

KONFERENCE

United in diversity – different practices in youth participation across Europe

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Youth participation

- Threefold concept: efforts by young people to organize around issues of their choice, by adults to involve young people in community agencies, and by youth and adults to join together in intergenerational partnerships (Checkoway, 1995; Rajani, 2001; Rajani, 2000a,b; Sherrod, Torney-Purta i Flanagan, 2010)
- Youth participation refers to the active engagement and real influence of young people, not to their passive presence or token roles in adult agencies (Checkoway, 2011)
- Youth as resource vs. youth as problem



| Civil participation (latent political participation) | | Manifest political participation | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| Involvement (attention) | Civic engagement (action) | Formal political participation | Activism (extra-parliamentary participation) | |
| | | | Legal | Illegal |
| <i>Individual forms</i> | | | | |
| Personal interest in politics and societal issues Attentiveness to political issues | Activities based on personal interest in and attention to politics and societal issues | Electoral participation and contact activities | Extra- parliamentary forms of participation: to make once voice heard or to make a difference by individual means (e.g. signing petitions, political consumption) | Politically motivated unlawful acts on an individual basis |
| <i>Collective forms</i> | | | | |
| A sense of belonging to a group or a collective with a distinct political profile or agenda Life-style related politics (e.g. identity, clothes, music, food, values) | Voluntary work to improve conditions in the local community, for charity, or to help others (outside the own family and circle of friends) | Organized political participation: membership in conventional political parties, trade unions and organizations | Loosely organized forms or network- based political participation: new social movements, demonstrations, strikes, and protests | Illegal and violent activities and protests: demonstrations, riots, squatting buildings, damaging property, confrontations with the police or political opponents |

Political participation

- Youth research generally focuses on three basic forms of political participation (Chisholm & Kovacheva 2002):
 - involvement in institutional politics (elections, campaigns and membership);
 - civic engagement (associative life, community participation, voluntary work).
 - protest activities (demonstrations and new social movements)

- **Activist citizenship** (Isin, 2008)

- Innovative, traditional and alternative forms of youth participation in decision making

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| I n n o v a t i v e N O N | ALTERNATIVE | TRADITIONAL |
| | Digital participation Co-management Co-production Deliberative participation Participation spaces | Use of new methodologies to encourage traditional participation |
| | Youth councils and similar structures Youth activism and protest | Voting Membership of political parties Trade union membership |



Participation is important...

- Dalton (1988): the success of democracy is largely measured by the public's participation in the process of decision making and responsiveness of the system to popular demands
- The Commission's White Paper "A New Impetus for European Youth" (EC 2001) defines youth participation in public life as a priority of European and national youth policies. The follow-up to the White Paper (EC 2003b), together with the Council of Europe's Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (CE 2003) express growing anxiety about the hazards for the practice of youth active citizenship and firmly assert the crucial role of youth involvement in the process of democratization and European integration
- EU Youth Strategy
- Erasmus +, European Solidarity Corps  participation is important!



But...

- Across Europe - accumulating problems in the realm of youth political participation. They are often interpreted as youth:
 - “disenfranchisement” (Adsett 2003),
 - “decline of social capital” (Putnam 2000),
 - “young people’s “de-politisation” (Vrcan 2002),
 - “social vulnerability” (Tivadar & Mrvar 2002),
 - “marginalisation” (Svynarenko 2001)
 - “anomie” (Adnanes 2000).



Young people today...

Table 1. A rough summary of the 'three' visions.

| Paradigm | Description of the situation | Vision of young people | Whose fault? | Solution |
|-----------------------|--|------------------------|--|--|
| Disengaged | Young people are apolitical and fleeing politics | Apolitical | Young people | Educate and motivate young people back into politics |
| Engaged | Young people are political, just in new forms | Political | Traditional politics | To recognize young people's new political forms and to draw political power into them, so far through funding and training |
| Radically unpolitical | Young people are politically rejecting politics | Unpolitical | No fault – a sign of a new type of society | To recognize withdrawal as deliberative and to articulate that a life of self-actualization is better equipped to address young people's new political agenda; this is the new politics of fun |



Inspirational examples

- ICELAND: Young people's involvement in creating a national constitution
- GERMANY (Berlin): Ichmache>Politik
- SLOVENIA: TBI: Youth, City and the Heritage
- BELGIUM (Brussels): YouthMetre: empower youth to become engaged and have an impact on EU youth policy
- NORTH MACEDONIA: #ИЗБОРИСЕ



Common traits or recipe for success?

- Involvement of young people from the start
- Focus on local level
- Potential for the (political, societal) change – involvement of authorities
- Innovation often comes from a desire to solve a particular issue
- Evidence-based approach
 - Needs assessment
 - Time for evaluation and reflection
 - Evidencing impact (remains a challenge)
- Combination online & offline tools; traditional & alternative methods
- Balance between the structure and flexibility

