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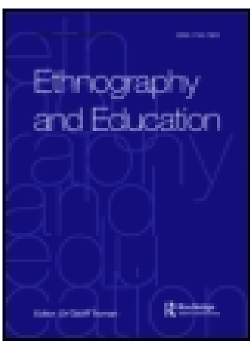

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In search of the beloved community: dancing to a different tune of youth participation

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ABSTRACT

One element of the PARTISPACE study into spaces and styles of Youth Participation in eight European cities is presented in this article. Drawing on ethnographically informed studies of four sites in three cities, the paper analyses the ways in which young people construct and sustain alternatives to the policy-driven forms of participation, based on their yearning and aspiration for different relations than those found in ordinary life. We suggest four themes as characterising their search for community: Places where communities are born; Breaking out of the Ordinary; Differentiated Openness and Protected Zones of Experimentation. In conversation with the work of bell hooks on 'homeplaces' and Victor Turner on anti-hegemonic anti-structures, the analysis suggests that young people's self-created spaces give insights into what 'youth participation' might be and that forms of protection of such alternative spaces are an inbuilt necessity and not necessarily to be seen as exclusionary or anti-democratic.

KEYWORDS
Youth; participation; yearning; anti-structure

Introduction: another place is possible

The facilitation of participation for young people is part of the core of the youth policy formulated by the EU Commission and the Council of Europe and is generally given a central role at the national and local policy level of the member states (Pilkington et al. 2018; Walther et al. 2019). Participation usually refers to practices associated with the democratic well-being of societies, such as voting and taking part in political representation, but it can also be extended to include actions such as volunteering for causes which promote social goods. The PARTISPACE study, a cross-country research study of youth participation in eight cities (www.partispace.eu), sought to turn the understanding of youth participation on its head by exploring the assumption that young people do participate but often in un-recognised ways.

In simple terms, policies appear to mark a deficit in 'youth participation' which needs to be remedied in various forms of citizenship education. The engagement with 'youth' at a policy-level suggests a continued concern with supporting successful transitions to

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employment or other forms of economic participation (Walther et al. 2019). 'Youth' provides a highly significant lens through which to engage with questions of policy formation and of social reproduction at a crossroads of continuity and change, and a site at which emerging theories can be tested (McDonald, Shildrick and Woodman 2019).

A well known definition of youth participation is 'a process where young people as active citizens, take part in, express views on and have decision making power about issues that affect them' (Farthing 2012, 73). The PARTISPACE study adopted an even wider definition and recognition of participation practices; biographical self-determination in the public and through public institutions. This conceptualisation was then operationalised in a research programme to ask 'what young people do in public spaces and what it means to them'.

Through PARTISPACE case studies, it became clear that young persons' motivations for involvement in participatory practices were not always in line with the intentions or preconceptions of those of the (adult) institutions which originally had proposed and orchestrated them. When projects were able to connect more deeply with the young people, there was an invitation to a more open room, allowing more existential questions of belonging and a searching for what an 'ideal space' might be like. Often this involved practices in which young people were placed in a position of construction and command, parallel but yet different and often in opposition to the formalised ways in which participation might be presented.

Considering evidence from fieldwork involving participant observation of youth-led projects conducted in cities in Sweden, Germany and Bulgaria, this article addresses the question of the search for, creation and protection of ideal spaces and utopian yearnings as an essential aspect of youthful participation. The evidence is analysed in order to consider further and unsettle what is most commonly meant by 'participation' in policy discourses. Previous multisite fieldwork and ethnographies (Marcus 1995) have shown how boundary work was undertaken to sustain the liminal and alternative nature of young people's situated social spaces. This analysis further contributes to this discussion.

The wider PARTISPACE research drew on a range of critical sources, in particular, the socialist/feminist exploration of the links between space and place, the local and the global, the personal and political which entails an investigation of liminality and the politics of normativity and boundary marking (Massey 2005; Butler 2015). Here this wider literature is mediated by an engagement with the work of bell hooks (2008, 2014). hooks' discussion of 'homeplace', in the context of African American experience, as a place that is yearned for and as a place where life can be experienced as occupied by subjects rather than objects, where dignity that is destroyed elsewhere can be restored, has much resonance with the yearning for ideal spaces expressed by young people in this study. When hooks discusses yearning for the Beloved Community, it can be considered a 'homeplace' on a society widescale, a place of mutual love, support and dignity. This is what we mean by the term 'ideal space', as it does not yet exist except sporadically, yet there are experiences which prefigure its possibility.

The desire for a space 'otherwise' as an aspect of youth participation has rarely been discussed previously, although the connection between here and now and future orientations is widely discussed (e.g. Sottkashra, Haikkola, and Horelli 2010). However, the policy-orientated focus of many formally established youth participation initiatives has

meant that the search for ideal spaces has had little attention in the existing literature. The need to protect and safeguard 'alternative spaces' has also been discussed in the context of radical education projects (Fielding and Moss 2010). Here we see examples of young people developing such protective mechanisms themselves. Since ideal spaces arise momentarily only to escape swiftly from view, there is a link between 'space' and the liminality and transience associated with a moment of 'youth'. This liminality and transience are also associated with the 'alternative' homespaces (Turner 2012) and 'homeplaces' (hooks 2008; 2014) discussed in this article, making them seem almost sacred.

Methodological issues

This article discusses the re-appropriation and re-signification of spaces by young people, focussing on four sites chosen from the large multisite study. We can term PARTISPACE a large collaborative multisite ethnographically informed study. The evidence presented here has been re-signified many times and in more than one language. A European research team of about 30 Senior and Early Career academics based in eight cities endeavoured to share our approaches to ethnographic research in a series of Consortium meetings, developed shared research schedules along lines suggested by an open grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2014).

All the research teams spent a year undertaking fieldwork and approached the sites in their cities after an initial mapping phase. They met with key informants about youth participation and undertook focus groups and city walks. In each site, 20 interviews were undertaken to inform the choice of sites for fieldwork. The 48 sites for in-depth ethnographies were then chosen according to criteria agreed at the Consortium meetings which gave the opportunity for a wide lens on the nature of 'youth participation'. Another 20 interviews were done afterwards to deepen understanding of individual young people's biographies, concurrent with a further period of action research fieldwork led by young participants.

We shared reading on ethnographic engagement and ethnographic writing, including reading on the role of reflexivity and affect in the development of ethnographic understandings (Hammersley and Atkinson 1989; Stewart 2007). Fieldnotes were made in the moment, and immediately after participant observation (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995); they were coded and analysed within city teams and a sample of fieldnotes was translated, coded and analysed in cross-consortium groups. Initial analysis was undertaken in 2017, emerging in a set of shared understandings of the un-recognised ways in which youth cultural practices and occupations of space were forms of public participation.

The themes discussed in this paper emerged from inductive coding of fieldnotes and transcripts undertaken initially in the local languages. Key transcripts were chosen for translation and discussed across the whole Consortium team. A consensus concerning the significant themes for further analysis was reached in small cross-national groups discussions. Throughout these, we have been informed by a curiosity about the ways in which experiential and textual readings and observations are partners within ethnography. We have used an approach which can be said to engage in 'grounded theory after the postmodern turn' (Clarke 2005). The ethnographic work was also inspired by current remembering of the affective as the unspoken communication in spaces (Stewart 2007).

Questions of recognition and misrecognition became central to discussions within the Consortium; from which the ambition to explore further the forms and meaning-making in participation not recognised as such by the authorities.

The researchers' re-inscription of powerful meanings draws on the positionality of the research team members. Older members of the teams readily drew on a literature and theoretical set of understandings derived from youth cultural studies; for the field-based researchers there was a direct encounter with a practice of re-appropriation and re-inscription of spaces, which they then presented in fieldnotes. In what follows we both draw on fieldnotes directly and on those incorporated and interpreted in working papers (national reports) and interview transcripts generated across the study. Background papers are found at www.partispace.eu. We have referred our analysis back to the teams who presented the material and checked for accuracy with them. In the Swedish case study, one of the current authors was a researcher in the Swedish team. The other author was a researcher in the UK team. Furthermore, key ideas presented here have been the subjects of shared analysis and discussion in PARTISPACE consortium meetings based on workshopping of a thematic analysis of detailed fieldnotes. The quotations in the text are all translated after having been analysed as field notes in the original language.

The four sites

This article considers the emergence of moments of yearning for or even experiencing an ideal space in four chosen cases where this was particularly strong: a centre for young LGBT people in Gothenburg, Sweden (the TYC), among a crew of graffiti sprayers (the Sprayers) and in a Political and Cultural Centre (PCC) in Frankfurt Germany, and in an alternative cultural scene (ICS) in Plovdiv Bulgaria.

The TYC in Gothenburg related to a divided context: on the one side a rather well-implemented policy idea about general welfare and positive attitude towards youth participation in policy; on the other side, a system that at structural level is affected by an overall marketisation together with ignorance of what practice other than officially sanctioned participation and recognition could mean, especially for groups in a continued struggle for acceptance. Fieldnotes highlight the transformation of the welfare state, and the issues of inclusion and exclusion, suggesting a lack of recognition of the value of young people's perspectives. In one of the interviewed experts' own words:

> The adult world still has a kind of blank (a tap on the head), for youth and children, and it can be on all levels really, that adults do not expect, do not have a picture of young people as competent persons. That's an obstacle I think. It can be on the individual level, that one is confronted in that way, but it can also be built into the system.

The working model of TYC was to make young people's own initiatives the beacon and the organising principle. A youth worker played an important role as a facilitator and supporter for the group, but apart from this, the group functioned autonomously and was of great personal value for many of the members. The group occupied space in a large Youth House in the city. The researcher was engaged with this project throughout 2016, usually on a fortnightly basis. She was an experienced youth social worker in the city as well as an academic research assistant on PARTISPACE.

The two sites we discuss in Frankfurt are very different. The Sprayers was an informal group of young men. Some of the crew members had met each other in school and developed their friendship for several years:

> We met each other at school, in smoking breaks one put out an Edding marker and tagged and then we were like 'oh man you're doin graffiti' and you too, like … , let's meet and go together. (Fieldnotes Frankfurt)

For the 'Sprayers' graffiti was connected both to places and to certain kind of spraying activities: 'legal' places for practicing spraying and hanging out, what they called 'ghetto spots'. These were hidden places appropriated by the crew members for a certain time to relax and draw graffiti. The 'illegal spots', located in public space, functioned as show rooms for the earning of scene-specific prestige, and potentially even broader artistic recognition. Their appropriation of places and spots ran the risk of being punished as illegal. To be 'legal', they had to ask for official permission, but those spots were overcrowded and lacked something of the special artistry of the sub-cultural 'guerrilla' gaze.

The Sprayers group was engaged with by a researcher on an intermittent basis throughout 2016 both in the Youth Centre where she first met them and on the streets. As well as being a PhD student she was also an experienced youth worker in the City.

The Frankfurt PCC, an alternative anarchist inspired social centre, was a site for ethnographic engagement by a different researcher, also a PhD student, throughout the year. This site was an initiative of young people who, from autumn 2015, ran an alternative cultural centre in an old building in the centre of a close neighbouring town. The building had been rented by the group and re-furbished as an autonomous cultural centre after they had searched for a suitable place for more than a year. The group consisted of about 30 young people, the majority being between 20 and 25. Most of them were university students from an arts university and involved in some kind of left-wing or artistic activism. The three-storey house was managed by an open plenary which coordinated the refurbishment process and the activities in the house. The core of the house was a café/bar like room ('the Salon') in the basement where public debates, cultural events, bar evenings, political discussions, were held. The other stories were used by different activist groups, such as a free and independent social counselling association. The group also organised an open flea market and events like games evenings. External groups could use the premises for events like jam sessions, concerts, and discussions, if permitted after a presentation at a consensus-based 'open plenary'.

Finally, The Independent Cultural Scene (ICS) in Plovdiv was engaged with through one of the key creators of this scene. The ICS emerged from a network of friends, interested in music and cultural self-expression. The platform was marked by the individual interests, attitudes, perceptions of its members and brought together a community formed and maintained for the organisation of events. From its formation in 2014 the ICS network was occupied with establishing links between its members and bands, artists and other NGOs, at the local and national level. While keeping their identity within youth culture, they simultaneously tried to increase their social capital through debates around political and artistic issues. ICS also aimed at securing a better position of the cultural scene in the public life of the city.

The platform had a dynamic character in which ideas and initiatives emerged and relationships could be created in an unpredicted manner. Participants in the Network

often went beyond the context of the platform itself and their activity in public life could be found in various new forms of expression and participation. Some of their activities were associated with the preparatory work for Plovdiv being the European Capital of Culture in 2019 and thereby with issues of youth involvement in public life in the city, including literally on the streets of a newly reconstructed suburb and in two of the city squares or in the old town.

The chosen sites are all examples of self-organised participatory practices, primarily led and driven by young people rather than being institutionally encapsulated within a 'participation' bureaucracy. In each case there is a strong and yet very different desire for and experience of an 'otherwise', whether this relates to their families, social, political system or the cultural sphere.

Yearning is a term for this desire**,** expressed through an interplay between different practices, such as those associated with individual recognition in the case of the LGBT group in Gothenburg, physical re-appropriation of buildings as in the remaking of a derelict cinema in Plovdiv, in the beautifying of the urban environment by the Sprayers in Frankfurt, or in the active creation of alternative musical, artistic and cultural scenes present to a greater or lesser extent in each site. It is expressed also in a certain fullness of happiness, which hooks termed a sense of a 'beloved community' and which emerged for the researchers in each of these sites as a momentary experience of joyful connectedness. The non-bureaucratic and non-corporate places chosen for meetings, the physical labour is undertaken in recreating rooms as dwellings and performance spaces, the beautifying of urban sites and edge lands with colour: all these are non-verbal aspects of the ethnographies which provide the powerful unspoken context of our analysis.

The necessity to create an elsewhere and a set of alternative practices for home here witnessed from different groups, all share in common a notion of that the ordinary restricts or opposes self-expressions and self-determination. The need to re-imagine a 'communitas' could arise forcibly as a result of a difficult and even disastrous experience of family, but it also refers to issues of national and transnational belonging, not least those emerging from traumatic experiences of war, migration and border-crossing. In this sense, the question of 'home' is at the heart of the material we consider (Söderqvist, Sjöblom, and Bülow 2016) even when it is not expressly articulated except as family, belonging and loyalty.

The creative search for moments in which the yearnings are brought to bear for a life and community lived otherwise was apparent in all cases as was its momentary existence as part of life, before the powerful constraints of a fully institutionalised adult life are felt. We now go on to consider four processes we have identified through which these 'ideal spaces' are coming into being.

A place where communities are born

> R: Let me think … Yes … The Post-Culture Scene, I want to say, it's not a club. Rather, it functions driven by the idea to be … well … a meeting place for people like … like the Crystal Park in Sofia, the Buttons, Fountains, Dzhumayata in Plovdiv, or something. That's … that's one of the ideas behind the Post-Culture Scene. A place where communities are born. From then on, anything might happen. I mean, the satisfaction of different tastes as … as a way to build communities, but the goal itself is not to build a music scene … but rather to build a community.
> (ICS, Plovdiv, fieldnotes)

R from Plovdiv is engaged in a group responsible for arranging concerts and debate among young people in a Post-Culture Scene which explicitly challenged the emergence of rival nationalisms. Having undertaken a walk which ended in the abandoned and recreated cinema which is now the home of ICS, quiet during the day, full of music at night, he reflects upon what actually motivates their engagement. Drawing on other similar places, or rather social spheres, he reaches the formulation that this has to do with making something novel happen. 'To build' – to be the facilitator for something to be born, the innovation of a new community set to earth. The community referred to can be understood in a spatial sense – a location where people join, but also in social sense, meaning a group committed to each other, but first and foremost to something higher, to something authentic – to an ideal space. This theme emerges too in the words of a Sprayer from Frankfurt, who also identifies with an ultras' supporter group:

> Be it the crew or be it ultras, for me it is all about community, that's what counts for me, I need a family … we go partying together, we go to the youth centre [where the crew emerged], we chill at my place … that's what crew is about and not the fame you get […] if I call one he's there and you can call me any time, I jump out of my bed immediately. (Sprayers, interview, Frankfurt)

In this narrative of the graffiti crew, the community has a double function for the interviewee; it expresses a yearning for belongingness 'communitas' and life direction, a dream of another family. It also serves to redefine and rebalancing his identity from being (male) deviant and a strive for individual power ('fame') towards creativity, sociality, sensitivity and reflexivity expressed by their community. The issue of appropriating public space (when making drawings in the public) appears secondary in his story. However, his presumption of contributing to the beauty of the city, and making it home-like, by painting pops up once again when asked in the end for a final comment: '[this city] is the coolest place in the world'. (Sprayers). Crew members can gather in the youth centre, but they move everywhere, marking and knowing the city through its graffiti 'tags'.

The desire for social and political change, for belonging, recognition and to find a place for the articulation of another identity elsewhere than in the 'ordinary' life and society, comes to realisation in processes of joint experimentation. The space is an open room for various suggestions about what activities should take place, what their goals on short term and long-term basis might be, and how these activities could link to group and individual enactments and self-understanding. Nevertheless, it is also defined by its borders both enabling the internal social sphere and its norms and values, and separating it from the world outside. As exemplified also by the TYC in Gothenburg, the idea of a space of their own finds its definition a constant conjunction to what it is not in the world outside.

> The common facility the group has access to serves an important function. Group members meet here just to sit and talk, but also to organize events such as movie nights and Christmas parties. Characteristic is the warm and friendly atmosphere created on such occasions. This is something that many in the group stress as central, and they also think that the TYC manages to create this feeling of togetherness better than other similar venues. (Fieldnotes, Gothenburg)

Breaking out of the ordinary

An ambivalent and often antagonistic relation to ordinary life is to be found in each of the spaces. When they consider the hegemonic attitudes and values thought to dominate the general 'normal' society, fitting into this is generally not motivating their participation in the particular networks and groups we followed. On the contrary, the ordinary could for some groups, such as the TYC in Sweden, be something scary, a reminder of having been excluded and disregarded.

> [Their venue] is a place where young people can feel free to be 'themselves' without pressure from denunciatory norms and values. But at the same time the very existence of the group is a constant reminder of the identity of difference from which the group members understand themselves. (Researcher reflection, National report, Gothenburg, 50)

The ordinary could stand for something limiting of their freedom to explore new forms of self-expression as individuals or groups. The ordinary functioned as a counter reference into their exploration and definitional work reflected in their own ways of doing, and how they presented themselves. In this way, the ordinary worked as a much-needed point of departure in a journey heading towards an undecided place of arrival. Even if the ordinary was perceived as a threat they tried to get away and hide from, it was nevertheless something they attempted to change.

> The entrance of the Network's place is changed by attaching numerous posters. There are posters of music groups or events, but most of them are from the times of the Soviet Union. / … / [They] concern art, more concretely – socialist realism and agitprop movement, as well as a metaphor for 'ideology'. M says: '- they are [the posters] here to create the impression that you go into a place with ideology' (online informal conversation with M). [His own band] has its influences and interactions with the platform of the Network … [Their] song 'Narkompros' is named in connection with the People's Commissariat of Education of the Russian Soviet Republic. The text can be interpreted as a description of a utopian world, a world under the influence of ideology (Fieldnotes, Plovdiv, National report, p. 25)

The underlying thought, in many of the cases, was that the ordinary has a colonising effect on (the majority of) people was something to escape from – whether this was represented by the usual hit-list pop music scene, the public art or the traditional hegemonies about gender and sexuality. Participation in their specific group would, therefore, have a de-colonising effect, allowing for new ways of understanding both themselves and the world around them.

The ordinary could also present itself as an omnipresent gaze from the public, towards which they responded in their self-presentation of who they really are, as being different and other than anticipated. By breaking out from the mundane and ordinary, they felt allowed to search for and attempt to realise hopes. These were connected to dreams for something substantial to believe in. The search was for something authentic and trustworthy for them to invest their desires, activities and identities in – it had to do with the meaning of living an authentic life, a 'real' life in a dignified way. Their participation can in these ways link to a desire for 'communitas' and deeper existential levels of meaning. Therefore, the importance of the set-up emerged: if they were daring to invest such treasure connected to inner parts of their own selves and emotions, the set-up must be shown to allow and assist in the authentic realisation

of an ‘otherwise’ addressing people’s actual dreams, everyday problems and real-life contingencies.

> You know, executors of the people’s sovereignty, they pervert people’s ideas and desires through the institutions they form. For me, the connection between politics and people consists precisely in the desires, problems and tasks that people want to solve. (ICS, interview, Plovdiv)

To be taken seriously, seen as having something meaningful to contribute for others seems to be motivating for being part of the participatory practices. Participants in each of these sites embraced the idea of openness to each other and (to different degrees) underlined the importance of group solidarity, but this was enabled by protective measures.

Differentiated openness

Openness is one of the defining features of these settings. This feature could manifest itself on structural level as a willingness to be inclusive to different groups being part of the setting, but also at micro level social interaction for example by allowing and supporting individual enactments of self and identity. The employment of a listening position towards each other seems to be crucial for this to take place. However, despite the idea of openness, (or maybe what makes this possible), in each site, there were mechanism serving to uphold and control its limits and place boundaries around it. We will now first consider boundaries between the groups and the outside: what and whom could not be a part of the group? Questions of boundaries and the internal controlling mechanism will later be discussed under the theme ‘protected zones for experimentation’.

If boundaries are to be effective, (boundary) work has to be undertaken to safeguard their function as dividing mechanisms (Gieryn 1983; Lamont and Molnár 2002). Openness does not come about or reconstruct itself just by letting things evolve by themselves, but is a particular form of a social sphere. Therefore, openness is realised by the help of social regulating mechanisms defining and displacing what is not taken as part. In some examples, this could point out what is threatening, or in embodied form, the enemy to the group. The external reference gave meaning and direction to the group ‘under oath’ (Sartre 2004) and functioned as a fuel to ignite group dynamics.

Thus, the idea of the open social room must be understood in relation to its limits, borders and counterparts not sharing or being a part of this openness. For both the Sprayers and PCC in Frankfurt this might be represented by conservative art societies, similarly for the ICS in Plovdiv, and for the TYC it was the heterosexual normative discourse that gave them meaning and their group oath. Borders could give the members an assurance of being accepted and acknowledged, but they also worked to separate from the external world – something that worked in multiple ways and could result in a feeling of being set apart in the same time as being included in the safe haven.

> [T]he pure existence of the group is a constant reminder of the identity as trans-person, something that many of the members really want to get away from. TYC aims to make LGBTQ-identity accepted and normalized in everyday life. At the same time, the forming of the group is based on a distinction, which, although it starts out from a positive identity, always risks functioning as a distinguishing identification. (Researcher reflection Gothenburg)

The boundary work seemed to follow different logics, that characterised each setting somewhat differently, and it also created some tensions internally. At one extreme one could find mechanisms facilitating 'globalness', and at the other those promoting the 'safe haven'. The first one urging for broad inclusiveness and openness, and the second restricting what are seen as threats to the specific collective and individual identity formation. The balance between these positions shows their liminal position as it weighs differently in respect to their specific needs and current situation and could also change over time. But, perhaps somewhat paradoxically, in order to achieve openness, they had to incorporate some regulating mechanisms that differentiated between them and the outer world.

Boundary work would appear in different shapes, as exemplified in the PCC. Some would be hard to miss or neglect, such as when they united in mistrust and reluctance to engage with the landlord of the building they occupied. Others were less distinct like those working as a socio-cultural grid sorting out those that met the required capital (Bourdieu 1984). These functioned primarily on a self-selection basis, making the PCC most attractive for those already equipped with the social and cultural preferences embodied in the social room. As shown by the informal conduct code for meetings, those who already adhere to the specific reflected and well-organised communication applied, would be the ones that fit in smoothly. Others would likely prefer another place and community to spend their time with.

> Differences or even competition between the suggestions aren't immediately perceptible to an outsider like me. / … / There are never any disturbances in the sense of interjections, tonal discontent or thoughtless remarks. The comments are almost never in negative response to the speaker but are worded something along the lines of 'I do not agree with what you/XY say/s'. Neither can any other form of counter speech be detected. Such elements are usually expected to link a discussion, but are hardly found here, one suggestion is in line with the other. As an observer I can hardly tell who – maybe even secretly – is rooting for who. However, they seem to reach a consent in the end and L, being the group leader, summarizes its elements that are commentated by either nods or hand gestures. (Fieldnotes, PCC, Frankfurt)

The informal barriers seem to function as equally powerful mechanisms to gather a distinct social category, as more formal membership appliances would do. Even if 'outsiders' are officially welcomed, there are apparently a division working, for example, few without higher education or with migrant background take part in the activities.

Protected zones of experimentation

In order to create the open social room they were striving for, they did not just differentiate themselves from the outside 'ordinary' world but also used obvious elements for internal control. These controlling mechanisms were more apparent in some groups than others, but generally functioned to regulate communicative structures, ideology and membership. They could for example concern rules for meetings: letting each one's voice be heard, not interrupting each other and resolving disputes and reaching decisions on a consensus basis (PCC, TYC). The control aspect is crucial because it helped to define different activities and people. It decided on whether or not to these were in line with the ideology, and thereby regulated the inner life and collective identity and overall monitor the hallway

binding the ordinary and the alternative together. Exclusion would be the ultimate mechanism to protect the group from losing its moral/ideological compass or from falling apart.

Boundary work served to divide persons, behaviours, attitudes and overall moral standards into accepted and rejected categories. As shown below this might be a quite fine-grained qualification, in which cultural similarity does not pass as a ticket of entry to the group. This could just as easily be interpreted as fake, or an un-legitimised self-righteousness to experiment with 'sacred' parts of the group, especially when it comes from outsiders, touristing or playing around with their cultural expressions. The scene evolves at a graffiti scene when the researcher starts a communication with 'S' a person she had not met before, something not well seen from 'P', a Sprayer's member.

> S says that he is different and not everyone understands, 'those here as well'. His tag had already been painted over and he wanted to take photos of it today, but he had arrived too late. […] I can see P running at a distance to the sports field. I get up and tell my conversation partner that I have to go to him (pointing at P). P hugs me and makes his way in the direction of his friend. He says: 'With what kind of strange people are you talking with now? Do not tell him anything!' I answer that he told me something about university and that I had not really understood who belongs here. P turns and points at S, and says that he is 'his wanker' that he had 'dragged along'. They all 'ride the short bus', being all 'as hipster as he is'. He points to S's socks that he is wearing with sneakers and laughs. (Fieldnotes, Sprayers)

The combination of openness and control turns the realisation of the ideal spaces not simply into zones of experimentation, but towards protected zones for experimentation. They are protected from being exploited from mechanism and values that are thought to dominate the outside world, whether consumerism, sexism, racism or homophobia. In the excerpt above this is exemplified by keeping a distance from 'arty' university students, who, if accepted, could appropriate their art and turn their expressions to something out of their control.

The commitment that their space would also be internally protected from bullying, derogatory comments or from other behaviour seen as rude was especially apparent in some of the groups. These internal regulating mechanisms were not always or usually encoded formally into rules of behaviour with stipulated sanctions. Rather they were made visible first in everyday practice, and shown in such as breaks in the social flow, a sudden silence taking place instead of conviviality. The rule of conduct would in these moments be articulated ad hoc. A central mechanism seems to be emotional, using the sense of un-easiness associated to when the group recognises threats against inner solidarity and their capacity of being in a safe haven, in other words when the group oath is threatened.

> At a dinner a situation occurred when one of the participants asked a critical question concerning another person's potential use of tobacco. This created a sudden crack in the atmosphere, which was dissolved when the recreation leader [youth worker] intervened and pointed to the agreement in the group not to comment upon each other's habits in various respects. The incident was quickly resolved, but it points at the vulnerability of internal communication, also in this kind of tightly knit groups. (Reflective fieldnote TYC)

Another interesting example of this internal regulating mechanism was observed at the PCC. The intention was to facilitate engagement and providing a meeting place for friends in a homely environment, where one was recognised as a whole person. The

ideal place was in this respect an attempt to materialise a space where one could act and feel authentically, be acknowledged as the person one wants to be, and also to host a process of experimentation about what this vision could mean in reality.

However, creating this alternative space did not come automatically. They experienced many challenges, represented by financial problems in covering the rent, thefts for example by beverages not being paid for, and in the insecurity of living on short term contracts because the house was about to be demolished. There were also social challenges, directly threatening the group oath. Not all of the participants had internalised the communication regulations, shown in rude behaviour and deviant opinions about the way forward for the place.

There were two general ways to protect the group and the ideas. First, there was a highly structured and worked out a regulation code for the communication at meetings. They followed a formalised agenda for the plenary in which all important decisions were taken in consensus. Everyone was expected to talk one at the time, communicate in I-messages, taking notice of statements from the others, and were supposed to keep the discussion in the line of the present issue. They had also worked out a way of agreeing, opposing and voting to reach a common understanding. If someone deviated from this conduct code, they were later informed about the meeting regulations.

Second, they had also strategies for safeguarding moral standards, using symbolic ways (exemplified by a 'rumour-list' put up at a wall), a kind a whole group confessions and excuses, and had also organised an 'awareness team'. This was commissioned to uphold the moral standard and sanction behaviours. The awareness team engaged in situations when the (informal) conduct code was threatened, and suggested solutions before the plenum. In more serious situations this could lead to a ban on a person from coming to the place.

During the observations of a plenary such an issue was addressed considering 'S' who was accused of having called 'F' a Nazi, and another one 'L' a son of a bitch. S was not welcomed to the place again until she explained her behaviour, but had so far rejected. L (below) is a leading figure at PCC, M and Fo are members and participating in the meeting.

> […] L explains, that, when it comes to these kinds of conflicts, there are certain structures and people who step in and try to solve things before people are driven away by others, as it was the case with F. He thanks the awareness-team, a group he isn't involved in, for doing such a great job and for being there. / … /
>
> Then M turns to Fo and apologizes for having hurt his feelings [another issue]. It's now time to 'take a good look at one's own behaviour' and to reconsider the 'rumour-list'. (PCC, Frankfurt, fieldnotes)

Quarrels, disputes, rude behaviour were more or less apparent in all of the four sites, possibly less in those closer to the logics of realising a safe haven, such as the TYC. These potential or open conflicts can in all likelihood be traced back to group dynamics occurring in assemblies of different people joined together with a mission of doing something else. In these cases, many members were profoundly engaged and held strong opinions, and negotiated both about their own identity and the collective. So, participation was not always a joyful journey towards a defined goal. It could sometimes be an energy-costly travel through a rough landscape in which they had to make the road as they

walked it, and thereby accommodate between the ideological statutes and practical contingencies. With some exceptions for the CSI where a leading member maintained that monitoring conduct and moral standings of individuals might diffuse the sight on the higher purpose of art, the cases had more or less formalised ways to deal with perceived deviations. The general picture is that protection mechanisms played an important, but often invisible, part of the set up.

Anti-structure and the right for self-recognition and determination

Lefebvre (1996) declared that the right to the city is a right for everyone, to every public space and to appropriate it from collective needs and meanings. But the 'cry and demand' for appropriation, recognition and autonomy are un-evenly distributed and more called and desperate for those in a marginalised position, those who are un-heard or silenced. In a similar vein hooks (2014) maintain that the 'cry and demands' are profoundly based in a yearning for collective and individual self-determination and equality. Yearning occurs at the boundary between what is and what might be, in the process of boundary work which remakes the meanings of spaces and territories. It is first of all a matter of affect and emotion, wordless to a degree, with aspects of longing and desire and dreaming. This article suggests its presence in the practices of young people creating alternative spaces.

Victor Turner (1975) coined the term anti-structure for organisations and structures coming out from struggles to create something else than the ordinary spaces dominated by hegemonic power in society. Anti-structures compositions emerge 'betwixt and between' established structures, and are thereby occupied by boundary work (Gieryn 1983; Lamont and Molnár 2002) connecting and dis-connected to what is desired and un-wanted from other systems. Boundary work also regulates the internal interplay and what norms and values could and should be imported, excluded and innovated. Further, anti-structures are composed of liminality and communitas (Turner 1975). These concepts refer to the continuously happening translation and transformation processes in which the specific structure/social sphere is reproduced. Liminality refers to transgressing, to un-decidedness, a state of being apart from but still dependent on and affected by other logics, and communitas to the process from which a collective is produced from (Söderlund and Borg 2017). Communitas is exciting and makes people work together and develop organisational habits, structures and rules of behaviour, but is also threatened if copying traditional, law-bound structures (Meira 2014; Pöyhönen 2018; Turner 2012, 4).

The practice of yearning (hooks 2014) was elaborated in the context of African American thinking against a racist system. It proposed a movement – in joy – towards a community founded in love, 'the beloved community'. It is now being re-engaged with as a concept which can support an understanding of the micro-politics of community development (Carpenter, Emejulu, and Taylor 2016) in ways congruent with the examples we have presented.

In the present analysis, the supposed unity underlying and sustaining a sense of 'beloved community' has been both unsettled and strengthened by an attention to and recognition of the generative powers of boundary-making in relation to difference. The dream for another place dominated by other ideas than in ordinary society was clearly

a driving force in each of the sites discussed. Young people explored and experimented with social spheres in a liminal position to other systems, thus a kind of anti-structure emerged based on communitas, transgression, but also boundary-making.

All the young people's practices and spaces discussed above are marked as non-conforming to a degree, some through political or sexual dissidence, others through the forms taken by their creativity, be it graffiti or music. They all seek to break out of the ordinary. This suggests a way of re-imaging a democratic practice which can momentarily elude the pressures of neoliberal consumerism, and harness or fuel desires which move away both from the market and traditional hierarchies, particularly but not only those of age. But this will also need safeguarding and protection.

Conclusion

This article is focussed on young people's capacities to yearn for, make and imagine another place, another kind of 'home' and belonging. These places of fluidity and differing, these protected zones of experimentation are also temporal and temporary fragile dwellings; they are momentary. Displacement and a sense of differing are now at the centre of many young lives; what is experienced as a home may thereby be fleeting. In earlier discussions of democratic networks, alliances and coalitions, 'home' was associated with identity and a certain protected zone of freedom (Young 1990), whereas the necessary 'open social rooms' and 'differentiated openness' of coalitions and alliances of politics and democracy were associated with a sense of threat and danger and difficulty, but nevertheless regarded as essential. In escaping the ordinary, young people do seek to protect their spaces, but this need not be in order to control and establish anti-democratic hierarchies. It is often in order to experiment with new and ideal ways of being. The marking of boundaries may be seen as holding, however momentarily, a sense of belonging and trust from which participation in a wider flow of social relations, might emerge. The 'ideal place' can be found both in safe havens and among those groups reaching for global connectedness. (Since this study was completed this is evident in the school strikes for climate emergency.) It can embrace both the protections of home and the openness of coalitions and thereby has potential both to enable the imagination of and provide an education in new forms of democratic life. In this way, young people's cultural yearnings and participation practices may be seen as precursors of a possible democracy to come for all, far removed though they may seem from the more usual framings of 'youth participation'.

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