

## Chapter 12

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# Everyday pedagogies

## New perspectives on youth participation, social learning and citizenship

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### Introduction

A major contribution of the PARTISPACE research has been to broaden and deepen our understanding of what it means for young people to participate. The research shows us that, while young people may not be engaging in social, economic and political processes in ways that fit mainstream discourses, they are nonetheless actively participating by giving meaning to their lives and taking action together following their own visions and values. While their participation may sometimes engage with mainstream political processes and broader social issues (see Chapter 5), our research clearly shows the importance of everyday settings and issues rooted in their life worlds. This suggests that opportunities for democratic learning and participation are not solely dependent on formalised structures but also emerge from the actions and choices of young people themselves, as they reflexively engage with their social, political and environmental worlds through everyday acts of participation and citizenship (Moosa-Mitha, 2005; Isin, 2008; Percy-Smith, 2015).

These insights into multiple, emerging and situationally specific forms of participation pose challenges for policy and practice in terms of inclusive citizenship and democratic participation, while also problematising the assumptions underlying traditional approaches to citizenship education (see Chapters 5 and 8). How can young people learn and develop the skills and capabilities of active citizenship within a context of often un-recognised forms of participation that emerge out of everyday life struggles and initiatives, especially when trust and belief in conventional mainstream political structures is in decline? While there is an expanding literature on the nature and scope of youth participation (Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2010; Ekman and Amnå, 2012; Loncle et al., 2012; Percy-Smith, 2015; Pilkington et al., 2017), less is understood of the ways in which participation evolves when it is led and shaped by young people.

This chapter draws on learning from action research projects conducted with young people as part of the PARTISPACE research to explore the implications of young people's changing forms of participation for innovating pedagogies of participation and citizenship. It aims to offer a new perspective

on everyday pedagogies of youth participation understood as processes of situated social learning in action, as young people reflexively engage with and make sense of everyday contexts.

This chapter begins by reviewing some critiques of citizenship education, introducing the ideas of Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR), and explaining how these were adopted (and adapted) in PARTISPACE. The main part of this chapter focuses on particular aspects of young people's participation in the projects: the ways in which young people develop agency and capacity through experience; the significance of experimentation, creativity and emergence; reflexive learning and negotiation of boundaries; and relational practices of participatory social learning. This is followed by critical reflection on the role of adults in youth participation initiatives, and by the articulation of a new framework of situated participatory learning for citizenship.

### **Pedagogies of participation and the challenge of education for citizenship**

There has been an extended and significant discussion in the discipline of education which challenges the idea of citizenship education as a practice which attempts to transmit received notions of citizenship through a formal curriculum. Following the influential work of Biesta and colleagues (Biesta et al., 2009; Wildemeersch, 2014), attention has focused on what contexts support citizenship learning, the relationships in which it is fostered and the dispositions towards enquiry and experimentation that need to be supported. It has been recognised that practices of democratic learning occur as much outside as inside school, and that networks which support it may be engaged in non- and informal ways in situated social learning and communities of practice which enable democracy.

In the consequent exploration of the networks of everyday practice in which citizenship learning might be said to occur, there has been a further recognition that children and young people should not be seen as 'not-yet-citizens' but as fellow citizens as they are a part of the same network (in which citizenship learning is occurring) as enfranchised others. Learning moves in more than one direction within a complex network and is not situated only in the child or young person. There are important links here with the development of claims for children as equal citizens which have developed in the literature on children's participation (see Jans, 2004; Cockburn, 2013). More recently, thinkers in the field have problematised social learning, emphasising the importance of an orientation towards the public and asking why a consensus orientation so frequently develops when democratic learning is framed as social learning (Biesta, De Bie and Wildemeersch, 2014).

Despite a traditional underpinning of professional youth work practice in terms of education and democracy based on experiential learning (cf. Dewey, 1938) in some national contexts (Batsleer, 2008), participation is often

manifest as a structured process of socialisation into the status quo, with little space for autonomy and self-determination of young people (Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2010). As Bentley (1998: 6) argues:

Young people are not empty vessels waiting to be filled with the wisdom of ages. From the earliest age they begin to convert their experiences into assumptions and theories about the world [...] But [...] instruction encourages them to place what they learn in a narrowly-bounded category, failing to give them the means to compare [with] other assumptions and experiences that make up their world view.

The ability to reflect critically on their world, and their position in it, is central to the struggle for many young people as they seek to find their position as equal and active citizens. Reflecting critically on experience is also central to participatory action research processes and as such has been increasingly recognised as a valuable approach in youth research (see, for example, Cammarota and Fine, 2008).

### **Youth participatory action research**

Action research is commonly understood as a process of participatory learning in action, in which participants are involved as co-researchers in a process of critical inquiry with a view to bringing about change (Weil, 1998; McTaggart et al., 2017). Carr and Kemmis (1986: 162) state that: 'Action research is simply a form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve [...] their own practices, their understanding of these practices and the situations in which the practices are carried out'. While action research tends to be facilitated by an external researcher, Participatory Action Research (PAR) is initiated by the participants (Reason and Bradbury, 2001; Cahill, 2007). Researchers and activists have increasingly recognised the value of PAR as an approach to participatory learning and change with young people, known as YPAR (McIntyre, 2000; Cammarota and Fine, 2008; Caraballo et al., 2017).

Drawing on critical youth studies, Quijada Cerecer et al. (2013) interpret YPAR as providing a critical praxis for policy makers and educators to value knowledge created with young people in collaboration and action to challenge research, policy and educational reform. Cammarota and Fine (2008) similarly see YPAR as a pedagogy of transformational resistance in which 'young people resist the normalization of systematic oppression by undertaking their own engaged praxis – critical and collective inquiry, reflection and action focused on 'reading' and speaking back to the reality of the world, their world' (ibid.: 1–2). They argue that through critical learning, young people can contest and reconstruct pedagogical discourses and norms: 'By attaining knowledge for resistance and transformation, young people create their own sense of efficacy in

the world and address the social conditions that impede liberation and positive, healthy development' (ibid.: 9–10). In this sense, YPAR is both an emancipatory discourse and an approach to research. While there are an increasing number of empirical studies addressing the methodological challenges of YPAR (see, for example, Rodriguez and Brown, 2009; Kim, 2016; Burke et al., 2017), there is relatively little empirical evidence of the ways in which young people self-organise, engage and learn participation in these contexts.

### **The PARTISPACE action research projects**

The overall PARTISPACE project included a phase of action research, intended to provide a space for young people to explore and give meaning to their participation on their own terms. We were acutely aware of the constraints of undertaking an action research process within a time-limited EU project with prescribed deliverables, but we tried to honour the fundamental PAR principle of valuing the expert knowledge of the young people we were researching. Our intentions were to provide opportunities for young people to explore and articulate their own understanding of participation experientially through undertaking their own projects on issues and questions they identified as important to them. We hoped to observe how young people mobilise, organise and respond to issues that concern them, and so to understand more about how they develop and make sense of their own forms of participation and learning for citizenship, an objective we hoped would also be beneficial for young people.

The overall research questions in this phase were:

- 1 How do young people construct meanings of participation from their own experience?
- 2 How can young people realise different forms of participation in action?
- 3 What affects whether and how young people participate in these ways?
- 4 How might young people develop understanding about how to enhance the way they participate in society?

Eighteen participatory action research projects were undertaken across the eight cities; 13 emerged from earlier ethnographic local case studies and were founded on existing relationships with the research team, while 5 were with new groups (see Chapter 1). Projects developed differently, some almost totally youth-led while others involved extensive discussion with PARTISPACE researchers. The relationship between adult researchers and young people varied according to the experience of the researchers and their personal styles, as well as the readiness of young people to take the initiative. While some projects progressed relatively easily, some faced obstacles, and a few came to a halt because of young people's other commitments.

The projects took different shapes according to young people's interests. We identified the following types of purpose: struggles for inclusion and

justice, finding solutions to social problems, articulating their own values and identities, encouraging others to participate. Some projects followed a classical action research model, characterised by cycles of reflection and action, while others were more about simply getting something done and learning from the experience. In reality, most projects could be seen as 'quasi' action research. Certainly, all the projects enabled learning both from the process and from the outcomes, together with some wider reflections on youth participation (Table 12.1).

All the projects involved discussions between professional researchers and young people to reflect on their experience, the significance of what they had done and what they had learned about the different ways they had participated.

Table 12.1 Action research projects grouped by project aims

Project	City
<i>Struggles for inclusion and justice</i>	
Hidden (arts project by young refugees on their life situation)	Manchester
Islamic Youth Association (arts project by young Muslims in Italy)	Bologna
Solidarity with Refugees (organisation cum humanitarian aid for refugees)	Eskişehir
The Box (arts project by homeless young people on their life situation)	Manchester
<i>Articulating values and identities</i>	
Free Sport Association (charity project of young free sports activists)	Gothenburg
Political and Cultural Centre (documentation of self-organisation process)	Frankfurt
the Drama Group (process of self-organisation)	Gothenburg
Hoodboys (video project on meaning of graffiti)	Frankfurt
Hip Hop group (self-organisation as band and production of songs)	Frankfurt
<i>Finding solutions to social problems</i>	
Youth Entrepreneurship Foundation (urban regeneration of waste land)	Plovdiv
Youth Rights Association (workshop on youth participation)	Eskişehir
Manchester Young Researchers (research, campaign on homelessness)	Manchester
Girls Group (research, campaign on bullying)	Zurich
Youth workers (self-organisation of training)	Eskişehir
<i>Peer activation and engagement</i>	
Political Youth Association (research, campaign on self-organisation)	Zurich
Party Youth Section (research, video on political orientations of youth)	Plovdiv
Partireennes (research on meaning of youth participation)	Rennes
L'Eprouvette (video on young people's views of participation)	Rennes

In most cases, young people were supported with finance and logistics. In contrast to the ethos in PAR of not imposing outcomes, as a result of prescribed deliverables in our EU project, each city team was expected to submit a video film from the action research, together with self-documentation by the young people. National reports were produced drawing on learning from each project, including documentation and outputs produced by young people, as well as observations and reflections from the research teams. This paper draws on secondary analysis of the national reports (see McMahon et al., 2018). In what follows and in line with the ethics of PAR, we privilege the experiences and learning in these projects, rather than seek to fit a priori theories and frameworks. We acknowledge an element of selection and filtering that occurs in any writing from empirical data.

### **Changing contexts: youth participation and learning in action**

In the following sections, we discuss four key themes that emerged from the action research projects and illuminate the ways in which young people learn to participate as citizens through their experience of action together, when they are able to define and control the practice. These are developing agency and capability through experience; spaces for autonomy, experimentation and emergence; reflexive learning and negotiation of boundaries; and participation as relational practice.

#### ***Developing agency and capability through experience***

Previous chapters have demonstrated how young people may readily participate through their own styles and spaces and according to their own agenda. Participation in everyday contexts provides opportunities for young people to engage in ways that are relevant to their immediate lives and in alignment with individual and group interests, in terms of expressions of values and lifestyle choices as well as through contribution to decision-making and change processes.

In everyday contexts, these different aims of participation play out through young people's spontaneous action, making decisions about what they do as they do it. In this way, we can conceive of youth participation as situated learning and action. A common characteristic in many forms of youth participation is to embark on some form of participation without necessarily having a clear plan of action, only that there is an issue or problem to address. This involves learning through action: exploring issues, coming up with plans, perhaps trying them out, revisiting the problem, creating new plans, taking action, encountering difficulties and finding ways to resolve these. The following extract captures the dynamics of a project that a group of young people in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, embarked upon as they sought to mobilise students in turning urban derelict land into something useable.

The students established that though the school was state owned and subjected to the Ministry of Education, the land on which it was built and which included the schoolyard was public municipal property so any action directed at renovation should involve two more stakeholders: the principal of the school and the Municipal Council. The next stage of the process supposed another wider meeting with school students, to determine which ideas for renovation could be gathered and which of them would really make young people interested and ready to join the whole activity. Establishing a skate park on the spot emerged as the most debated idea during the brainstorming session. While some of the participants argued that it would be unique for the schools in the city, especially against the backdrop of lacking so many such places at all in the city, and thus would attract serious attention, others warned about supposed too high costs of the whole enterprise. A more consensual idea was posed – creating a park area which would not cost so much because plenty of the work (cleaning, planting trees and flowers, etc.) could be done by the students themselves and could involve different place uses. In the end, a recreational park with various facilities dependent on the opportunities and the funding set up as the plan to be followed.

(Action research report, Plovdiv)

These types of participation offer opportunities for learning in real time about participation for change. Young people through taking responsibility for a project can learn through the experience, both by confronting the real complexities of struggling for change and through realising their own abilities in practice. This means becoming aware of limits to their agency, but also learning sometimes that they can do more than they thought, by using their power and creativity in responding to problems. In the project with Manchester Young Researchers, most of the young people had experience participating as part of a formal Youth Representative Forum and acknowledged that they derived many benefits from this. At the same time, they expressed frustration about how the representation operated and a sense that their participation was somewhat constrained by its agenda. They were highly motivated to make use of an opportunity to self-organise in response to the issue of youth homelessness that they had voted was most important for them, but without the formal youth representation structure were also faced with the reality of what was entailed in participating in change processes. As one young person said,

Participation is a process and is about learning, ever learning ... finding out the best thing to do as we do it, about the challenges and not meeting deadlines and how that affects things, and solving problems as they come up.

(Young person, Manchester Young Researchers)

While facing dilemmas in seeking to participate, these opportunities for experiential learning were valued and embraced as part of the rich tapestry of participation driven by and for young people themselves.

Part of the learning in these projects involved bridging between their visions and ideas and what was realistic and achievable in practice as the Bulgarian research team reflected with regard to the process of one of their action research projects with the youth section of a political party:

The group wanted to deal with an all-encompassing problem of how to overcome political apathy of young people. This was a live issue that was often discussed. We tried to direct them towards a more concrete research problem which would be more manageable within the resources available. As a result of the action research the political party group re-framed their general question as ‘Is it possible to turn efforts combatting political apathy into a genuinely mobilizing cause for more and more young people?’

(Action research report, Plovdiv)

They learned that there is complexity in change projects involving the need to engage different stakeholders, and that such projects take time, for example, dealing with administrative processes. In the case above, the project leaders reflected on how implementing plans depends on the ‘eagerness and will for inclusion of the whole community, and the cooperation of the authorities’ (Young person, Youth Entrepreneurship Foundation, Plovdiv). This also involved understanding the practices, priorities and procedures of the authorities.

Through these different forms of experiential learning, young people exercise and derive a sense of empowerment from practice. As one of the researchers involved in the action research project with the youth section of the political party in Plovdiv reflected:

The practical conviction of possibility of change through one’s own efforts is among the best outcomes of action research projects. Thus, the young may move from the phase of being only critical of politics and ready to leave the country to organized group attempts at changing the way politics is done in the country and in the city.

(Action research report, Plovdiv)

### ***Spaces for autonomy, experimentation and emergence***

Earlier chapters provide evidence for how young people use and appropriate spaces with their own styles and agenda (see especially Chapters 6, 7 and 9). Similarly, learning from the participatory action research projects provides insights into the importance for young people having freedom to engage in



different modes of participation. In the context of change projects, young people value having space to be independent, experimental and creative:

I like how we have the freedom, we don't get controlled by it ... the council can be a bit tokenistic, like we have something on the agenda then someone high up puts something on the agenda. We just want the chance of being independent ... it's important to have independence – it's a learning curve.

(Young person, Manchester Young Researchers)

This means having the power to decide both *how* they engage and *what* they engage in. Personal agency and empowerment are facilitated through young people having the opportunity for autonomous participation and self-determination. Informal and non-formal contexts can often enable such autonomous participation to happen more easily for young people, as they provide spaces not controlled by adult agendas and more formalised processes, as in the case of a drama group by young people in Gothenburg.

The Drama Group engaged in the action research project because it wanted to shift away from participating within the formal structure of the Culture school, towards participation characterized by self-initiation and self-management. In so doing, the action research project they devised involved a creative process (the play) and a process of learning how structures work (for becoming independent).

(Action research report, Gothenburg)

There was no pre-defined method for how young people participated. We saw pragmatism, spontaneity and emergence as they developed their projects. This was a journey without a 'satnav', where decisions and actions emerged organically from everyday conversation and engagement.

Young people demonstrate a rich imagination in establishing various activities and connect them in a coherent way.

(Action research report, Plovdiv)

There is a fluidity to young people's participation, seen here as an exploratory and experimental process. The case of a project of solidarity with refugees in Eskişehir, Turkey, reveals that young people are constantly in a dynamic process of situated social learning and action, intertwined as an expression of Freire's *praxis* (1970):

The project wanted to offer health, rights and language workshops to refugees, but there were difficulties accessing refugee groups and gaining trust. The group members realised that speaking language of refugees

contributed to building trust relationships. So they organised street food, music concert, language, health and rights workshops to make connections with refugees. In this case through the language courses the participants developed a level of language competence to enable them to shop, use amenities and talk to locals and thus helped them integrate and participate in the city.

(Action research report, Eskişehir)

Central to many projects was a desire to raise awareness and communicate the realities of young people's situations. There is something powerful for young people in just communicating who they are, rather than necessarily seeking to influence decision-making. This is participation as a struggle for recognition, a desire to communicate lived realities and values, be recognised and valued – in Honneth's (1995) terms, as a unique individual, as a person with the right to respect and as someone with a contribution to make (see also Chapter 13). This is not so much about representing different interests or perspectives, but young people as active citizens, contributing to the social fabric of the city through their activities. For some groups, participation was not about change processes but about expressions of their values in the form of sub-cultural styles through appropriation of particular spaces. Expressing themselves through artistic and cultural forms seemed to allow more scope for self-learning and identity development. For example, graffiti groups offer both a symbol of belonging and a language for telling their story. In other cases, struggles for recognition emerged in the form of striving for citizenship rights, justice or care, for example, by refugees and asylum seekers, or young homeless people (see also Chapters 8 and 9).

### ***Reflexive learning and negotiation of boundaries***

Participation is not a process of articulating fixed views and actions according to normative expectations, but one of action-oriented learning as young people position themselves between what may appear contradictory forces (insider vs. outsider positions; difference vs. acceptance; individual vs. collective meaning; self-determination vs. support; informal vs. formal processes; life worlds vs. systems; freedom vs. structure). These are the focal points for learning and change, expressed through dynamic interaction within and between groups. How young people reconcile these oppositions depends on the practices and choices they make to question, accept, transgress or confirm boundaries of groups, spaces, situations and identities.

Changes within group dynamics are characterised by learning in terms of different modes of participation such as balancing, struggling, negotiating with society and within the group, working on boundaries and taking risks.

(Action research report, Frankfurt)

One of the more explicit ways in which young people experienced transformational learning was through sharing and reflecting on personal experiences as a group. For example, the project of the Islamic Youth Association in Bologna used a lantern activity and 'narrative circle' to share experiences of being both Muslim and Italian, so constructing a stronger sense of the role of the group in their life. As one participant reflected:

I don't know, maybe now I'm feeling I know a little better the people I meet every Saturday, people who before they let us enter in a private sphere of their life, maybe wouldn't have normally told us; you feel more like in a family, isn't it? Then, a moment of trust occurred. I mean, you need to trust to tell a part of yourself as we did. Maybe in another place I probably wouldn't have told what I told. I felt comfortable at that time. Actually, I said [during the activity] I feel comfortable at the IYA. And that activity helped a lot.

(Young person, Islamic Youth Association, Bologna)

This highlights the value of having 'safe and comfortable' spaces to share and explore together; it also exemplifies the power of learning in what Kemmis (2001) refers to as 'communicative action spaces' that provide opportunities for participatory social learning for group members at the interfaces of systems and life worlds.

### **Participation as relational practice**

A key aspect of participation concerns how groups function, how decisions are made, roles and responsibilities allocated, different contributions valued and leadership manifested. In the action research projects, a recurring theme was how young people organise and function as a group. In contrast to the assumption that adults or professionals are best placed to provide opportunities for democratic learning and participation, participant observation of how young people organise to solve problems together, lead and are led, offers evidence and insight that can inform the development of participation pedagogies.

Many groups showed a democratic orientation towards consensus and avoidance of hierarchy, a commitment to share power, respect each other's contributions and engage in collective processes. Such horizontal power relations were not always easy to sustain; in many projects, individuals emerged 'naturally' as leaders, often acting in ways that mirrored adult leadership of young people's groups. This occurred when there was a need to encourage the group to keep momentum. *Ascribed* and *claimed* leadership roles sometimes emerged out of struggles within the group as individuals searched for identity and recognition. Leadership may change over time and according to tasks, or there may be a consistent leader. However, in several projects,

once one young person stepped forward, they then became the initiator of all activities. Explicitly defined roles and incentives sometimes seemed important for young people. In one project, a young person took a parodic stance of pretend leadership – perhaps in reaction to feeling not in control of things. However, for the most part, young people evidenced a commitment to fairness, inclusion and democracy, ‘puzzling together’ by utilising the ideas and problem-solving potential of the whole group, as in an arts-based project in Rennes, France:

Relationships were characterised by a climate of trust and conviviality; roles and decisions in some projects were organised on the basis of skills and responsibilities resulting in some members of the group being more invisible and less forthcoming than others.

(Action research report, Rennes)

While some groups were highly task-focused, others were more concerned with their own dynamics. Participation for the group of the Political Cultural Centre in Frankfurt, Germany, was summarised as follows:

The work has been a lot about the degree and enthusiasm of individual involvement, group dynamics, the goal of group cohesion and personal development and identity work – sometimes in conflict, sometimes in harmony.

(Action research report, Frankfurt)

A common characteristic across many groups was the importance of fun and friendship, even when dealing with important issues, reflecting an inherent sociality in young people’s participation. One young person of the Islamic Youth Association in Bologna reflected:

We dealt with serious issues, but, when you usually deal with serious issues you stay sitting, you are serious, you talk one at a time. Sometimes it could get boring. Here we did it in a very funny way, differently from what we usually do. We created the lanterns, with a story on each face. We felt more intimate.

(Young person, Islamic Youth Association, Bologna)

For the most part, projects were self-directing. In contrast to the expectations of some researchers, many young people identified the importance of having a professional to provide support, encouragement and sometimes suggestions and ideas. The extent to which participation is seen as a relational practice, therefore, is also influenced by the way in which adults engage with young people when they participate. This is explored further in the following section.

## Reflections on adult roles in youth participation

The experience of working on these projects was itself an instructive one for the research team, coming from a wide range of professional backgrounds – some in youth work or social work, others solely in academic disciplines, and from a range of methodological traditions. In moving into the facilitator role, researchers experienced directly some of the tensions and dilemmas familiar to youth workers when striving to facilitate young people's autonomy and self-expression. When does one lead, when step back? How does one decide whether to intervene with a suggestion or warning, or to let young people learn from experience? When is adult understanding of the wider world valuable to share, and when is young people's knowledge of their own world more salient? The researchers also had objectives and deadlines for project deliverables, which did not necessarily fit with the natural flow of young people's projects and availability; this is also a constraint experienced by youth workers, who may be answerable to funders or employers for delivering certain outputs.

It was necessary to move beyond a dichotomy of 'adult-led' versus 'youth-led' approaches, to explore a middle ground involving varying degrees of collaboration. There are examples of adults offering contributions which were taken up by young people, and others where they were not. In some cases, adults were expressly asked for their input. It is arguable that who initiates an idea becomes irrelevant as long as young people are able to re-animate it. Participatory practice, as a post-positivist form of knowledge production (Gibbons et al., 1994), is not hierarchical but involves all participants being free to challenge the thinking and practice of others. Notwithstanding the paradox of operating 'youth-led' processes in the context of a wider project whose boundaries and outputs had been determined by adults, within the space provided young people had a degree of freedom to use the opportunity as they wished and to call on adult support as they saw fit.

Often, in processes that purport to be participatory, the researcher or professional actually determines the agenda. In these projects, we tried to create a situation where young people could exercise power in determining their own projects and learning together with researchers. This led researchers to question their own position, reflected in comments and reflections that showed ambivalence in different ways. In post-positivist participatory approaches (Gibbons et al., 1994; Wildemeersch et al., 1998; Reason and Bradbury, 2001), effective practice is understood by the extent to which those involved can exercise power in challenging others and influencing what happens. While this is not a problem for some young people, for others, power differentials between generations may be difficult to overcome. In such cases, the imperative is on adults, conscious of inequalities, to adopt a more facilitative approach.

Ambivalence about when to intervene is especially sharp when adults perceive young people to be developing plans that present difficulties or promise

little value in terms of the young people's ambitions. While there may be good reasons for letting young people 'try and fail', this may lead to them feeling let down: young people in one project felt frustrated because they did not receive the feedback they needed from professionals on their plans for a handbook for youth workers, so that they inadvertently duplicated existing work. While young people do want more freedom to pursue their own ideas and have control and influence, this does not always mean they want to be just 'left to get on with it'. On the contrary, these projects show that young people definitely seek appropriate support from adults and value the interaction with adults in collaborative processes. This invites a rethinking of professional practice in relation to young people's participation (Percy-Smith and Weil, 2003; Mannion, 2007; Fitzgerald et al., 2010).

Youth-adult relationships are fluid, changing with situations, objectives and capabilities. When young people have a clear vision and can see how to achieve it, there may be a limited role for adults. However, when young people have a general aim but need support with resources or difficulties, or simply want to learn from others' ideas, adult roles are more present. Both young people and adults may seek to develop collaborative approaches, regardless of who initiated the project. Relationships and power issues work out in ways that are not inevitable or easily predictable, but involve more complex dynamics dependent on context and the capabilities and aims of both adults and young people. The involvement of adults is not something to be encouraged or discouraged as a general rule, but negotiated in particular acts of participation by those involved. Participation is about the negotiation of intersubjectivities in situated social contexts as critically reflexive practice, as reflected in critical accounts of youth work as a pedagogy of informal learning (Percy-Smith and Weil, 2003; Fielding, 2006; Batsleer, 2008; Fitzgerald et al., 2010). This speaks to the idea of participation as a learning process that has emerged from this project. It means that adult researchers are free to offer ideas from their perspective, and young people are free to respond as they feel appropriate. In this, reflection and learning are central and integrated parts of participatory practice, not just consequences of action.

The experience of these projects shows that young people do not necessarily assume that adults will be oppressive and controlling. On the contrary, they value collaborative relationships with adults, but prefer to negotiate the quality of these relationships in respect to openness, equality and resourcefulness. We can identify four different stances of collaborative involvement of adults:

- Invited input – where young people invite contributions and input from adult-professionals:

What you [researchers] can actually leave to us – and I think I am speaking on behalf of all – is a way for succeeding in involving people more during our meetings, because people are often bored, lose easily their attention ... and you, for instance, being

sociologist ... If you had some suggestions to improve our meetings it would be a great contribution.

(Young person, Islamic Youth Association, Bologna)

- Offered input – where adults make a contribution based on observing a need, with no influence on whether and how their input is used: ‘The young people rarely sought our advice but they accepted most of our suggestions. They are more used to working with adults in a more power-sharing relation’ (Action research report, Plovdiv).
- Co-inquiry-based practice – where adults and young people work together on joint endeavours involving mutual learning:

Even though there was a question of hierarchy and power in the ARP it always seemed like both sides respected the wishes and needs of the other but also had a position on what is possible or not. The fact that some of our suggestions were easily dismissed by the young participants showed they see us not as authorities but as equals.

(ibid.)

- Facilitated action research – where adults facilitate a process of participatory learning for change, but without seeking to promote a particular agenda: ‘Support for participation emerged as being crucial, highlighting the importance of a “facilitating” role rather than orienting young people to our own conceptions’ (Action research report, Rennes).

However, changing conventional roles and identities is not always easy, as reflected here:

We opted to ‘give the floor’ to the young people, attempting to reduce as much as possible our ‘adult’ and ‘expert’ power to define, to speak, to decide ‘on behalf of’ the youngsters. Nevertheless, we are aware of the fact that is somehow impossible to give up completely with our position (and our power), as ‘adults’ and as ‘omniscient researchers’, even though keeping a constant attention in trying to build non-hierarchical relationships among us.

(Action research report, Bologna)

### **Innovating pedagogies: new perspectives on learning in and for participation**

We have looked at examples of participatory activity where young people more or less take the lead and construct their own forms of participation as they participate. From the reflections of researchers taking a ‘youth worker’ role, we have also seen how the position of adults in these processes is complex and ambivalent. This suggests that it is adults as much as young people

who need to ‘learn to participate’, and enables us to look in a more nuanced way at what may constitute pedagogy in relation to participatory practice. While there remains a place for more formal educational inputs, it is crucial to attend to what happens when people learn together through practice. Rather than being compartmentalised as ‘citizenship education’, pedagogy can then be embedded in an ontological process of becoming a citizen, which may include making claims through acts of citizenship (Isin, 2008). Rather than adults teaching young people as a preparation for citizenship, citizenship is learned and shaped through concrete experience and praxis. At its best this involves young people and adults/professionals engaging in a mutual process of learning together.

We propose here a framework for constructing a new pedagogy of *participatory citizenship education*. The aim is to identify the different modes of citizenship action and suggest examples of the types of learning that are typically central in each mode. This, we contend, better reflects the multifaceted character of participation and citizenship in practice, and the different kinds of learning that this practice demands. It should be emphasised that these are not watertight compartments; the modes overlap, and different types of learning may be relevant in more than one mode (Table 12.2).

Developing this kind of pedagogic approach requires a different kind of relationship between young people and adults/professionals. Giving more power to young people does not mean giving them *all* the power; our research shows that professionals still have an important role to play: providing support and encouragement, as a critical friend or guide, as a mediator between young people and institutions and as a helper when barriers and pitfalls appear. This signals the need for a new social contract that repositions young people in society as diverse but equal citizens with meaningful

Table 12.2 A framework for pedagogies of participation

<i>Mode of citizenship action</i>	<i>Learning type</i>
Learning in and for participation in formal decision-making	Curriculum-based citizenship education
Contesting status and hierarchies through direct action and conflict	Dialogue and deliberation, situated social learning, critically reflexive learning, communicative action
Becoming a citizen	Developing critical consciousness, critical education and action, participatory social learning and identity work
Learning from being a citizen	Experiential learning, critical reflection, ‘legitimate peripheral participation’
Struggles for citizenship, rights and justice	Personal and community learning
Finding one’s own solutions	Creative innovation and critical inquiry



contributions to make. It is necessary to shift professional identities and practices away from the 'expert' who directs to the interpretive, reflexive, social pedagogue who facilitates, supports and enables – ideally, one versed in collaborative approaches to co-inquiry that can enable youth participation as a joint enterprise.

For, of course, there are no spaces free from power. All spaces are permeated with power relations, so that power is also needed to navigate in these, especially for groups who are struggling for recognition, trying to put new questions on the public agenda or to construct a space for their collective identities. Young people have much experience of adults trying to direct or educate them; a youth worker never enters an empty scene, but always an arena that is structured by rules, scripts and expectations. Workers who aim to develop a new role or way of working must start from understanding these existing structures, this *habitus*. In practice, this process, we suggest, demands three things: *availability*, *connectedness* and *craftsmanship*. Availability means that the worker is close at hand so that young people find it easy to ask for help, support and guidance when needed, without imposing. As has been seen throughout the PARTISPACE research, young people do not want to be (and do not flourish when they are) left completely to their own devices. Connectedness means a readiness to establish social bonds with the young people, while also being connected to other networks and sources of power that can potentially help young people to achieve their goals. By craftsmanship we mean a gradual refinement of the professional's fine-tuned sense of how to respond to a particular group, how to adapt to and support in a certain phase of the work, when and how to intervene and so on. This may be experienced as intuition, or in Bourdieu's (1998) term to have a 'feel for the game'. In youth work literature, there is a concept of 'accompaniment': this too suggests a feel for a practice that is often unspoken, yet rehearsed, attentive and collaborative (Batsleer, 2008).

## Conclusion

There is a paradox in youth participation. While there is profound concern about the perceived marginalisation and alienation of young people, the response may be either a drive to involve them in highly structured settings which further alienate them, or a contrasting emphasis on youth-led processes which, while they may be more acceptable to many young people, tend to reinforce their separation from adult society. Although young people often choose to participate within their own groups, they also actively seek collaboration and engagement with adults and professionals, in a democratic space. In fostering inclusion and democratic involvement, we need to understand youth participation in conjunction with, rather than apart from, wider society. Cooperation and dialogue between young people and adult-professionals are essential if young people are to achieve a sense of inclusion as equal citizens.

This may mean introducing young people into adult-professional settings, or adults into young people's worlds, or establishing co-constructed spaces. Mutual learning through doing together can be conceptualised as an alternative approach to participation emerging from this work.

Some of this work is already under way as a direct outcome of the research discussed here, in the shape of a training module developed to share learning from the PARTISPACE research with practitioners (Percy-Smith et al., 2018). Key learning aims include 'To reflect critically on issues of power, autonomy and control in participatory groups and activities involving young people' and 'To achieve a better understanding of the role of the worker in supporting young people's participation and autonomous action'. The module encourages 'participatory practice' approaches, based on principles of democratic learning, co-inquiry, participatory social learning and reflexivity, shifting the role of the worker from 'expert' to facilitator.

Participation is a learning process in which individuals gradually develop their capabilities to participate through practice. Learning for participation should not be interpreted simply as citizenship education in schools, but as a lived practice in all areas of the young person's life. Many young people find that tightly structured settings such as schools restrict their ability to participate fully; in contrast, settings that give freedom to young people to exercise agency can offer more meaningful spaces for participation. There is a need to challenge 'fixed outcome' approaches to projects that can hamper creativity and even undermine the project intentions, and instead to focus on creating and supporting free spaces where young people can explore, experiment, exercise their creativity, articulate their ideas and express their values as autonomous and self-determining citizens.

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