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Youth Participation and Learning

Critical Perspectives on Citizenship Practices in Europe

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Editors

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Editors' Preface

This book is about youth participation and learning. Being interdisciplinary in its nature, it brings together scholars from different national contexts and disciplines, such as educational sciences, child and youth studies, social work, sociology, and political science. The overarching focus of the anthology is on exploring participation and learning processes as they take shape outside traditional socialization settings such as the school and the family. The different chapters delve into the connections between the two concepts and critically interrogate learning and participation as interrelated phenomena. From an array of theoretical vantage points, the chapters search for and bring about novel insights regarding the complexities and struggles of young adulthood.

Most of the chapters build upon empirical data from the research project *Spaces and Styles of Participation. Formal, non-formal and informal possibilities of young people's participation in European cities*, in short, PARTISPACE. This project was carried out between 2015 and 2018 and financed by EU's Horizon 2020 research program. Research teams from eight cities were involved: Bologna (Italy), Eskişehir (Turkey), Frankfurt (Germany), Gothenburg (Sweden), Manchester (United Kingdom), Plovdiv (Bulgaria), Rennes (France), and Zürich (Switzerland). All cities, except for Plovdiv, are represented in the book.

As editors, we feel privileged for being provided the opportunity to work together with colleagues whose talent, hard work, and generosity has made this book into a truly collective achievement.

Gothenburg, Sweden   Zulmir Bečević
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Chapter 1
Introduction: Youth Participation and Learning

Zulmir Bečević and Björn Andersson

/.../ pedagogy is a political and moral practice that provides the knowledge, skills, and social relations that enable students to explore the possibilities of what it means to be critical citizens while expanding and deepening their participation in the promise of a substantive democracy.
Henry A. Giroux, *On Critical Pedagogy,* 2020.

But in youth the tables of childhood dependence begin slowly to turn: no longer is it merely for the old to teach the young the meaning of life. It is the young who, by their responses and actions, tell the old whether life as represented to them has some vital promise, and it is the young who carry in them the power to confirm those who confirm them, to renew and regenerate, to disavow what is rotten, to reform and rebel.
Erik H. Erikson, *Identity,* 1968.

Abstract In this introductory chapter, some key points of departure for the book are introduced. The issue of youth participation has for a number of years attracted the interest of significant actors in the fields of research, policy making and youth work practice. A basic assumption for this volume is that youth participation should be studied as a social and situated practice and that this always contains a complexity of learning processes. The concept of participation has a quite indeterminate character and can be connected to a multitude of interpretations and meanings. The activities investigated in the different chapters of this book are often not defined in terms of "participation". Still, through these efforts young people involve themselves in important contemporary issues of political and public nature, thus demonstrating a participatory commitment to societal concerns. Learning is connected to this engagement in multiple ways, giving young people new insights about themselves and the social contexts of which they are a part. Most chapters of the book use empirical material that was gathered as part of the research project PARTISPACE. This was an

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EU-funded project that involved eight European cities and was carried out between 2015 and 2018. In PARTISPACE, a variety of research methods were used, and the results have been published in several articles and books. Finally, the chapters of this book are presented.

Keywords Youth participation · Learning · Social practice · PARTISPACE

Youth, Risk and Participation

Youth as a social phenomenon is often conceptualized as a dynamic life phase characterized by intense processes of learning which occur both in formal educational settings and everyday life. Both sociology of youth and sociology of education have explored learning as it takes place through socialization and participation in a range of settings, activities and pedagogical spaces (such as the family, nursery, school, peer group) characterized by different levels of institutionalization and formalization. Within the interdisciplinary field of youth studies, *participation* and *learning* thus stand out as key concepts and central analytical tools in understanding and unravelling the multilayered meanings and complexities of growing up in a late modern age characterized by de-industrialization, globalization, digitalization, protracted transitions from school to employment, marketization (and massification) of education and fragmented conceptions of identity (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Furlong, 2009, 2013; Cieslik & Simpson, 2013; Kelly & Kamp, 2015; Wyness, 2019; Johansson & Herz, 2019; Walther et al., 2020a, b).

Through their sociological diagnosis of the late modern condition, theorists such as Bauman (2002), Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991) have analysed this corrosion of tradition, modernity and identity, conceptualizing it in terms of rapid change and heightened processes of individualization, risk, reflexivity and alternative lifestyles. One of the consequences of these historical transformations and trends is an ontological insecurity which forces young people to constantly interpret and reflect upon themselves and their choices in search of stability and coherent life biographies in a world increasingly characterized by fluidity and fragmentation. Multidimensional processes of structural change are directly connected to changed living patterns and a differentiation of experiences and lifestyles. Answers to basic questions of an existential nature connected to identity formation, expectations and demands imposed on the individuals from family, friends, school and society at large are no longer as easy to predict as during the industrial era.

The late modern shift towards individualization, differentiation and risk, however, does not mean that divisions and inequalities based on class, gender, ethnicity and race have diminished as major predictors and determinants of life opportunities. As Furlong and Cartmel (2007: 143) write, overemphasizing "the ways individuals interpret the world and subjectively construct social realities" leads to the obscurement of inequalities and the "epistemological fallacy" of late modernity:

> Individuals are forced to negotiate a set of risks which impinge on all aspects of their daily lives, yet the intensification of individualism means that crises are perceived as individual shortcoming rather than the outcome of processes which are largely outwith the control of individuals. In this context, we have seen that some of the problems faced by young people in modern societies stem from an attempt to negotiate difficulties on an individual level. Blind to the existence of powerful chains of interdependency, young people frequently attempt to resolve collective problems through individual action and hold themselves responsible for their inevitable failure. (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007: 144)

Individualization is thus not the same as *equalization* of life opportunities which, even though de-standardized and individualized, remain strongly conditioned and structured by a social order built upon (and reproduced through) class, gender and racial inequalities, dominance and exploitation. In fact, young people today are living in an age of growing social and economic inequalities which are undermining fundamental principles of social justice and citizenship that underpin democratic societies (Wilkinson, 2005; Piketty, 2015; Milanović, 2016; Therborn, 2013, 2018). If we are to avoid the epistemological fallacy and illusion of disconnected and unconstrained subjects, we need to situate and analyse young people's lives and practices in relation to political, social and historical conditions of which they are always a part.

This is particularly important in relation to the somewhat enigmatic concept of youth participation, which has attracted significant attention from researchers, policymakers, youth work practitioners and the public since the institutionalization of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The heightened awareness of the adult world regarding how young people participate in the political, economic and social processes of societies in which they live is often understood in terms of a general "de-standardization of the institutionalized life course and of youth transitions in particular" (Pohl et al., 2020: 1). Following the neoliberal turn, the welfare systems of European nation states have undergone significant transformations during the last decades. Principles of universal welfarism have been gradually dismantled and replaced by political and economic policies which have eroded and weakened the very foundations of state-facilitated welfare, replacing collective responsibility with market logic (Brown, 2005, 2017; Harvey, 2007; Fraser, 2019). The distinct shift towards neoliberal governance in capitalist societies has hit young people particularly hard. Discourses about anti-social youth as the new dangerous "underclass" unwilling and unable to participate in educational, political and employment arenas offered by traditional society have been on the political agenda since the 1990s (Mingione, 1996; MacDonald, 1997). During the new millennium, discourses which conflate youth with exclusion from mainstream society have been increasingly ethnified and racialized (Wacquant, 1999, 2007; Dikeç, 2007; Schierup et al., 2014). Poverty, low educational attainment, precarious working conditions, long-term unemployment, discrimination and bleak prospects for groups of young people have led to the erosion of substantial citizenship rights and thereby concrete opportunities to act and participate in society as full citizens (Bečević & Dahlstedt, 2021). Even Beck (1992: 35) acknowledges that risks and insecurities follow a class pattern, but, as he writes, "only inversely", meaning that

"wealth accumulates at the top, risks at the bottom". Risks thus strengthen the class society, and, in a society dictated by principles of market logic, winners are young people with access to economic, social and cultural resources and losers are those without. This means that participation, as an empirical phenomenon, needs to be understood as structured by unequal and resource-based power relations which give rise to distinct practices, experiences and life chances for groups of young people based on their social location. Participation, as an abstract principle of democratic citizen involvement – and as an everyday practice – is conditioned by class, gender, ethnic and racial divisions which tend to be transmitted across generations, making participation "unequal at the starting line" (Verba et al., 2003). This is one of the essential characteristics of participatory practice in urban areas across Europe.

Being in a dynamic life stage characterized by transitions, intense meaning-making, uncertainty, changing behaviours and rebellion against conformities of both childhood and adulthood, young people are often ascribed seismographic qualities by the adult world, as having almost intrinsic capabilities to read the present and lead the way towards the future (Lalander & Johansson, 2017). The general state of youth is thus directly connected to the state and survival of democracy. This is evidenced by the active policy work of the European Union during the last 20 years (see European Commission White Paper on Youth, 2001; The EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering, 2009; EU Youth Report, 2015). Engaging young people and increasing their participation in the established institutions of the broader society are seen as key priority:

> Young people's human and social capital is one of Europe's greatest assets for the future. The European Union and its Member States need to invest in the potential that 90 million young Europeans represent in terms of skills, creativity and diversity. The economic crisis has hit young people particularly hard. It has widened the gap between those with more and those with fewer opportunities. Some young people are increasingly excluded from social and civic life. Worse still, some are at risk of disengagement, marginalization or even violent radicalization. This is why the Commission and the Member States continued working /.../ to improve young people's employability, their integration in the labour market, their social inclusion and participation. In the face of a growing socio-economic divide, policy must continue tackling the deep social problems that many young people are facing. We need to identify sustainable solutions to fight youth unemployment, strengthen social inclusion and prevent violent radicalization. (EU Youth Report, 2015: 8)

The new EU Youth Strategy, which makes up the framework for EU's youth policy cooperation for 2019–2027, has *participation* as one of its guiding principles, aiming "towards a meaningful civic, economic, social, cultural and political participation of young people". Fostering youth participation in "democratic life" in times of welfare-state retrenchment thus continues to be of central importance.

This emphasis on the importance of educating young people into becoming well-functioning and active citizens needs to be understood in relation to widespread, well-established and medially perpetuated representations of young people as self-centred and apolitical. Ideological concerns regarding the so-called "youth partici-patory deficit" resulting from young people's dissatisfaction with mainstream party politics, as well as the public institutions of liberal democracies, are key drivers of policy developments which succeed to only a limited extent in connecting with the

lived realities, experiences and struggles of contemporary youth (Loncle et al., 2012, 2020; Becquet et al., 2020). In popular discourse young people are often represented as disengaged, cynical, aversive and thus highly *problematic* and even responsible for the gradual dissolution of representative democracy. Viewing young people as primarily "becomings" whose most important task is to conform and adapt to the ways of the capitalist economy is an instrumental and cynical way of conceptualizing what participation, education and learning is and can be about. Planting a "participatory lack" with generations of young people who do not participate "enough", or "in the right way" according to the standards of the institutionalized order, pathologizes behaviours and practices of youth while leaving the political and economic power structures intact. This general stance of the adult world further neglects everyday realities, experiences, practices, dreams and ambitions of millions of youths who nurture a growing discontent with their general circumstances and constrained future outlooks. An impotent, global political order, evidently unable to adequately address the rampant political, economic and environmental crises significant of our times, is obviously yet another source of young people's aversion towards the ineffectiveness, bureaucratic conformity and growing authoritarianism of political systems across the world.

However, recent analysis of youth participation in European cities presents convincing evidence of youth organization, action and political engagement which question and challenge the existing state of affairs from different standpoints (Batsleer et al., 2017; Bečević et al., 2017; Rowley et al., 2018; McMahon et al., 2018). In research, this phenomenon is usually referred to as "the participatory paradox". While it is true that young people are generally sceptical towards and simply bored by established politics, they are simultaneously well attuned to specific issues (like global warming, racism, sexism, animal rights) as well as broader matters of social and political concern. The presumed "apathy" of youth towards politics thus simultaneously contains ideals of justice and equality and with that a visionary, political drive which has the power to radically redefine and regenerate politics in times of risk and crises (Pickard & Bessant, 2018).

At the same time, this principal discussion about the material embeddedness of participation points to the discursive ambiguity and elusiveness of the term. Its flexibility and general characteristics of being like an "empty vessel which can be filled with almost anything" (Theis, 2010: 344) can be understood as one of the reasons behind its enormous breakthrough and popularity. Due to this conceptual lack of substance, noted by political scientists and citizenship theorists already in the 1970s (see Pateman, 1970), "participation" often needs "ladders, degrees, levels, enabling environments and supporting adjectives, such as meaningful and ethical" (Theis, 2010: 344) to make any theoretical or empirical sense at all. Participation seems to be "a signifier without a signified" (Laclau, 2006), that is, a term always in motion and open to different interpretations and ascriptions of meaning. Participation can thus be equated with democracy, opportunity and justice, but just as well with tokenism, manipulation and control, which is evident by the many ways of understanding, conceptualizing and studying participation (see Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010; Pilkington et al., 2017). Within the overlapping fields of childhood

and youth studies, participation is commonly viewed either as young people's involvement in social and civic activities (e.g. culture, sports, associations) or as political engagement (e.g. in conventional party politics as well as in autonomous political movements):

> [. . .] we may distinguish two ways of looking at what goes on when children and young people 'participate': one that sees it in terms of social relations and another which sees it in terms of political relations. There is a discourse of children's participation that is predominantly social – that speaks of networks, of inclusion, of adult-child relations, and of the opportunities for social connection that participatory practice can create. Alongside this there is an alternative discourse that is more or less overtly political – that speaks of power, and challenge, and change. (Thomas, 2007: 206)

To boil it down: while participation in childhood studies tends to focus on relations between adults and children, pedagogical processes, power sharing, decision-making, dialogue and deliberation, measuring degrees of involvement and assessing its quality and outcome in terms of skills and learning, in research oriented towards youth, participation – even if it can involve all of the elements listed above – is more often related to political, civic and social engagement and questions concerning citizenship status, democracy, conflict and opportunity. The purpose of this book is not to provide the reader with rigid, lexical definitions of participation but to critically explore multiplicities of meanings ascribed to the term in relation to different contexts and practices of learning.

To avoid "conceptual confusion" (Ekman & Amnå, 2012) common in the interdisciplinary study of youth participation, we still think it is important to provide the reader with at least a broad theoretical platform from which more delimited, conceptual explorations in the upcoming chapters can depart. Following the general findings of an international research project about youth participation in urban Europe (which makes up the empirical foundation of this book and will be presented in short), the definitional point of departure implies that:

> /. . ./ potentially all actions (and therefore different *styles* of action) of groups or individuals carried out in and/or addressing the public (which is not homogenous but consists of a variety of formal, non-formal and informal *spaces*) can be interpreted as participation /. . ./ Such a broad concept of participation allows for the inclusion of actions by which young people articulate interest in being and aspiration to be part of society. These include actions which are normally not recognized as participation, such as youth cultural practices, conflicts with authorities /. . ./ and finally 'riots' and 'unrest'. (Pohl et al., 2020: 3)

The individual chapters, being different theoretically and empirically in their exploration of the interlocking terms *participation* and *learning*, converge around three basic, theoretical assumptions:

– Participation needs to be seen as *social practice* which means that participation is 'done' in complex interactions, negotiations and struggles.
– These social practices articulate, reproduce and transform *power relationships* inherent to processes of institutionalization and domination but also of coping with everyday life which may involve latent or manifest contestation and resistance.
– Finally, participation implies that social practices and power relationships emerge in *public spaces*, that is spaces where what is done is seen and heard by (if not always

addressed to) others. They are practices which in some sense make public claims. (Walther et al., 2020a, b: 28)

Departing from this broad understanding of participation, the chapters in this volume will go about examining how participation is constructed through discourse, how it is institutionalized by local policies, how it evolves from a variety of practices embedded in social space, how it emerges in biographies of individuals and, not least, how it intersects with and relates to multidimensional processes of social learning (see also Walther et al., 2020a, b: 21).

Participation and Learning

> Participation is always based on situated negotiation and renegotiation of meaning in the world. This implies that understanding and experience are in constant interaction – indeed, are mutually constitutive. The notion of participation thus dissolves dichotomies between cerebral and embodied activity, between contemplation and involvement, between abstraction and experience: persons, actions, and the world are implicated in all thought, speech, knowing, and learning. (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 49f)

Learning in general has to do with how knowledge, skills and competences in a given society are recreated, generationally transmitted and renewed. With regard to the way children and young people acquire and develop knowledge they need to address the looming challenges of adult life, different traditions (such as behaviourism, cognitivism, neuroscience, pragmatist and sociocultural perspectives) conceptualize learning in different ways. Just like with participation, learning is a complex phenomenon and can mean different things depending on whether it is related to the domain of formal education, everyday practice, politics or research (Säljö, 2015).

Although learning comes in many modes and different people may have different understandings and expectations in relation to the term, learning within institutionalized pedagogical settings such as schools is probably the dominant way for most of conceptualizing what learning means and where it takes place. Learning in formalized contexts follows a curriculum and is systematically organized; it is based on content which is predefined and aims to create conditions for the acquisition of skills understood as necessary for young people's development and functioning in society, it is teacher-led and builds on explicit (as well as implicit) expectations and demands and the outcomes of the pedagogical activities are frequently measured through standardized tests and a grading system assumed to be an objective indicator of intellectual progress and growth. Operating under the broader mechanisms of capitalist, market logic, this mode of learning is highly individualized, competition driven and, thus, in line with the marketization of education and reproduction of divisions and inequalities (Giroux, 2003; Dahlstedt & Fejes, 2018). This kind of learning is seldom spontaneous or incidental; it is de-contextualized, both materially (learning activities are located in buildings and classrooms set apart from other public and private spaces) and figuratively (the knowledge children and young people are expected to internalize is poorly related to their everyday lives,

experiences and domains of practical action), which leads to processes of passivation and estrangement, a problem that the philosopher-educationalist John Dewey (1999/ 1916) addressed over a century ago.

In this book, we conceptualize learning as emerging in social, situated practice in which participation in social interaction and construction of meaning are the fundament and source of learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). The notion that human beings learn through active participation in different social contexts and settings is not new. Historically, learning through practices of everyday life has been the most important way of knowledge transmission and development of skills, a process without which modern societies could not have evolved. Before the rise of modern education systems, participation in everyday interaction was for most human beings *the only* source of learning (Säljö, 2015: 15). Viewing human beings as active subjects who interact and engage with economic and political circumstances by which they are simultaneously constrained, and, like Marx says, "make their own history", is a basic sociological insight in materialist theorizing of social relations. That "all social life is essentially practical" (Marx, 1888/2003, in Liedman and Linnell p. 119) implies that social life is a *participatory* life, a process which consists of both "action and connection" (Wenger, 1998: 55). From a situational perspective on learning, participation is synonymous with:

> [. . .] the social experience of living in the world in terms of membership in social communities and active involvement in social enterprises. Participation in this sense is both personal and social. It is a complex process that combines doing, talking, thinking, feeling, and belonging. It involves our whole person, including our bodies, minds, emotions, and social relations. (Wenger, 1998: 55–56)

The educational theorist Paulo Freire, borrowing from Hegel and Marx, calls this person-world relation *praxis*, denoting a process of critical reflection and action. According to Freire, collective organization, activism and pursuit of social change are enabled by a radical pedagogy which builds on participation in activities aimed at "awakening of critical consciousness", which further enables "people to enter the historical process as Subjects /. . ./" and "enrolls them in the search for self-affirmation /. . ./" (Freire, 1970: 10). Participation in the social world, and learning that is connected to it through the awakening of a critical mind, is a humanizing process which makes it possible for people to emerge as knowing and acting subjects (in contrast to objects, "which are known and acted upon", ibid.) and participate in the construction of the world to which they are dialectically bound. Participation is thus "a learning process in which individuals gradually develop their capabilities to participate through practice" (Percy-Smith et al., 2020: 196). Participation *implies* social learning, which reversely puts emphasis on "learning as participation in the social world" (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 43). From a situated perspective on learning, participation as a social practice then inevitably *leads to* different processes of multidimensional learning, which means that the two terms presuppose one another:

> [. . .] learning as increasing participation in communities of practice concerns the whole person acting in the world. Conceiving of learning in terms of participation focuses attention on ways in which it is an evolving, continuously renewed set of relations; this is, of course,

> consistent with a relational view, of persons, their actions, and the world, typical of a theory of social practice. (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 49f)

Even if the "communities of practice are everywhere" as Wenger (1998: 6) writes, a small remark is in its place: the participatory contexts analysed in the chapters of this anthology are not to be understood as subsumed under a model of economic production (where apprentices in different settings through a gradual process of knowledge acquisition move from peripheral to legitimate participation in the economic production) but rather as communities of practice characterized by different levels of formalization and voluntariness. Without attempting to capture the extremely different contexts of youth participation under one conceptual banner, we can say that the participatory contexts analysed in the book can be understood as "mini-polities" (Flanagan, 2013), signalling that young people's learning and "becoming" citizens are firmly rooted in the relationships of everyday life:

> /.../ it is through their experiences in these local, proximal contexts [mini-polities, our remark] that teens formulate ideas about their membership, rights, and obligations as citizens in the broader polity. In other words, adolescents' concepts of themselves as citizens, as members of the body politic, are built up via their memberships in groups and institutions – peer groups, schools, community-based institutions – spaces where they enact what it means to be part of a group, that is, exercise the prerogatives and assume the responsibilities of membership in the group or institution. (Flanagan, 2013: 18)

Even though "learning" in a sense is an abstract phenomenon, it is also – regardless of how it might be analytically conceptualized – concretely implicated in interactions and social contexts which are analysed in this book. Through their exploration of participation and learning processes which occur outside traditional socialization settings such as schools and family, the different chapters delve into the connections between the two concepts and, in various ways and from different perspectives, critically interrogate learning and participation as interrelated phenomena, bringing about novel insights with regard to the complexities of young adulthood. Being interdisciplinary in its nature (contributors to the volume come from disciplinary backgrounds such as educational sciences, child and youth studies, social work, sociology and political science), the volume provides an analysis of issues connected to youth participation and learning. The book brings together scholars from different national contexts, all firmly grounding their analysis in the life worlds of young people, putting focus on their voices, perspectives, practices and strategies.

The PARTISPACE Project

Most chapters in this book build upon empirical data and analyses from the research project *Spaces and Styles of Participation. Formal, non-formal and informal possibilities of young people's participation in European cities*, in short, PARTISPACE. This project was carried out between 2015 and 2018 and financed by the EU's Horizon 2020 research programme. In all, eight cities were involved in the research:

Bologna (Italy), Eskişehir (Turkey), Frankfurt (Germany), Gothenburg (Sweden), Manchester (United Kingdom), Plovdiv (Bulgaria), Rennes (France) and Zürich (Switzerland). The selection of cities was based on both similarities and differences. Within each country, the cities have common features with respect to dimension and urban status. However, in relation to Esping-Andersen's well-known model of welfare regimes and the youth transition regimes model developed by Walther, the cities represent different welfare arrangements and offer a fertile ground for empirical explorations (see Pohl et al., 2020 for further references). PARTISPACE was led by the Goethe University of Frankfurt am Main.

As already mentioned, one starting point for PARTISPACE was that youth participation in Europe is more widespread than is often assumed and that one important issue concerns recognition. If the understanding of youth participation is stretched beyond the traditional arenas of politics and specific institutional arrangements for participation, then new spaces of young people's political involvement are opened up. The aim of PARTISPACE was to investigate this social landscape and to phrase and analyse young people's experiences of inhabiting it. The research was especially concerned with young people's use of public space and used a three-parted model for distinguishing participatory settings. *Formal* settings are those specifically designed for youth participation (e.g. youth councils), *non-formal* settings are those in which participation is not the main goal (e.g. associations) and *informal* settings are about individual and collective everyday practice (e.g. peer groups).

The project gathered a vast amount of empirical data and used a number of research methods, for example, survey analysis, discourse analysis, action research and ethnography. As a start, a literature review and a policy analysis were conducted in each country in order to acquire an understanding regarding how youth participation and policy are generally articulated and organized, and then followed a number of individual and focus group interviews with experts, politicians and young people in each city. Biographical interviews and case studies were also carried out. Finally, action research projects were implemented together with groups of young people. An important starting point for PARTISPACE was to study young people's participation in practice. The project therefore worked with a qualitative research design, and much of the material collected consists of interviews and case studies. This provides opportunities to closely follow social processes and to analyse the practice of youth participation in depth. At the same time, the opportunities to make general and quantitative analyses of young people's participation based on variables such as class, gender, and ethnicity are limited.

The outcomes of PARTISPACE are manifold. The project was able to demonstrate a number of participatory settings and practices among young people. These broaden the understanding of young people's political participation and show that "democracy is learned by doing" (Batsleer et al., 2020: 21). Furthermore, the project has issued a number of policy briefs with research-based recommendations for policy and practice. A training module for professionals working with young people has also been made available. Finally, the project has published a number of articles

and books that deepen and enhance the theoretical discourse on youth participation (see www.partispace.eu for a complete list).

Presentation of Chapters

In the first chapter, *Erik Andersson* discusses major challenges to the political participation of young people. He identifies three important issues that have to be contested, and these are linked to questions about why, what and how. These concern reasons for involving young people, what democratic experience is supported and which methods can be used. The possibilities for youth participation are dependent on adult decision-makers, and Andersson presents how a "public pedagogical leadership" can be elaborated. Finally, he discusses how young people's political participation must be related to different types of participation and which pedagogical principles should guide such processes in order to enhance young people's possibilities of involvement.

The interplay between justice, conflict and recognition is the starting point for *Larissa von Schwanenflügel and Andreas Walther* to understand how participatory practice develops among young people and how this creates learning possibilities. They use a number of empirical cases from the PARTISPACE project to present different constellations of conflict and to show that it actually is in, and through, these conflicts that participatory learning can take place.

Doing volunteer work is a common way for young people to get involved in socio-political and cultural issues, and in their chapter *Berrin Osmanoğlu and Demet Lüküslü* give an overview of youth volunteering across Europe. They then turn to the situation in Turkey and describe how the candidacy for membership in the EU changed the conditions for volunteer work. They distinguish a process of professionalization and how new demands have been placed on young volunteers. Through a case study, it is shown how the interaction between politicians, youth workers and young people creates a project culture of skills and expectations.

In their chapter, *Alessandro Martelli and Stella Volturo* study the dynamics of youth participation in relation to the arenas of everyday life. They think of these as learning laboratories and highlight the importance of leisure activities in current times when traditional social bonds are weakening. A case study shows young people organizing and performing different cultural activities. Through these, the young people engage in a number of social activities like helping asylum seekers and regenerating urban space. Martelli and Volturo conclude that what we see is representative of what has been labelled "active minorities" and that the aim of such groups is to try out new ways of living in the city.

Volunteer work with people in exile is also at the centre of the contribution from *Patricia Loncle, Louise Bonnel and Zuwaina Salim*. They present an association whose main engagement is to make free language training available for people in exile. However, the young volunteers involved in the association enlarge their efforts to include several important areas of daily life. This leads to "turning points", that is,

learning situations and social relations carrying new knowledge for all parties involved. In this process, the young volunteers function as "cause entrepreneurs" who help to raise awareness about socio-political matters.

Practices of a group of young people engaged in theatre work is the focus of analysis in the chapter by *Björn Andersson and Zulmir Bečević*. The group is in a process of becoming independent from the support of an educational organization, and the goal is to set up a play of their own. This proves to be a complicated task which affects the relations within the group. The play is never realized, but the group members are satisfied with their achievement since it is associated with socio-political participation and learning connected to personal experience as well as social relations in the external world.

In her chapter, *Ilaria Pitti* deals with activism of social movement organizations. This kind of engagement often rests on the assumption that activists are driven by a "call" and pure commitment. However, Pitti uses two empirical cases to show that there are certain skills involved in the running of these organizations and that activist training is mediated through specific mechanisms. On the one hand, the young activists imitate the behaviour of more experienced members, and, on the other, there are moments of shared confidentiality between the activists. The first type of learning is labelled "mimesis" and the second is called "sharing", and it is through processes such as these that young people acquire the necessary skills to participate in the activism of social movement organizations.

In contrast to this, *Alexandre Pais* discusses learning processes in formal settings of youth participation. The empirical vantage point of the examination is a number of youth councils and student committees that are part of the PARTISPACE data material. Pais concludes that a general trait of these organizations is that they are exclusively organized and led by adults, leaving the young participants with little space for disagreement and possibilities to bring up issues of their own. A rather strict protocol guides all performance and passivates the delegates. At the same time, being a member of a youth council can be seen as a possibility for self-enhancement and a way to invest one's time in productive activities for a thriving future. In this way, engagement in formal settings may teach young people to accept and indulge in the current state of affairs.

From this we turn to new social movements among young people. *Magnus Dahlstedt* writes about youth living in urban peripheries of Swedish cities. For a number of years, these residential areas have seen different kinds of protests against the segregation and social exclusion that young people experience. The new movements organize a resistance on a collective basis, being explicitly inspired by the Black Panther Party. Their activities include, for example, free breakfast for children and study circles. As individuals, young residents describe strong feelings of belonging and cohesion in their area. In relation to mainstream society, they feel they are judged as undesirably different and that it is up to them to care for their civil rights. Young people in the urban periphery are engaged on both a collective and an individual basis in constant politics of re-framing their social circumstances.

Finally, *Yağmur Mengilli*, *Christian Reutlinger and Dominic Zimmermann* investigate the educational landscapes of the city. This perspective underlines that