recently graduated. The group plays ethnic music and has a large repertoire of songs from Anatolia and the Middle East (covering not only songs in Turkish and Kurdish, but also in Armenian and Persian). The group merges different music instruments in their music such as the guitar, santoor and erbane. In that sense, the group continues the tradition of Kurdish groups, merging Kurdish music with modern folk and jazz.

### Activity 6B

Now turn to the further reading for [Activity 6B in the Workbook](#), and read about the different case studies. You will discover how things have really gone. Are the real stories of these communities similar to what you have imagined? Is there something that you didn't expect? Looking at the communities you belong to: what can you learn from these young people's stories?

## Unit 7: The role of the worker

Here we bring together learning from all Units to focus on the role of the worker or pedagogue in supporting young people's participation. When do we facilitate, and when do we get in the way? When should we lead, when do we stimulate or provoke, when do we provide control, or simply a holding space? What does it mean to show respect for young people's capability, and their autonomy?

The Pedagogical Paradox (Lovlie, 2016) involves a contradiction between what I say and what I do, or what I am committed to and how I set about achieving it. For example, a teacher invites students to a free dialogue, but sets the rules for the dialogue herself. A similar paradox is arguably present when adults seek to assist and promote young people's participation. Linked to this is a more general paradox of children's rights, which is that children in practice rely on adults to inform them of their rights, including their rights to autonomy (Thomas 2017). It is this kind of manifestation of power imbalance that occurs despite the best of intentions, and that requires to be negotiated in the working relationships between young people and those seeking to enable their participation.

### **Recognition**

Axel Honneth (1995) identifies three distinct modes of intersubjective recognition, which he refers to in summary as 'love, rights and solidarity'. By *love* he means 'primary relationships insofar as they ... are constituted by strong emotional attachments among a small number of people'. By *rights* Honneth refers to the respect for persons implied in modern legal relations. Honneth links this with social respect, and with self-respect, which is dependent on the ability to claim one's rights. By *solidarity* Honneth means the outcome of 'social relations of symmetrical esteem'. At a personal, and also at a group, level this means being recognised and valued for one's particular contribution to the social whole. Thomas (2012) has argued that all three modes of recognition are necessary for effective participation (see also Partispace Glossary).

The term 'empowerment' which is often used as a short hand for the aims of both participation and youth work can be seen by some as intrinsically problematic. Power relations mean that pedagogues/youth workers and young participants are working together through negotiation of both agendas and methods. Sometimes therefore in conflict. Like the related concept of 'giving voice', the idea of 'giving power' has been subject to widespread critique. Rather than 'giving power' or 'giving voice', young people can be encouraged to come into a sense of their own power and to come to voice, a voice which was never absent but was often muffled or ignored. In such processes of negotiation, the fundamentally relational nature of power is acknowledged.

Discussions and critiques of the term 'empowerment' in youth work and wider education literature (Batsleer, 2013) are paralleled by discussions in citizenship education. It is widely argued for example that when 'citizenship' is taught it can involve the transmission of

existing values and practices, flowing with a fundamental purpose of education from one generation to another. In contrast with this, democratic learning, it is argued, is not transmissible but can only be developed experientially by fuelling a desire for enquiry and experimentation with new forms of participation and influence (Biesta,2011).

The idea that participation is about giving power, sharing power or enabling experimentation has implications for professional roles in research, policy and practice, and gives rise to ambivalence concerning how adults engage with young people. This emerges in different ways in all the projects, and appears to affect all participants, young and old. In many initiatives with young people there is an assumption that adult involvement is controlling and oppressive and that young people should be 'left to get on with it themselves'.

Experience from the Partispace research suggests this is not always the case. In the action research projects young people talked openly about valuing the space to have more power and freedom to be self-directed, but also about the value of having adult input to bounce ideas off, as well as sometimes to 'keep us to task'. For the adult researchers, there was uncertainty about whether, when and how to intervene, in order to help the group keep their focus, or sometimes to steer them away from plans that might be risky or unrealistic.

**Activity 7A:** Read the extracts in Unit 7 of the work book. Note down your observations about the nature of relationships between adult professionals and young people. What language or actions are adults using to facilitate interactions with young people? From reading these extracts, try and draw up a list of principles for facilitating participation.

Many of the issues above can be mediated through 'participatory practice' approaches. These are based on principles of democratic learning, mutual reciprocity, emergent learning, co-inquiry, participatory social learning, critical reflection and reflexivity. For the worker this changes roles and relationships from one of 'expert' to facilitator and shares many principles of open youth work and are reflected in the following orientations:

- Young People making an active choice to be involved, and so pedagogues/youth work professionals seek to be respectful of those choices and negotiate the agenda and processes of work. However, just as researchers work actively with a principle of 'informed consent', so professionals seek to support young people's 'informed consent' to take part in, direct and shape projects. They also inform themselves about aspects of young people's conditions of life which may actively prevent them agreeing to be part of something, even when they have a strong desire to be involved: these include school and family pressures as well as economic and financial pressure.
- Facilitating youth participation as a learning and change process involves starting from 'where young people are.' This involves listening to their experiences and being attentive to their emotions: in particular to anger, boredom, discontent. The participatory practitioner can develop a strong sense of the communities to which young people belong/with which they struggle: seeing both peer groups and inter-generational

relationships as a potential source of learning and engagement as well as a source of limitation and control. The overall aim of the participatory practitioner in supporting participation is to enable movement beyond where the young person(s) are through supporting their reflection on their situation and enabling them to identify alternative choices of action. As young people become aware of new possibilities the participatory practitioner can help the young person(s) think through the viability of those choices, as a critical friend, challenging and inviting reflection, but not controlling or prescribing. An initial small goal may rapidly be met and a group's aims become more ambitious. An initial wide ambition may become curtailed. It is part of the skill of the participatory practitioner to enable a group of young people to understand what lies initially within their scope and what lies beyond their power and how this can shift.

- In order for this to happen, the participatory practitioner needs to build a reliable basis for relationship so that trust and more authentic exploration can emerge. Boundaried and reliable spaces, which remain reliable even when boundaries are tested by participants are necessary. In relation to work with adolescents, it is widely discussed that it is from this process of boundary-work that the possibility of tipping the balance of power and control in young people's favour occurs. In participatory practice, it is the process not outcome that matters, as young people increasingly take on roles and responsibility for their own projects.

### **Reflection**

Participatory practice and good youth work can be seen as having some of the same contradictory qualities as great jazz. It is well prepared and highly disciplined yet improvised. And, while responding sensitively to signals and prompts of others, it continues to express the workers own intentions, insights, ideas, feelings and flair (adapted from Davies in Batsleer and Davies, 2010: 6).

“The metaphor of ‘accompaniment’ in music, in the relationship between a soloist and accompanist undertaking a performance together [...] It conveys something of the quality of listening and attention which the informal educator gives, not taking centre stage but working responsively with the main performer, keeping time and stopping with them..... as in the relationship between players performing together, there are distinct parts to be performed and at different moments different balances are found between the players. There will be times when the rhythms of conversation move in unison. At other times, the conversation will develop through a pattern of dominance and subordination and the voices of those involved will be shifting out of balance or seeking a new balance.” (Batsleer,2006: 95)

In the literature concerning children and young people's participation there is widespread use of a tripartite model of adult-youth relationships in participation: consultative, collaborative, or youth-led. This can be seen as a continuum of power relations with collaborative approaches providing a balance between the polar positions of youth-led and adult-led. In some instances it may be appropriate for activities to be completely youth-led without adult

involvement. In other cases, there may be value in a more collaborative approach in which young people and adults work together.

**Reflection:** Think about the following questions: How do you feel about sharing or giving away power to young people? How would you feel, in the context of professional practice, for young people to challenge your ideas? In what circumstances do you feel it is important to intervene in a project being run by young people? Think of a time when you were challenged respectfully. What did that feel like?

**Activity 7B: Reflecting on practice**

Working with one or two other practitioners, set up a peer supervision co-inquiry session to reflect on your own practice with young people around issues of power and relationships. Spend some time thinking about your own practice as workers and the nature of relationships you forge with young people. Consider a critical incident concerning **control** in the process of your work with young people. Think about the position you are coming from. Think about the position other people are coming from. Be alert to where one agenda affects the other and how the nature of the relationship established affects that.

Now share your reflections on learning from the action research projects that you set up with young people. How do you feel about giving away power to young people? When does it feel ok to intervene and when not? What reflections do you have concerning whether, when and how to intervene with young people? What are the implications from learning in this Unit about what constitutes appropriate roles for workers when young people participate and how these might vary in different contexts?

Make a recording of this peer supervision session.

## Unit 8: Reflections, implications and final assessment

### Reflection:

Look back over your reflective diary and portfolio of notes throughout the module, and think about what new understanding you have developed about youth participation.

- How has your thinking changed or developed, especially about what counts as participation by young people?
- What are the implications for society in ensuring that young people have opportunities to participate as equal citizens?
- What messages do you think need to be given to policy-makers so that policy will support youth participation more effectively?
- What will you do differently in your own practice to change the way you engage with young people?
- How might you widen opportunities for open dialogue with young people?
- What conversations will you have with colleagues to continue the cycle of learning and change you have begun by undertaking this module?

As outlined in the beginning, the assessment for this module consists of three parts:

	<b>% of total marks</b>
<b>i) Learning from the action research project:</b>	<b>40%</b>
a. Either 3000 words written assignment	
Or	
b. 20 minute speech produced on a video	
<b>ii) Submission of a portfolio</b> including your response	<b>20%</b>
to each activity including your reflective diary	
<b>iii) 4000 word final assessment (see below)</b>	<b>40%</b>

You should by now have completed and documented your action research project with young people. You will also have a portfolio of notes, reflections and responses to activities.

Details of the final assessment are set out below:

**Final assessment:** Write a 4,000 word reflective account that addresses the questions above, reflects your learning from this module, and outlines your own action plan for changes to practice and policy based on how you have been challenged and changed as a result of learning from this module and that you feel would make a difference in widening and supporting youth participation. In your assignment you should provide critical reflections on what you have learnt about youth participation from this project, including young people's own styles and preferences, frustrations and obstacles they experience, implications for



## B) WORKBOOK

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## Unit 1: What is (youth) participation?

### Youth participation: definitions and discourses

A perspective that helps reflecting the complex relationships and power struggles involved in societal debates about the meaning of participation is understanding social processes in terms of *discourse*. In short, discourses stand for practices that address social phenomena in specific ways – and thereby exclude other ways of seeing and understanding them – and for social orders that result from these practices. Dominant discourses reflect the power relationships existing in a given context and establish dominant ways of seeing, understanding and referring to the social and material world.

In the area of *youth policy*, in recent decades there have been mainly three ways of seeing, conceptualising and addressing young people:

- **Young people as a problem** referring especially to deviant behaviour by young people but also to juvenile experimentation interpreted as a threat for the existing social order which implies surveillance, adaptation and normalisation;
- **Young people as victims** referring to the vulnerability of young people in the generational order and in their particular process of personal development which is reinforced under conditions of social disadvantage and – more generally – the increasing uncertainty of future lives;
- **Young people as a resource** referring to young people as the future of society – as citizens and as labour force – who need to be ‘cultivated’; this implies both protection and promotion.

Each of these understandings define the position of young people in society in a different way, influencing the understanding of the ways in which young people’s participation in society can occur.

### Activity 1A

In the following paragraph, we provide a range of definitions of (youth) participation by different actors, written from different perspectives, for different purposes. Definitions are given first without contextualisation. Read them and identify key differences – as well as commonalities: What do they say – and what do they not say? What could be advantages and disadvantages of each definition? What ideas of young people does each definition reflect?

- a. *“Participation in the democratic life of any community is about more than voting or standing for election, although these are important elements. Participation and active citizenship is about having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engaging in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society.”*

- b. *“Participation is the process of sharing decisions which affect one’s life and the life of the community in which one lives. It is the means by which a democracy is built, and it is a standard against which democracies should be measured. Participation is the fundamental right of citizenship.”*
- c. *“Simply defined, participation is the act of taking part in or ‘becoming actively involved’ or ‘sharing’ in, but the reality of young children’s participation is more complex. As Kirby and colleagues point out, participation is a multi-layered concept that may involve young people’s active involvement in decision-making at different levels, from the everyday to a specific event. Participation is also fundamental to the practice of active citizenship.”*
- d. *Asking children and young people what works, what doesn’t work and what could work better; and involving them in the design, delivery and evaluation of services, on an ongoing basis.”*
- e. *“Youth participation is the involving of youth in responsible, challenging action that meets genuine needs, with opportunities for planning and/or decision-making affecting others in an activity whose impact or consequence is extended to others— i.e., outside or beyond the youth participants themselves. Other desirable features of youth participation are provision for critical reflection on the participatory activity and the opportunity for group effort toward a common goal.”*
- f. *“Participation is a fundamental right. It is one of the guiding principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that has been reiterated in many other Conventions and Declarations. Through active participation, young people are empowered to play a vital role in their own development as well as in that of their communities, helping them to learn vital life-skills, develop knowledge on human rights and citizenship and to promote positive civic action. To participate effectively, young people must be given the proper tools, such as information, education about and access to their civil rights.”*
- g. *“The question “what is political participation” is converted into the more pragmatic question: how would you recognize a form of political participation when you saw one? Answering this last question allows for the methodical identification of any phenomenon as a specimen of political participation and for a systematic distinction between various types of participation.”*
- h. *“The right [of a child who is capable of forming his or her own views] to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.”*
- i. *“Ensuring young people are consulted and more involved in the decisions which concern them and, in general, the life of their communities.”*
- j. *“Participation is defined as “biographical self-determination” in the public and/or through the use of public institutions. This implies that participation refers to potentially all (and*

*therefore different styles of) actions of individuals carried out in and/or addressing the public (which is not homogeneous but consist of a variety of formal, non-formal and informal spaces) – unless dialogue has revealed that the individual actor does not consciously refer to a wider community or society.”*

## Activity 1B

Below, you can discover from where each of the previous definitions come from. Now that you know who has elaborated a specific definition, discuss how the content of the definition is influenced by the authors (who elaborated the definition?), the context (when and where has a definition been elaborated?) and the purpose (what idea about the role of young people in society is mirrored in the definition?)

- a. *“Participation in the democratic life of any community is about more than voting or standing for election, although these are important elements. Participation and active citizenship is about having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engaging in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society.”* (Council of Europe 2003): “Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life”)

The Council of Europe is an international institution which is older and representing more European countries than the EU. It has been active youth regard to youth policies long before the EU. Nowadays European Commission and Council of Europe have formed a joint Youth Partnership. Not only but especially after the fall of Socialist Governments in Eastern Europe, the promotion of youth policies has become one of the main activities of the Council of Europe.

- b. *“Participation is the process of sharing decisions which affect one’s life and the life of the community in which one lives. It is the means by which a democracy is built and it is a standard against which democracies should be measured. Participation is the fundamental right of citizenship.”* (Hart 1992: 5)

Roger Hart worked as a consultant for the UN. He accompanied the declaration of the Convention of Children’s Rights in 1989 (see below) and developed the concept of the ladder of participation (from Arnstein 1969) which distinguishes different degrees of participation programmes from manipulation to children initiated activities.

- c. *“Simply defined, participation is the act of taking part in or ‘becoming actively involved’ or ‘sharing’ in (Collins English Dictionary 1991), but the reality of young children’s participation is more complex. As Kirby and colleagues point out, participation is a multi-layered concept that may involve young people’s active involvement in decision-making at different levels, from the everyday to a specific event (Kirby, Lanyon, Cronin and Sinclair 2003). Participation is also fundamental to the practice of active citizenship.”* (Thomas and Percy-Smith, 2010)

Thomas and Percy Smith have edited a comprehensive handbook on children's and youth participation. The quote is from their introductory chapter.

- d. *“Asking children and young people what works, what doesn't work and what could work better; and involving them in the design, delivery and evaluation of services, on an ongoing basis.”* (UK Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2010)

The definition of the UK Department for Children, Schools, and Families refers to involving users, in this case children and young people, into evaluating social policies. The underlying idea is that providers need to legitimise in front of their clients who are thus being empowered.

- e. *“Youth participation is the involving of youth in responsible, challenging action that meets genuine needs, with opportunities for planning and/or decision-making affecting others in an activity whose impact or consequence is extended to others—i.e., outside or beyond the youth participants themselves. Other desirable features of youth participation are provision for critical reflection on the participatory activity and the opportunity for group effort toward a common goal.”* (US Commission on Resources for Youth, 1975)

The National Commission on Resources for Youth was an American programme established in 1970. The Commission was charged with identifying and promoting youth participation in schools and communities across the United States, and was largely funded by the U.S. Government and the Ford Foundation.

- f. *“Participation is a fundamental right. It is one of the guiding principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that has been reiterated in many other Conventions and Declarations. Through active participation, young people are empowered to play a vital role in their own development as well as in that of their communities, helping them to learn vital life-skills, develop knowledge on human rights and citizenship and to promote positive civic action. To participate effectively, young people must be given the proper tools, such as information, education about and access to their civil rights.”* (UN, [Inter-Agency Network for Youth Development](#))

The United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD) is a network of UN entities, represented primarily at the headquarters level, whose work is relevant to youth.

- g. *“The question “what is political participation” is converted into the more pragmatic question: how would you recognize a form of political participation when you saw one? Answering this last question allows for the methodical identification of any phenomenon as a specimen of*

*political participation and for a systematic distinction between various types of participation.” (van Deth, 2016: 14)*

Jan van Deth is a Dutch political scientist teaching at the University of Mannheim (Germany). The quote is from an article for the Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics (online).

- h. *“The right [of a child who is capable of forming his or her own views] to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.” (UN Convention of the Rights of the Child 1989)*

The UN Convention on Children’s Rights was adopted in 1989 and has been ratified by 194 countries. It has been one of the key drivers of the current discourse on children’s and youth participation. Many national legislations and even more temporary policy programmes.

- i. *“Ensuring young people are consulted and more involved in the decisions which concern them and, in general, the life of their communities” (European Commission, 2001a, p. 8)*

This quote stems from the EU’s White Paper on Youth in 2001. The context was the aim of the EU to develop an own youth policy without having a mandate (as youth policy was and is national competence). Promoting participation was a compromise focussing on how youth policy should be done, not what youth policy. It was included in the Open Method of Coordination by the Commission monitors and coordinates member states’ policies.

- j. *“Participation is defined as “biographical self-determination” in the public and/or through the use of public institutions. This implies that participation refers to potentially all (and therefore different styles of) actions of individuals carried out in and/or addressing the public (which is not homogeneous but consist of a variety of formal, non-formal and informal spaces) – unless dialogue has revealed that the individual actor does not consciously refer to a wider community or society.” (PARTISPACE research proposal, unpublished)*

This definition from the PARTISPACE proposal builds on the findings of an earlier EU research project (Youth – Actor of Social Change, UP2YOUTH; [www.up2youth.org](http://www.up2youth.org); Loncle et al., 2012) which questions normative institutional definitions of participation. Even if they aim at empowering young people, they also exclude certain activities by which young people try to be heard, seen and respected.

## Reflection

We can broadly distinguish three ways in which the definitions above address (youth) participation:

- **National policy institutions** (definitions d and e) are clearest in making normative statements how participation should be: educating young people to become good citizens who care for the community; in the case of definition e, empowering young people as clients (not necessarily as citizens) of social policy programmes.
- **International policy institutions** (definitions a, f and h) do not have to legitimise own policies and are free to criticise national policies. Therefore, they present themselves as advocating young people's rights. Nevertheless, also these statements are clearly normative inasmuch as they interpret participation as involvement in something that is already known and predefined.
- **Social scientists** (definitions b, c, g and j) see their role more in describing and explaining than in advocating and promoting.

This reveals how biased definitions of youth participation are depending on the perspective from which they are formulated. Especially institutions define participation in a provision logic as something they do in order to make young people participate in a particular way.

In PARTISPACE, we have carried out a critical discourse analysis of European policy documents on youth participation, especially the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the European Youth Forum representing youth and youth organisations at European level (Becquet et al., 2017).

Youth participation features widely in the official documents of European and national youth policy since 2000. A common feature of these documents is the general lack of a clear definition of the term. In the analysis, it becomes clear that policies build upon a very narrow picture of youth public engagement. Policy discourses reflect that recognised forms and spaces of youth participation are limited and that the scope of the tools through which youth involvement is promoted is narrow. Indeed, the policy texts appear more occupied with questions about how to engage young people in pre-existing activities rather than to recognise and support new creative and self-controlled activities. Interventions proposed to promote youth engagement are often based on information and education.

Look for example at the word cloud of the main terms used in the main policy documents of the European Commission (figure 1). What are the main terms

related to youth participation? How would you explain this?

Figure 1: Word cloud of the terms most used in the EU documents on participation



One can easily see the priority of educational matters in the policies developed by the EU Commission: information, learning, training, knowledge, and mobility constitute the words in close relation to the dominating education. Moreover, coordination between different institutions in the EU political system as a necessary tool and problems of agenda-setting in such context are clearly presented through the accumulation of terms such as council, dialogue, framework, cooperation, policies, programme, objectives. The strong emphasis on policies, support and opportunities underline the role that the EU assigns to itself in promoting youth participation.

The top-down approach of Council of Europe (CoE) to youth participation and its instrumental reading (to the end of better, healthy, democratic society, and not simply as a value in itself) are well presented here. Terms such as authorities, organizations, policies, management, decision, structures, and “patronizing”, verbs such as support and promote build the pillars of the whole construction. We also see the domination of a single document, the Revised Charter (see definition above), which can be treated in this light not only as the most important one in the CoE discourse but also as the one underpinning the policies and measures in this period. The lack of terms associated with social and economic affairs confirms the secondary importance of the crisis developments in the CoE documents. However, there is an underlying discourse on participation from below as seen from the higher incidence of the use of the term ‘projects’ (higher than of ‘policies’) and the wide use of participation as a verb rather than a noun.

The more radical and socially conscious stance of the European Youth Forum (EYF) is apparent from the wide distribution of terms such as discrimination and protection, to smaller extent of the frequent reference to concrete groups such as children and students (but also persons as a hint to some individualization), and of the meaningful appearance of the word however. One can also discern the ambition of EYF, as an umbrella organization of national youth structures, to balance between different levels of conducting policies which is visible from the numerous mentions of countries, national and international. The greatest focus on ‘education’ is in line with the EU discourse. What is different is the place (and significance) of the term ‘information’: it has the strongest place in the EU documents, in those of the CoE it has a diminishing strength and the least in the documents of the EYF. The opposite is the significance attributed to the term ‘organizations’ – it is highest in the EYF documents, declining in the CoE and the least in the EU.

There seems to be a proximity between EU and EYF affirmed through the strong link between education and participation, but also through the importance of employment issues. Wide coverage of education and employment confirms the observation of shifting of participation sphere from active citizenship to social and economic priorities. Organized activity arguably dominates as a preferred path of participation in the case of all three institutions. And interestingly enough, the terms ‘democracy’, ‘democratic’ and ‘citizenship’ do not seem to figure prominently among the most employed terms anywhere although this was the master frame which introduced the concept of participation.

If you want to know more about EU and national policies and discourses on youth participation, you can read Partispace’s [WP2 report](#).



## Activity 1C

### Activity 1C

The following pictures show two initiatives of participation that involve young people in Rennes and Manchester.

Pictures 1-3 refer to the French courses and cultural activities that the young volunteers in Rennes have elaborated for asylum seekers and young migrants.

Pictures 4-6 refer to an action research project carried out at The Box: young homeless have created five planters/boxes to depict five aspects/representations of homelessness. During a special event they led walking tours to show their works.

#### 1. Young volunteers at the laboratory for asylum seekers in Rennes



#### 2. Text-books used at the French classes for asylum seekers in Rennes



3. Leisure activities organised for asylum seekers in Rennes



4. Planter created by one young homeless at The Box (external and internal) in Manchester



5. Planter created by one young homeless at The Box in Manchester



6. All the planters created by the young homeless during the ARP at The Box in Manchester



## Unit 2

### Activity 2A

#### Excerpts from biographical interviews – short narratives about personal routes into participation

”Amanda” – participation through political engagement

My name is Amanda, I was born and raised in [City] and I will soon be 17 years. Quite early on I became the victim of bullying due to my skin color and due to my hair, which is curly Afro hair. This is based on racism, so quite early I became the victim of racism and bullying. That is partly why I really want to combat different types of uncertainties, or different types of, what should we call it, differences in how people are treated, like, inequalities in society. It is like, it was really what made me want to involve in society by that time, I had as my focus to change the society. The bullying was about psychological and mental manipulation and it was so serious that I did not realize that I was bullied, in that way. Then in fourth grade the bullying ended. I had seen a program on TV where somebody had been bullied and so, and I just, shit, hey that fits me, so I just said to my parents then, or my mother, that I was a victim of bullying, or I thought I was, and then she contacted the teachers and then it ended. But it is the basis for me wanting to work to change things in society. And shortly after that I started to get involved in student councils, first at my school. I have been involved in student committees since the fifth grade, up to the ninth grade. My teachers and the contact person for the student committee at [Elementary School] saw that I was very involved in political issues and not just like this anti-racism and anti-bullying and so, but it was also about young influence, gender equality, especially intersectionality. So, I got a tip about the Youth Representation Group. I got in and since then I have developed my work in the city. I work for a young reference group, I am a freelance writer, I lecture on intersectionality, anti-racism and feminism.

”Johanna” – participation through theater

Okay, I'm 20 years old. I was born and raised in the countryside, into a family with a big sister, a mother and a dad [...] a standard family, living in the countryside, everything was quite safe I think. I had my grandparents living there as well, and I played football because that's what people did there, if you wanted friends that's what you did. So, I tagged along, even though I played for couple of years I never took it quite seriously so I was never amongst the best, I did it because I always liked having people around me. [...] I started doing theatre at the age of ten, it was a small amateur theatre association. It was like this, I think: My older sister said she wanted to do theatre, and because I looked up to her I said I also wanted. But then she changed her mind, she is quite shy, she paints and creates in that

way instead. And I didn't actually know if I really wanted to try theatre or not, I just said I wanted because she wanted. And then I came there [...] I was extremely nervous, and after two hours I thought this is awesome! [...] A whole new world opened up to me. Before this... When I was a kid I used to dress up, I liked walking around in plastic heels, dressing up like Pippi Longstocking. I mean I was really goofy sometimes, when I felt safe, not with people I didn't know perhaps, but in front of people I did know I could be quite goofy. But engaging in theatre was something completely else, I mean here I suddenly was in the middle of something big, that was like... this world was suddenly there, five minutes by car from where I had grown up and lived my whole life, but I only knew about football and that people were... I had a picture of how people were. And then I discovered a place where grown ups could be silly, where they played around. And then I thought to myself, I will never be one of those boring adults who don't know how to let go and have fun. I will also dress up in clothes from the 80's and stand there dancing with a hula hoop, on stage, just doing it, and also be able to do it when no one is watching, because it's fun. [...] The theatre has shaped me a lot, I have gained a lot of friends through theatre. I am able to see things seriously, but at the same time the theatre has given me tools to play around with reality, to understand it from different perspectives. And it's priceless, it's awesome being together with people who think alike and enjoy exploring similar things.

## Unit 3: Whose agenda? Power and democracy in groups

### Activity 3D

We propose some definitions and general reflections on power. Read them along with the definition of **power** proposed in our glossary and engage in a reflection with your friends and colleagues: what is your definition of power? From where does power emerge? Is power only a negative thing?

#### Types of power

For Max Weber, power is “the ability of an individual or group to achieve their own goals or aims when others are trying to prevent them from realising them”. From this Weber identified power as being either authoritative or coercive. Authoritative power (Macht) is exercising power which is seen as legitimate. By being legitimate it is effective because those who are subject to the power do so with consent. In contrast, coercion (Herrschaft) is when someone exercises power through force.

Authoritative power manifests itself in three forms:

1. **Charismatic authority:** this type of authoritative power is based on “charisma” (for example the personal qualities an individual has in order to influence a group or a person).
2. **Traditional authority:** this form of authoritative power comes from established customs passing power down on a hereditary basis (for example British monarchy).
3. **Rational-legal authority:** this form of authoritative power comes from certain groups having certain positions of power over subordinate groups (for example a policeman telling you to stop).

#### Power and resources

“The term power is overused, and with a great variety of meanings. Very generally, this term refers to three connected notions each of which help to make it explicit. There is no power without allocation of resources, of whatever nature these might be. Furthermore, there must be some ability to use these resources. If we give a computer to a chimpanzee, this implement will not increase his power either in relation to the man who will have given him this resource, or in relation to any of his fellow monkeys. The use of resources implies a plan of use and requires minimal information about the conditions and consequences of this use. Finally, to refer to resources which can be used according to the abilities of the person who disposes of them naturally, or who has intentionally assembled them in view of the aims he set himself or which have been proposed to or imposed on him, comes back to recognizing the strategic character of power and that ultimately it is exercised not only against the inertia of things, but against the resistance of opposing wills” (Boudon and Barricaud, 1989).

#### Power and legitimacy

According to Hanna Arendt, power has to be distinguished from strength, force, and violence. Power is not the property of an individual like strength, but of a plurality of actors joining

together for some common political purpose. It is not a natural phenomenon (like force) but a human creation, the outcome of collective engagement. It is based not on coercion (like violence) but on consent and rational persuasion. For Arendt, power is a product of action because it emerges from the activities of a plurality of agents, and it is based on persuasion because it consists in the ability to gain the consent of others through discussion and debate. Arendt states that the legitimacy of power comes from the initial pact of association that establishes a political community, and is reaffirmed when individuals act in concert. “Power needs no justification, being inherent in the very existence of political communities; what it does need is legitimacy ... Power springs up whenever people get together and act in concert, but it derives its legitimacy from the initial getting together rather than from any action that then may follow” (Arendt 1972, 151).

### **Power and knowledge**

“One needs to be nominalistic, no doubt: power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society” (Michel Foucault 1976)

According to Laclau and Mouffe (1993) the definition of the social world is context-bound and the result of a discursive struggle for hegemony, between different perceptions and understandings. ‘Interpretive precedence’ means, from this perspective, to have won hegemonic status through successful negotiations. In this way, some definitions tend to be more influential than others, and can have an ideological function, where they maintain and reproduce a certain power order (Fairclough 1989/2001). Sometimes these definitions become so powerful that they are ‘naturalised’, that is, they are being taken for granted and perceived as entirely in accordance with reality. Words such as real, true, normal, deviant, reliable and unreliable, problematic and unproblematic, can then be locked to a certain meaning, and can also be linked more to some individuals and groups, than to others. In Foucault’s words: “We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it ‘conceals’. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth” (Foucault 1991, 194). According to Foucault (1975/2003: 32-35, 38-39, 137ff), one of the most important forms of control in modern society is the ‘normalising power’ or ‘governmentality’. This form of power is quite far from the traditional image of power with the “monarch commanding its people”. Instead of apparent forms of power, where the ruler “shows up his muscles” by, for example, punishing criminals and sinners through painful bodily punishment, the normalising power is invisible and operates primarily by producing knowledge. Particularly interesting in this context is knowledge-production concerning normality. This type of power is practiced, according to Foucault, through discipline of the “soul”, and it is done by measuring, monitor and judging individuals in relation to each other, to a certain standard, and through spatial and temporal regulations. When individual behaviour deviates too much from what is perceived as normal, this usually implies a punishment in the form of separation. However, Foucault claims, as the well-socialised actors most individuals are, they manage to abstain from this kind of norm breach through self-discipline and self-control. We learn to evaluate ourselves and our ability in

relation to the norms of how we should be, and in this way the power becomes internalised – that is, a part of ourselves.



## Unit 4

### Activity 4B

#### *A comparative analysis of the youth councils in Frankfurt, Manchester and Gothenburg*

Read the field notes from the youth councils in Frankfurt, Manchester and Gothenburg. Which similarities and differences do you see in the ethnographic descriptions? What does your comparison tell you about

- Political processes of formal youth participation
- Young-adult relations
- Tokenism
- Representation
- Participation from above and below
- Institutional boundaries and limitations of formalised contexts
- Self-determination and autonomy
- Agenda-setting

In principle, the Youth and Students' Representation (YSR) in Frankfurt aspires to represent all pupils and students of the city. In fact, at several times, the actual lack of "diversity" among board members and activists is mentioned as a problem. The formal election process is seen as a social filter which leads to an over-representation of students from the higher grades of Gymnasium both in the general assembly and as a consequence also among board members. [...] we also observed that there was an inner circle of male members running most of the show. It is usually the spokesperson X who prepares the agenda on the official letter head of the YSR and a flipchart. He is also leading the discussions and has the largest shares of speaking time. Two of his personal friends have also been members since two or three years and often the discussions end in dialogues between them while more junior members seem to not be able to follow because of their lack of detailed knowledge. The atmosphere is also dominated by pranks and jokes between the male majority present at the meetings. Girls are a minority on the board and more or less adapt to the male dominated atmosphere.

The turn to education and pedagogisation as an answer is currently the dominant rhetoric of Manchester Youth Formal Representation. We observed that in most of the events we attended, the groups of young people have to follow a discussion agenda that was structured beforehand. There were several steps, and everything seems to be very schematised, with timelines and specific topics to be addressed. It is hard to miss a certain "pedagogisation" of the discussion, structured by adults and aimed at young people's engagement. Although the discussion is made by young people, the entire structure for the discussion is determined by others beforehand. It is as if there was a fear of getting lost in the discussion if given to young people's own initiative, thus the need to control it by elaborating a set of specific rules that groups have to follow (cover certain topics, make a report, report back to one person in the group, etc.)

Mattias is having a lecture about Rhetoric's, in an open (question-answer-reflection) dialogic style, and 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.

## Unit 5

### Activity 5A

#### Extract 1:

“One of the elements that emerges from our work with the youth group is that participation in the [group] is experienced as a personal journey. Participation in this case is meant to be a process of personal enrichment, a process of training and growing up, an individual fulfilment, planned, acted and achieved together with peers. The objective of participation, thus, is to improve one-self, to promote ‘fair values’, to find a ‘balance’ as an individual. More than in other participatory experiences, therefore, the [group] represents a context where weaknesses are accepted, and no-one feels judged to demonstrate his/her limits and insecurities. The very purpose of participation in [the group] is to work to overcome those weaknesses.” (Researcher, Italy)

#### Extract2:

Participation is a very complex multi-level process interwoven by different dimensions of significance for young people. The individual level is strongly connected with the collective level as each group member engages with the groups according to a shared ‘identity peg’ (Goffman 1963:72). Finding compromises for representing their group for a public non-scene audience through a short-movie was connected to strong informal learning and professionalization process. To get involved in this project implied a high risk for the individual and the group, as spraying is often related to criminalisation. This overall process of learning is connected to the aging-out process of the “Sprayers”. The transition from deviant to professional graffiti writing is connected to the age of the group members. Forming adult social bonds makes it harder to participate just in subcultural contexts, when one has to earn its living. So, the movie can be seen as a claim for public recognition of their practices, without going mainstream. (Researcher, Germany)

#### Extract 3:

**M:** Doing this project ... it is a good learning experience. None of us had ever done anything like this before. We have definitely learnt a lot ... starting from scratch. Having everything there – freedom to do what we want, resources. But sometimes we lose momentum.

**Researcher:** What’s that about then?

**M:** I think it’s because of a lack of communication, if we don’t communicate once, twice, tree times .. we lose it. In the meetings we are hyper, everyone buzzing, then it stops (outside of the meetings). We need regular meetings. We need to look back to the purpose of why we joined this project ... the main reason: we wanted completely to make a difference, but it’s also to do with personal benefits [cv building]. Most things are like that with the council ... we need passion to make progress because we can’t just turn up to meetings. If it was really personal – affecting our lives then there would be more urgency. The problem with group chat on Facebook is that people read messages then don’t reply, is better to have group calls.

**S:** Yeah, we are learning a lot ... in the Youth Centre we are not given responsibility ... Youth worker ends up doing everything ... and now we have the power and the freedom and we aren't doing it.

**D:** This is just how young people are together. (Interview with young people, UK)

**Extract 4:**

We found that very often young people's participation is about everyday activities of self-discovery, identity formation rather than reaching concrete results which is contrary to the expectations and bureaucratic requirements of administrative bodies of policy making. Philip from Plovdiv – has tried all kinds of 'out of school' activities which often led him to conflicts with the police. The list of his interests ("things he was hooked to") includes: assembling model planes, playing video games, geography and reading about different countries, painting graffiti, getting involved in the hip-hop culture, playing a bass guitar and singing in rock groups, etc. Some of these activities were individual but most important for him were those that were done with other people creating communities. Philip learnt through experience that "when you're doing that with other people it ... becomes a little bit easier". Philip has a circle of 10-12 people who are in the underground music scene "where the most important thing, you know, is that you're completely free to express yourself", and the 'group experience' is what shapes his identity and brings joy in his life. (Researcher, Bulgaria)

## Unit 6

### Activity 6B

Now read about the different case studies and you will discover how things have really gone. Are the real stories of these communities similar to what you have imagined? Is there something that you didn't expect? Looking at the communities you belong to: what can you learn from these young people's stories?

#### Case 1

In 2015 the ultras community has started a self- managed centre named “Freccia”. The centre has been opened at the beginning of 2015 when some of the young football supporters have occupied a bowl court abandoned since a couple of years which was located just in front of the stadium. Within “Freccia”, the group has started a series of leisure, social, and cultural activities for its members, but also for the whole citizenship. Free music events are organised every Friday and books presentations are scheduled every month. A “popular” free gym has been opened one year after the occupation, while before every match a “kids’ corner” is managed by the young ultras women to allow parents to enjoy some free time at the café/pub opened within “Freccia”. One of the most ambitious projects the young people are seeking to start concerns the creation of a public archive on ultras culture and sport support: some spaces of the centre have started to be turned in a library where books and other materials - such as T-shirts, scarfs, stickers - concerning the ultras world will be stored. Lastly, “Freccia” has become the “operating base” for a series of social projects – such as food drives and clothes collections for the victims of the earthquakes occurred in Italy during the last years – and awareness campaigns launched by the group. These have concerned, for example, police authorities’ abuses, practices of repressions and control, as well as the urban management of the city (requalification of the stadium and the surrounding area).

All the projects within Freccia have been started with a two-fold motivation: on the one hand, the group needed a space where to feel “safe” and not being stigmatised for their interests and practices, on the other hand, the community sought to go beyond the existing stigmas on football fans, using the centre as a tool to develop positive relationships with the external world and to give “civic” concreteness to their love for their city.

Just after the renovation, the group has engaged in a process of bargaining with the local Municipality, which has recognized them the right to manage the place for a period of about 4 years. More specifically, on a first phase, the Municipality has stipulated with the group a one-year agreement where a series of objectives to be achieved by the group – elaborated and proposed by the group itself – were specified. After the first year, the Municipality – acknowledging the efforts of the group to fulfil the tasks – has extended the agreement for other 3 years.

## **Case 2**

As their city did not have a political centre, the young people involved in this group decided to build up their own political centre following the example of another leftist space where some of them used to meet, but that was too much distant from their neighbourhood to become a daily meeting place. Since occupations in the region failed the last years they decided to make it in a legal way and build up an association to rent the building. The building has been rented by the group and re-furbished as an autonomous cultural centre, after they had been searching for a suitable place for over a year. The 3-storey house is managed by an open plenary that coordinates the refurbishment process and the activities in the house. The core of the house is a café/bar-like room (the Salon) in the basement, where public debates, cultural events, bar evenings, political discussions, etc. are held. The other floors are used by different activist groups as a free and independent social counselling association, which offers alternative advice in welfare and social issues. The group also organises an open flea market and events like game evenings. External groups can use the premises for events like jam sessions, concerts, discussions etc. The big external conflict is the struggle with the landlord over the hiring contract for the building: the financial conditions and the duration of the contract have been the subject of several discussions. Internally, this tension leads to the need to find a strategy on how to deal with the financial and non-financial aspects of the problem: is it worthwhile to invest in a heating? How much energy should the group invest in the further refurbishment of the building? This was also visible during a one-day retreat, when the core group discussed how to deal with the lack of resources, financial and time resources to keep the centre going (paying the rent, the supplier's bills etc). In February 2017, the landlord did not prolong their contract to demolish the house for new building land, so now it looks like the group has to leave the house in April.

## **Case 3**

The group plays music in the streets of the city centre. They have some specific spots in the city, which are in the most popular and crowded streets of Eskişehir, where young people hang out and spend their leisure time. They are not discreet; in the sense that their music is loud and when they start to play music, they attract a lot of attention. It is also probably because they are good musicians.

The group's choice to play the aforementioned particular type of music, ethnic music, is an artistic choice but it is also related to their ethnic identity, which has in the current context political, ideological and socioeconomic aspects. All members of the group are from the Kurdish region of Turkey (and also of Iraq). It should be noted that the Kurdish issue, besides its complexity, is a political claim for identity recognition which has been subject to discrimination and which is still related to violent conflicts. Consequently, the street musicians' choice to play a variety of ethnic music should be considered as a political and ideological stand.

The street musicians are seen by the municipal police force as part of the "informal sector" which needs to be fought. That is why the street musicians (just like other street vendors,

beggars, or people collecting tips on the streets) are critical towards the police. At the same time, the police don't seem to bother them in such a way to prevent them from playing music. The municipal police, as a part of the formal, institutional force is rather there to make the street musicians be aware of their "unaccepted" and "unauthorized" existence on the streets.

## Unit 7

### Activity 7A

#### Example 1

“The Manchester’s formal youth representation functions as a Trojan horse for the incubation of broader national politics into the lives of young people. This happens not only implicitly, through the partial mimicking of formal political activities and modes of organisation, but also explicitly, through the organisation of work sessions, thematic days, and others, destined to inform or involve young people into mainstream policies. Official codes and scripts predominate and yet the young people find a reason to persist here, believing they can make a difference. Groups of young people often have to follow a discussion agenda that is structured ahead.”

#### Example 2

“In the case study Youth Job Exchange, led in Zurich, researchers have noticed from the very beginning the dominant role of the professionals in the branch office of the open youth work. The dominant role emerged in several ways or situations. The professionals refused, for example, to let the researcher get directly in contact with the young people involved in the youth job exchange and insisted to ask themselves if the youths would like to participate in the project or not. Apart from that, the professionals refused an extension of the case study – from the initial focus on the Youth job Exchange to the youth “shop” as a whole.”

#### Example 3

“On regular users who do not like to participate in the projects of the Frankfurt’s youth centre and are not willing to interact with the professionals, the centre reacted with the reduction of opening hours. Consequently, the centre is used more for organised activities and less for being open to everyone. Some young people described the situation as “*we live in two separate worlds in the same space.*” It becomes apparent that there is – from the perspective of a couple of regular users – a small space for negotiating this, instead, the professionals and the young people seem to live parallel to each other.”



**Example 4**

“There is a latent conflict between the Sprayers and the youth centre which they use during the closing hours without permission. There are no direct negotiations between the crew members and staff of the youth centre, but on the windows of the centre there is a panel saying ‘please do not spray on windows’. On a spraying event organised by the centre the Sprayers wanted to take part and draw a style on a spot, but did not get any of the cans which were offered to the other participants by the centre. A youth worker mediated the conflict and in the end the crew were able to take part in the event using their own cans.”

**Example 5**

“Most of the interactions between professionals and the girls involved in the youth centre are conflictual and often solved asymmetrically by the professionals. For an estrangement, the following statement is indicative: ‘yo, we’re doing what we want, we’re here our own youth workers. We’re doing here whatever we want [...].’”

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