

Youth Participation Good Practices

in Different Forms of Regional
and Local Democracy

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Summary

The analysis in this publication is based on a five-fold frame for promoting participation. The good practices presented are categorized within different fields of political action, including representative, direct, participatory, deliberative, and counter-democracy. The general argumentation of the publication states that in creating a participatory culture, the practices in all of the above fields should be taken into account. The good practices are based on answers to a questionnaire which was open from 31st January to 18th of February 2013. Respondents from 22 countries answered the questionnaire. In addition to the questionnaire, some good practices are identified using existing research literature and the authors' ongoing research data on youth participation. The use of social media is presented in a separate chapter, as well as an overview of existing policy documents and the legal framework of youth participation. The paper advocates using a broad scope of democracy in policy planning, and it documents existing practices all over Europe. The good practices are analysed from the adult perspective and the actual impact of these practices on young people is not assessed. The recommendations presented at the beginning of the report are based on the analysis set out in all the chapters of the publication.

Tiivistelmä

Julkaisussa tutkitaan, millaisin eri tavoin nuoret demokratiassa toimivat. Analyysin pohjana on viiden demokratiamuodon malli, jossa edustuksellista demokratiaa täydentävät suoran, osallistuvan, deliberatiivisen ja vastademokratian muodot. Julkaisu perustuu ajatukseen, että nuorten osallistumista tukevaa kulttuuria kehitettäessä tulisi kaikki demokratian muodot huomioida tasapuolisesti. Demokratian toteutumismuodot esitellään eri puolilta Eurooppaa kerättyjen niin sanottujen hyvien esimerkkien kautta. Esimerkit kerättiin 31.1.–18.2.2013 kyselyllä, johon saatiin vastauksia 22 maasta. Lisäksi kiinnostavia esimerkkejä löytyi tutkimuskirjallisuudesta sekä kirjoittajien käynnissä olevista hankkeista. Sosiaalisen median merkitystä nuorten vaikuttamisessa nostetaan esiin omassa luvussaan, samoin kuin laajan demokratiakäsityksen näkymistä eurooppalaisissa nuorisovaltuustojen asiakirjoissa sekä lainsäädännössä. Julkaisu on tarkoitettu edistämään laajan demokratiakäsityksen hyödyntämistä poliittisessa suunnittelussa, ja se dokumentoi siihen liittyen olemassa olevia käytäntöjä Euroopassa. Hyvät esimerkit on nostettu esiin aikuisten toimesta, eikä niiden vaikuttavuutta nuorten vaikuttamismahdollisuuksien edistämiseksi ole toistaiseksi arvioitu. Julkaisun alussa esitettävät suositukset perustuvat eri luvuissa esitettäviin tietoihin.



Sammanfattning

Analysen i publikationen är baserad på en femdelad ram för främjande av deltagande. De goda rutinerna som presenteras i denna studie är kategoriserade inom olika områden för politisk aktivitet såsom representativ demokrati, direkt demokrati, deltagande demokrati, samtalsdemokrati, och motdemokrati. Enligt den allmänna argumenteringen i studien bör man beakta rutinerna på alla dessa områden när man vill skapa en deltagande kultur. De goda rutinerna är baserade på ett frågeformulär som var öppet från den 31 januari till den 18 februari 2013. Frågeformuläret besvarades av personer från 22 länder. Förutom formuläret identifierades några goda rutiner med hjälp av existerande forskningslitteratur och författarnas forskningsresultat om ungas deltagande. Användningen av sociala medier, en översikt över existerande policydokument och den rättsliga ramen för ungas deltagande presenteras i särskilda kapitel. Studien förespråkar bred tillämpning av demokrati i politisk planering och dokumenterar gällande rutiner över hela Europa. De goda rutinerna analyseras ur vuxenperspektiv och deras faktiska effekt på unga bedöms inte. Rekommendationerna i rapportens början är baserade på den analys som ges i de enskilda kapitlen.



Recommendations for authorities at the local, regional, national and European level

Recommendations concerning representative democracy

1. **We recommend that the benefits of lowering the voting age are considered by the member states in national, regional and local elections.** It is not only possible to base decisions on existing literature, but also on experiences and information from existing projects. Lowering the voting age should be done in conjunction with other forms of promoting participatory culture.
2. **There is a need for projects that improve youth turn-out and take into account both cognitive and evocative factors.** More information on how the political system actually works should be provided in clear and accessible language. In addition to this, different youth cultural methods could be applied to reach targeted groups.

Recommendations concerning participatory democracy

3. **Local youth and school councils as well as local and national children's and youth parliaments may be recommended as functional means for advancing child and youth participation in social life and decision-making outside the realms of formal representative democracy.** They also, as valuable means, serve the function of carving space for open debates and learning democratic culture and citizenship. However, these representative models will not be meaningful if they are imposed as technocratic solutions for ear-marking participation as the means to an end of an administrative procedure.
4. **In order to have functioning and meaningful participatory structures and processes investment has to be made in training adults in their attitudes towards children's and young people's participation.** Also, engaging children and young people should not solely be the task of teachers and youth workers. The participation of young people is sustainable only when a participation-friendly community culture is promoted. This means a child- and youth-friendly attitude, approach and methods which cut across all functions and policy sectors in the community; from family to school, from school to health, social and youth services; from community planning to decision-making and budgeting; from those who have special needs, live in fear or in poverty or are marginalised to those who are socially and politically more active or materially better off; and finally paying attention to gender balance and equality.



5. **To advance participatory democracy at community level, community-based youth organisations and associations or youth-led organisations** could interact more with local and regional authorities and decision-makers, **and for this more political will and financial support is prerequisite.** In states where civil society is weak, it is recommended that the state ensures that civil society organisations, including youth-led organisations, do have a role to play as an integral part of a well-functioning and transparent democracy.
6. In national, regional and local governance, including impact assessment, **children and young people should be perceived as partners in governance** who have valuable experience as equally competent citizens. Participation is most successful when it is integrated in community planning which involves a wide spectrum of both adults and children/young people. Innovative means and tools for community planning, including the use of digital media, are highly recommended. Participatory democracy entails rights and responsibilities for all parties involved. Children and young people have the right to be constantly protected from any harm, violence, abuse or exploitation. They are also entitled to feedback on how their views and suggestions have been taken into consideration. To achieve this, **child- and youth friendly information sharing and feedback mechanisms should be developed.** This also ensures continuous assessment of the actual impact of participatory processes and paves the way for a more structured dialogue.

Recommendations concerning deliberative participation

7. **There is further need for organising, implementing and evaluating different practices of deliberative youth participation.** There are some examples of deliberative youth participation in European countries used at local, regional and national levels, but these are still too few. Many more examples are needed in order to make youth engagement more deliberative. There is no one way to implement deliberative youth participation; innovative approaches, such as mock trials of young people, are highly valuable. It is especially important to document and evaluate implemented deliberative practices to learn from each other's experiences.
8. **We recommend that deliberative youth participation is used in every level of governance.** Deliberative practices can be implemented at local, regional and national levels. Often the issue deliberated upon defines the optimal level of governance. For example, youth participatory budgeting takes place most naturally at a local level. Regional planning on the other hand requires a deliberative format that takes place at a regional level, for example a regional youth jury. Some issues need to be deliberated on a national level. Then a platform is



needed that makes national deliberation possible. This often means combining face-to-face deliberation with the processes of e-democracy.

- 9. Education for public authorities and civil servants is needed on how to implement effective deliberative youth participation.** Civil servants' education does not often include learning the methods of public participation. It is even less common to learn deliberative practices or deliberative youth participation. To amend this first of all, university degrees in public administration need to be modified to include academic courses on why public and youth engagement should be valued and how such engagement can be implemented in practice. Secondly, public officials need to be offered training courses on the topic. Such academic and training courses should ideally include the actual implementation of deliberative practices. Trust in the process of deliberative youth participation increases as one sees how well it works in practice.

Recommendations concerning counter democracy and progressive activists

- 10. There is a need for organising regular open local spaces for horizontal participation with the aim of bringing decision making closer to ordinary citizens.** For example in Austria, there is a "Long night of participation" tradition, where the aim is to provide an open space where anybody who wants to say something about participation in general or within their experience or work can do this – children, youth, youth workers, scientists, politicians, NGOs, other people. The participants are provided with the time, space and equipment they need. The basic idea is similar to the Social Forums¹ and horizontal camps of extensive new social movements.
- 11. Guaranteeing the right of peaceful demonstration and political dialogue without fear, and the respect of human rights.** From the renewal of police anti-riot equipment towards visible 'Dialogue Police' or 'Talking Police' waistcoats. The threat is not mass demonstration but the rise of (neo) fascism and Nazism that violates human rights. Support for anti-racist youth movements locally, nationally and regionally is extensively needed.
- 12. The objective is the development of token interaction into real dialogue between decision-makers and young people.** Increased transparency reduces mistrust. Young people are often critical towards political systems and procedures, and they point out the undemocratic methods and inner circles of political tradition. When occupying a space (also inside a political institution),

1. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Social_Forum (accessed 21.2.2013)



young people are often conveying a clear political message to decision-makers. In making a genuine attempt to understand the plurality of youth political participation and seeing the richness of political diversity – non-violent progressive activism could be much better channelled into political institutions to strengthen democracy across Europe, from the local to regional and trans-regional levels.

Recommendations concerning the use of social media in youth participation

13. **The use of social media should be increased in promoting participation.**

The connection to the off-line world should be structured so that the use of social media will have practical consequences in decision-making. **In the use of social media in promoting youth participation there is a need for including a variety of tools, such as blogs, wikis, or even virtual worlds, instead of only social networks. Using social media, it is possible to combine bottom-up Internet activism with the top-down structures of political decision making.** In the general logic of social media gatekeepers are absent and different networks are not necessarily based on existing hierarchies.

Recommendations concerning youth participation at the strategic level

14. **It is important to notice who are actually heard and who are excluded,**

when young people are heard. Methodology is critical. On-line surveys and distance meetings favour the most active. Also, the processes of structural dialogue used in building interaction between young people and EU decision making need to be evaluated from this point of view. **Systematic evaluations on how effectively young people are able to impact decision making, when and if they participate, are needed.** Evaluations are needed at all levels from the local and regional to the national and European level.

15. **It is crucially necessary to hear the voice of young people from all fields of**

democracy not only representative and participatory democracy. New guidelines from the Council of Europe and European Union are needed to support this. For example *the Revised Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life* is an important and sound document. However, it might be useful to consider updating the charter since its approach goes back to 2003 and does not reflect the contemporary situation.



Recommendations concerning the volume of instruments – Towards coherence

16. At an international and European level, there is a need to consider a variety of legal sources. However, there is also need for coordination and coherence between different hard and soft law instruments in the child and youth participation context. The focus should be on preserving coherence, while using separate instruments. Otherwise the volume of instruments may constitute a major weakness. **More research is needed because legal communication cannot succeed without a deeper knowledge of different legal systems.** The comparative approach should be central, because it can help in analysing the national laws regarding international treaty obligations and learning from other countries' experience. Evidence of the effectiveness of (international and national) regulation at a domestic level is a precondition for further development. There is a huge need for this kind of research.



1. Introduction

Anu Gretschel and Tomi Kiilakoski

According to the international ICCS- study² young people are not particularly interested in political issues at a local level, at least compared to the national level. Students in many European countries participated in the ICCS. They were asked how interested they are in “political issues” or “politics.” Overall across these European countries, the greatest interest in political issues was at the national level, with almost half of all students, on average (49%), reporting interest in national political issues. In contrast, around 4 in 10 students expressed an interest in political issues within their local community (40%) and in European politics (38%). The least amount of interest was in politics in other countries (26%) and in international politics (33%). (Kerr, D. & Sturman, L. & Schulz, W. & Burge, B. 2010, 108, 110.) That young people are less interested in “local political issues” than in national politics is important in two ways. The first emphasizes the importance of everyday surroundings. Why are the young less interested in the local even if they are surrounded by it? The second perspective emphasizes conceptual choice in describing the political. What is understood as “politics” or “political issues”? In this report we advocate a broad conception of politics and indicate that there are five areas of democracy “producing politics”, even if “politics” is normally understood as the matters and processes handled by elected representatives. Our analysis is accordingly based on using this five-fold frame for ways of promoting participation.

To document the wide array of participation, it is important to be able to analyse the full scope of democratic life that exists in society: representative democracy and its ideal conception of citizen electing delegations is contrasted with the ideals of direct, participatory, deliberative and counter democracy and respectively, the ideals of direct decision-making, participation, democratic discussion and surveillance – for example at the local level (This sensitiveness to the broad scope of democracy is based on earlier work by Eskelinen et al. 2012 and Kiilakoski & Gretschel 2013). Different conceptions of democracy retain different views on what constitutes a democratic culture, how a truly democratic community is formed, how ideal citizens engage democratically

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2. The aim of the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) was to report on student achievement in a test of conceptual knowledge and understanding in civic and citizenship education. It also measured the political participation related behaviors and behavioral intentions of young people. The ICCS gathered data from more than 140,000 grade 8 students of approx. 14 years of age (or equivalent) in more than 5,300 schools in 38 countries by questionnaire. Also, reports from school principals or teachers of the schools were used in the analysis.



with each other, what is required to participate in the democratic process and which democratic instruments promote participation.

In order to test the idea of a broad scope of democracy is useful in practice, we needed information about the existence of inspiring examples of youth participation in each democracy field. We asked actors from all over Europe to describe good youth³ participation practices from different democracy fields:

“...We want to hear about all types of examples: from complex to simple as well as local solutions with a light structure that could easily be adopted in other localities, regions and countries. We are looking for youth related best practices within all fields of democracy: participation and engagement within representative, direct, participatory, deliberative and counter democracy and progressive activism....”

It was possible to share good practices by completing a questionnaire delivered through the networks of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) of the Council of Europe, the EU-CoE Partnership in the Field of Youth, the National Agencies of the EU Youth in Action Programme and European Youth Forum. The research team also delivered the questionnaire to their European contacts in the field of youth.

The questionnaire was open from 31st January 2012 to 18th February 2013. Some good practices were identified and described by 45 respondents from 22 European countries. Almost all the respondents described more than two good practices. Of the 45 respondents, 22 represented “public authorities.” 9 were “youth workers” and 7 “decision makers”. Only two respondents defined themselves as “young.” It was possible for the respondents to define themselves from several positions. Both of the “young” respondents defined themselves e.g., as also being something other, besides young. The amount of received sketches of good practices was optimal given the tight timetable of producing this report (three months). For the same reason, we did not ask for more detailed information, but had to focus on using the answers as such. Answers were analysed, categorized and the statements were proofread for grammar mistakes. The research team is interested in continuing this research work in some form in the future to dig deeper for details of the examples given. There is also a need for more material directly from young people themselves.

“Good practice” is used as a term for indicating a relatively simple solution to a set of complex problems. In order for a certain solution to be a good practice it must also be applicable in a variety of contexts, such as different cultures and societies. The practices described in our report are solutions, methods and institutional approaches described as good practice by the informants, scientific literature on participation or

3. The main point of this report is to describe youth participation, but the research team also considers children to be included in the term ‘youth’. Young people are persons under the age of 30.



by the writers of this report if their research data warrants them to describe a certain practice as a good practice.

The standpoints and challenges of the report are:

- a) In the policy documents it has been recognized that there are and should be different ways available for young people to participate and contribute in decision making processes at different levels. In this report we survey the methods mentioned in the policy documents and then iterate the need to expand and supplement the scope of the solutions offered by the documents. The analysis is based on the application of democracy theories and practical examples.
- b) It is known that the legal framework in the field of youth participation has been improved, but in the report we try to discover to what extent national and international legislative bodies are involved in local and regional life.
- c) The results of the democracy analysis are summarized in policy recommendations on how to improve youth participation opportunities and impact such actions in decision making processes.

There are different areas needing improvement in promoting participation, such as legislation, institutions, forms of interaction, the status of young people as actor or as subject, the quality of intra- and intergenerational dialogue, attitudes of the concerned parties, methods in promoting participation or co-operation between different bodies – just to name a few of the most obvious. In this report we are interested in discovering what needed most – legal reform is or for example simply a change in attitude or methodology.

The recommendations based on the analysis are placed at the beginning of the paper. This enables quick readers to see the practical implications of the analysis. The actual report includes the good practices from each field of democracy. At the end of the report the current policy documents and the key guidelines on youth participation of the Council of Europe, European Union and the EU-CoE Youth Partnership are analysed using the same classification of theories of democracy and a juridical perspective.

As stated in Resolution 23 of the Committee of Ministers, youth research can have a role in promoting evidence-based youth policies and supporting the work of practitioners in the field of youth (Council of Europe 2008c). The need for this report was indicated by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and the EU-CoE Partnership in the Field of Youth. The Finnish Youth Research Network was selected to be in charge of producing this report. The process of composing the report involved seven researchers who possess experience and data of youth participation at a local and regional level in a European and global context.



2. Good practices of representative and direct democracy

Tommi Kiilakoski

Democracy is government by the citizens themselves. The dominant understanding of democracy nowadays is representative democracy, a form of governance where elected politicians or office holders must renew their position in elections. Representative democracy is a form of changing governance in a non-violent way. Elections are often considered by policymakers to be a yard-stick for the relationship between citizens and the political and turnout is thought to be an indicator of the legitimacy of democracy (Feldmann-Wojtachnia & al. 2010, 58). Representative democracy has the advantage that it can enable decision-making in a fairly economical way by a small group of well-informed people. Their mandate is based on consent from large numbers of citizens. The disadvantage is that there might be little actual engagement of citizens who remain passive most of the time. (Thomas 2007, 209.)

There are a number of differences in representative democracy within democratic societies. Firstly, electoral systems vary. The number of parties (and number of alternatives) present in elections varies from three parties to multi-party systems. This is reflected in the percentage needed to gain a major role in politics. Secondly, in presidential systems, the president is directly chosen by the people. Ministers and other political leaders are generally chosen by parliament and in pure parliamentary systems, ministers are appointed by the legislature. Thirdly, the spectrum between unitary states and federal states causes differences in the way local areas are able to contribute to politics. Also, the relationship of the European Union and its member states raises the question of federalism in Europe. Fourthly, the roles of legal systems vary. While politics cannot interfere with judges, there are cases where parliamentary sovereignty makes it impossible for judges to interfere with legislation. (Dryzek & Dunleavy 2009.) These four differences indicate that there is considerable variation in the way the political system works, even if all the societies share the same basic principles. Besides variation in the actual design of democratic structures, there is considerable variation in democratic culture.

The question that is at the core of the position of the young in representative democracies is what constitutes *demos* – the Greek word for the people. Who are able to take part in the democratic process and who are excluded? The classical theories of democracy posit an ideal image of men who were roughly equal in capacity, and able to contribute as economic agents in the market (Nussbaum 2007, 14). This of course excluded women, children and the young, in addition to other less privileged groups. While the scope of *demos* contributing to the process has widened, children and the



young are still excluded from elections. It is assumed that the chosen representatives are also likely to take care of the interests of children but the fact remains that children are unable to take part in the defining moment of life in representative democracies – the moment of electing leaders. Such exclusion could also contribute to how well children and the young are able to add to the political agenda when the future of societies is decided.

The position of children and the young can be improved in many ways in the representative conception of democracy. In fact, the answers to the questionnaire can be classified in four categories. One solution would be to lower the voting age and thereby widen the amount of people potentially taking part in elections. Another solution would be to create representative mechanisms for children and the young (youth councils, children's parliaments...), although these mechanisms are analysed as good practices of *participatory democracy* in this report. The third alternative could be to strengthen the links between chosen representatives and the young in many settings. Thus the viewpoints of the young could be reached even if they do not have official positions. Some examples of this are analysed in the chapter on deliberative democracy. The fourth alternative would be to de-formalise representational decision-making by creating artistic or other innovative or evocative ways of making statements, being heard and obtaining information. Different awareness raising and interest in voting campaigns are also instruments of this form of democracy.

2.1. Lowering the voting age

In representative democracy voting as free and equal citizens is an essential act. The legal voting age defines citizenship. It is based on assumptions related to cognitive development, interest, knowledge and motivation in social manners etc. There are some indications that the moment in life when the young experience their first election also affects their interest in taking part in elections generally. Bhatti, Hansen and Wass (2012) studied the impact of the actual voting age. The turnout is higher amongst 18-year olds, compared to 19–21 year-old voters. The authors contend that there are arguments for lowering the voting age, but such action should be coupled with creating a democratic atmosphere, e.g. using formal education.

Some experiments in lowering the voting age have already been conducted. A notable case is the parliamentary elections in Austria. Some experiments in lowering the voting age are already documented. To name just a few, the right to vote was given to 16 year olds in Finnish parish elections in 2011. A survey on the role of the young indicated that turnout among 16–18 year olds was 15.2 %. The overall turnout was 17 %. There were no significant differences with other age cohorts. (Grönlund 2011.) If there are no obvious variations in voting behaviour, it is hard to see how it could be argued that the young are somehow incapable of making informed decisions compared to other age groups. However, results from local elections in Germany (where the



voting age has been lowered in some constituent states) offer only limited evidence that lowering the voting age increases democracy. The evidence from Germany seems to suggest that the opinions and viewpoints of the young and the general atmosphere of participation also affect how well the lower voting age actually works. (Feldmann-Wojtachnia & al. 2010, 58–60.)

Among the good practices described by our informants are attempts to influence decision-making on voting age by offering relevant information on the voting behaviour of the young. In Denmark, the Danish Youth Council (DUF) is working to influence politicians to lower the voting age from 18 to 16 years. Through the implementation of monitored “trial voting” in various regions in Denmark actively supported and promoted by the Danish Youth Council, the focus has been directed towards the issue of voting age and consequently this practice promotes the impact of participatory involvement. The election results are released and officially validated in order to illustrate how young people react to politics. The Danish Youth Council also produces other relevant information on this subject⁴.

2.2. Representative institutions for the young

Many formal representative institutions exclude children and the young. One way of bridging the gap between the political and the life worlds and experiences of the young is to organize formal representative institutions for children and young people. Usually these are given some sort of official status and are mandated with some political power. By connecting such institutions with political decision-making the viewpoints of youth can be taken into account in decision-making. The developmental perspective emphasises that these institutions could bring about personal transformations in the young people themselves and at an institutional level, when decisions based on what youth actually wants, are made (see Hart 2008).

An example of a representative institution of the young on a national level is the Governing Board of the Youth Board of Cyprus. The board consists of a representative from the youth organisations of each political party with a parliamentary team in the House of Representatives and three members who are appointed directly by the Council of Ministers. The Youth Board’s budget is covered by the State. The Youth Board has an advisory role and is able to connect to the Council of Ministers via the Minister of Education and Culture. The Youth Board was established in 1994.

Different representative bodies of the young are analysed in a more detailed manner in the chapter on participatory democracy.

4. The Danish Youth Council web pages are published in Danish and in English. http://duf.dk/english/publications/materials_in_english/.



2.3. Campaigns to influence voting

The turnout of the young is significantly lower compared to older age groups at a European level (Fieldhouse, Tranmer & Russell 2007). There are campaigns to revitalize interest in democracy. In Azerbaijan the voting age is 18. The State program on Azerbaijani Youth in 2007–2015 runs awareness campaigns among first-time young voters to ensure the active participation of youth in elections. In the Russian City of Orenburg the “vote in the morning, dance in the evening” campaign aimed at increasing electoral turn-out among young people in the city. A description of the event stated that

“...during the month prior to polling day in the city of Orenburg people handed out flyers (approximately 100,000), which could be exchanged on polling day at the exit to polling booths for free tickets to the cinema, theatre, circus, skating, hockey, a popular TV entertainment show, night clubs and other establishments for young people. It should be pointed out that there was no electioneering to sway young people in favour of one political party or another. The result was a very positive one indeed, with a 15% increase in the turn-out of young voters.”

This indicates that turnout is about having enough information and also social capital to participate in voting. The Orenburg example shows that using youth cultural events in the context of voting might increase interest in voting. However, as this report shows, similar actions should be situated in a culture that promotes participation in a variety of fields. One of the results of our study is that focusing only on representative democracy (voting, political parties, and elections) is not likely to be as effective as focusing on different manifestations of democracy.

2.4. Direct democracy

One of the problems associated with representative democracy is that it disconnects people from actual democratic structures. According to recent critics, the only actual opportunity to make an impact is Election Day. On all other days, people not active in party politics are unable to influence decision-making. This is thought to create an air of elitism in representative democracy. (Urbinati 2008.) Many solutions to this problem exist. In direct democracy, the people themselves are given power. Methods such as referendum-like popular votes or citizens' initiatives enable people to make decisions.

While the goal of direct democracy is to make democracy more democratic, the young are still excluded from the process because of the voting age. For these reasons, providing every young person in a school, residential area or municipality with the opportunity to be consulted might be an example of how the ideals of direct democracy



could be translated to promoting participation at the municipal level. (Feldmann-Wojtachnia & al. 2010, 18.)

There were no precise direct democracy examples suggested by the respondents in our survey. This notable exclusion might offer grounds for arguing that more attention should be focused on creating a mechanism of direct democracy for the young.



3. Good practices of participatory democracy

Tiina-Maria Levamo

First, this section discusses in short the concept and challenges of participatory democracy/approaches involving children and youth and secondly examples of good participatory practices in Europe. As described earlier, participative or participatory democracy offers organised citizens' groups and non-governmental organisations the opportunity to challenge and deliver information, views and suggestions.

Certain commonly known participatory democracy channels available for children and youth, some of them affiliated with the school environment, are e.g.: Internet based opinion polls, discussion forums, pupil and youth councils, mentoring and conflict-solving programmes, Internet spaces for providing feedback on public services or signing petitions and various co-management processes. Often, it is schools, community youth services, various non-governmental organisations and community groups/associations which offer or facilitate these opportunities for local, regional and national participation.

Evidently, models and structures for child and youth participation in a society are indicators of particular political landscapes in decision-making and manifestations of the changing status of children and youth. In many Western democracies the ideal of "a good citizen" has resulted in various active citizenship training programmes and participatory structures. Reflecting this ideal, it can be perceived that an active citizen is a person who is well informed and empowered to engage in decision-making and dialogue with decision makers or authorities in power and, moreover, in full awareness of his or her rights.

However, many Europeans still live in communities and states where active and critical citizenship is not realised due to various political, social or cultural barriers. Citizens of pre-transition regimes (less open) are used to centralised power, low tolerance of opposition, very little public dissent, minimal freedom of association and little respect for human rights whereas in transition regimes (opening up) and more open democratic systems negotiations between governments and citizens are more likely to be possible and favoured. (VeneKlasen & Miller 2007.)

Lately, debates regarding citizenship, rights and equal share of resources have spread across southern Europe and Arab countries in Africa. Child and youth participation is in the nucleus of these struggles which also represent generational power confrontations. Therefore, the critical questions remain, how ready are societies for implementing participatory democracy for all and secondly, how truly meaningful are already existing participatory means and approaches to children and youth. Many participatory models of democracy offered to children and youth, such as youth councils and children's parliaments, can be perceived as "mini models for mini human beings" reflecting an



ideal of democracy rather than the lived (non/semi)democratic circumstances (power disparities, corruption, nepotism etc.). Participatory structures for children and youth might also be assimilated with local or national political structures in which citizens may have lost confidence. However, according to Willems, Heinen & Meyers (2012), it is evident that educational institutions, youth clubs and local organisations which offer citizenship and human rights education can be valuable platforms for children and young people to practice and learn the fundamentals of democracy.

3.1 Power relations within participatory structures and processes

It has been claimed that too much focus on representative democracy has to some extent restrained children's and young people's voices and influence in society. The same criticism could also be applied to some participative forms of democracy. According to Willow (p. 52–53, 2010.) this argument indicates the misconception of seeing children's and young people's membership or their attendance in these structures, processes or at one single event as an end in itself. For example, the structure of a Youth Council in a community and a certain representative membership in that council is not a guarantee per se that children and young people are unaffectedly influential on matters of their concern. Furthermore, such membership might mainly represent the most active and socially favoured young people, and thus exclude the participation and views of children and young people on the margins of social life, and even society, such as children and youth with special needs, disabilities, ethnic minorities, refugees etc. Also, Internet based opinion polls, surveys, questionnaires and platforms might not be available for the broad spectrum of children and young people due to lack of resources and limited access.

Nevertheless, despite the critique, participatory democracy models and approaches may be useful means for engaging children and young people, when attention is given to underlying, often hidden or invisible and possibly destructive, hindering and manipulative power relations. Over the course of the existence of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, since 1989) many academics and practitioners have critically analysed participation frameworks in their attempt to address and break down hierarchies between children and/or adults within these structures.

The most well-known of these models is Roger Hart's ladder of participation (adapted from Sherry Arnstein in 1969). On the top rung of the ladder is the ideal form, "child-initiated shared decisions with adults". In the ladder the three bottom rungs of participation are perceived as less ideal forms of participation such as tokenism, decoration and manipulation. Although this is the most widely known model and has especially been found useful by practitioners, it has also been highly debated due to its hierarchical order. (Willow 2010, 35.) Since Hart, many other theories and models have emerged portraying participatory processes, e.g. as metaphoric pathways



(Shier 2001, 2006), concentric circles (Reddy & Ratna 2002) or dimensions of young people's participation (Driskell 2002), to mention a few. Also Hart (1992) himself has challenged his prior model by introducing a less hierarchical approach to participation processes.

Most constraints on children's and young people's participation ascend from external factors such as access to relevant information concerning their matters and opportunities for participation; their skills and means to participate; social attitudes towards the role and capacities of children and young people; the intensity with which children and young people are encouraged to express themselves; the genuine opportunities given to them; the degree of supporting legislation and existing threats in society such as fear of violence and other human rights violations. In some European states child and youth participation has become extremely technocratic, and as a result, a new profession has developed: a participation worker, who enjoys the theories, systems and expert language related to child and youth participation. This is a trend particularly in the non-governmental sector, but it has also spread to local communities, schools, youth and social services, to mention a few. (Willow, 2010, 35.)

Further consideration is required to assess how various adult attitudes as well as skills and spaces for child and youth engagement genuinely facilitate dialogue and a positive attitude towards children and young people. Another issue worth exploring is social interaction and power mechanisms among adults and children; and peer groups of children and young people of different age, ethnic backgrounds and gender.

3.2 Results from the field

Most of the answers to our questionnaire included references to models and approaches of participatory democracy. In particular, Pupils' and Youth Councils as well as Youth and Children's Parliaments were among the most mentioned good practices. Below is a summary of some examples of the good practices identified by non-governmental organisations, government authorities, national, regional and local practitioners and other experts in this field. It is important to note based on the information we received, that it is not possible to discern to what extent in the given country the reported good practices lead to the actualization of the improvements suggested by children and young people and how meaningful this dialogical approach has been for the children and young people involved. Another issue not apparent in the answers is the matter of inclusiveness: it is unknown how the given good examples of participatory democracy do in fact guarantee the engagement of the most vulnerable and marginal groups of children and youth as well as take into consideration the gender balance. The recommendations regarding participatory democracy are found in the beginning of this report (Recommendations 3–6).



3.2.1 School governance, mentoring and conflict solving programmes

The Czech Republic describes a structure of pupils' self-governance in schools. It is reported that the activities of such pupil platforms include school performances, leisure time groups, pupil assemblies and elections of pupil representatives. In Denmark, national legislation obliges all schools to establish a Pupils' Board with a mandate to influence local school issues. Similar structures were also reported as good practices in Estonia and Germany (Kindergipfel, Kindebeirat).

It is assumed that various conflict solving programmes involving children and young people are practiced in Europe, but in the answers to our questionnaire none of these were mentioned. To give an example, the Finnish Forum for Mediation/School Mediation Program VERSO has implemented a national mediation program *Towards Restorative Learning Communities*. The practices include peer mediation, adult-led mediation and conferencing for pupils and their parents led by trained staff members. So far, over 400 primary, secondary, high and vocational schools, 10 000 peer mediator pupils and 2000 staff members have been trained; over 10 000 cases have been mediated annually; and about 20 000 pupils have solved their conflicts successfully in mediation. Altogether, the program has touched the lives of 90 000 pupils and their parents. In autumn 2011, the program was extended to kindergartens. Implementing restorative practices in schools usually starts by mediation training for the entire school staff. After this, the pupils to be trained as peer mediators are chosen, as well as staff members who will be their supporters and adult mediators. The program embraces impact analyses as follows:

*“The progress of the project is measured by surveys every second year. Some main results: 86% are cases of verbal or physical harm. 95% of the cases referred to mediation led to a lasting agreement. 90% of peer mediators consider mediation valuable and 87% of the parties in the conflicts found it important that situations could be mediated through peer mediation. **91% of the parties felt that they have been heard in mediation.** Early intervention can prevent the escalation of conflicts into long-lasting action which often leads to the parties' stigmatisation and victimisation.”⁵*

3.2.2 Opinion polls, online surveys/consultations and petitions

In Azerbaijan, the creation of an “online idea bank” is under consideration to encourage innovative thinking among youth. In Baden-Württemberg, in Germany, an online voting platform “Jugendnetz baden-Württemberg” offers youth a channel to participate in local and regional decision-making. A local decision-maker reports online communication with young people and consultative meetings as a good

5. <http://www.sovittelu.com/vertaissovittelu/index.php?id=98>



practice in the Croatian context. Croatian youth are also assisted to engage in the strategic work of politicians and MEPs in the EU Parliament in Brussels.

Structured national surveys in schools could also be a form of participatory democracy. However, the critical question regarding such surveys is how the data is shared with pupils and to what extent are pupils able to follow-up decision-making based on their suggestions. These structured consultations and dialogues were reported as good practices in Estonia. No actions regarding petitions were reported.

3.2.3 Children's and Youth Parliaments, Boards and Councils

In the past, national Children's and Youth Parliaments have been presented as an important means of allowing children and young people to access and promote local concerns to a national forum. Recently, the Azerbaijani Ministry of Youth and Sport in co-operation with UNICEF established a Youth Parliament in response to the provisions in the State Programme "Azerbaijani Youth in 2011–2015". One of the aims is to provide youth with the opportunity to discuss draft laws and policies. Likewise, in the Czech Republic a National Children's and Youth Parliament and a network of Regional Parliaments have been set up. These parliaments hold round tables, discussions with experts on various topics, and educate children and young people about their rights, and furthermore, play a pertinent role in assisting young people in establishing more local participation structures.

Youth Boards and Councils are the most traditional forms of participative democracy and were mentioned in most of the replies to our questionnaire, such as in the Basque region of Spain and in Cyprus, where

"Local Youth Councils have been created to advise the local authorities on youth related matters. This constitutes an initiative of the Youth Board of Cyprus. The Youth Board of Cyprus also coordinates and advises all the Youth Councils. Members of the Youth Councils are youth organisations and young people between the ages of 13–35."

In some European states, these structures are reasonably new, such as in Croatia where in 2010 the County Assembly commissioned a resolution that a Youth Council should be formed. In Finland, the Youth Council structure has been developed to the level where councils have organised themselves under a nation-wide umbrella organisation (NUVA). NUVA is responsible for the interests of existing local Youth Councils and for advocating the adoption of a Youth Council structure in every municipality in the country to ensure youth are heard at a local level. NUVA's advocacy stems from an obligation in Finland's legal framework.

The Azerbaijani Youth Forum was initiated to engage youth to develop society, to offer a problem solving platform and to facilitate opportunities for the exchange of views in the capital and regions. It is anticipated that this structure will open more



dialogue between youth and state organisations. Azerbaijan has also promoted more access for youth to participate in the formal state structure. According to the information received from Azerbaijan, youth are e.g., represented in Public Councils under the Ministries, where they have an opportunity to improve social legislation and prepare new law projects. Youth participation has been supported in a joint programme by the UNDP and the Ministry of Youth and Sport of Azerbaijan. The ambition of the project is *“to increase young people’s contribution to policy planning and policy outcomes, and to develop their capacity as future leaders and public servants.”*

To promote the Youth Council model, in 2009 the Estonian Youth Council published a manual “Youth involvement and participation” (revised in 2012) which aimed at a broad overview of the possibilities available for participation in the activities of Youth Councils. A good practice is also reported from the municipality of Ballerup in Denmark where the Youth Council annually visits all the schools and higher education institutions in the area to inform youth about emerging youth related issues and to hear the concerns of young people in order to pass them on to the City Board, which they meet on an annual basis. A similar consultation model is also reported from the Russian Federation, where in the city of Orenburg, the Youth Forum meets with the Chief Executive of the City Council. The aim of these meetings is to offer young people a platform to present their projects and put questions of interest to the Chief Executive.

Several replies from the UK and even from other states suggested Lewisham’s system of annually selecting a young Mayor⁶ as a good practice. The young Mayor is democratically elected through Lewisham’s schools and colleges. He or she supports, and is a spokesperson for, the borough’s young people, informs and advises the current Mayor on issues relating to young people, works with the Young Advisors and Young Citizens’ Panel to inform the work of the Mayor, Council and other decision-making bodies.

3.2.4 Co-planning and management programmes/structures

The Czech Republic announces that one of the most successful youth participation structures in the country is the participation of young people in community planning which is based on open communication between different groups such as municipal authorities, civil society organisations, school teachers and library staff. Young people have been especially active in contributing to the planning of sports grounds, skate parks and school surroundings.

Correspondingly, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) has introduced a digital map of each city to involve young people in informing the local authorities about their safety experiences and to plan with young people e.g. how local transport could be arranged to increase city safety. In Sweden, cities also organise

6. www.lewisham.gov.uk



annual theme days where children and young people can propose how their localities should be developed. SALAR has also launched a special project which aims to develop participatory democracy in all Swedish communities. Digital mapping with youth has also been used in Germany when the train station of Hamburg-Altona ceased its operations and as a consequence some free space was suddenly available. Innovatively, the city and young people started an e-participation process to collect ideas, discuss them and vote upon what should happen with this spare space in the city. The e-participation process allowed graphical interaction through an integrated map in the e-participation platform. The process started in November 2012 and is on-going.⁷

An interesting Student Council programme under the auspices of the Chief Executive of Orenburg City Council in the Russian Federation was also reported:

“The Student Council of the City of Orenburg comprises the leaders of all self-governing student bodies of higher and specialised secondary education establishments of the city of Orenburg, as well as activists from self-governing student bodies (student councils, student unions, trade union committees, trade union cells etc.). The number of activists in the Student Council of the City of Orenburg grows every year. The main aims and tasks of the Student Council are geared to developing a system of student self-government through the creation of trade unions and student councils, and machinery for interaction with public authorities, administrations of teaching establishments and the media is being devised.”

In Finland “Ruuti – the framework for youth participation in the city of Helsinki” gathers both top down and bottom up promotion of youth participation. Young people are provided support to influence larger or small issues by and via their own circumstances and activities. Youth participation is promoted by the Ruuti.net website and youth decision making forums like “Päättäjämitti” – a meeting where young people negotiate directly with decision makers about their concerns and on issues which they feel are crucial. There is also a core group of elected youth representatives included in the Ruuti-framework. They act as a link between decision makers and young people.

3.2.5 Other forms of advancing participatory practices among young people

One of the challenges in advancing child and youth participation is often the lack of funding. In Germany the Bundesgovernment of Baden-Württemberg has, since 2009, announced the annual “Youth education price” (Jugendbildungspreis) in recognition and appreciation of youth organisations aiming at integration and engagement. In Azerbaijan, the challenge of funding has been tackled by establishing the Azerbaijan Youth

7. <https://smsaltona.ypart.eu/instance/smsaltona>



Foundation to provide grants for local and international projects. It is expected that the fund will promote creative projects in the sphere of culture, architecture, theatre and cinema; and allocate participation grants for young people to take part in international events. However, the Foundation is more likely to promote peace and mutual understanding among world youth rather than structured participatory decision-making and problem solving at the local, national and international level. Nevertheless, promoting cultural exchange might be developed to include projects for the exchange of experiences and promotion of local, national and global democracy and civic participation.

Since sufficient funding allows more room for investment in quality participatory structures and processes, it is worth mentioning that since 2007 the European Union has implemented the *Youth in Action Programme* (2007–2013) which aims to promote active European citizenship, solidarity and tolerance among young Europeans and to involve them in shaping the Union's future. It is evident that the programme has also contributed to youth engagement, participation and the exchange of ideas in EU countries. E.g., in Turkey with the funding of the Turkish National Agency (of Youth in Action) Izmit Municipality has coordinated a *Local Youth Policies* National Project. The cooperating partners in this project have been the EU Ministry, the Youth and Sport Ministry and the Ministry of the Interior. During the project 80 meetings in 80 cities were held. In addition, 8 regional meetings and a national peak, with the participation of 250 young people, were organised in Ankara. During a period of 9 months, more than 5 000 young people participated directly in the project. Turkey reports that the project made a great contribution to national youth policies and it received an award for being the “Good Example of the Year” from the Turkish National Agency. In response to a call from the European Commission, an application has been made for the award of “Good example of the Year” on an international level. *“We advise this and/or similar projects to be implemented in all congress member countries. We wish this project to be the project of all European peers. I would like to invite the representatives of youth from each congress member countries to participate in the international peak of this project to share the results.”*

Funding, recognition and sharing of good practices in the field of drug prevention is also facilitated by the Pompidou Group which forms a part of the Council of Europe. The Pompidou Group offers a European Drug Prevention Prize which was launched for the first time in 2004. *“The Prize is awarded every two to three years to prevention projects that fully involve young people, either in the development and implementation of activities, decision-making, project management and/or evaluation. The Pompidou Group is awarding this Prize to highlight good-quality drug prevention projects that have proved successful in practice in involving young people. The projects are evaluated by a jury of seven young people advised by experts in the field of drug prevention. The prize-winners each receive a trophy, a diploma and prize-money of € 5000.”*⁸

8. http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/pompidou/initiatives/preventionprize/default_en.asp



In order to support youth-initiated projects and self-governed youth groups to realise their ideas, young people need empowerment and various skills, e.g. in voluntary work, fund-raising, project management and advocacy. Therefore the Finnish Youth Academy has developed a “*Self-made*” (“*Itse tehty*”) -manual for community youth workers. This manual explains how youth workers can facilitate children’s and young people’s own ideas and projects, and give them positive support in the process. The manual is available via a net portal, and is continuously being developed in co-operation with other non-governmental organisations and community youth services.

An example of cooperation between the non-governmental sector and schools is Operation a Day’s Work (Dagsverke, Taksvärkki), which initially started in Sweden as a social and political movement after the accidental death of the former UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld in Zambia, and was later integrated into secondary and upper secondary school activities in all Nordic countries. Norway, which has integrated this activity in the national curriculum, highlighted this good practice as follows:

“Every year in October, Norwegian students are allowed and encouraged to take a day off to do a day’s work for the benefit of education of youth in poor countries. Prior to the ODW-Day, the information campaign ‘International Week (IW)’ is organised. The IW offers an educational program and lectures dealing with global topics such as solidarity, equality, human rights and education, as well as information on that year’s project. Today, approximately 120,000 youth work and earn 30 million kroner (approx. 4 million euros) annually in order to provide youth in the South with educational opportunities.”

A good example of bridging the gap between physical abilities and cultures is the Macadam MixTalent web project directed from the Netherlands. The project organizes web workshops for 6–21 year-old students with physical challenges and medical needs. It connects students in hospital/medical settings/special education and regular education in Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Poland, Belgium, Austria, England, Turkey, Ghana and Cape Cod. These children and young people stay in contact with their peers over the Internet, develop their talents together and share their visions, feelings and ideas. Teachers from different countries facilitate this process and make use of the web workshop platform. Participants have, e.g., produced books together custom made to suit their health situation. The books are then published, web-celebrated and delivered to very important persons and co-operative bodies like the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, which has also awarded the project.

One more innovative tool for bringing young people closer to local government authorities and decision-makers is reported by a youth worker from Lithuania where young people have an opportunity to replace municipal workers for one day to learn about local community administration and management, including political decision-making. In addition, in Denmark, youth have the opportunity to learn citizenship skills



“...through practice in the physical real and virtual citizens’ house. Inside this house there are a number of ideas and materials on civic life and citizenship education. Thus the hands-on experience and real-life situations not only instruct the young people in how to understand and participate in local decision making and elections, but also how to handle household economic matters and budgets. Secondly, the Youth Parliament Day (Ungdomsparlament) gives young people the chance to gain experience in with law making legislation and committee work in the parliament of Denmark. Through this practice the participatory involvement of young people may be promoted due to the greater understanding that youth gain in this matter.”

Learning citizenship by doing is also applied in Greece where a simulation of the European Union is reported to be organized in Athens.¹⁰ Greece and Cyprus have also organized a bi-lateral “Youth in Action” -project where a simulation of the Greek “Agora” was reopened for youth and decision makers for a debate about local environmental questions.

Eventually, in order to facilitate participatory democracy, children and young people need to be informed¹¹ about their rights and the various services and opportunities available to them. Such an example of good practice was reported from Germany, where the Baden-Württemberg youth service has opened a web site for informing youth of available services. In the Province of Calabria in Italy, an information desk at the Provincial level has been opened to support young people in need, youth with disabilities or those who have difficulties in managing their studies. Some of the fundamental principles of this service are to alleviate a sense of solitude and promote a positive community life for all.

According to some of the replies to our questionnaire, raising awareness, empowerment and advocacy in the form of campaigns has proven its effectiveness in engaging young people with each other and with other generations. An example of informing young people about their rights in stopping violence was reported as a good practice from Malta where the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts is running an awareness raising campaign ‘No to Violent Relationships’.

“The campaign also speaks out to the authorities to enact the necessary protection laws for victims and survivors whilst standing up for justice and human rights. In the framework of the campaign also a survey to assess knowledge of youth related to violence in a relationship

9. <http://www.ungdomsbyen.dk/index.php/english-new/501-welcome-to-youth-town>, <http://www.ft.dk/Ungdomsparlament.aspx>, <http://www.ypnetwork.gr/parousiaseis/4.denmark.pdf>

10. <http://www.eurosimulationathens2013.com/>

11. In addition to being an Article of its own (Article 12 in the UNCRC) the right to participation is also a principle which means that this right has to be taken into account in implementing all the other rights in the Convention and in other treaties, such as civil rights and freedoms regarding the right to information, freedom of expression and freedom of thought, conscience and belief.



*is conducted. One of the highlight events for this campaign is a silent march along Republic Street in Valletta ending with a dance at St George's Square on the 6th of April 2013. Youths at schools and other youth groups are being encouraged to learn the dance and join in the big dance on the day.*¹²

Certainly, participation can also be interactive and fun, such as in another example reported as a good practice from Liechtenstein where a “Festival Morgenland” was organized in 2011 to gather people from all generations, backgrounds and countries to reflect on various themes regarding Liechtenstein, the world and active preparation for the future.

Finally, in some examples, such as in a case from Lithuania, practices for promoting voluntary ethos and voluntary civic engagement were mentioned as good practices for involving young people. In the answer from Germany it was highlighted that they offer young people the possibility of 6–24 months voluntary service in the area of civic engagement (Freiwilligendienste).

12. <http://www.maltagirlguides.com/?id=120>



4. Good practices of deliberative youth participation

Harri Raisio

According to the theorists of deliberative democracy, the *deliberative turn* began in the early 1990s (e.g. Dryzek 2010). Through deliberative turn, our understanding of the ideal of democracy is changing. Previously, the ideal of democracy which stressed the aggregation of citizens' views, e.g. through voting, to collective decisions (Fishkin 2009) was emphasized. The theory of deliberative democracy, however, began to highlight a talk-centred form of democracy (Chambers 2003). In this ideal, citizens would be given an equal opportunity to participate in public deliberation prior to actual decision-making. The aim is that through public deliberation, the legitimacy of the decisions will increase, as they will be based on a broad and diverse public debate and consideration. The advance of the deliberative turn within EU-countries can be observed most clearly in the increase of deliberative mini-publics¹³. These are participatory mechanisms that try to achieve the normative ideal of deliberative democracy. Examples include Danish consensus conferences and German planning cells. Deliberative turn, however, has not yet spread widely enough to properly influence the processes of youth engagement, neither in Europe, nor elsewhere. E.g. Finland has just barely taken its first steps in the advancement deliberative youth participation (e.g. Raisio, Ollila & Vartiainen 2011).

With deliberative youth participation we mean the mechanisms of youth engagement that are inclusive, deliberative and effective (Carson & Hartz-Karp 2005). *Inclusiveness* means that the young people participating in deliberation represent diverse backgrounds as much as possible. The *Deliberativeness* of the process makes it possible for young people to thoroughly consider the topic and weigh different options and the values underlying decisions. Lastly deliberative youth participation is not tokenism (see Arnstein 1969; Hart 1992); it is genuinely collaborative with decision makers – in other words it should *influence* the policy outcome.

Deliberative youth participation is then, rather similar to public deliberation on a more general level. However, as traditional mechanisms of public deliberation strive to include the whole society – usually meaning citizens who have reached the voting age, which in many countries is 18 years – in miniature, deliberative youth participation strives to include specifically the youth population. But this is not a simple objective. It is important to remember the complex diversity within the youth population. Special

13. This can be seen clearly from the Participedia-website, which maps all the different kinds of deliberative formats implemented worldwide: <http://participedia.net/>



efforts need to be made to reach young people who normally do not participate, those who are beyond society. Also, to differentiate youth participatory democracy and deliberative youth participation it must be acknowledged that the former is more structured, i.e. youth deliberative mini-publics attempt to create carefully detailed conditions for increasing the legitimacy of decisions created through deliberation (e.g. Nabatchi 2012).

Evaluations of deliberative youth participation have shown highly positive results (e.g. Iredale et.al. 2006; Carson 2010; Andersson et.al. 2011; Raisio, Ollila & Vartiainen 2011). Deliberative participation offers young people something new; a chance to really discuss and listen to each other in a safe public space, and to have an actual influence. However, implementing deliberative practices can be burdensome. They require a lot of planning and also ex-post monitoring. Therefore it should be carefully considered to which issues deliberative youth participation can be applied. In general, deliberative practices can be seen to best suit society's most complex, ambiguous and value-substantive problems (Raisio 2010). Also, deliberative youth participation should not be *placebo* democracy. Without influence the risk is that, instead of empowerment, cynicism will be generated (see Segall 2005). At minimum, when young people offer their recommendations for action, relevant policy makers should always give an official response where the recommendations are acknowledged. If they are not going to act upon them, policy makers are obliged to say why. In doing so, deliberation can go forward (see Friedman 2011).

To promote effective deliberative youth participation, a kind of virtuous cycle should be created. This virtuous cycle begins with the existence of process champions and enabling leaders (Carson & Hart 2005). Process champions are people who have knowledge of deliberative mechanisms, youth participation and facilitation. Enabling leaders are people who support the implementation of deliberative processes and commit themselves to act on the recommendations developed in the deliberation. Process champions and enabling leaders encourage young people to participate by creating a safe space for deliberative youth participation. By furthering the actual influence of deliberation, enabling leaders empower youth. As a result, the confidence of young people in the processes of public participation increases, and they become more active participants in civil society.

Within European countries, despite the above cynicism, some good examples of deliberative youth participation are apparent. The examples from section 4.1 are based on the authors' own experiences. The examples from 4.2 and 4.3 are from relevant literature. The examples presented in 4.4 were discovered in the National Youth Reports of the Commission of the European Union and from the answers of the questionnaire conducted for this report. For the following analysis, we chose those that best follow the normative ideals of deliberative democracy. These can be acknowledged as the European good practices of deliberative youth participation. At the beginning of the report we proposed recommendations on how to advance the deliberative turn of youth engagement.



4.1. Finnish Youth Juries and Dialogue Days

A *youth jury* is a specific form of citizens' jury¹⁴, made up only of young people, typically aged from 12–25 (Carson 2004). Ideally youth juries give a voice to young people, resulting in better equity in decision making processes and wider diversity in the political arena. Importantly, a youth jury, like a traditional citizens' jury, forms a safe public space for young people to open up to others and listen well. Jurors are able to meet and exchange ideas with young people different from themselves. They also collaborate with adults, who usually work in the jury as project leaders, facilitators and expert witnesses.

In the Vaasa region in Finland, so far two youth juries have been implemented¹⁵. The first took place in November 2010¹⁶. Over three days jurors from two selected secondary schools deliberated on the issue of involvement in the school community. The aim was to provide information for the school administration to develop the schools, for local government to support them in developing youth programs, and especially to provide a genuine opportunity for young people to have an influence on issues important to them. Altogether 195 youths signed up for the jury. Through stratified random-sampling 24 jurors were selected, of which 19 eventually participated.

The young jurors deliberated and collaboratively authored a declaration that consisted of sixteen recommendations for action. These ranged from local school issues such as drawing attention to the school environment, as well as regional issues such as increasing the availability of student welfare services, and also national policy issues such as enabling students to obtain study grants. An evaluation of the youth jury by Muurimäki (2011) reported that the jury had proven influence; it was not tokenism.

The second youth jury was carried out in the autumn of 2012. The objective of the jury was to deliberate on the future of the Vaasa region. Youth from eight municipalities were able to register for the jury. From the 38 young people who registered, 24 were chosen so that the jury would represent certain demographic factors, such as

14. The citizens' jury format was invented by the American Ned Crosby in the 1970s. He saw the existing models of civic participation as inadequate and thus tried to find a more efficient and effective way. Seven principles have emerged as central to the citizens' jury. Firstly an objective is to form a target population in miniature. Also the size of the jury should not be too large—generally 24 maximum. Information given to the jurors is of high quality. Similarly facilitators strive to guarantee the high quality of deliberative discussions. All manipulation is forbidden, and the total process is driven by ideals of equality and fairness. Finally there should be enough time for deliberation, usually between three to five days (Crosby and Nethercut 2005).

15. Youth juries have also been implemented in Wales (Iredale et. al. 2006) and Australia (Carson 2004).

16. See the English version of the final report: http://www.uva.fi/fi/blogs/project/uudenlaista_demokratiaa_luomassa/the_first_finnish_youth_jury-final_report/



age and gender. The jury lasted for three days, during which the young people had discussions led by trained group facilitators, received a wide range of information from expert panellists, and finally produced a joint declaration on the future of the Vaasa region. Jury members presented the declaration to regional policy makers and the media in a press conference. At the beginning of 2013 the declaration was sent to all the participating municipalities and other relevant institutions.

In both juries, feedback from the jury members was highly positive (see Raisio, Ollila & Vartiainen 2011). When asked, the jurors stated that the jury discussions were rich, that they had a chance to voice their opinions openly and that they had been heard. Similarly the jurors were satisfied with the performance of the facilitators and project leaders. Also, when asked if they would participate again in a similar event, a large majority of the jurors responded affirmatively. The following comments from the jurors indicate their satisfaction:

I had a really a nice time here. As I haven't before been in this kind of youth jury or any like this where I can present my opinions and where I can influence, it was quite a nice experience.

I think that a youth jury is a really good idea, as in it, we were in a way those who made decisions. Not teachers, parents or others.

It was a nice experience when for once we got to present our own opinions. In school we only answer the questions of the teachers, and cannot at times express our opinions. But here we did. We got to say our own opinions, so it was a nice change.

A project to evaluate the possibility of giving young people influence in municipal decision making was conducted in Finland in 2008–2011 (Gretschel & Kauniskangas 2012). It was financed by the Ministry of Education and coordinated by Finnish Youth Cooperation – Allianssi, a Finnish service and lobbying organisation for youth work. A new participatory forum, *Dialogue Day*, was created and used to achieve dialogue between young people and decision makers. Dialogue Day was explicitly designed to be carried out in the spirit of deliberation. This can be seen in the different aspects of Dialogue Day. First, it is open to all young people. The ideal composition is from thirty to fifty young people. The participants include active young people from youth councils, student unions, youth organizations and youth centres, along with young people who are not active in any official organization. During the first half of the Dialogue Day, the young people deliberate amongst themselves; later decision makers join them. Ideally about ten decision makers, mainly local politicians and administrators relevant to the theme of the Dialogue Day, would take part. Facilitation is an important component of Dialogue Day. Trained facilitators have a strong role in supporting youth participants throughout the day. Using different methods of facilitation, such as discussion circles, facilitators give every young person an opportunity to express their opinion. Also, a real



influence in relation to policy-making is sought. The objective is that for every suggestion the young participants make, decision makers will give a concrete response.

In the project, altogether 81 discussion days in 60 municipalities were implemented; 2 500 young people were reached. The experiences of the Dialogue Days were positive. Feedback from the young people and decision makers was mainly positive. Having deliberated with young people, the decision makers often committed themselves to advancing the young people's proposals. However, it is crucial that decision makers begin to act immediately after the Dialogue Day. Otherwise the likelihood of the promises made in the event being forgotten increases. As a positive outcome, the encounters between the young people and decision makers also increased decision makers' trust in the young people's abilities and willingness to participate (see for example Gretschel & Kauniskangas 2012; Eskelinen et.al. 2012).

4.2. Youth Participatory Budgeting in Italy

Participatory budgeting (PB) can be considered as a practice of deliberative democracy where citizens are delegated with decision-making authority on a certain amount of the state or municipal budget (see e.g. Wampler & Hartz-Karp 2012). In 2009, such a PB process was used in Colle di Val d'Elsa, Italy¹⁷. This PB was special because it was targeted at young people; the municipality entrusted € 20 000 of its budget to its young residents. Through the process of PB the municipality sought to bring young people closer to local decision-making. The PB involved deliberation on how to allocate the given funds to different youth activity improvement projects. PB consisted of 59 young participants. Even though these participants were selected from a random sample, with an aim of representativeness, PB was also open to other young people living in the municipality. PB lasted four months in total and consisted of four official meetings, unofficial meetings organised by the participants and discussions in social media. Facilitation was part of the official meetings. During the process participants were able to meet the Mayor and other experts who gave information on the proposed projects. After participants had made the decision on how to allocate the funds, municipal technicians worked on the proposition so that it could be adopted by the municipal council. The young participants were part of this final process to ensure the end result would be as they had stipulated in their decision. The influence of the PB was high; the young participants' decisions were implemented.

17. For more on this Italian example see: <http://participedia.net/en/cases/youth-participatory-budgeting-colle-di-val-d-elsa>. Also the examples of participatory budgeting for young people in the city of Trofa in Portugal and in the city of Helsinki in Finland offered by the city's youth department were mentioned as examples of good practice among the answers of the survey made for this research.



4.3. Mock Trials of Young People in Wales

Mock trial of young people is an interesting concept where young participants act as the jury, prosecution and defence (see Andersson et.al. 2011). The main difference with a youth jury, presented in section 4.1, is that there are no adult experts, but the information base for the jury is built by youth themselves. One example of such a mock trial was implemented in Wales in 2008. The charge upon which the jury was to deliberate was whether “the government would be guilty of causing an unreasonable threat to the civil liberties of the citizens of the United Kingdom by the creation of a Universal DNA Database”.

As the aim of the mock trial was to engage youth offenders, they formed the actual jury. First, focus groups were organized on the theme of the trial, in which 84 youth offenders participated. From these, 29 expressed an interest in participating in the trial as jurors. The prosecution and defence teams were formed from students of local schools. The prosecution team was formed by 14 students and the defence team by 11 students. To prepare their testimonies, the two teams had meetings with project members and facilitators once a week for six weeks. This is a good example of how young people can inform each other; Adult experts are not always needed.

The trial was set up as much as possible to resemble an actual criminal trial, e.g. a judge was present. After the prosecution and defence teams had delivered their 30-minute long speeches, the jury retired for a one-hour facilitated deliberation. During deliberation the government was found guilty of the charge. The last stage of the trial involved disseminating the results to national policy makers; the young participants themselves presented the results and answered questions. According to Andersson et.al. (2011), this project showed that mock trials can help young people to understand highly complex issues and to form well-reasoned opinions for discussion with policy makers. Also, feedback from the jurors was positive: “It’s a brilliant idea that makes us, the youth of today, think more about what’s going on in our country!”.

4.4. Structured Dialogue with Young People in Belgium, the Czech Republic and Greece

Between 2000–2011, the Flemish Youth Council, Belgium, implemented *structured dialogue with young people* on the topic of youth employment. Central to the process was a panel consisting of 15 to 40 “youth ambassadors”. The process also included online consultation as well as focus groups. This consultation process reached about 500 young people, who represented very different backgrounds. As an aspect of deliberative democracy, the youth ambassadors were able to question experts on the topic of youth employment. The aim was that such an increase in information would result in more knowledge based recommendations. To increase the influence



of the structured dialogue, participating young people also had a chance for discussion with the policy makers. Additionally, in the French community of Belgium, the Youth Council is a formal advisory body representing young people. The Council gathers opinions and information from youth and youth associations throughout the French Community, and passes this information on at community, national, European and international levels. The Council involves 50 elected members aged 16-30 living in the French-speaking Community. Gender-balance is required in the representation. The Council is mainly consulted by the French Community Youth Minister, and it seems that the emphasis of action is mostly on influencing youth policies. The first pilot of structured dialogue took place during the last Belgian EU presidency and thus serves in many ways as a good example of how young people have also been involved in planning the dialogue procedures and structures as well as in advocating matters that have become significant on a national and international level.

In the Czech Republic, a project “Kecejme do toho!” (Let’s speak into it!) created a platform for young people that was national, inclusive and participatory. This platform can be considered a process that uses both e-participation and face-to-face meetings, and consists of three separate stages. The first stage involves informational activities. An informational package is created, which includes general information on the topic of the structured dialogue as well as arguments for and against it. During the discussion stage, young people will not only have discussions among themselves but also with policy makers. Recommendations created through these discussions are put to the vote in the Internet. Lastly, the results are translated into actual influence, by presenting them to the media, policy makers and other relevant actors. The ideal would be that the discussions between young people and decision makers also continue in this last stage, i.e. the young participants will then hear the arguments of decision makers.

According to our questionnaire deliberative methodology has also been used e.g. in Greece (in Paphos in April 2012):

“Democratic dialogue to reinvent democracy... where the participants were invited to actively deliberate in order to develop a vision for ideal systems of governance, and propose action plans for reforms and practical measures. The workshops were implemented using the Structured Democratic Dialogue Process (SDDP). The expectation was that at the end of this process the participants would have a clearer idea of the problems they face; moreover, they collectively developed vision and action plans to suggest and promote reforms of current systems of governance.”

The above examples responded in different ways to the ideal of deliberative democracy. The youth juries, for example, strived to fulfil as well as possible all three criteria – inclusivity, deliberativeness, influence – of public deliberation. The mock trial of young people, on the other hand, was a rather innovative way to engage young people, but did not reach the same level of deliberativeness, mainly due



to the short time reserved for deliberation. The structured dialogue in the Czech Republic was a good example of national level youth deliberation and the youth participatory budgeting process showed in an exemplary way the form of direct influence deliberative processes may take. Despite their differences, all these examples can be considered as good practices of deliberative youth participation. The positive results they present encourage striving for the advancement of the deliberative turn in the context of youth engagement.



5. Good practices of counter-democracy and progressive activists

Geoffrey Pleyers and Sofia Laine

The data of this chapter is threefold. The first part applies Geoffrey Pleyers' recent publication (2012), focusing on youth participation. This research draws on previous studies and an analytical framework of the alter-globalization movement and critical consumers. The main data comes from ongoing research, based here on 35 interviews and participatory observation with progressive activists in France, Belgium, Spain, Finland, Poland and Germany between January and June 2012. In addition, a focus group was organized in Paris. Three quarters of the informants were under 30 years old. The results of this exploratory phase are neither exhaustive nor representative. They may however provide a perspective that helps to categorize some parts of subterranean politics and creates a basis for further research. The research was conducted as an autonomous part of the "Subterranean politics" project, coordinated by Mary Kaldor and Sabine Selchow (2013). For a detailed analysis of these cultures of activists and the respective stances towards Europe, see Pleyers (2013).

The 41 answers to the questionnaire carried out for this report were used as additional data in both sections of this chapter. The additional information and analysis from the questionnaire were provided by Sofia Laine. The answers from Denmark and the Ukraine were included in the first section, whereas the information provided by Sweden, Austria, Germany and also some additional answers from Denmark were used in the latter section. All in all, the answers to the questions regarding counter democracy and progressive activists were sparse: we received only eight answers, three of which were invalid. One implicated the term "*Counter Eurodesk Service*", the other did not give any additional information only "*No Fear Campaign*", and the third stated: "*We live actively and peacefully so there is no counter-democracy*".

As this chapter thoroughly explains, there is a substantial amount of counter-democratic and progressive activism generated and/or carried out by youth all over Europe. The same movements spread and grow globally. Therefore, in the latter section additional interview data from Tunis is utilized. This exploratory phase of Sofia Laine's ongoing research project took place in Tunisia, 27-29 August 2012 during the Symposium "*Arab spring: Youth participation for the promotion of peace, human rights and fundamental freedoms*", co-organized by the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth, the League of Arab States, the Tunisian governmental authorities, the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, the Euro-Med Platform, the United Nations Population Fund and the European Youth Forum. The conference itself could also be described as a 'good prac-



tice' outcome of Euro-Mediterranean co-operation in the youth policy sector – even the young activists provided critical observation:

“I think when they suggest something in the congress they should detail when they will achieve it. They announce something and forget it later. But when they fix when they will achieve it, or when they fix objectives, it's better.” (Doha, 25, Tunis)

5.1 Progressive youth and forms of counter-democracy in Europe

Geoffrey Pleyers

In case of any remaining doubt, the last two years have shown that youth are not only “citizens of tomorrow in training”, as many institutions like to describe them, but vibrant actors in today's societies, our democracies and our world. Young citizens played an important role in the Arab revolts (Khosrokhavar, 2011). They started the M15 movement in Spain to denounce a “democracy without choice” and occupied public squares all over Europe and the Americas. In Chile and in Canada, students mobilized against education policy projects. In Russia, Pussy Riots' “punk prayer” denounced collusion between the church and the political regime and did more to point the finger at its authoritarian nature than dozens of expert reports. In China, young factory workers went on strike to improve their wages and working conditions, while other young citizens stood up to denounce environmental damage or started online debates.

These critical young citizens have not only opposed dictators in the Arab world and the structural limits of institutional democracy in the Western world. They have provided alternative meanings to the economic crisis and reclaimed a more democratic society. They do not consider democracy simply an obligation but also as a task for themselves. Many of these young activists develop prefigurative forms of activism (Pleyers 2010, ch. 2-4) with which they strive to implement a deeper democracy in various sectors of their private and public lives. However, young progressive activists are not a homogeneous group. Their strategies, actions, concepts of social change, movements and democracy vary considerably, to the point where some of their discourses and tactics may appear contradictory. Throughout Europe, four main cultures of activism seem particularly popular among progressive youth: *self-organized direct democracy outside formal institutions*, *responsible consumerism*, *expert activism* and *mobilisers of protest democracy*. Nonetheless, these four cultures of activism do not constitute an exhaustive list; they simply assemble the major progressive features under their four roofs.



5.1.1 Indignados and occupy camps and assemblies: self-organised direct democracy outside formal institutions

Indignados and occupy movements surged in the wave of an economic crisis that has had a devastating effect on youth precarity and unemployment. The claims of this movement however, focus less on economic demand than on the crisis in democracy, indicating the actual and structural limitations of representative democracy. Activists denounce an “*empty democracy*”, considering that the policies with any real impact on their lives are settled within circles upon which citizens have no impact. For instance, the “M15” movement in Spain started as a denunciation of a “*democracy without choice*”. Many Spanish citizens considered that the 2011 general elections did not offer a choice between alternatives, as there were no significant differences between the policy approaches of the two main parties. It echoes the concerns of Occupy activists in the US, where citizens claim that both parties are under the hold of big corporations and the richest 1% of the population. All over the world, citizens denounce the collusion between big corporations and policy makers. Many Indignados consider this their main target: “*We must break the vicious link between capital and the representatives of democracy, who are more eager to defend the interests of capital than those of the voting population*” (David, Barcelona, January 2012). In Tunisia, the Ben-Ali family controlled the most profitable companies and used political power to expand their businesses. In Mexico, the young citizens’ movement “#yosoy132” denounces the collusion between two major and very influential media consortiums, the economic elite and the winning presidential candidate.

Indignados and occupy activists consider democracy not only as a claim but also as a practice. Experimentation in horizontal and participatory discussion and deliberation processes is at the core of their camps and neighbourhood assemblies. Space occupied by the movements become “spaces of experience”, understood “*as places sufficiently autonomous and distanced from capitalist society and power relations which permit actors to live according to their own principles, to knit different social relations and to express their subjectivity*” (see Pleyers, 2010, op.cit. pp. 37-40).

“We build spaces where you find freedom of imagination. When St Paul [the Occupy camp at the heart of the City of London] was there, I was able to avoid money, universities... and all the things that people tell me I have to do to have a happy life” (an activist from Occupy London Stock Exchange, 2012).

The subjective dimension is particularly important. Experimenting in concrete forms of direct democracy is also a personal, and often transformative, experience:

“I think that things happen much through a change of oneself. ... After having been part of the indignados, I don't see people in the same way anymore. I realized that everyone has



something to say and I try to care about everyone's opinion, and also about everyone as a human being" (Anne, Focus group in Paris, 2012).

While some seek to articulate these local democratic practices as a reflection of national and global democracy, other indignados mistrust representative democracy and only believe in participation at the (micro-) local level.

"I'm not sure democracy can work beyond a certain level, beyond the local or city level. Beyond, it is rather more about coordination than democracy." (Sophie, Paris, 2012).

The Internet is another location where indignados and occupy activists develop and defend the open space of expression, call for mobilization and build tools to empower offline democratic and horizontal processes. For example in Tunis and Cairo before the revolutions, Facebook (FB) chats were widely used among university students to execute political 'flash mobs' (i.e. assembling crowds of people suddenly in a public place, to perform an unusual act for a brief time). Also, in Denmark young people first managed to mobilize political action in FB on *"the negative consequences of combining young people, alcohol and knives [...] which must be assumed to have had a majority of young people as supporters, young people managed to mobilize political action [generating later concrete institutional changes] on an issue"*.

5.1.2 Responsible consumer and the ecological transition

In the last decade, Western Europe has witnessed a rise in actors seeking to implement more sustainable lifestyles with less consumption and more convivial relations among people. It ranges from the transition movement (Hopkins, 2011) to voluntary simplifiers (de Bouver 2009), local money initiatives and critical/local food networks. The latter has developed into a large economic sector in most of the western world. In the UK and in the US, networks of "community supported agriculture" (CSA) provide local food for people and local public administrations (Maye and Kirwan 2009). A very constrained model of the alternative food network feeds over 200 000 people (Miramap¹⁸ 2011) and at least twice as many in less restraining local food networks. All over Europe, freeganism (reclaiming and eating food that has been discarded) is attracting increasing attention among young people. The "slow food movement" has spread far beyond Italy, with local sections in over 40 countries. The broader "solidarity economy" or "human economy" sector has become a major actor in fostering renewable energies, local economy (notably thanks to alter-

18. Miramap (2011) Evolution des AMAP en France – Novembre 2011.

http://miramap.org/IMG/pdf/MIRAMAP_evolution_des_AMAP_maj_22_11_11.pdf
(accessed 19.3.2013)



native money systems), local agriculture and the value of cooperation over competition among workers. Also, campaigning for fair trade in towns and universities, colleges and schools has strongly been in the hands of young volunteer activists around Central and Northern Europe¹⁹.

While Indignados and Occupiers implement prefigurative activism in public spaces and in their movements' camps and organizations, "transition activists" focus on prefigurative actions and consistency between values and practices in their daily life. More than the economic crisis, many activists we interviewed rank health issues (those involved in alternative food networks), climate change and environmental damage as their main concerns.

They consider it their personal responsibility to lower their impact on the environment. The roots of social change thus lie in a change in one's lifestyle and in alternative practices at a local level. In consequence, the subjective and self-transformative are particularly strong in this mode of action, where activists stress the need of coherence between their practices and values and develop a strong sense of personal responsibility.

"It is first and foremost a way to refuse playing a game with which I disagree. At least with vegetables, I don't play the game, I don't provide more water to the system" (Jerome, 23, Paris).

"I do it to feel good with myself. At least I can say that everything that happens, all this pollution, all these environmental disasters, all this waste ... well it's not my fault. I am at peace with myself." (Philippe, Liege, Belgium)

While many "transition activists" proudly claim they go beyond rhetoric and implement concrete alternatives, the spread from self-transformation or from social change in a limited group to a larger scale transformation often remains limited, especially as many of these groups are reluctant to engage in large scale coordination and institutionalization.

5.1.3 Expert activists' arguments and popular education

With European austerity plans and the Euro crisis, committed intellectuals and expert activists have published dozens of appeals²⁰, books and articles to develop both rigorous analysis and political statements underlining the irrationality of the way the EU and national governments deal with the crisis²¹. Expert activists build their credibility and legitimacy on the basis of the quality of their expertise on a precise topic (e.g. tax justice, public debt or water public management), which

19. See <http://www.fairtradetowns.org/?lang=fi> and http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/get_involved/campaigns/fairtrade_universities/default.aspx (accessed 22.2.2013)

20. See for example "Another road for Europe" <http://www.anotherroadforeurope.org>

21. See for example the Tax Justice Network



allows them to challenge EU and government experts and to propose concrete alternative measures. Like in Habermas' (1985) deliberative democracy, they trust that when arguments are rational and well-developed, they will ultimately be taken into account by policy makers.

"We try to mobilize expertise and apply it in relevant policy and advocacy processes, rather than mobilizing citizens to make an outcry: we believe that once we create enough public information, people will mobilize themselves." (Mita, Tax Justice Network)

In many of the Occupy and indignados camps, various tents were dedicated to sharing knowledge, developing a better understanding of economic policies and elements of alternative policies. In and around the camps, youth activists created websites, articles and magazines aiming at producing and diffusing alternative analyses of the austerity policies. Other young expert activists have joined or created international expert activist networks, such as the Tax Justice Network. Their conception of social change is institutionalised and rather top-down, as it focuses on policy makers, regulations, institutions and redistributive policies at the national, continental and global level. However, the push towards this social change and its sustainability also requires a bottom-up, dynamic, and more active citizenship, familiar with macro-economics and able to get involved in debates on global issues. Popular education is thus an urgent task, to which expert activists dedicate much of their time.

5.1.4 Mobilizers and protest democracy

"Mobilizers" focus on building popular mobilizations and mass demonstration able to forecast a different balance of power in the political system and to influence national government policies.

"If we want to influence the destiny of a democratic and social Europe, we must create a balance of power with this political system. ... We, as a trade union, we try to bring any worker or employee and tell them 'you have something to say or something to do in these big ideological issues, even if you are not a priori an activist'." (Jean, a Belgian leading trade unionist, 2012)

They consider that neither left-wing governments nor expert activists will be able to "force" a major political change without strong citizen mobilization.

"Social progress has never been obtained just by elections. In 1936 [year of the "Front populaire" in France], social benefits were obtained not only thanks to the progressive government but because millions of people were striking and demonstrating" (Antoine, Paris, 2012)



In Southern Europe, young citizens regularly mobilize against house eviction. Mass protests in Greece, Spain, and Portugal regularly denounce the social damage of the austerity plans. In Britain, the “UK uncuts” campaign drove tens of thousands of students to the streets. In spite of the strong European dimension of the crisis and similar austerity plans, these mass protests remained focused on a national level, with no significant transnational coordination. Other mobilization campaigns are local-scale. For instance, in Odessa, 10 000 students mobilized to denounce the lack of part-time jobs in the city. They created a foundation for dialogue with local authorities who have developed a municipal service that provides part time jobs for students.

5.1.5 Complementarity and cross-fertilization

Like ideal-types, these four cultures of activism are heuristic tools that exist neither in a pure form, nor as isolated practices. Most activists, performances and events mix different logics of action even if one is often dominant. Indignados/occupy camps provide a clear illustration of coexistence and cross-fertilisation among these four cultures of activism, with alternative food initiatives and (in many cases) symbolic urban gardening; popular education (e.g. the “university tent” at Occupy London Stock eXchange) or the discussion and elaboration of expert alternatives and the publication of appeals, newsletters and magazines. Besides, many camps and movements would not have lasted long without the support of more institutionalized and experienced activists. Many of the activists we interviewed were very conscious of their differences and most underlined the complementarity present in different forms of activism.

“There is not a right and a wrong way to do things. There are various ideas of how to transform society, some are pragmatic and others are utopian. Some focus on the global and other on local relations. Some are implemented *by* unions and other by associations. *In my perspective they are all complementary and shouldn't be opposed*”. (Jerome, a local/transition activist, Paris, 23).

A combined analysis of these movements helps to indicate their potential for cross-fertilisation (Laine 2012; Pleyers 2010: ch. 8 & 9), which may help to overcome certain limitations specific to each of them. For example, Indignados/occupy movements are combining their energies and creativity with initiatives closer to the other three trends. Connection and cross-fertilisation occur in local human economy projects (this is particularly the case in Barcelona; see Sánchez 2012), with expert activists and popular education (see for example the “Occupied Times of London”) or with more formal civil society organisations (Indignados from Brussels have developed a strong network? after the eviction of their camp). Such cross-fertilization may contribute to overcoming the ephemeral and sporadic nature of the camps and the many recent mobilisations and movements rooted in experience, subjectivity, creativity and horizontal organization.



Rather than contesting representative democracy, as many activists claim to do, these movements explore four ways to complement representative democracy and empower citizenship. Taken together, these forms of counter-democracy²² (i.e. direct democracy, responsible democracy, argumentative democracy and protest democracy) offer concrete ways forward for a multi-dimensional approach to deal with the perceived structural limits of representative democracy and to explore paths towards more democratic societies, which remain to be invented.

5.2 Understanding the diverse messages of non-violent counter-democracy is a necessity

Sofia Laine

“I’m not really a fan of violent methods and approaches, because I think that’s why we’re working on participation long before situations collapse [...]. Processes like the Arab Spring mostly occur because the leaders of these countries had no clue about participation and were dictators. But really the question is: do we always have to wait till society collapses? Long before that we should act to get things clear, therefore participation is always a part of a peace making process.” - Austria

This answer to the questionnaire carried out for this report raised the question whether or not a democratic society needs (any kind of) demonstration (because all issues would otherwise be negotiated before such demonstrations could happen) or whether or not demonstrations are a component of democratic society. The answers to the questionnaire were a worrying signal that counter-democracy or progressive activism is not well recognized, is even seen as a threat or at least its full potential towards more versatile and durable democracy is weakly used (see also Rosanvallon 2008, 1–22).

Even though citizens have the right to demonstrate peacefully, and even when the majority of protestors in mass demonstrations behave peacefully, there has been a growing tendency towards ‘the politics of fear’ especially instigated by three types of actors. Firstly, the media creates threats by choosing the most aggressive acts to represent demonstrations, which may prejudice the public’s views of mass movements. The plurality of media channels and the accessibility to such a variety of sources of information (and also the possibility of young people sharing their information freely in the social media) is highly important for wider democracy²³. Secondly, police actions have been

22. As P. Rosanvallon (2006) states, counter-democracy is not opposed to democracy. On the contrary, it provides a counterweight to representative democracy that is indispensable in a democratic society.

23. E.g. in Tunisia, before the revolution, there was a floor of “pirates” in the Ministry of Internal Affairs hacking and erasing the blogs and FB posts of young local activists.



widely criticized for the disproportionate use of force in mass demonstrations across Europe and the Arab countries (see e.g. Charnock et al. 2011). Luckily the answers to the questionnaire provided good practice information to the contrary:

“Young people and police officers team up, get to know each other better, develop skills in non-violent communication and work together to achieve respect and equality in police control situations.” (Iris, Germany)

There is an increased need to protect and support the right of peaceful demonstration and political dialogue without fear, respecting human rights among young people. Therefore the renewal of police anti-riot equipment should be turned towards visible ‘Dialogue Police’ or ‘Talking Police’ waistcoats, a uniform successfully used during the European Social Forum in Malmö 2008: the open appearance of the police generated trust and transparency on both sides (see also www.face2face-ffm.de from Germany).

Thirdly, extreme nationalists, (neo) fascists and Nazis especially in Greece (where the popularity of the Golden Dawn movement is rising²⁴ rapidly) and even in Finland (where the first political stabbing by the National Coalition took place in January 2013²⁵) use violence. In this issue, Sweden provided the best practices of the ‘Pantrarna’²⁶, i.e. the Black Panthers, which is a youth movement fighting against social injustice and racism.

New social initiatives are generated by counter-democracy and may later have a more institutionalized mandate, like the youth houses in Denmark:

“In the specific case of counter-democracy and progressive activists such participation is probably only rarely promoted by a specific good practice. Often young people affiliated with such initiatives are not interested in being part of the formal structure of systemized practices and officials. As a result, it may not be appropriate to speak of best practices, but merely one should discuss whether counter-democracy and progressive activist participation has initiated any good practices within the formal system of good practices. In Denmark, Ungdomshuset, or in English the Youth House was an initiative created by anti-elitist and reactionary young people outside the formal system. Yet, today Ungdomshuset is now part of a formal system receiving public funds showing that a specific issue (the fight for a Youth House in the 70s and 80s) promoted counter-democratic activity and the activity of progressive activists which then eventually established a good practice in the official system to engage all kinds of young people and not only mainstream groups.” - Denmark

24. <http://www.businessinsider.com/latest-greece-political-opinion-polls-11-2012-11> (accessed 21.2.2013)

25. <http://www.helsinkitimes.fi/finland/finland-news/domestic/5340-one-suspect-in-juvaeskylae-stabbing-still-at-large.html> (accessed 21.2.2013)

26. http://www.alpineanarchist.org/r_pantrarna.html (accessed 21.2.2013)



The politics of space (i.e. occupying space) demonstrates diminishing public and democratic space (in general) and it shows (concretely) how diversely such space could be used (i.e. the elite monoculture of neo-capitalism for profit provokes a response in the form of versatility by the people for the people). As the old party political system seems to merge with the business elite, many progressive activists prefer to stay independent, outside party politics:

“Because we are young, we have like you said a mission. So the first thing is to know how to manage it. [...] Second thing is to declare one opinion in every event. And a declaration alone is not sufficient. You have to declare THEN protest, THEN go to strike.” (Emel, 25, Tunis, 2012)

At present, it is highly important to avoid tokenism and to organize real horizontal dialogue between decision-makers and young people, as increased transparency increases trust. Young people are often critical towards political systems and procedures, and they are able to highlight undemocratic methods and inner circles of political tradition (Laine 2012). By occupying a space (also inside a political institution), young people are often conveying a clear political message to decision-makers. By sitting down to a real dialogue, by trying to understand the plurality of youth political participation and see the richness of political diversity – non-violent progressive activism could be much better channelled into political institutions to strengthen democracy across Europe, from the local to regional and trans-regional levels.

On both sides of the Mediterranean Sea there is an emerging scenario in which the struggle has only just begun (Charnok et al. 2012; Sánchez 2012). The European week of mobilization will take place on 10th-16th of March 2013 and Blockupy Frankfurt in “the heart of the European crisis regime” on May 31st and June 1st 2013. On both shores of the Mediterranean Sea frustrated youth will continue shouting “bread, freedom and social justice” until society starts a real dialogue to consider their demands²⁷.

27. <http://marchapopularindignada.wordpress.com/> (accessed 21.2.2013)



6. The role of social media in youth participation

Tommi Kiilakoski

Social media is an umbrella concept, which combines different Internet activities such as blogs, wikis, content sharing sites, social network sites, collaborative productions or virtual worlds, among others. There is no shared definition on what *social* media consists of and how it differs from traditional print or electronic media, which is also social in some ways. Generally, social media is connected to the evolution of Web 2.0. with its emphasis on the two-sidedness of communication. According to Lietsala and Sirkkunen, social media has the following characteristics: there is space to share content; participants in this space create, share or evaluate the majority of the content themselves; social media is based on social interaction, content has an URL or link to external sites and all of the active members have their own profile (Lietsala & Sirkkunen 2008). In brief, social media is not synonymous with Facebook or Twitter or other social network sites, although in practice these might attract more attention. Social media does not rely on bottom-up structures. Instead of this, they are essentially social, meaning that the content and evaluation of the content is produced by active users.

Social media is increasingly becoming an integral part of the everyday life of youth. In the Finnish Media Barometer for children in 2012, even 10–12 year-old children use the Internet at least weekly. Although most of the sites limit users according to age, older children have their own profile and they are active in sharing writing or videos, although personal profile updates are not very common. The Internet use of this age group is growing continuously. (Suoninen 2013.) When children even as young as ten are active Internet users, and since social media is becoming increasingly important as they grow older, it is no wonder the use of social media in politics is a debated topic. Some critics have claimed that politics disengages from young people because mainstream politics does not use the tools effectively enough that are the natural environments for interaction of the Internet generation (Coleman 2007). The use of social media in politics can mean joining different interest groups, interacting with candidates or politicians or sharing politically relevant content and evaluating that content (Himmelboim & al. 2012).

The impact of social media can be conceptualised by using terms such as digital citizens and e-democracy and the impact of social media is sometimes optimistically thought to combine democratic engagement and individual autonomy. Individuals and collective groups are, however, at least partly dependent on existing commercial and technological structures that may limit the possibilities of individual engagement. (Fenton & Barassi 2011.) There is also an on-going debate on the pervasiveness of



social media groups. For example a study on the use of Twitter in two environmental groups shows that groups may be long-running epistemological communities generating knowledge or the dynamics of the group can change over the course of time (Segerberg & Bennett 2011).

Social media, or more generally, new digital technologies can be used to promote all of the aforementioned viewpoints of democracy, from representative to counter-democracy. The question of social media in politics is not about isolated technological atomism, but how existing forms of policy-making can connect with the Internet generation. Digital technologies can have a positive influence on political knowledge and activity if young people have the skills to use them. They can, however, also widen the gap between different social classes. New technologies are of interest to policy-makers as they offer a new way of reaching out and involving young people, for example through online consultations and questionnaires. Online social communities, such as Facebook and Twitter, offer young people vast opportunities for personal politics and, as was observed during the recent demonstrations in different countries (Indignados, Geracao a Rasca, etc), for mobilising political action across communities and also borders (Willems & Heinen & Meyers 2012).

The desirability of using social media to connect with young people also manifests itself in our data. The perspective of using technology to engage with the young is shared by respondents in these statements:

“A good method of good practice among young people is definitely the usage of IT. Nowadays young people mostly use the internet all the time ... I definitely believe that the best way of good practice when it comes to a young target group is the usage of Social Networks.” – Macedonia.

“I think the most important forms of participation at this time for youth are social, or through the web with a lot of people sharing and enabling the exchange of ideas and political positions freely.” – Italy.

“A form of good practice which has promoted general activism among young people is the access to internet based media such as Facebook and Twitter. Although these forms of practices are not particularly Danish, these internet-based initiatives have created a set of frames for general activism among youth covering all kinds of activities from political to purchase decisions to personal values and beliefs.” – Denmark.

Besides general comments on the importance of social media, there were descriptions of different ways of using social media.

The most mentioned social media site was Facebook. There were some descriptions of sites that have an unofficial status in the political system. These sites serve as political discussion arenas, and might be considered sites for digital political will-formation. Examples stated that the young, either individually, or through organizations and parties, should have Facebook sites where to “freely discuss policies and politics”. Among the sites mentioned was a Facebook group “«Azerbaijan 2013: VICTORY!» created



to discuss public, political, social and cultural events, exchange opinions and share news and videos. The group consists of 372 948 members who respect the liberty of speech, personality and opinion of each group member.” However, the answers did not explain how the use of social media by the young is actually connected to policy-makers. There were no examples of sites in social media where the young and the political worked together.

In addition to this, there were examples of formal youth institutions using social media. Odessa Youth City Council organises on-line discussions on acute youth themes. Also, there are TV debates “Pro and contra”. Eurodesk Cyprus also uses social media to promote mobility. Using social media to gain information on the needs and opinions of the young for use in decision-making was also mentioned. In addition to providing a social interaction platform for the young, social media can be used to promote and strengthen existing off-line structures using on-line methods.

Examples of how general Internet activism (bottom-up) could be connected to (top-down) political decision making are scarce in our data. This raises the question of how social media could be used in a manner that would connect the young to decision-making and follow the general logic of social media; where gatekeepers are absent and where different networks are not necessarily based on existing hierarchies.



7. Searching for a broader scope of democracy in existing policy documents

Anu Gretschel

In the previous chapter we introduced different fields of democracy based on our earlier work and that of other researchers. In this chapter we will analyze how and whether it is possible to identify the same variety of democracy ideals in youth participation related European policy documents.²⁸ In 2012, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities pointed out in Resolution 346, that

“...young people’s interest in conventional political participation, such as voting in elections, has declined over recent years due to increasing disenchantment and cynicism. However this does not mean young people are no longer interested, they still engage in democratic and civic behaviour and they still believe in democratic values. They engage in different forms of democratic activities appropriate to their own understanding of democracy and citizenship. Young people still identify with their society and they are still prepared to engage: the important issue is to get one’s voice heard.” (Council of Europe 2012b.)

We analysed some key European youth participation related documents to discover what is understood as “*engaging in democracy*” stated in Resolution 346 above and the connections the recommended improvements at a local and regional level to strengthen youth engagement have with different fields of democracy. Since the resolutions and charters of the Council of Europe are not legally binding instruments it is important that the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers adopts a recommendation (like Council of Europe 2004) for each of them to support their implementation and to imply that member states have a moral responsibility to implement such resolutions and charters, even though they are not legally bound to do so. Nevertheless, many countries have for example created a national legal framework to advance the impact of the recommendations in a national context. To illustrate how the function and need to develop a legal and policy framework at a national level can be examined, the Council of Europe has piloted policy reviews in three countries (Finland, Moldova and Slovakia); of these, the first has already been published (see Council of Europe 2011). At the European level the policy reviews were used as baseline study documents, among many other consultations, to guide the Council of Europe Strategy Process in defining the rights of the Child. According to the strategy all children have the legal right to be heard and taken seriously in all matters affecting them, whether in family or alternative care environments;

28. Tiina-Maria Levamo made a significant contribution by commenting on this chapter.



day-care; schools; local communities; health care, justice and social services and for example policy-making at domestic, European and international levels. For example, as observed in the policy review of Finland, adult attitudes are seen as a major obstacle to effective child participation and the strategy particularly recommends establishing a culture of respect for children's views (see Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2012–2015, 16).

One of the most well-known European policy documents on youth participation is *the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life*. We once more read through both the charter and the charter's manual *Have your say!*, which guides actors in how to put the charter into practice at local and regional levels. The standpoint defined in the charter's preamble promises a broad understanding of democracy:

“...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.)

The manual also recommends

“...diverse forms of involvement. One single form of participation appropriate to all young people does not exist. It is therefore important that a variety of ways of getting involved is offered to youth so that they can choose what they find most relevant and interesting.” Council of Europe 2008a, 12, 22.)

The Revised Charter is divided into three parts. The first part provides recommendations for emphasizing the need for young people to be included in planning and decision making processes *in different policy sectors* – such as health, urban environment, education. The second part introduces some *ideas and tools* which can be used by local and regional authorities to enhance youth participation. The third part concentrates on how to distribute *equal footing* between young participants and local and regional authorities in their mutual processes of identifying needs, suggesting solutions, making decisions and planning actions. In the charter, establishing permanent youth participation structures like youth councils and co-management in local and regional councils is seen as the most important way of doing so. (See Council of Europe 2003, 7–8.)

An initial reading of the charter provides a very sophisticated view of how to advance youth opportunities to participate and wield influence. Accordingly, young people should be involved, e.g. in designing health policy programs, public transportation and school curricula. Everything included in the charter's 2003 revision, remains important. Though nowadays there is an understanding of an outside world that needs



to be addressed therein. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (Council of Europe 2003b) pointed out in Recommendation 128 that the charter is originally from 1992 and... *“should not remain a static instrument, but ... address the changing issues experienced by young people.”*

The revised Charter was born in a decade when some young people were chosen to represent all without question. At present, although there are youth representatives in youth and pupils' councils, and they are heard – though this is not often the case, and youth representatives in co-management positions in the councils of local and regional authorities, it is possible to see the need for the simultaneous existence of a culture and process of discovering the opinions of all the young people living and being educated in areas and regions where such channels are offered. Targeted surveys, meetings and workshops can for example be used to achieve this.

The Charter's manual *Have your say!* names *the most common forms of youth participation observed in contemporary European societies* and on the other hand examples of *new forms of participation* through which *“young people should have the chance to experiment and to find the right ways of getting involved.”* (Council of Europe 2008a, 25–26.) For the purposes of this report we listed these two categories together in the framework of six democracy categories named in the earlier chapter:

- In the *Have your say!* -manual instruments of direct democracy (such as referendums and popular initiatives) were not mentioned nor were deliberative forms of participation.
- From the field of representative democracy *“Taking part in elections (both to vote and to be elected)”* was included in the manual.
- From the field of participatory democracy, the manual mentioned *youth councils, parliaments, forums, boards and other structures – a way of participating in decision-making processes in the framework of international, national, regional or local authorities, schools, clubs, NGOs, etc., signing petitions, membership of political parties, unions, interest groups, co-management systems and consultations – used in decision-making processes to voice needs and concerns and to make proposals.* The manual also mentions *voluntary work, participating in different forms of non-formal education, peer education – involvement of young people in educating their peers (for example, health promotion programs, awareness-raising campaigns, etc.), peer to peer networks, discussion forums, being active in an organisation/club and taking responsibility for some areas of its work, different levels of participation of young people in projects and activities (organized as well as non-organized), campaigning activities, international meetings, using the Internet to gather information, express views or influence decision-making processes.*
- From the field of counter democracy and progressive activists, the manual mentioned *participation in so-called “new social movements”, support groups, boycotting of products and demonstrations.*



Resolution 346 of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities named demonstrations as one example of *spontaneous, issue-based* informal participation by young people. On the other hand, the same Resolution admits that demonstrating can also be a deliberate form of action: “...*If young people do not feel they are an active part of the political process, they will find other ways to make their voices heard. The recent demonstrations, protests or riots in many European countries can be seen as young people’s answer to a political system that does not really give them their share of power and full citizenship.*” (see Council of Europe 2012b).

Later, in the same Resolution, it is said that “*young people should learn about democracy and participation in educational institutions such as schools... and ...through the non-formal education they receive elsewhere, such as in local youth clubs and civic organizations, and through participation in local and regional youth councils and parliaments.*” After that the Resolution concludes with what is understood as participation in democracy, where, again, only formal forms of participation are named: “...*This is where young people get to know what participation in democracy means: through electing class representatives, meeting with local politicians and engaged local citizens, working in community-oriented service projects or sitting on youth parliaments in the local community.*” (see Council of Europe 2012b.)

According to our analysis, new ways of engagement in politics are recognised for example in Resolution 346, – besides demonstrations it also names such forms as online-communities, signing petitions, but it still fails to recognise these as a genuine “*form of what participation in democracy*” means. This is also seen in Recommendation 327 formulated according to Resolution 346. It first states: “*Young people’s political engagement is taking on new forms of civic citizenship and their participation is through the Internet, signing petitions or spontaneously attending demonstrations.*” But then for concrete action the Congress recommends that the Committee of Ministers invites member states to: “*Strengthen the political influence and participation of young people through the offer of more citizenship rights, for example by investigating the possibility of lowering the voting age to 16...*” (See Council of Europe 2012c.) Despite providing a broader view of the democratic scene, the only action proposed indicates the field of representative democracy.

Resolution 346 of the Congress of Local and Regional authorities states that: “*Young people want to make their voices heard and to play a real role in decision-making in their societies. The best way to achieve this is to strengthen their social integration by sharing economic, social and political power with them and giving them full citizenship and full access to jobs. Due to the proximity to citizens, it is at local and regional levels that this can best be achieved.*” (Council of Europe 2012b.) The *Have your say!* Manual gives recommendations regarding the field of participatory democracy: youth councils, youth parliaments, youth forums... According to the manual these offer an institutional connection between young people and decision making in local and regional affairs. At the same time, the connections between young people in other fields of democracy and decision making are ignored. (see Council of Europe 2008a, 35.)



7.1 About the processes of “co-management” and ”structured dialogue”

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities pointed out in Resolution 346 that children and young people under 18 do not enjoy full political citizenship, for example they do not have the right to vote in most member states leading to an underrepresentation of this group in parliaments, both national and regional, and local councils (Council of Europe 2012b). At a European level “*co-management*” has been seen as one solution to further involve the voice of young people in decision making.

Willems & Heinen & Meyers (2012) defined co-management as “*a system used in the Council of Europe’s Youth Sector, where young people and government representatives sit down around the same table to take, together, decisions that are grounded in the reality of young people.*” In the political documents of the Council of Europe co-management is often described “*as a unique and valuable co-operation mechanism between governments and youth organisations.*” (see for example Council of Europe 2008a,b). In Resolution 346 the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities invites local and regional authorities to, among the other matters, offer opportunities to young people to enter into a *structured dialogue* with local and regional authorities and to participate in politics and policy-making by setting up joint decision-making mechanisms, mirroring the Council of Europe’s co-management system, in the form of joint councils composed of elected local/regional councillors and youth representatives. (Council of Europe 2012b.) In a co-management manner, the Congress even invites the member states of the Council of Europe to include young people in their national delegations to the Congress, both as full and substitute members (Council of Europe 2012b).

Another often used youth participation related concept in European discussion is “*structured dialogue.*” According to the Resolution of the Council of the European Union, structural dialogue involves consultations with young people and youth organizations at all levels in the Member States, and at the EU Youth Conference organized by EU-Presidency Countries and during European Youth Week (European Union 2011). Since 2005, the European Commission and Member States have developed a structured dialogue with young people and their organizations, researchers in the youth field and policy-makers. Since 2009 the structured dialogue consultations have been based on work cycles of 18 months with an overall thematic priority and specific topics that correspond to the overall objectives of European cooperation in the youth field. The Council of the European Union is very optimistic in Resolution 164:

“...resulting from the nature of the structural dialogue process, young people living throughout the European Union had the opportunity to express their opinions and ideas during the same consultation phase on a common priority theme (like “youth employment” in the cycle of 1.1.2010–30.7.2011)...process should be further developed by applying relevant and efficient methods that stimulate a quality output ... by using, where appropriate, diverse tools, such as social media, Internet and on-line consultations...in promoting the involvement of



young people with fewer opportunities and the involvement of representatives of local and regional authorities.” (European Union 2011.)

According to our knowledge based on National Youth Reports (2012)²⁹ structured dialogue in the years 2010–2011 was rarely carried out at local and regional levels of the member countries; the main method being on-line consultation at a national level. Thus it is possible that young people with fewer opportunities were not reached to voice their opinions (see also Kiilakoski & Gretschel forthcoming 2013). According to National Reports, the Flemish-speaking community in Belgium was one exception. In this case, actions were targeted to also involve young people with fewer opportunities in the process. Even if such examples of structured dialogue are mainly from an EU and national level, structured dialogue processes can, when built appropriately, be a fruitful mechanism for feeding the voice of youth into local and regional decision making.

7.2 Assessing the impact of youth participation

In the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States (Council of Europe 2012a) on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18 it was said that....

“...Children and young people should always be fully informed of the scope of their participation, including the limitations on their involvement, the expected and actual outcomes of their participation and how their views were ultimately considered.”

As part of the writing process of this report we requested through a questionnaire, European examples of good practice in the promotion of the impact of youth participation on a specific issue at which their activity was directed or generally on decision-making. Even though we received many examples of good practice where the participation of young people had been promoted, there were very few examples of how the impact of participation had been developed. We can therefore see this as one of the main challenges in developing youth participation.

In Finland local youth councils (N=147 answers from 123 municipalities) described their connections to local authorities and decision making. The opportunities for making an impact varied greatly from one council to another. Some of them rarely had any interaction with decision making bodies at a local level. The evaluation pointed out that a need exists for ensuring the quality of youth participation in the municipalities.

29. http://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/national_reports_2012.htm



(The Regional State Administration of Finland 2011). A similar evaluation would also be needed at a European level.

Resolution 164 of the Council of the European Union recommended that the structured dialogue should be further developed for example by *“promoting a political follow-up of the results of the structured dialogue and by providing feedback to young people regarding action taken on the results of the structured dialogue.”* (European Union 2011.) It was previously unlikely that young people would have been entitled to have an impact on decision making at an EU-level through a structured dialogue process (Laine & Gretschel 2012.) Since 2009 the process has been developed further (European Union 2009). In the period from 1st January 2010 to 30th June 2011 youth employment was agreed by the Council of the European Union to be the thematic priority in the process. In the *“Compendium of the first cycle of the structured dialogue”* (The Youth Department of the Ministry of National Resources of Hungary (2011, 15) it is said that: *“As part of the dialogue process, on-line consultations and debates were organised with thousands of young people all over Europe.”* In the Compendium it is stated that the national consultations together with the joint outcomes of the EU Youth Conferences and the discussions therein, *“had impacted the Council Conclusions on promoting youth employment to achieve the Europe 2020 objectives”* (see European Union 2012a). However, the National Youth Reports (European Union 2012b) do not provide such a clear picture. Many member states reported that they are unable to distinguish how opinions collected from the national level have impacted a European process. It is possible that the development of the process still needs further attention.



8. The legal framework of youth participation in Europe and some examples of the importance of national laws

Niina Mäntylä

When dealing with issues of youth participation, it should be noted that there is a variety of legal sources and these sources are developed by different organizations.³⁰ E.g. the major treaty of the Council of Europe: European Convention for the Protection of Human rights (ECHR), UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as well as EU law, are separate sources of law. ECHR and EU law are even enforced by different courts. Moreover, states still have their own legal systems and they see the hierarchy and interaction between different legal sources in different ways³¹.

Altogether, there are few legally binding provisions on child and youth participation at European level and the role of national laws and soft law (e.g. declarations, resolutions, and guidelines) is significant. E.g. the Council of Europe advances the child and youth participation agenda by 1) setting standards, 2) monitoring the compliance of member states with human rights standards; 3) developing policies in the fields of e.g. legal co-operation, human rights, social cohesion, culture, education and youth; 4) assisting member states with legal reform, policy and institutional framework design, and training for professionals; and 5) doing outreach by communicating, educating and training on standards and policies.

It is even important to notice that *participation can take place at different levels*. There are more legally binding instruments to safeguard children's and young people's right to express their views in court proceedings on matters affecting them than to facilitate other forms of participation e.g. opportunities for planning or decision-making in school or community development. First, the European Convention for the Protection of Human rights (ECHR) is a significant source of law in court proceedings in Europe. As a hard law instrument, the Convention creates legal obligations or duties to the member states. However, the right of children to be heard is not expressly contained within the European Convention of Human Rights, nor has such a right been explicitly determined by the European Court of Human Rights. Nevertheless, such a right can be derived under the Convention. (Daly 2011, 441–461.) Second, under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) the child's right to be heard in any judi-

30. Tiina-Maria Levamo made a significant contribution by commenting on this chapter.

31. Legal systems in general cf. http://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/legal_systems



cial and administrative proceedings affecting the child is even expressly contained, but other levels of participation are embodied in this convention contrary to the ECHR.

In this report we are going to focus more on forms of youth participation that do not relate to the child or young person as a legal party.

8.1 UNCRC – The right of the child to express his or her views

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child³² (UNCRC) is legally binding upon the States that are party to it, but the degree of commitment may vary. For example, the role of the UNCRC has been seen as weak and relatively invisible in Denmark (Jørgensen & Leth & Montgomery 2011, 839–826). Child law does not compare favourably with UNCRC in Ireland either – whereas the situation is much better in Norway. The varying commitment could be a result of legal and administrative structures and/or political and public attitudes. (Lundy & Kilkelly & Byrne & Kang 2012, 4, 100.) The absence of effective enforcement mechanisms could also be behind the varying legal role of the UNCRC, and as a response, to reinforce the UNCRC, the Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure was opened for signature on 28th February 2012. This allows children or their representatives to file individual complaints concerning violation of the rights of children³³. The protocol will be enforced on the tenth ratification (now it has two ratifications). It is anticipated, among other benefits, that the Optional Protocol will indeed strengthen children's rights to participate and be heard on matters of their concern.

The right of the child to express his or her views is an absolute right, expressed in Article 12 of the UNCRC. Not only does it cover the opportunity to express his or her views, but also to have their views taken seriously. The Committee on the Rights of the Child suggests that the government must develop a direct relationship with children and young people, and build communication channels not only through non-governmental organizations. Participation should be possible in all spheres of society and in decision-making processes at all levels. (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 2003, paragraph 12.)

The European Network of Ombudspersons of Children (ENOC) construes that the obligation “includes a duty to find and to use the appropriate methods for communicating with children as well as a duty to try to motivate children and young people to take active part in the debate in society including within the family, in the classroom, in court proceedings and in all other fora that are of relevance for children” (European Network of Ombudspersons for Children 2003). For example,

32. A child is defined in the UNCRC as a person under the age of 18 years. (Article 1).

33. see <http://treaties.un.org/doc/source/signature/2012/a-res-66-138-english.pdf> More about the enforcement mechanisms cf. Lundy et al. 2012, 19–20.



concerning Finland, the UN Committee recommends among other issues, that the State abolish age limitations established under domestic laws, that all children are duly heard in judicial and administrative proceeding affecting them and that the State party pays more attention to children's well-being at school including their right to have their opinions taken into account (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 2011).

In general, it can be argued, that the right of the child to express views is not taken sufficiently seriously by those who make decisions affecting the child (European Network of Ombudspersons for Children 2003). It is typical at a domestic level that the general principle relating to participation is accorded recognition only in specific circumstances or contexts (Lundy & Kilkelly & Byrne & Kang 2012, 19).

One reason for the challenges of the CRC concerning participation may be in terminology. It is simply not clear when a child is “*capable* of forming his or her views” and what is meant when “*due weight*” is given to children's views. According the UNCRC this weight depends on the “*age and maturity of the child*” (Alderson 2010, 88). However, national and regional laws can clarify the rights of the UNCRC, because it allows for national and international law, if they are more conducive (article 41). For example case law in England and Wales allows *competent* children to be decision makers (Alderson 2010, 88)³⁴.

8.2 EU instruments and competence in the field of child and youth participation

Concerning children, the European Court of Human Rights has drawn inspiration from various UNCRC measures. On the contrary, EU legislation very seldom draws inspiration explicitly from this instrument (Stalford 2009). However, commission reminds that the EU and its Member States are nevertheless bound to respect Children's rights under international and European treaties, in particular the UNCRC and its Optional Protocols and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)³⁵. In 2006, a communication from the Commission proposed to establish a comprehensive EU Strategy on the rights of the child. (European Union 2006.) Later, this ambitious strategy was replaced by the EU Agenda on the Rights of the Child.

The EU explicitly recognised children's rights – including participation – in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (European Union 2010,

34. About minor's competence and especially consent to health care treatment and research cf. Alderson 2007, 2272–2283.

35. The Lisbon Treaty now even provides an obligation for the EU's accession to the ECHR. (Article 6 (2) TEU).



389–403). The Charter guarantees the protection of children’s rights by EU institutions, but also at the domestic level when EU countries implement EU law.³⁶ In Article 24 it is said: “[Children] may express their views freely. Such views shall be taken into consideration on matters which concern them in accordance with their age and maturity.” The explanations concerning this Charter have been prepared at the instigation of the Praesidium, but where article 24 and particularly participation is concerned, the explanations are scarce, referring only to the CRC: “*This Article is based on the New York Convention on the Rights of the Child signed on 20 November 1989 and ratified by all the Member States...*”³⁷

However, it is important to recognise that the EU does not have general competence in the area of children’s rights (European Union 2006). This means that EU actions need to respect the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and must not encroach on the competence of the Member States. Also youth policies fall within the competence of Member States, the EU plays merely a coordinating and complementary role in this field. This is why EU instruments are “softer” and political – such as the Youth in Action Programme, EU youth strategy and European youth pact. There are no legally binding EU decisions in this field.

8.3 The role of legally non-binding norms

Soft law instruments, such as action programs, guidelines, recommendations and resolutions, are not legally binding, and thus they are not officially applied by enforcement mechanisms i.e. courts and committees. However, soft law can have an important role in representing political will and making the law a living instrument in implementation. In addition, soft law instruments are at times the only applicable instruments in fragile states where legal structures and mechanisms have not been fully developed. Therefore, soft law also may have an ability to influence the future development of hard law commitments. Softer legalization is often easier to achieve than hard legalization and it offers more effective ways to deal with uncertainty. Soft law facilitates compromise between actors with different interests and values and weak and powerful states. (Abbott & Snidal 2000.)

There are plenty of soft law instruments concerning child and youth participation in

36. However, it can be argued that at EU-level law and policy needs to capture the diversity of childhood, to acknowledge the needs of children at different stages of life, and to ensure that variables such as gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status and disability are appropriately accommodated (Stalford 2009).

37. Text of the explanations relating to the complete text of the Charter as set out in CHARTE 4487/00 CONVENT 50: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/04473_en.pdf



Europe and these instruments are developed by different organizations as well as hard law. E.g. in 1995, the UN (United Nations 1995) adopted the *World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond* (WPAY), which systematically formulated a youth policy framework. As mentioned above, even instruments concerning child and youth participation at EU level have a soft law character. In addition, the Council of Europe has a significant role – e. g. the Revised European Charter of Young People in Local and Regional Life has achieved wide recognition as a major policy instrument (Council of Europe 2003). Its recommendations are not legally binding, but it can be understood as a moral instrument.

8.4 The importance of national laws in ensuring child and youth participation

In this chapter we will share some examples of good practice related to child and youth participation that are required by national law and are binding at a regional and/or local level in the EU and the CoE member states. We are aware that national legal systems are different, and especially the relationships between statutes and judicial decisions can vary, but there is no opportunity to enlarge upon these aspects of legal systems in this report. Nor is there any possibility of discovering the effectiveness of national laws in this context. Therefore, our purpose is only to highlight some good examples at the level of domestic legislation, because national laws are, after all, the most important legal sources within the field of child and youth participation.

In general, *participation through formal structures* is usually enshrined by legislation: e.g. the legal basis for this kind of youth representation is very strong in Austria (Youth Representation Act and The Federal Youth Representation Act³⁸, 2001) also the youth board law in Cyprus was mentioned through our questionnaire. At regional and local levels, especially in *the field of education*, student representation and student co-administration is typically based on national law. Based on the questionnaire, such examples from national laws were mentioned e.g. in answers from Italy and Spain. In *Belgium* (Flemish-Speaking Community) the Government of Flanders evaluated the Flemish Parliament Act on participation in education together with the Flemish Pupils' Umbrella Organization³⁹. Now schools and university colleges are obliged to organize student councils (or other participation mechanisms) at the students' request.

38. International translation: <http://www.en.bmwfj.gv.at/Youth/YouthProtection/Seiten/default.aspx>

39. The Flemish Parliament Acts are published in Dutch (original language) and French translation in the Belgian Bulletin of Acts, Orders and Decrees: www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/doc/rech_f.htm



These student councils are also organized at Flemish level. (Belgium. Flemish-Speaking Community. National Youth Report, see European Union 2012.) Through our questionnaire we noticed that the effectiveness of student representation may vary: e.g. *In Denmark* the councils even “have seats in school boards, and must be consulted when e.g. the school leadership formulates institution specific rules. In this way pupils and students are formally considered as stakeholders on many issues on educational institutions” (an answer from questionnaire)⁴⁰.

Concerning participation in *child and youth services*, national legislation is not as typical. However, *in German legal order* the right to participate in decision-making processes regarding child and youth services at a federal level is enshrined in Book VIII of the Social Code (Child and Youth Services) (Section 8 (1) 1990). During each legislative period, the federal government, the Bundestag and the Bundesrat have to report on the situation of, and developments relating to children. At *länder* level e.g. the Schleswig-Holstein Municipal Code (Section 47) stipulates that the municipality must “suitably involve children and juveniles in plans and projects affecting their interests.” The municipality must also suitably explain how it has taken these interests into consideration. (Lundy, Kilkelly, Byrne and Kang 2012, 45–46.)

The Kindergarten act (section 3) *in Norway* enshrines children’s rights to express their views on the day-to-day activities of the kindergarten and to be given the opportunity to take active part in planning and assessing the activities of the kindergarten on a regular basis (Lundy, Kilkelly, Byrne and Kang 2012, 59).

40. The law in Danish: <https://www.retsinformation.dk/forms/R0710.aspx?id=145142>



9. Epilogue

Tiina-Maria Levamo

This report reflects in all its richness how the concept of democracy is under a constant redefinition and reproduction process in contemporary societies throughout the world. Demarcations of the concepts of democracy, democratic participation and citizenship are indeed all but clear and always entail a certain fluidity. In this respect, child and youth participation cannot be perceived as something that is solely socially and culturally determined and state-bound, but also, in parallel, participation touches upon highly political and economic spheres, and moreover: the various calls for equal rights and share of resources by children and youth no longer remain solely within the boundaries of formal state structures. In our questionnaire, most of the good examples of child and youth participation shared with us could be categorized as participatory democracy. However, many examples from Europe and beyond were far from distinct and some of them could also have been easily included in the other categories of democracy. Our questionnaire confirms that conventional representative and participatory democracy models and approaches are challenged by novel social contracts, negotiations and manifestations over democracy and equal share of power, many of them strongly initiated by young people. There is no doubt that the national, regional and international landscape for child and youth participation is becoming all the more challenging to define and understand in simple terms and categories. This period in the history of democracy provides thought-provoking opportunities for researchers, decision-makers, local, regional, state and world leaders and civil society at large, including children and young people.



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Youth in Europe are politically engaged and having their say at the local level in many fields of democracy. Nevertheless, often political activeness is only considered to be the act of voting in mainstream elections. Moreover, it can be observed that local decision-making rarely has the ability to utilize the messages generated by such youth activity. This publication comprehensively highlights the political engagement of youth. Using practical examples, it presents in addition to representative democracy, the forms of direct, participatory, deliberative democracy and progressive activism as well as counter-democratic activity. The significance of social media is also emphasized. Additionally, the publication considers whether the versatility of youth participation and its scope of impact are sufficiently supported by European policy documents concerning youth participation, the guidelines based on such documentation, internationally ratified codes of practice and national legislations. The recommendations given in the publication support the many different forms of youth participation and the increase in impact of such participation in the future.

Nuoret vaikuttavat Euroopassa paikallistasolla monilla demokratian kentillä. Poliittiseksi aktiivisuudeksi lasketaan usein kuitenkin vain vaaleissa äänestäminen. Lisäksi on havaittavissa, että nuorten eri toiminnoillaan synnyttämiä viestejä ei useinkaan osata hyödyntää paikallistason päätöksenteossa. Tässä julkaisussa tuodaan esiin nuorten poliittista vaikuttamista laajasti: käytännön esimerkkien kautta esitellään edustuksellisen demokratian lisäksi suoran, osallistavan, deliberatiivisen sekä edistyksellisen aktivismin ja vastademokraattisen toiminnan muotoja. Myös sosiaalisen median merkitys tuodaan esille. Lisäksi tarkastellaan, tukevatko nuorten osallistumista koskevat eurooppalaiset asiakirjat, niiden pohjalta laaditut oppaat sekä kansainväliset ratifioidut säännöt sekä kansalliset lait nuorten vaikuttamisen monimuotoisuutta ja sen vaikuttavuutta riittävän pitkälle. Julkaisussa mukana olevat suositukset tukevat nuorten monimuotoisen vaikuttamisen ja sen vaikuttavuuden kehittymistä jatkossa.

