Deliverable 5.3:
Group Discussions reflecting Case Study Research Results

Grant agreement number: 320136
Project name: Social Innovation | Empowering the Young for the Common Good
Project acronym: “SocIEtY”
Work package leader: Forschungs- und Beratungsstelle Arbeitswelt (FORBA) – Working Life Research Centre, Vienna – Mag. Dr. Bettina Haidinger; Universidad Politécnica de Valencia (UPV) - Ass. Prof. Dr. Alejandra Boni
Coordinator: Bielefeld University - Bielefeld Center for Education and Capability Research - Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Hans-Uwe Otto
Project starting date: 1st January 2013
Delivery date: 15 July 2015 (originally March 2015)

The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme FP7 under grant agreement n°320136 (see Article II.30. of the Grant Agreement).
Contents

Introduction to Deliverable 5.3 - Group Discussions Reflecting Case Study Research Results

Bettina Haidinger
1 AUSTRIA: Reflections about Interactions and Results in a Participatory Research Process with Young People

Thomas Ley
2 GERMANY: Between (Self-)Reflection and Exhibition!

Giuseppe Acconcia, Alberta M.C. Spreafico, Enrica Chiappero-Martinetti & Paolo R. Graziano
3 ITALY: Group Reflection

Aurora López Fogués, Alejandra Boni Aristizábal
4 SPAIN: Bringing Back the Results

Valerie Egdell and Helen Graham
5 SCOTLAND: Understanding Young People’s Experiences of Looking for Work Using Participatory Research: Outcomes of the Reflective Group Discussions in Scotland

Niels Rosendal Jensen, Anna Kathrine Frørup and Christian Chrstrup Kjeldsen
6 DENMARK: Group Reflection

Thierry Berthet & Veronique Simon
7 FRANCE: Group Discussions reflecting case study research results

Caroline Vandekinderen & Rudi Roose
8 BELGIUM: Group Discussions reflecting case study research results

Evelyne Baillergeau & Jan Willem Duyvendak
9 THE NETHERLANDS: Group Discussions reflecting case study research results

Adrian Dan, Oana Banu, Marian Ursan
10 ROMANIA: Group Discussions reflecting case study research results

Benoît Beuret, Jean-Michel Bonvin, Stephan Dahmen
11 SWITZERLAND: The Place of Young People Facing Disadvantage in the Swiss Research
Introduction to Deliverable 5.3 - Group Discussions Reflecting Case Study Research Results

As the finalization of the participatory research, a reflection among the participants of the research process and in some cases the preparation of outcomes to be disseminated or presented must be carried out. This is the content of deliverable 5.3. of our project and will be the documented final step of Work Package 5 that aimed at implementing a dialogue-centred, process- and participation oriented research design into the 11 case studies of our SocIEtY project.

The aim of this deliverable is to bring back the results from our investigation to the participants that were involved in the research process. This can be done by conducting group discussions among policy stakeholders, third sector intermediaries, community actors and/or the young people themselves or by organizing and documenting one or more final event(s) concluding the research process.

Partners prepare a brief documentation of 2-3 pages on how the participatory research process has ended. In general, bring in the initial aims of pilot WS (including findings and suggestions; del 5.1) and bring it back to the stakeholders. This template will provide you with a suggestion of relevant questions. Many of the issues raised have already been tackled in the section on methodological reflection of Deliverable 5.2:

- Interaction between youth and researchers and (if) other stakeholders: How do youngsters value the interaction/relation with researchers?
- Learning produced through the process: what do youngster value as learning outcomes produced through research?
- Results: what kind of results do youngsters value most?
- Recommendations: what kind of recommendations do youngsters suggest for researchers and (if) other stakeholders)
1 AUSTRIA: Reflections about Interactions and Results in a Participatory Research Process with Young People

Bettina Haidinger
Forschungs- und Beratungsstelle Arbeitswelt (FORBA)

1. Context

The case study carried out in Austria attempted to implement a participatory action research approach undertaken with girls engaged with open youth work in Simmering, one district in Vienna, Austria. Hence, the focus of the participatory and action research was put on the presence, situation and participation of young girls in open youth work and public and semi-public spaces in Simmering and the role of gender-sensitive youth work in enhancing girls' empowerment.

The research was based on four methodical elements: (1) ethnographic methods including observant participation and informal talks in youth centers in Simmering; (2) arts-based methods focusing on street-art in terms of a Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR), insofar, we attempted to implement a project in a collaborative process with girls; (3) problem-centered interviews both with girls and youth workers; (4) and three reflective sessions in form of group discussions with stakeholders and informal talks with participants to reflect the research process. Two reflective sessions in form of group discussions with youth workers from Balu&du and informal talks and feed-back rounds with participants were to reflect the research process and to conclude the whole PAR process were carried out. In addition, preliminary results of the project were presented and discussed at the “Regionalforum”, a monthly local exchange meeting of stakeholders of local youth policies including youth workers, social workers, local politicians, community organisers and school social workers.

The main venue the research process was carried out was the girls' garden, a girls-only programme of a local youth centre in Simmering. The whole research process lasted from February 2014 to November 2014 (see Overview 1, Research Design).
Overview 1: Research Design

| Kick-off period | Selection of focus and method involving gatekeeper (youth centre) and young people → “out-reach” and decentrally organized research work with the girls’ garden as “home base” run by Balu&du |
| Workshop preparation I + II | Design and distribution of flyers and posters  
Workshop preparation with girls: introducing them into street-art methods; designing bags and stencils  
Ethnographic life-world analysis (Mar-Nov 2014); continuous presence in the girls’ garden, youth centers and parks; documentation and reflection in research diary |
| Workshops | Organisation and implementation of two workshops on Street-art with street-artists (July&Sept 2014) |
| Follow-up and reflection | Reflective (group) discussions on participatory research design and workshop proceeding with girls, youth workers and other stakeholders |

2. Reflection

- Interaction between youth and researchers during the YPAR process and (if) other stakeholders: How do youngsters value the interaction/relaion with researchers?

During the YPAR, in exercising street-art practices, in conceptualising and putting a graffito on a public wall vis-à-vis the girls’ garden, we realized that the youth centre’s low-threshold approach makes continuing work with the young people respective girls quite difficult. We simply had to acknowledge that the attendance especially of young women is very unpredictable as is their motivation to contribute to theoretical and conceptual considerations about participation and graffiti. Consequently, it was difficult to initiate the project process together with the girls.

The project as a whole was regarded by most of the girls involved during this half-year process as “our – the researchers’ – project”. They were polite to support us with ideas for the flyers and posters and with ideas of what wording to take (e.g. no teenager understands the word “workshop”), and recommended to use pictures and drawings for the posters and flyers. When asking if they came next week to continue with collecting ideas and preparing the workshops one of the girls answered, “We are not without hobbies.” At another time, when we were “chasing” interviews and informal talk opportunities with young people they put their position like this, “Do you fear we would leave if you left us alone right now?” It was clear: they are the subjects of interest and have the power to withdraw.

The final event after months of interaction with girls frequenting the girls’ garden, when a graffito was spray-painted on the wall vis-à-vis our “home-base”, during the final season party, was a very dense experience: in short time everything and with comparatively many girls present – from concept, contents and motives to the concrete procedure of spray-painting – was completed. During the whole period of action research we envisaged to spray-paint a mixture of a common piece and individual artistic pieces in the end.

The main feedback by the participating girls and youth workers was that it would have been important to communicate better, how this workshop was structured and who should and could spray-paint what and where. The girls said in a reflection round that the artistic piece
(the girl’s head) was beautiful though they “were pissed” that the artist overspray painted parts of their own graffiti.

For us this was a justified objection and an interesting finding: For months, we tried to accompany and trigger a participative process. There would have been all time of the world to come to a common conclusion on what should be spray-painted on the wall and in what way. When the workshop “outside” finally took place “when the serious part” started, time was limited to come to a common consensus and conclusion. The process at this particular event was rather chaotic and hardly participative in its structure also due to the “passing by” of different and many girls at different times. This meant that we were not able to define a common “starting point” for the action. This process as a tension between individual ideas and a collective outcome was very difficult to accompany. Finally, the workshop leaders directed this process straightforwardly to come to an end - and to come to a spray-painted piece that all (future) visitors of the girls’ garden might find attractive.

- Learning produced through the process: what do young people value as learning outcomes produced through research?

One of the main lessons learned was that girls' ideas emerge when they do something, deliberating as such „theoretically” turned out not to be every successful. When doing (e.g. spray-painting) they showed much more fantasy, developed ideas, became active and been motivated to realize their ideas.

In the beginning of an arts process when just sitting and turning ideas over in their minds, when consulting books or colleagues about new ideas and inspiration, the process seems to stuck: “I can’t draw!” „I don’t know“! „I don’t have any idea!” Finally, the girls in one of the preparation workshops decide for the obvious to spray-paint their names or the initials of their names. This is actually a typical graffiti step: drawing your own name and putting it into public space. The wonderful aspect of graffiti is that – when you have some support of more experienced colleagues explaining basic techniques – idea, design and implementation can be carried out within three hours. The result is a presentable “oeuvre” that can make you proud of and that is visible publicly.

The art of spray-painting seems to have some kind of “magic”. Girls immediately realised what spray cans are made for: to put your mark in public space. They were immediately oriented towards outside.

- Results: what kind of results do youngsters value most?

Some of the girls were happy to be encouraged in trying out this new method of expressing themselves and proud about the results and the appreciation of their work by us as initiators of the workshops. It was amazing to observe what emotions and behaviour this tool, actually of male-dominated artistic practice - is triggering among the girls.

Another result is the perception of participation sometimes as an imperative they are exposed to in many aspects of their lives, for example at school. Therefore, from this perspective, a youth center must also be a place for just hanging around without “participating in a project”, without an obvious aim and a purpose than just “being”.

- Recommendations: what kind of recommendations do youngsters suggest for researchers and (if) other stakeholders?
The necessity for free and at the same time protected girls-only spaces, protected from male assaults, from constraints of their freedom of movement, from hetero-normative dominance and for valuing female friendship, exchange among girls and support was explicitly formulated and became apparent “in action”.

It offers a safe space for bodily experiences and where the body can become a topic. Dancing is a favourite activity in girls’ youth clubs. Beauty, bodily changes, menstruation, friendship and respect among girls as topics and problems are discussed and worked out. This also means, conflicts and difference among girls become more apparent, can evolve and can be argued out.

It enables the creation of a safe environment in which self-confidence can develop and new skills can be tested. The girls’ garden for instance is a place where girls together with youth workers and sometimes other adults use the “material” this place is offering. The material is nature on the one hand: the trees, the patches, the meadow are “processed”. On the other hand, youth workers provide adequate tools to work with. In this combination, girls have many opportunities to contribute: they are designing and constructing the patches. They are deciding what to plant, they are planting seeds, they are watering the coming plants, they are mowing the meadow, they are weeding the vegetable patches, they are harvesting the fruits they have planted before, and they are cooking with the fruits and vegetables they have harvested. What is more, the girls present in the girls’ garden are also contributing to longer-term projects such as the construction of a tree house or – as in our case – the designing of a wall representing the girls’ garden and making it more visible. They are contributing to “their” place. As our interviews and field research showed girls-only spaces are places that is appreciated and defended.
2 GERMANY: Between (Self-)Reflection and Exhibition!

Thomas Ley
University of Bielefeld

The basic idea of this multisided participatory research was to reach different (groups of) young adults via divergent institutional settings - namely a secondary school, a mosque and a youth club.

All in all, there was a broad interest of youngsters, youth workers and stakeholders about this research project and its vague approach to youngsters’ perspective in local policies. But in fact it mainly remained unclear in relation to the role and the benefit for the participants and it often stayed unclear from the researchers’ point of view (as there was no clear ending and no clear goal to reach). Starting point of the research was to elaborate interests, ideas and aspirations - as well as conflicts, discriminatory experiences and barriers. Participatory Research considers all perspectives of those involved into the research process, but is not necessarily focusing common interests.

In the following, we want to highlight three aspects that came across during the research process and some concluding aspects of the ending of the research process.

1. During the research process:

Firstly, action or rather “promoting a project” is a necessary (even inevitable?) but also ambivalent criterion of participative research. It seems to be (pedagogically) reasonable to set a goal and to work towards a final aim, nevertheless it carries the curtailment of the participatory claim (it can turn from a transformative idea - in whatever form – to a more “consumeristic” idea of being engaged, being part of, having fun etc.). Furthermore while focussing the goal, the negotiation process might be shadowed and other voices could be silenced; insofar a reflection on the conditionality of “process and product” was needed. This “product placement” was an essential “(de)motivator” in school and seemed to be a critical turning point in the photo project in the youth club.¹

Secondly, setting an issue or rather “defining the problem” (the way of posing a problem, the way of looking at a problem) became a critical part within the preparation and realisation of the participatory research. How much content do we provide? What can be part of the negotiation process in the local group of researchers and participants? What will be predetermined for the “success of the project” (i.e. as we already set up a project title and broad issues for the photo workshop)? Do we (want to) find a consensus or is the elaboration of different voices enough?

- Concerning the area: Do we set up a spatial focus which might not be a focus of the youngsters)?

¹ Consequendy we wanted to allow for short-term and long-term involvement (and their combination) as well as not setting the goal at the top of participative research.
- **Concerning disadvantages**: How can we speak about poverty and disadvantages? How can we turn these into discussions about positive freedoms the youngsters deem to value? How can we ask for perspectives of a youth-friendly and justice-orientated community which goes beyond particular interests?

- **Concerning the youth**: How can we talk about the “youth”? Should we just ask for “youth dreams”, “youth spaces”, hence aspirations, desires, wishes and prospects?

*Thirdly*, already during the preliminary discussions with stakeholders and the participatory research, it became obvious that we are not *entrancing* an undescribed, blank and inactive *field*, but a lot of things were already existent (not new), done, already forgotten etc. In addition, some of our first ideas were reused, taken up or absorbed (which is not inherently bad, in fact it was welcome, but somehow the agency of bringing things in specific directions got lost). After all the researchers were sometimes used for legitimisation (as we did it with some of the field as well!), for diverse and sometimes contradictory claims. This demonstrates that the researcher is not only a boundary subject but as well a boundary object, which has to be taken into account as participatory research often entails the idea of equal and altruistic partners. Furthermore it did not always become clear to the young people why research was part of these processes and for what the research stands for (some youngsters asked if they will be in the newspaper soon).

2. **The ending of the research process**:

In the mosque as well as in school there was no declared - and especially created - setting of a reflective group discussion, furthermore the reflection was part of the process in itself and some informal concluding panel discussion within the participatory research.

But the photo workshop “officially” ended with an exhibition. One important aspect of this participative approach was to provide adequate ways of alternative (somehow aesthetic) expression and production. It should serve as one way of the appropriation of the subject matter, bringing more creativity in as well as going beyond an academic bias. As such, photography served as a medium of data collection and as a “product in itself”.

Some basic instructions of the media experts (the golden ratio, effects of lightning and zooming) and playful trails and errors of the youngsters were already sufficient to gain collectively new insights and new perspectives onto their surroundings (the often mentioned “wow effect”). Although a lot of young people are making daily photos with their smartphones, they did not know basic effects of camera settings. Insofar this indicates an aesthetic dimension and the cultural/productive appropriation of reality through this medium. Insofar the photographers were quite proud about their large-sized photos.

One main issue raised by the workshop and the youngsters as well, was the common idea of “selfies” as a mode of shooting (subtheme of the workshop was: “Everything but selfies!”). As such a reflexive process about egocentrism and the self-placement in social contexts took root; i.e. we compiled a series in our exhibition about these distancing effects, where only body parts were shown in public spaces.

223 out of 1838 photos were selected for this exhibition and clustered in 12 main topics. The twelve topics of the exhibition are: Action & Movement, Perspectives & Experiments,
Everything but Selfies, Kesselbrink, Ostmannturm, Making of, Lightpainting, The photographers and the hood.

This exhibition was launched on 12.06.2015 in the youth club and the opening started among the young people (with some cocktails) who made their perspectives public and visible and showed them to their peers.

The photo exhibition is still open. The travelling of the exhibition into the community centre is planned for August in order to reach a wider (and more adult orientated) public.

Taking the aforementioned three aspects “promoting a project”, “defining the problem” and “entrancing the field”, it was much easier to “hide behind the photo workshop” and to see the exhibition as a distinct goal, delivering something new, giving a return to the stakeholders and closing the process. Anyhow the creative bias within this project made it complicated to set up a critical view onto social circumstances.

As such this participatory approach in particular and participatory projects in general can be located somewhere between (Self-)Reflection and exhibition (as such an introverted and an extroverted dimension). Analytically spoken it can be seen as an attempt to self-location and gaining an own perspective – which might be fruitful for others. Insofar a reflection on the conditionality of “process and product” in participatory attempts is inherent, needed and can be prolific.
3 ITALY: Group Reflection

Giuseppe Acconcia*, Alberta M.C. Spreafico^, Enrica Chiappero-Martinetti^ and Paolo R. Graziano°

University of Pavia

1. Interaction between youth, researchers and other stakeholders

In this research we conducted three focus groups with target youngsters. In a first stage we involved Libera representatives both in Lombardy and Campania. We contacted and interviewed in Milan and Naples the coordinators of projects involving disadvantaged youth. They provided a general framework of the NGO targets and references to specific programs concerning unemployed young men, women and immigrants in the selected areas of Scampia and Giambellino. These professionals facilitated the contacts with the grassroots associations that we decided to involve in a later stage. Table III shows the two case studies and the number of people involved in the process.

We then interviewed social assistance professionals working for CD Giambellino, Presidio Scampia and Scampia unemployed movement (GRIDAS). They have been part of the process for the composition and organization of the focus groups. Representatives of the municipalities participated at some point at the definition of the preliminary meetings with the local associations (i.e., Scampia case study) but later on did not take part in the participatory research.

The focus groups have been organized with a specific aim to understanding the level of implementation and youngster participation in the preliminary stages of the Youth Guarantee programme at the local level. At the end of each meeting we had a debriefing session with all the involved social assistance professionals in order to talk about the group dynamics and the relevant results for their specific field of activity.

Initially we have found promising interest, especially on the level of involvement of the disadvantaged youth who are taking part in the associations' activities. However, a number of problematic issues had to be tackled in a later stage. In the Milan case study, the access to the youngsters had to be mediated by the social assistance professional who had a peculiar relation with the disadvantaged and thus hugely motivated them to be fully involved in the research process.

In the Naples case study, the municipality wanted to involve the youngsters in our research through an official letter of invitation to the participant of the focus group. However, in agreement with Libera we decided to have access to the field only through the Scampia branch of the association. In the projects coordinated by Libera, a number of former detainees and students in summer camps are involved, among them we have chosen our target group for further discussions. A Libera representative participated at the first stage of our group interviews with the young unemployed.
As for CD Giambellino, the social assistance professional Dario Anzani organized and selected the youngsters among the customers involved in the activities of the association, following our general indications. It was not easy to set the first focus group due to several activities involving the disadvantaged youth. However, the young unemployed or with precarious jobs\(^2\) appeared very motivated to answer to our questions and discuss their major problems related to the barriers to enter into the labour market or to what extent the experienced inequalities have affected their aspirations. Especially, the immigrants appeared more prone to fall into black market activities, no-paid jobs but very motivated to better understand labour market possibilities and ask for help at the local employment support providers.

As for Presidio Scampia, Daniela Minardi\(^3\) gave us access to the confiscated land owned by the local mafias. We met at the presence of a Libera representative a group of five young unemployed girls\(^4\). We had articulated discussions on their aspirations and struggles to find a job, their familial background and the consequences of inequalities in the access to the labour market. We were especially focused on the features of the Youth guarantee that appeared to be largely perceived as not effective by those youngsters. They considered very poor the possibility to access to subsidies and passive policies in order to be helped in the periods when they did not have a job.

As for GRIDAS, the social assistance professional Armando Arianiello organized and selected the youngsters according to the criteria we previously discussed in the first meetings. The group was formed mainly by former detainees\(^5\) involved in programs adopted by the municipality to help them to be reintegrated in the labour market. For this reason, these interviewees asked to be anonymous but appeared very motivated to describe their daily struggle to find a normal working environment. The social assistance professional highlighted that the youngsters are facing a period of disillusionment and disengagement due to the economic crisis and the continuing failures of local politicians.

For our participatory research specific procedural requirements are taken into account. Policy analysis and an understanding of the socio-economic context has not been suggested or reminded to the interviewees. However, time has been spent discussing with participants how to defend their views and images. We guaranteed that every individual in each group participated actively, and that has had his/her voice heard.

Our links with the local associations and the support we have received from them might have been problematic when dealing with some groups or individuals, given that most of the youth who has taken part in the process received some kind of support from the associations. It is true that they might have avoided criticisms. However, the presence of the gatekeepers facilitated the discussion and generally the voice of the youngsters has not been mediated or obscured by their presence. We never entered in competition with the social assistance professionals who in many cases did not directly take part in the discussion with the youngsters.

\(^2\) Case 1, group 1, interviews 3-12.
\(^3\) Interview 15. This confiscated land owned by local mafia has been dedicated to Antonio Landieri a young man who has been shot dead by the district criminals.
\(^4\) Case 2, group 1, interview 17.21.
\(^5\) Case 2, group 2, interviews 22-26.
There were no major episodes of dissent during the research. As for the CD Giambellino, the social assistance professional initially tried to create two different groups: one with immigrants, the second with the Italians. Eventually, he preferred to involve all together the youngsters in the process. As for the GRIDAS, especially the former detainees did not want to be mentioned in the research and frequently asked not to disclose their identity, even if this was already discussed at the beginning of the process.

Especially in the Presidio Scampia and CD Giambellino, the youngsters seemed very interested in being more aware of the available policies aimed at contrasting youth unemployment. They benefited from the participatory process because at the end of the process they understood the relevance of participation in the policy making process something that seemed to be not among the opportunities they considered as relevant before the interviews. For the involved associations was an important possibility to better understand the background of their customers and their previous or current job conditions.

2. Learning produced through the process

In a later stage of our participatory research we tried to involve and motivate the interviewed youngsters, as part of the focus groups of the two case studies, with writing and photographic workshops. The aim has been to finalize the research findings collecting data for ethnographic purposes. The target was to have a more concrete understanding of the youngsters aspirations in a way that was not mediated by stakeholders, gatekeepers or social assistance professionals.

In this instance the question we addressed to the youngsters was to describe or take a photo of what they would like to change in their own neighbourhood. The results were very diverse and especially fascinating for the CD Giambellino focus group. These youngsters were already involved in photographic workshops so had a certain degree of knowledge about the topic. As for the unemployed women of Presidio Scampia they preferred to participate to the writing workshop. Several interesting answers to the topic of aspiration and capability to change have been addressed.

Finally within the focus groups was necessary to deal with a diverse range of dynamics. In the Giambellino focus group to tackle the topic of unemployment and labour exclusion was easier for those who already had some labour experience. The Italians often influenced each other; the same processes were going on among the immigrants with some additional difficulty for those who had some linguistic gap. Those who aspired to more creative jobs appeared more self-centred and less prone to listen to their peers. Those who had some help from the NGO to find a job or a fixed term contract, on the one hand, were more motivated to discuss their labour experience, on the other hand, they did not want to clearly address the issue of difficulties in the labour market entry at the presence of their peers.

As for GRIDAS in Naples, the youngsters appeared to have different backgrounds. Thus the former detainees felt some influence of a leading figure. The youngest unemployed appeared often very negative and unwilling to discuss about the topic as one of their most important matter of daily concern. Some of them were even very afraid of addressing the issues of local mafias and black market presence as delicate topics that would be better to not discuss in public even if protected by the anonymity.
3. Recommendations from the youngsters

The youngsters highlighted a diverse range of aspirations that are not addressed. They all considered the existing policies as not innovative. They emphasized a need to favor experimental policies in particular in vocational training, enabling a constant involvement of the disadvantaged youth. They aspire to have more effective employment support providers. They all would like to work with better contracts. They would like to have a stable job or at least a job opportunity for one of their family members. They would like to find a job related to what they studied. They highlighted that this can happen only with a bottom-up change. They highlighted specific conditions of their neighborhood as detrimental for the achievement of their aspirations. At the micro level, the interviewed disadvantaged youth has never been involved in policy making processes and more generally in contributing to defining means to tackle poverty and inequality. In other words, a general exclusion of youth participation in influencing public policies aimed at tackling unemployment has been highlighted both in Giambellino (Milan) and Scampia (Naples).

The non-participation of the youngsters is not politicised. The effects of the youngsters disengagement are poor public interventions and policies not necessarily focused on the youngest. This highlights a more general need of a structural change in the local labour market with the aim to involve the youngest; enhancing the financial resources for this target group in order to better address their exclusion. The risk is that this non-participation and the inadequacy of the existing public policies push the disadvantaged youngsters closer to the black market and corrupted habits.

4. Appendix 1

Photogallery 1 - Giambellino

Segneri/Giambellino: a place to change

“We would like a house or better homes”

---

6 Case 1, group 1.
Via dell’Abbondanza: a never ended school.

“We would like a new school that could help us to find a good job”

---

7 Interviews 3 to 12. Zone 6 (Giambellino-Lorenteggio-Barona) has an extensive fabric of public housings.
8 Case 2, group 1.
9 Interviews 19, 20, 21, 23 and 26.
4 SPAIN: Bringing Back the Results

Aurora López Fougues, Alejandra Boni Aristizábal
Universidad Politécnica de Valencia

The methodology adopted during the project had two basic pillars: the Participatory Action Research (PAR) and the use of Participatory Video (PV).

The participants during the project have included: policy-makers, technicians, and young people. Aiming to gather the voices of the youth in order to define disadvantage, aspirations and the role of participation from a bottom-up approach, the last part of the project has focused on gathering the voice of young people through the use of participatory video. The team worked with the group of young people through debates about issues and concerns in their daily lives. From those debates or continuous dialogues the participants decided which topics they would like to further explore and present through the use of video.

The dissemination of the results happened twice in two different environments.

1. Screening followed by discussion within a series of conferences organized by the municipality (29th of April).

To this event all the associations and civil servants working at the city hall of Quart de Poblet were invited. Additionally, four specialists from different areas (education, labour, culture and youth) were also invited to be as “guest speakers”. To the invitation, we had two positive responses. Whilst at first it was meant to have a roundtable due to the low rate of answer, the two specialists attended as part of the public. To the event 30 people attended and the debate was dynamic and lively. From the group of young people, the response was lower than it was expected and three were able to make it. From the municipality the number of attendees was high and the responsible of youth policies in Quart de Poblet assisted and participated. From this debate that lasted 2 hours (19.00 – 21.00), the general recommendation was that further participation of young people on policy making was needed. The three videos received positive critiques. Particular interest raised the video about Esplai, for being place in Quart de pobllet and an association to which many of the public could refer as the place where they learnt high values as participation, solidarity, respect and friendship. From the municipality the message that
they were always open to learn “best practices” was constantly repeated, and Esplai (as a place where young people learn values through playing) was put as an example of it. Regarding the other two concerns raised by the young people through the videos (migration and instability in education), the municipality responded either by saying that the problem was too big for being only a matter of a town or by presenting the employment plans that they are currently offering. Additionally to the three videos, the project in itself was presented and a final interview with the young people that participated. The attendees valued to have the voice of young people saying that they liked living in Quart de Poblet and also asking for the continuation of projects like this in which they can participate, feel part of a bigger thing and also learn new perspectives and skills.

2. Open air screening followed by Q&A session within the Alternative Fair (Fira Alternativa) of the city of Valencia (7th of June).

The Fira Alternativa is an annual encounter on the old river of Valencia among associations, groups and individuals that are concerned about the way the society, the ecology, the economy, or even the consumption is organized. During a weekend, thousands of visitors can listen, hear, taste and ask in the different stands about proposals or social concerns. SocEtY had a black tent in which the videos done by the group of young people were screened. The attendance to this event was high and many of the participants came. They also introduced the videos and answered the questions or concerns raised by the public.

Within this screening the other two videos (Migration/Entrepreneurship and Educational laws) raised a higher level of interest because they were dealing with issues concerning all the audience. The results were very positive. The shared values of young people align with the CA principles. This consists in creating and having a society in which stability is the norm, therefore they can lead a life that is value for them and for the others. The three videos showed and the discussions showed that well-being was broadly understood by the young people and had a high presence of the word “harmony”, understood as security to build a life-plan and respect towards heterogenous life-plans. Contrarily to the government policies, employment was not the only concern for the young people. Rather it was one among many others and, even in some cases, a consequence of the bad management of policies (i.e. corruption, political favouritism).
The results of the project highlight a number of policy implications for local and national stakeholders. As a direct result of the understanding of youth as a vulnerable group facing multiple disadvantages, youth policy needs to widen the informational basis. In fact, a more comprehensive view of young people and their genuine opportunities is needed for the integration of these in the labour market and society in general and for enlarging their capacity to aspire.

A mismatch between policy and needs has been highlighted, with a general sense that the focus on employment and entrepreneurship is not sufficient to tackle young people’s barriers.

Moreover, the young people discussed that the employability discourse hides an idea of individual responsibility in which they feel that they are failing.

As noted by the young people, this discourse is not realistic because it does not reveal the obstacles that a person has to carry out an idea or project (video Quart Jove).

Alongside the employability discourse the second pillar that has been signalled on the project is the austerity cuts and how the cuts on social services and educational bursaries affect again young people’s aspirations and capabilities.

It is important then as a policy recommendation that young people are considered as a vulnerable group, that employment does not become the only area that youth policy targets and that there are real financial funding for assuring that young people can access or remain in education or to open a business. This can be done by avoiding that educational fees are increasing and by reducing the payments to young entrepreneurs during the first years.

Finally, an understanding of the multiple faces of youth disadvantage and the specific needs of young people demands that young people are treated as individuals (or group) that is transversal to many other areas and hence it needs to be represented in decision taking bodies.
1. Introduction

This chapter presents the outcomes of the ‘reflective group discussions’ undertaken as part of the photovoice research with nine young people aged between 16 and 20 years young people engaged with employment support programmes in Edinburgh, Scotland. Photovoice employs photography and group dialogue to deepen understanding of a community issue or concern. The methodology was used in order to enable participants to represent their lives; to promote critical dialogue; and to reach policy-makers (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 2006). Through the photographs and discussions we sought to understand young people’s experiences, ideas and aspirations; and what they think are the most important issues for young people looking for work in Edinburgh today.

The research had seven stages (see Egdell & Graham, 2015, forthcoming for more details).

- **Stage 1: Initiation phase/pilot workshops** where we engaged with different stakeholders in order to develop common interest about how the research would proceed.
- **Stage 2: Introduction to photovoice workshop** for participants to learn about the project and taking photographs.
- **Stage 3: Photovoice assignments.** Participants spent approximately two weeks taking photographs.
- **Stage 4: Reflection group meeting /group discussion.** Participants were asked to select and discuss the photographs that were the most meaningful to them. Participants also discussed their experiences of the assignment.
- **Stages 5 and 6: Second cycle of photography taking and reflection group meeting /group discussion.** Only one group of young people wanted to/were able to undertake a second cycle of photography taking and group discussion. However, although this group did continue taking some photographs they did not attend the second group discussion meeting.
- **Stage 7: Data analysis and verification of research results workshop.** We undertook data analysis in the first instance, which was then verified by the wider research group through two workshops. Workshop 1 was attended by three participants and one project
worker. Workshop 2 was attended by one project worker\textsuperscript{10}. In addition to the workshops a summary of the draft research findings was sent to seven policymaker/practitioner stakeholders as they are potential key research users for their email comments and feedback on the results. At the time of writing this report, email feedback was received from three of the policymaker/practitioner stakeholders.

The process of ‘reflective group discussion’ mainly occurred during Stage 7. This ensured that a dialogue-centred process and participation-oriented research approach was used. However, there were also elements of ‘reflective group discussion’ occurring in earlier stages of the research. For example in Stage 4 we asked participants to reflect on their experiences of taking part in the research and for their views on the best ways in which to capture young people’s voices.

The remainder of this chapter draws on the information gathered in these processes of ‘reflective group discussion’, as well as the observations that we made. Specifically the chapter considers:

- The value placed by young people on the interaction/relationship with researchers when engaging in participatory research;
- The issue of problem definition;
- Recommendations from young people on ways in which to capture their voices; and
- What can be learned from listening to the voices of young people.

2. The value placed by young people on the interaction/relationship with researchers when engaging in participatory research

This research sought to understand young people’s experiences, ideas and aspirations. The aim was to give voice to young people who do not always have the opportunity to have their views heard, and to highlight the experiences of young people to policy-makers. However, there were challenges in engaging young people in the research and providing opportunities for voice, which provide interesting insights into the value placed by young people on the interaction/relationship with research and researchers.

When recruiting young people to participate in the project, the aims of the research were presented to groups of young people either by us or project workers on our behalf. In these presentations and discussions it was outlined how the research would be used to reach policy-makers. However, we often found that it was necessary to explain who policy-makers were, what policy was and why young people should be interested in taking part in the research. In reflecting on these encounters we felt that it was not always obvious to young people why it was in their interests to care about policy and policy-making. In the group discussions with those who participated in the research, it also became apparent that young people, even if they were aware of policy, they did not know specifically what might be wrong with it, or how it could be improved. However, it should be noted that not all

\textsuperscript{10} All the research participants were invited to take part in the workshops. However, many did not attend.
participants were disinterested in politics and policy-making as confirmed in the verification of research results workshop.

Our reflections were supported by feedback from the project workers during the verification of research results workshop. One project worker stated how they had found it difficult to explain the concept of ‘research’ itself – why people do it, what is its purpose, and why young people should be interested in taking part in research.

“I found it quite difficult to explain to them why they were doing it, just things like doing a piece of research, why would you do that, and why is that someone’s job, and trying to simplify that, I found it really difficult” (Project worker)

It was also felt by the project workers that it was difficult to get young people engaged in politics as they did not always make the connection between the political decisions being made and their everyday lives. Those who were interested did not always have the confidence to translate their interest into voting or taking part in other opportunities where they could have their voices heard. These views were fed back to us by project workers throughout the research.

3. Problem definition

The issue of ‘problem definition’ emerged as an important issue during the ‘reflective group discussion’ process. During Stage 2 it was often difficult to get a balance between directing the task and not imposing all the questions from the start. The participants often asked for suggestions and examples of the types of photographs to take. While we gave examples, it was stressed that participants could interpret the theme in any way they wished and take any photographs they liked. Some participants stuck to the theme rigidly, while others generated content that was maybe less directly ‘relevant’ to the research questions but provided insights into their day-to-day lives.

Some of the young people, when asked about their experiences of taking part in the research discussed the difficulties they had in knowing what to photograph. One group talked about the photographs that they regularly took throughout the day, e.g. ‘selfies’. Being asked to take photographs for the research however, was a very different experience. The lack of a ‘right’ answer in meeting the aims of the research was frustrating for participants, who often felt that they had got it wrong or taken ‘bad’ photographs, or found it difficult to think more abstractly in terms of the images that they could take.

4. Recommendations from young people on ways in which to capture their voices

As part of the reflection process we were keen to hear from the young people about their views on the best ways to capture their voices and opinions, getting feedback on the photovoice method as one way in which to do this. In asking these questions we wanted to

---

11 Of course some limitations were placed on them in order to ensure their safety (see Egdell & Graham (2015, forthcoming) for more details).
reflect on the extent to which the photovoice method has given voice to participants and as such as generated richer and more insightful data.

We would raise some questions about the benefits to data generated compared with more traditional methods such as focus groups employed earlier in the SoCIETY project (see for example Egdoll & Graham, 2014). Would the insights gathered through the photovoice method have been gleaned through conducting semi-structured interviews or focus groups? In terms of added value, the choices of subject in the photographs provided clues about what is important to participants. Also the photographs acted as useful icebreakers with the participants and did lead to interesting discussions that might not have necessarily arisen in the ‘standard’ approach.

In the main however, it is difficult to say to what extent the photovoice method was empowering and gave voice to the young people who participated. We were aware that we were asking participants to make a big effort in order to make their voice heard (i.e. taking a photograph a day on a topic that they would not necessarily be taking photographs about in the course of normal events). In terms of making a contribution to the participants, taking part in the photovoice project was seen as fun by some, but a burden by others. We did keep in touch with the participants and project workers to maintain momentum and awareness of the project during the photography taking stage, but despite this some participants commented on the difficulty in remembering to take photographs for the project.

“I didn’t get one photo a day though, I’d forget about it some days and then I’d be like oh no!” (Young male)

We did hope that using smartphones and an online platform would make the photovoice project more accessible. However, this was not a platform already used by the participants and there were some technological difficulties. For example, one project worker commented that the young people struggled in using their smartphone and the app, which was not something that they had thought would be a problem. As a research team we had also not anticipated this problem.

“One of the things that our guys struggled with was the technology, having to use a phone and an app. I thought they’re young so that’ll be really easy, and they totally struggled with it, which I was really surprised about” (Project worker)

A couple of participants also had issues with their smartphones breaking during the photography taking stage. They did not however always advise us in order that we could provide them with a camera to use.

In the future we would suggest, with due consideration of the associated ethical issues, exploring ways in which to tap into technologies/media that young people are already engaging with, and the photographs they are already taking as part of their engagement with this technology/media. We asked some of the young people during the group discussion stage about the apps and platforms that they were using day-to-day, and examples mentioned included Instagram\(^ {12}\) and Snapchat\(^ {13}\), although they did acknowledge

\(^{12}\) Instagram is a photo- and video-sharing service which allows users to share their photographs and videos on a range of social networking platforms. Photographs and videos can be customised with a range of tools and filters. See for more information: [https://instagram.com/](https://instagram.com/)
that not all young people were using these apps/services. These young people thought that if we, as researchers, wanted to know about young people’s lives, that these avenues would be the most illuminating to explore.

We also asked the young people at the verification of research results workshop for feedback on taking part in group discussions, as we were keen to know whether they had found it difficult to talk about their experiences. The young people reported that while it could be difficult to talk about their experiences, they had valued having these discussions in small groups with people that they knew already.

These reflections raise questions about whether it is possible to give voice to young people on their own terms. Even though we took a participatory approach in our research, it was still a researcher initiated process (e.g. in terms of deciding the broad topic of enquiry, the methods used) and it is not necessarily a research process that all young people found interesting. Are there alternative modes of participation, using technologies for example that young people are more engaged with? Will policy-makers listen to young people who are expressing their views on their own terms/using alternative modes of participation?

5. What can be learned from listening to the voices of young people?

5.1 Challenging policy assumptions and political discourses

The research has highlighted the importance of listening to the voices of young people. In particular the research findings have countered some of the dominant political discourses and assumptions in the UK. These include the notion that there is a ‘poverty of aspiration’ and entrenched ‘cultures of worklessness’. These notions are based on assumptions that the welfare system has created generations of people who lack hope and aspiration (see Egdell & Graham, 2015, forthcoming for more details). However, by listening to the voice of young people we have learned that all those who participated in the research wanted to find work, and most had a specific job in mind. They wanted to do jobs that involved an activity that they enjoyed, or follow in the footsteps of an inspirational person in their lives.

The research has also raised questions about the appropriateness of current approaches to employment activation in terms of the types of barriers it focuses upon. In the UK, employment activation has tended to take a ‘Work First’ approach concerned with rapid labour market entry, where jobseekers are encouraged to take any job as quickly as possible. There is often limited consideration of employment sustainability and progression, and jobseekers may becompelled to engage in activities or be at risk of sanction (Grover & Piggott, 2013; McQuaid & Fuertes, 2014; Fuertes et al., 2014). The approach focuses on the attributes and deficits of individual jobseekers, employability and participation; rather than participation in ‘quality’ employment and addressing softer outcomes (e.g. increased confidence) and wider socio-economic barriers).

13 ‘Snaps’ are picture or video messages taken and shared with friends on Snapchat in real-time. Snaps can be viewed for up to 10 seconds. The aim is to make conversation more spontaneous, visual and fun. See for more information: https://support.snapchat.com/
The young people’s experiences however, point to the need of also considering wider socio-economic barriers. The young people felt that they were disadvantaged in the job market compared to other people. They did not feel that school had given them the right skills for finding work. Some had not known when they left school about how to apply for jobs and how difficult it could be finding work. Some could not see the relevance of the school subjects that they studied to the skills needed for work. They wished they had been able to study subjects directly related to their interests and the types of jobs they wanted to get. They felt that they faced challenges in finding work, especially related to wider labour market conditions. The young people often felt stranded, excluded from the labour market due to forces beyond their control. They didn’t feel that employers were willing to give young people a chance; they outlined how they were not able to get experience because employers would not offer them an opportunity because they lacked experience (see Egdell & Graham, 2015, forthcoming for more details).

The research has also given insights into concerns over youth political disengagement and apathy, supporting existing evidence which suggests that the problem is not political apathy amongst young people but the disconnection of young people from the political process; and feelings of disenchantment and alienation from political parties, politicians, and government (Sloam, 2007, 2012; Harris et al., 2010; Geniets, 2010; Henn & Foard, 2011, 2013; Checkoway, 2011). It was not always obvious to the people taking part why they should care about politics or policy. Even if they were interested, they did not always know what might be wrong with it, or how it could be improved. Some felt very angry and frustrated with politicians. They did not feel that politicians understood the challenges young people face looking for work. Others lacked confidence in their own knowledge and understanding of the political system, which could potentially hold them back in terms of voting or taking up other opportunities to have their voices heard (see Egdell & Graham, 2015, forthcoming for more details).

5.2 Policymaker/practitioner stakeholder feedback

A summary of the draft research findings was sent to seven policymaker/practitioner stakeholders as they are potential key research users for their email comments and feedback on the results. At the time of writing this report, email feedback was received from three of the stakeholders, who reflected on what they had learned from the project results.

The policymaker/practitioner stakeholders outlined that they recognised the young people’s views, which reflected the experiences they saw and heard from young people – and as such they had not necessarily learned anything new from the findings, but as one policymaker/practitioner stakeholder commented, the findings did reinforce the messages they heard from young people and strengthen arguments for the need to give young people support earlier and make links with employers. The policymaker/practitioner stakeholders also outlined policies and initiatives that were seeking to address some of the issues identified by young people. One stakeholder however, also expressed some reservations about the success of implementation of some policies and initiatives, as well as worries about how young people were affected by the costs of higher education, minimum wage levels and welfare rules.

There seems to be some disconnection between what policymaker/practitioner stakeholders believe is happening or changing in the arena of youth employability policy, and the
experiences reported by the young people in the study, with one stakeholder feeling that they could not say that policy priorities were aligned with the young people’s experiences. Another stakeholder did feel that the alignment between policy priorities and young people’s experiences could always be improved and young people needed to be engaged as key stakeholders.

One policymaker/practitioner stakeholder reflected in their feedback about what would motivate politicians to listen to young people under the age of 18 years, as they do not have the vote, and questioned whether politicians focused on the views of young people’s parents. They felt that it was important to give young people platforms to put across their views to decision makers and felt that co-producing policies and programmes was important, as well as getting feedback from service users and stakeholder during service delivery. The other policymaker/practitioner stakeholders outlined examples of how their organisations were taking young people’s views and experiences on board. However, there seemed to be some divergence of opinion about the extent to which further engagement was necessary; one came from the perspective that this was something that already happened, while another felt that generally the area of engagement was one where more could be done.

References


6 DENMARK: Group Reflection

Niels Rosendal Jensen, Anna Kathrine Frørup and Christian Chrstrup Kjeldsen
Aarhus University

This chapter presents group discussions and reflections on case study research results among policy stakeholders, professionals and young people about the Danish case study. The reflections are divided in two parts: a part on the content of the research, and a part on the research process.

1. Content

June 8 2015 we had arranged a workshop for the participants in the Danish part of the SociEtY Project and as a part of the participatory research we presented the findings of the WP5 in a forum of professionals and a few youngsters. According to the professionals they could not identify other goals than education and labour market participation within the existing policy descriptions or discourses. Additionally, they could not see other possible or progressive plans og goals for young people than to follow the educational track; the professionals considered education and labour market participation as the only way to get included in society and to avoid poverty, inequality and a life as disadvantaged. The professionals did not see other possibilities or strategies within the existing policy descriptions.

The professionals are so to say placed in a difficult situation: they draw on beliefs and values, ethics and competences based on the idea to meet people's needs. At the same time they are accountable for the results of their efforts. The contradictions or dilemmas at stake are not 'homemade' or caused by them, but by the local level of implementation to which they are subjected.

It is a truism to say that professionals are acting under constraints. And why in this case?

Interestingly, we have taken notice of the fact that national legislation seems to be more 'capability-friendly' than local practices. National legislation emphasizes that educational offers have to take the experiences, wishes, aspirations and needs of the affected young people into consideration and generally speaking the voices of the young people are to be taken into account. The discrepancy between national and local level has often been a point of departure for complaints in these cases - primarily parents or parents' organisations have made such complaints. It is obvious that the differences from one municipality to the next one is a strong argument, and it is important to remember that the decisions on how to implement national legislation are made by local politicians who can be overruled by the Ministry of Education in some cases.

The reflection next in line is about the young people. Some training or education projects do not take the youngsters' or a certain group of youngsters' perspective for granted
because the needs, wishes and aspirations of these youngsters are not in accordance with the policy descriptions or discourses about education and labour market attachment. Even, when the idea is to make a ‘tailormade’ offer for a young person, then this is far from being the reality. Other youngsters do not want an education and do not have the courage or feel comfortable to participate in certain (comment) situations like a job situation or training programs. Basically 'no one size fits all', and if learners come to their learning with different experiences, then it is also necessary to understand that learning itself is more multifaceted than we sometimes realise.

Generally, the voices of young people are not heard, and as education has become an obligation to every young female or male 16-19 years old, they usually surrender and adapt to what is expected.

According to this, the various efforts and possibilities are primarily set up for individuals who are able to be social and feel comfortable in social relations or contexts. On the contrary, such kind of social offers do not meet young people suffering from anxiety who find it difficult to use public spaces as well as being together with other people. These youngsters do not have the experience of being heard or involved in different processes or within certain activity and community structures and these youngsters experience a lack of offers and opportunities for getting help and get into some kind of personal or social development. This is interpreted as a form of inequality and barrier and these youngsters do not feel that they get much attention within the range of projects and social offers.

Our study raises a central doubt about what is going on: Do the projects take the youngster’s perspective or do they construct youngsters' aspirations through policy described aspirations and discourses? Some projects do not take the youngsters for granted - or a certain group of youngsters'- perspective, because the needs, wishes and aspirations of these youngsters do not connect with the policy described aspirations about education and labour market participation. Confronting the professionals with these findings and recommendations, they do not see other possibilities for the youngsters to be included in society and to avoid inequality, poverty and a life as disadvantaged.

The challenge for the professionals is to approach the youngsters as individuals and give them opportunities contrasting the opportunities within the frame of dominating discourses/policy descriptions about education and labour market participation.

The young people’s aspirations are characterized by wishing to obtain another position in life through education and/or financial independence with an overall purpose of being “integrated” in society. Regarding immigrant youngsters they feel Danish but still aspire for being more integrated even that they do not feel like a stranger and feel a national attachment to Denmark and the Danish norms and culture. According to the youngsters articulations this dilemma – or ambiguous self-identification – is based on a discriminatory approach with a focus on the youngsters look and religious affiliation.

Confronting the stakeholders/professionals with this findings some of the front level professionals recognized these conditions but have not been aware of it and therefore have not put very much attention to it.

In general the stakeholders and professionals did not discuss or present any solutions and did not reflect very much on alternative ways of handling the situations professionally or
organisationally according to the youngster’s experience of limitations, discrimination and inequality within the social system and within some individual projects or activities.

A first initial presentation of the national results of the Q-methodology was likewise presented and soiled the ground for discussions on the difference between stated values of the organisations that lead the practice of the professionals on the one hand and then the results from the q-sort. This discussion made it clear that caution should be made when interpreting the q-interviews whereas many of the statements have to be interpreted relational towards the group of youngsters they work with rather than their view on youth in general.

On the one hand (our impression is that) they felt determined and limited by existing legislations, policy descriptions and discourses. On the other hand, the findings were new knowledge or were introduced in a form that was experienced as something new and not (yet) articulated and reflected among the professionals and the stakeholders. Unfortunately, there were not enough time to elaborate on these reflections and discussion, but everybody expressed an interest in another arrangement later this year or maybe in the beginning of next year for the purpose of going further into these issues and discussions.

### 2. Research process

As mentioned in earlier reports, it has not been a piece of cake to recruit participants. With respect to the young people some refused, others would like to - but had moved to another town or part of the country. So, eventually we had to take what we got.

With respect to the professionals, some were very interested, got involved and gave good advice related to getting further professionals in the boat. Other professionals nearly from the very start had reservations. Primarily, because they imagined that the research was an evaluation of their projects. This misunderstanding was a severe constraint as they had the contacts to a majority of the young people. At the end of the research we had overcome most of the objections and barriers. Partly, too late. The way of doing research also demands much more time - in particular to develop the relationships necessary (first of all confidence).
3. Appendix 1

Photogallery: Researched city district in Svendborg

These photos are brought here in order to show the standard of good social housing in Svendborg. Though this area has been listed as a ghetto it does not look like a ghetto. The tenants' organisation emphasizes the necessity of not letting social housing appear as a deprived space.
7 FRANCE: Group Discussions reflecting case study research results

Thierry Berthet (cnrs), Veronique Simon (cereq BORDEAUX)

1. Interaction between youth and researchers and (if) other stakeholders:
   How do youngsters value the interaction/relati on with researchers?

This research has represented a peculiar moment for both the researchers, the stakeholders and of course the youngsters.

For the researcher

If we had already changed our research methods for other researches, this one has allowed us to push forward the participative dimension of data gathering in social science. This has led us to deeply modify our research protocol on three dimensions:

- Research questions;
- Research agenda;
- Kind of interviewees.

Consequently, our research process has progressively become more and more inductive: youngsters were asked to explore the explanations for their situation and test them by questioning the appropriate actors. For the researchers, this work supposes to give up the idea of a total control of the research process. We had to trust the youngsters in being able to find by themselves the right answers to their own questions. At the risk of getting away from our main research question "to what extent and in what way social policies and their implementation do they take seriously the views of young people in difficulties", we have chosen to take seriously the youngsters’ point of view and capability to be fully participative in the research process.

In addition, the researchers had to engage fully in the method that requires managing very carefully the confrontation and deliberation of youngsters and stakeholders. This method implies a full commitment and the ability to impose and regulate a group dynamics. This goes hand in hand with a distance from neutrality that fits well with a normative theory such as the capability approach.

Concerning the implementation of the CCAPPA (Contradictory, Collective And Participatory Policy Analysis), a big amount of time is dedicated to the preparation of the interviews in order to make them as easy and fluid as possible.

For the youngsters

It is not possible to decide whether this method allows a stronger agency capability for the youngsters. Nevertheless we have been able to verify that this methodological/analytical moment has represented a reflexive blip very much appreciated in an everyday life filled with injunctions and prescriptions.
The CCAPPA has also been an opportunity for the youngsters to get information on their entitlements to rights and services (financial, political).

These collective interviews have also been an opportunity to increase their self-esteem by having the right to express freely their point of view and grief but also legitimize their own vision of the world. Their critical and reflexive views – often surprising with regards to what is being said by their own case managers – has allowed us to gather a very rich and original empirical material.

For decision-makers and street level bureaucrats

The discussions were an opportunity for policy makers to hear the internal contradictions in the policies they manage. As early school leavers, the most precarious youngsters had to find by force their own way towards autonomy, often with precarious jobs but able to give them an entitlement to unemployment benefits lost as soon as they change to a status of pupil trying to get back to school!

Confronting the words of the beneficiaries also required them to leave aside the comfortable position of the institutional "monologue" of semi-structured interviews. Here, the youngsters’ experience of the programs sometimes contradicts strongly the official of decision makers and case managers. Therefore, the limits of their action logics appear.

These very interesting results speak in favour of associating the beneficiaries to the definition of the policies dedicated to them. A true and strong participation of youngsters to the definition of youth policies represent one of our main recommendations.

2. Learning produced through the process: what do youngster value as learning outcomes produced through research?

The meetings were an opportunity to deconstruct certain representations: for young people, that of not being worthy of interest for policy makers and operators to deal with young incapable of sustained attention and reflexive attitude.

During the closed sessions, reserved exclusively for young people, we presented them the method emphasizing their role as junior researchers. On the one side, this role was greatly valued by youngsters. On the other side, this role took them away from their personal experience and engaged them to build questions in a more collective aim. The richness of their questions demonstrates their understanding of the purpose of the approach: identify the key elements of dropouts course and how their views could be, or not taken into account.

Policymakers had more trouble to leave out of their institutional role. The first trend on their part was to stay confined to a usual discourse. We had to support the group to strengthen the weight of their questions with them, to make that practical answers are given to specific questions, even have to discuss the limits of the programs under study.

The sessions were sometimes filled with a strong emotional charge. Open sequences could be harsh and late in the day it was sometimes necessary to shorten the debriefing time to give time to "recover" before leaving the group. Unequal positions between youth and stakeholders re-emerge within a certain symbolic violence. Thus, viewing photos at PRI, and
more significantly the discussion around sketches of the designer at the micro high school, were opportunities to conclude on a less alarming note.

3. Results: what kind of results do youngsters value most?

The recognition of the early school leaving suffering

Our groups of deprived youngsters highlight the hardships and oppressions. First, the pain express by the dropouts we met. So, one of our CCAPAA start by this expression: ‘youngsters need to let the pain come out’ before to start the sequences. In the course of the interviews, we harvested many strong words on this theme (more details in the WP5.2 report).

Schooling as a major cause of social inequalities

School careers are among the top factors of inequality mentioned by young dropouts. First and foremost, orientation to technical and vocational secondary education, perceived as relegation sectors, is pointed out.

Social capital as a main resource

Young people also identify the issue of social capital as an important source of inequality. Having the right connections, knowing the right networks is a crucial stake for a large range of issues such as accessing internships, entering the labour market, finding rights and services, etc. So, they point the importance of focusing on concrete achievements rather than on idealized institutions.

The lack of value of the jobs proposed to them

The other dimension raised as evidence of inequalities is the quality of jobs that deprived youngsters have access to. These jobs are generally perceived (with reason) as marked by strong domination and poor working conditions, making them impossible to value.

Enforceable rights against all forms of discrimination

In the young’s perspective, caring for the origins of inequalities in their lifecourse is a precondition to foster a better society, as, racial, gender, social capital (cf. supra) discrimination in everyday life. Although rules for social justice exist – racial discrimination is subject to prosecution in France – it remains true that a discriminating society (as evidenced by the experiences of young people) is a completely unfair society.

Less status designed programs and more account given to concrete life conditions

Too often, programs are making young people aware of limiting their projects rather than
truly allow their aspirations to come true. However, this experimental nature generates difficulties in achieving their goals. Thus, for the micro high school, as we pointed in WP4, the status of the pupils raises a livelihood issue that may hinder their return to study. The problem of the deprivation of welfare rights (rights to benefits) highlights the lack of coordination between local actors, the joint failure between programs, and the institutional compartmentalization.

4. Recommendations: what kind of recommendations do youngsters suggest for researchers and (if) other stakeholders

That the most flagrant injustices are addressed

According to the youngsters’ perspective, the matter of justice is not only to try to achieve it but also to prevent the blatant injustice. In their perspective, caring for the origins of inequalities in their lifecourse is a precondition to foster a better society.

It is also interesting to notice that while appreciating social justice, youngsters can also refer to a Niti approach and the importance of showing an appropriate behavior. As a consequence if an institutional actor does not apply the same rule to himself his functioning is considered twice unfair.

That their point of view has be trained to be recognized as valuable

The expression and the use of the opinion of vulnerable people without a previous work on their ability to build their own reflexive point of view may not be the best way to reduce the inequalities they suffer from. The social embeddedness of voice expression is an important issue to take into consideration. If participation is defined as a way to improve social justice in public policies then this “socially built character” of individual perceptions should be considered. In terms of support to youngsters, working with them on self-reflexivity should be worth considering this character especially with regards to the assignment of social positions.

That there are given full social rights

Young people here do not claim anything else than the minimum they are entitled to. As an employee or job seeker they was entitled to unemployment benefits but as a pupil, nothing. So, without parental help, private help what do they live with? On this matter of financial autonomy, the French ‘familialist’ model of social rights shows its limits. Beyond 18 years old, the youth public policies have to fully take into account the concrete life conditions of young adults especially for the most vulnerable.

For case managers: giving them the necessary resources to support them really

When there is one guidance counsellor for 1500 pupils, the lack of human resources is a true problem for vulnerable young people. Many programs suffer from a lack of financial means. The number of dedicated case managers is much too low with regards to the number of early school leavers in France (approx. 140 000/year).

More individualized support

Young identify failure to take into account their individual aspirations. Standardized answers and prescriptive attitude remains the most common way to support vulnerable youngsters. Therefore they rightly claim for a more individualized support as a fair compensation of the
more individualized responsibility they are confronted to. This point relates to the discretion left to street level bureaucrats in their operational autonomy (see WP5.2 recommendations).
8 BELGIUM: Group Discussions reflecting case study research results

Dr. Caroline Vandekinderen & Prof. Dr. Rudi Roose
University of Ghent

1. Introduction

In this paper, we outline how our participatory research, aiming to deliver an empirical foundation to inform and broaden the “Informational Basis of the Judgments in Justice” in the system of part-time vocational education and workplace learning in Ghent, evolved through the different research phases. Firstly, we explain how the research questions and design were established through a participatory approach. Next, we document some methodological decisions which are based on a participatory perspective. To conclude, we reflect on the interpretation, representation and dissemination processes, conceived from their participatory potential.

2. Participatory approach of the research questions and research design

The research questions and design, were shaped in cooperation with the Consultation Part-time Education (ODO), a steering committee in which the following partners are represented: Department of Education of Ghent, partners from the labour market, coordinators of the two centers PVEWL of Ghent, Syntra Flanders, part-time@work, center for education legislation and compulsory education, and the coordinator of the center PVEWL of Eeklo (a neighbouring town). These partners obtained extensive experiences with the perspective of young people through their everyday practice in the system of PVEWL and are as such an ideal touchstone to discuss the research questions, design and methodology.

Both through our exchanges with the steering committee, as through the local network analysis, the notion of “success” emerged as a sensitizing concept that embraces a broad range of meanings and layers and practitioners balance on a tension between functional and more complex interpretations of both success and education. Therefore success functioned as a central concept in our research. However, throughout the local network analysis, it became obvious that a number of trajectories evolve in complicated and difficult ways, for which various reasons were given: the structures of the system, the “target group” and their characteristics, failure of general education, ... From the Capability Approach, we therefore explored the perspective of young people who drop out, rather than only presenting the perspective of the young people who are loyal and adaptive and integrate into the system or actively participate in it. Therefore, we focused also on “difficult trajectories”. As such, our aim was to map complex and exemplary stories – selected by the schools (our gatekeepers) – that provide information about interactions / interventions / critical incidents experienced as meaningful trajectories that are evaluated as positive (success) or negative (difficult) by the schools. This selection may to a certain extent reveal the professional logics by which trajectories are constructed as successful or problematic.
Our main research question, embedded in the Capability Approach, was the result of an intensive process of discussion, and sounds: “How is the capability for education - what youngsters in the system of PVEWL may have reason to value in education - of disadvantaged youngsters realized (or not) in the system of part-time vocational education and workplace learning in Ghent?” What is the possible meaning of education, learning, support, ... for young people and how does this relate to the policies and (pedagogical) practices that are being developed in the system of part-time vocational education and workplace learning in Ghent?

3. Participatory approach through the research process

In what follows, we will explain some of the methodological challenges we faced during the research process and the responses we formulated as an inherent part of the continuous dialogue and negotiation process of our participatory research that we address as a practice of reflection.

The three schools in the system PVEWL in Ghent (CLW, CDO De Rotonde and Syntra) selected in total 14 trajectories. Seven of these trajectories were perceived as “successful”. Seven of them were referred to as “difficult”. In each trajectory, we started to interview respectively the youngster’s student, trajectory or employment counselor as someone who was strongly involved in the trajectory of the youngster and who could map the situation. This resulted in 14 interviews. Afterwards, we interviewed the youngster. Despite many attempts, in two cases we did not manage to reach the youngsters for an interview (difficult trajectories). As such, we conducted 12 interviews with the youngsters.

From the very beginning, we opted to situate the personal experiences of youngsters in the discursive field of practices and public issues of social structure, since these are inherently interrelated, in order to catch a more contextualized perspective of youngsters on their capability for education (Komulainen, 2007). However, throughout our research process, it became clear that an in-depth exploration, reconstruction and understanding of the often complex educational trajectories of youngsters in the system of PVEWL required a more exhaustive mapping of the various critical steps and tracks during the trajectory. By introducing additionally one or two relevant persons (for example teachers, employers, supervisors of bridging trajectories, ... ) – who were engaged in the trajectory and were perceived as important by the youngster – we took the perspective of youngsters on their trajectory serious, since the extra selected persons enabled us to contextualize the perspective of the youngsters and to interpret their trajectory against the background of social, cultural and political contexts and systemic forces. Another advantage of introducing more persons in the research, is that more space is created for and attention can be paid to ambiguity, complexity, tension, conflicting views, ... which we perceive as the basis for transformation. As such, we tried to explore the different and sometimes paradoxical discourses and views underlying the localized interactions with involved professionals in the trajectories. However, this multi-perspective research, which shifts the focus from “capturing the authentic voice of youngsters” to “a dialogue between contextualized perspectives, evolved as a very complicated venture. Moreover, it seemed to be difficult, on several occasions, to reach the youngsters. As such, the ambiguity of the pedagogical practices, also resonates in the research venture, in which a continued research engagement with the complexity and uncertainty of the research process can be seen as essential.
During an interview with a professional, a spontaneous exchange of perspectives occurred, as his colleagues – working in the same room – joined our conversation. During our conversation, it became clear that the question to select cases perceived as successful, contained a lot of noise. The research design was shaped with and explained to the Consultation Part-time Education. However, most of the members of this platform are principals. As such, they spread the information to the persons in charge of the school establishment, who, on their turn, informed the practitioners. However, it were eventually those practitioners who selected the cases. During this conversation, it became clear that in their selection, they interpreted success on an outcome basis (as they understood that we were looking for such cases), while – in everyday practice – a process-oriented interpretation of success seems to be of crucial importance to them. Also about the difficult trajectories, there seemed to be no consensus. At that point, it was decided together with the principal and some counselors, to select two more cases in consultation with the researcher.

4. Participatory approach with regard to the interpretation, representation and dissemination

While constructing a research report in order to interpret and represent the findings, we were struggling with the complexity and ambiguity of the rich research materials in which very complex insights were revealed (Roets, Roose and Bouverne - De Bie, 2013). Although the representation of the trajectories is the product of entangling our empirical material with our theoretical persuasion, we are aware that the telling of a story is experimental: there is no way in which it can be interpreted in a “right” way or represented as the final truth.

Our strategy of data representation is inspired by the work of Sameshima et al. (2009), who argue for the juxtaposing and re-presenting of multi-perspectives that are both in tension and in tandem with other possible interpretations, by revealing “the hybrid spaces of coupled interpretative systems, complex patterns are revealed which are not evident when researched separately” (Sameshima et al., 2009, p. 8). As Clarke (2003, p. 560) brings in, the produced perspectives “are not necessarily intended to form final analytic products. Although they may do so, a major and perhaps the major use for them is ‘opening up’ the data – interrogating them in fresh ways”. In line with Lather (2009), we argue for dialogical representational practices that reside in contradictory and constantly shifting and changing interpretations. The confluence of interpretations can create novel understandings, provoke new questions, generate innovate knowledge and enable new thinking (Sameshima et al., 2009).

Our aim is to question the obviousness of the institutional problem constructions and “Informational Basis of the Judgements in Justice” through which people learn to accept social injustice, by which the “unquestioned” becomes “questionable” (Schuyt, 1972). This relates to the possibilities of public and democratic debate with social actors in our societies about the ways in which policy and practice shape the structures and discourses that influence concrete circumstances of those disadvantaged youngsters and about the creation of solidarity and social justice (Vandekinderen and Roose, 2014). Therefore, it is of crucial importance that research guards its relation to the conditions in which the voices of social agents unfold, to enable researchers to formulate relevant implications for both policy and
practice (Grunwald and Thiersch, 2009) and to initiate a conversation with the involved partners. However, due to a mismatch between the research time-schedule and the educational context (holiday), we could not organize this exchange/feedback process yet. Nevertheless, we are concretizing both a formal conference and more informal moments of exchange (f.e. feedback and debate on the results during a staff meeting), as we aim to create knowledge as “a living evolving process of coming to know rooted in everyday experience, it is a verb rather than a noun” (Reason and Bradbury, 2001, p. 2).

References


9 THE NETHERLANDS: Group Discussions reflecting case study research results

Evelyne Baillergeau & Jan Willem Duyvendak
University of Amsterdam

1. The place of young people facing disadvantage in our research

Our SocIEy empirical research consisted in exploring the aspirations and the capability to aspire of young people in Amsterdam as well as the circumstances in which they develop over adolescence and early adulthood. Because of the focus of the SocIEy project on young people facing disadvantageous circumstances, this report addresses our research results pertaining to young people based in a couple of boroughs that are locally framed as ‘multi-problematic’ and subjected to a wide array of targeted social policies.

According to prevailing sociological literature, the aspirations of young people are significantly impacted by socio-economic factors. These factors are mostly studied from the perspective of the impact of family life and values on the process through which young people’s aspirations develop over time. Although not doubting the impact of social inequality and disadvantage, we wanted to question the role of local support networks in a wider sense (including other socialisation opportunities through which young people’s aspirations could be addressed and develop eventually) and the interactions between various structures of opportunity. This would, as we hypothesised, allow us to head towards a full picture of how young people frame a desirable future and of the extent to which their aspirations are impacted by social inequality.

To this end, this report addresses the views of secondary school students (aged 12-17) enrolled in the Weekend Academie (see report 5.2.), a non-school-time-based project explicitly aimed at broadening the chances of developing one’s aspirations young people facing disadvantageous circumstances have. Therefore, we consider two boroughs of Amsterdam in which the Weekend Academie operates, New West (Osdorp district) and West (Bos en Lommer district). As an attempt to provide ground for comparison, we also consider here the views of a third set of secondary school students attending the same school based in ZuidOost, another district, locally framed as ‘multi-problematic’ and subjected to a wide array of targeted social policies. The latter set of young people face rather similar social economic circumstances as the young people involved in the Weekend Academie, but they are not involved in such a supportive initiative as the Weekend Academie is meant to be. However, this does not entail that their aspirations and their capability to aspire are not actively stimulated beyond the sphere of family. They were asked about their views regarding a desirable future in an open way, so as to allow researchers to assess what are the aspirations that matter most to the commitments of
young people, be they related to attitudes towards school or beyond. Eventually, all young people enrolled in the research were asked more or less the same questions and there is a nice diversity in the narratives, which enabled a good testing of our research questions on the aspirations and the capacity to aspire and how they connect to social inequality and disadvantage.

We have not ‘left the field’ yet, for some observations and interactions – in the sense of an interactive research process – are still going on. The study of aspirations being a central focus of our research, a quite personal matter, we decided to proceed to one-to-one interviews as a first – and critical – step. In addition, the young people not being the only ones in state to inform us about their capability to aspire, some other respondents were included in the sample, notably teachers and social professionals. Our plans for the ‘leave the field’ phase is to submit our preliminary findings to a panel of people involved in the research so as to hear about their comments. Based on these comments, the present report will be finalised and a short article (in Dutch) will be offered to a local newspaper.

Meanwhile, the present report mostly draws upon interactions with others throughout the first rounds of the research process and addresses a few questions discussed with others all along the research process. First of all, the reception of our research among young people facing difficult circumstances enrolled in the research is discussed, and, subsequently, what we learned from the research process through a collection of talks with colleagues/academics and/or with frontline professionals such as teachers and social workers dealing with young people.

2. The reception of the research among young people

The aspirations and the opportunities to develop one’s aspirations were at the core of the discussions with the young people. Unlike a wealth of research in which young people are invited to discuss their aspirations based on questions such as whether or not they ‘hope to stay on in full-time education after the age of 16’, in our research, young people were asked about their aspirations in a broader perspective, meant to allow an open-ended analysis of the aspirations that really matter for young people and inspire their intention to participate in society, be these aspirations of educational order or not. Such an open-ended framing of aspirations might have been challenging for young people who are not familiar with social science research in general and qualitative research in particular. In addition, aspirations being a quite personal matter, we thought best that they would be investigated over one-to-one interviews, which in itself, may have been demanding for young people.

Overall, young people reacted well to being asked about their aspirations in one-to-one interview settings, as well as to being invited to discuss aspirations in an open way, entailing
a higher degree of reflection over one’s goals and commitments. Young people being approached through projects and/or school teachers who do care about the capability to aspire of young people, we could have expected that they would be very clear in their narratives regarding their goals. It happened to be so for some young people but not systematically so. For some it was more difficult and their aspirations seem to be somewhat vague, thus making it more demanding for researchers to get to know about their aspirations and their capability to aspire. Such difficulties suggest that the way aspirations were approached by project leaders and/or teachers was either not fully explicit and straightforward (using the language of aspirations), or if so, not in a dogmatic way, allowing the young people to go at their own pace and along their own lines, and leaving space for doubt, hesitation and afterthoughts. This suggestion is to be confirmed.

3. Learning through the research process

Such an approach to aspiration research is rather uncommon and remains experimental. Therefore it is uppermost important to proceed in a cautious way and to progress in a reflexive fashion. Therefore we kept records of talks and discussions about the topic all the process, starting with our WP2 paper, meant to be a theoretical sketch of aspirations and the capability to aspire. So far, the following points triggered the attention of various people, be they academic colleagues or frontline youth professionals – teachers and/or social care takers operating with young people.

Explicit aspiration research caught between two types of risks. As said, statements made about the aspirations of people (be it about dreamed job or housing wishes) often derive from researchers making deductions out of their own observations but without asking explicitly respondents about aspirations. This happens to make sense but it prevents respondents – in the very case: young people – from having a say about what they frame as their preferences regarding a desirable future and about the weight they grant to these preferences. At the opposite end, by explicitly asking about their aspirations, researchers may run the risk of projecting normative views upon the young people, along which ‘high aspirations’ would looked like as they were most valuable. Being particularly prone to avoid the former potential problem, we believe the latter potential problem can be prevented, when introducing ‘aspirations’ to respondents, by clearly distinguishing them from ‘ambitions’ – or at least from a maximizing take on ambitions (‘a desire to be successful, powerful, or famous’). But this is perhaps debatable.

Another debate we came across a few times is that of the desirability of enlarging the capacity to aspire among young people having low or limited prospects in life. Could that prove detrimental, in the sense that it might be conducive to disappointment, frustration and social withdrawal (see Khattab, 2015; Hanson, 1994) among young people? Perhaps not
if a larger capacity to aspire is discussed along the steps to take to fulfil aspirations and the available resources in the matter.

A third debate encountered so far revolves around situations in which it seems that young people have no aspirations. Whilst a significant share of academic literature on aspirations addresses aspirations along a self-evident process starting from ‘idealistic’ aspirations (a view on a desirable future regardless of the prospects of having them fulfilled in the future) towards ‘realistic’ aspirations in due course (aspirations adjusted thanks to a growing awareness of constraints and ‘real’ opportunities to have aspirations fulfilled – Saint-Clair & Benjamin, 2011), both frontline workers and academics observe situations in which young people seem to have no aspirations. These situations challenge prevailing views on aspirational pathways and invite researchers. Another type of challenging situation we should address is situation in which aspirations seem not to be fulfilled with available/legal resources but more so by other resources.
10 ROMANIA: Group Discussions reflecting case study research results

Adrian Dan, Oana Banu, Marian Ursan
University of Bucharest, Faculty of Sociology and Social Work

1. Interaction between youth, researchers and other stakeholders

The youngsters involved in participatory research are in vulnerable situation, from Vulturilor Community - a poor neighbourhood in Bucharest, evicted in September 2014 from a yard of houses that they were illegally occupying. The research consisted in a photovoice exercise which involved a number of young people from Vulturilor community.

The research team approached the people in the area, having extensive discussions with adult people and youngsters, as well as mediating the conflict and facilitating negotiations with local authorities. The lack of cooperation between the two conflicting parties made many victims among evictees who refused the accommodation solution proposed by the Local Authorities and continued to live in the street, also during the harsh winter. In this context we decided to try to hear the voice of the young people, not only about the current situation, but mainly about their perception and perspectives in making their voice hearable by decision makers mostly regarding their chances to access quality education and job market.

The participants of PhotoVoice consisted in a total number of 10 Roma ethnics youngsters, aged 16 – 20 years old, most of them part of the group evicted from Vulturilor Street and nearby, district 3rd of Bucharest. The recruitment plan was conducted in collaboration with Carusel Association, an organization active in the area by providing social services. In order to select the participants, the interviews took place nearby the places of residence, in the neighbourhood, so the participants could have the full control to express their interest and concerns related with this process.

The interaction with researcher was very rich for both – youngsters and researchers. The researchers had the opportunity to see, understand and learn about the real life, difficulties and aspirations of young people, while the youngsters have the opportunity to express their voices and find out useful information about various opportunities at their hands. Also in the concluding meeting they have the opportunity to organize the photovoice exhibition as they considered, explaining to the research team what is the logic ant their interpretation.
Thematic analyses have been conducted in collaboration with the participants in several steps over the course of the project. Through both inductive and deductive thematic analysis we identified the emergent themes aligned nicely with and supported existing theories in the literature. After each photo shooting process was done, the research team conducted sessions of discussions with all participants; each photo was analysed and accompanied by stories/messages. The aim of the session was to realize a ‘macro-picture’ that underlines there are also others in their situation and appropriate to intervene at this level. All the pictures have been printed on special boards displayed during the confrontation phase. The confrontation was organized in the premises of the University of Bucharest, Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, with the participation of the young people involved in the Photovoice process and few other key stakeholders. In fact the interaction with stakeholders – excepting the Carusel Association staff involved in making the photovoice – was rather minimal. Even at the final confrontation (the viewpoints/perspectives of the involved youngsters regarding the topics in focus vs. viewpoints of various stakeholders) the interest of stakeholders was minimal by non-attendance of meeting.
2. Learning produced through the process

In the beginning of our participatory research we came with a very specific agenda of discussions / themes / topics that should be tackled during the photovoice. This was based on previous interactions / interviews with various other young people, stakeholders / professionals. It was proven by our involved youngsters that our pre-determined does not fit with their view on their current situation, as well as theirs aspirations. This was the first and a good lesson for us and determined to re-think and adapt the line-up of themes according with the view of those particular youngsters but not “youngster at risk” generally. As a consequence, the proposed and tackled themes were focused on: a) important things in my life; b) social relationships - group of friends / family; c) lifestyle and leisure - hobbies etc.; d) education - education in the family, education system, teachers, peers, non-formal education; e) employment - future aspirations, intention to immigrate, the importance of education in finding a job; f) importance of health and access to health care services; h) risk behaviour (alcohol, drugs, unprotected sex etc.); i) involvement / participation in community life.

FAMILY – the central value ... But also the 'friendship' ...

Following the discourse about lack of willingness of society and in charge social institutions to help in need people and families, the main idea of youngsters focused on family values and family support as the main agent in helping its members in crysis situation.

The focus on family as a centered value reflects not only a more general trend among youngsters in Romania14, but particularly in our group of young people. It is not only a kind of subsidiarity (family / relatives / friends/ community/ state agencies) when young people think about/ are confronted with problems, but a a desperate awareness of the fact that most of the times behind of (failure) family support is merelty nothing or only a scripatic entitlement to rights embedded in a huge bureaucracy.

Two additional significant findings: attachment to school and willingness to participate and obtain good scholar performances are strongly linked to the abilities of teachers to interact, communicate and stimulate young scholars not only to learn various disciplines (mathematics, biology etc.) but – as Timotei mentioned:

---

“This is my teacher and two of my classmates. I spend a lot of time with them, both at school and outside school. My teacher teaches me good things, such as not to use drugs and stuff. That’s why I chose to take this picture of him. If you don’t graduate 12 grades, nobody gives you a job. Young people should not skip school, they should graduate their 12 grades.” (Timotei)

The second idea is related to accomplishing aspirations through work (with school as proxii) ... but sometimes even educated people fail to accomplish even some tangible dreams. One of the youngsters involved in photovoice – Amir – explained:

“This car caught my attention and my eyes flashed when I saw it and I said I wanted to have it, but it’s hard for me to get it. I can not have it unless I turn to other things, such as drug trafficking, prostitution, theft. A car is important, it’s my image. Most people need cars to go on vacations, or to work. But nowadays people have very low incomes to afford a car.” (Amir)

3. Recommendations from the youngsters

Based on our photovoice exercise (but we can extensively extrapolate our conclusions to overall young population and not only), the social policies and practices do not take the perspectives of (disadvantaged) young people seriously. Even there are governmental strategies and programs addressing the issue of wide social integration of young people, in practice the things are slightly different.

Youngsters’ experiential knowledge, even limited due to lack of information, participation and opportunities, reflects some fundamental aspirations and conceptions of justice which are very few articulated, heard and contested in social policies and practices as well as in other aspects of their daily lives.
In terms of participation, the young people perceive it mostly through the lens of family and school. Volunteering could be a very good example for others to share their resources, like David which was doing volunteering in a school for pupils, and talking them about “No hate speech”, or Timotei’s sister who does volunteering (making donuts) for the children from the church. The school is seen as the most important ‘vehicle’ driving one’s life to success and prosperity, to be respected and integrated in society. But school is sometimes a very abstract agency and it makes sense for young people through the teachers but not necessarily the knowledge that they can achieve.

They are considering themselves as disadvantaged / marginalized and that have to succeed mostly by their own or with family support but not the state/ institutional support – so they claimed to transpose all those ineffective public strategies from theory to real practice.

The disadvantaged youngsters considered themselves as not informed / aware about local social programs targeting them perhaps because such effective programs are missing. Many times the programs developed have irrelevant goals, not linked with the real needs of the young people, representing just a checklist of indicators for bureaucrats and donors.

They are aware that the only chance to succeed in life is through school attendance but the school is not attractive at all – has old fashioned courses and teachers that do not motivate them to perform.
Their aspirations are modeled (lowered sometimes) by the family and are from deep pessimism to unachievable ones through legal ways.

For youngsters, the family is the cornerstone. All their values, dreams, aspirations, needs are gravitating around family and mostly in the absence of any agency/institutional support.

Eventually the public institutions/services are seldom seen as temporary and accidental vehicles which drive them closer to the final goal: independence in absence of the State.

In terms of employment the main requests refer to job creation and non-discrimination.
11 SWITZERLAND: The Place of Young People Facing Disadvantage in the Swiss Research

Benoît Beuret, Jean-Michel Bonvin, Stephan Dahmen

HES-SO, EESP, Centre for the Study of Capabilities In Social and Health Services (CESCAP)

Our research has been conducted with 3 different groups of young persons involved in different institutional contexts. In line with the methodological approach of the “sociological intervention”, our aim was to document the reality and voice of young adults whose trajectories differ from the linear and fluid transition to adulthood and reconstruct the social relations that are shaping their experience of “being in transition”.

The reception of the research by the young people

The discussions and interactions that took place during the first research sessions can be interpreted as collective sense-making activities, in which participants came to a collectively agreed description of their experience and interpretations of the world. As a matter of fact, youngsters (even when vulnerable) were able to demonstrate a “critical capacity” that allows them to think about their condition and living, to subject their aspirations to critical scrutiny and described what they have reason to value, as expressed through manifold evaluative practices. The collective discussions highlighted the IBJJ on the basis of which the young people problematize their situation and position in relation to the institutional calendars and the various expectations of the “adult world”. For example, youngsters developed the idea that the “transition system” carries within it specific issues related to questions of timing. Participants argued in particular that the actual system fails to provide enough time to choose and opportunity to experiment jobs that they (would) have reason to value. A shared consensus emerged during the discussion in conceiving timing as an important barrier to a fruitful transition into work.

Learning trough the research process

During the next sessions, the presence of interlocutors provided to the young persons a lot of concrete and first-hand information on how the VET system works. The confrontative stance of these specific sessions allowed them to learn how to put their arguments in order to be “intelligible” by a different public. However it was only in very few cases that youngsters confronted the claims of their interlocutors. The latter demonstrated an inclination to impose a pragmatic agenda over a more transformative one. Taking advantage of their insider position and institutional legitimacy, they rather engaged in a process of clarification of the “social scenery” that they consider relevant in relation to youngsters’ narratives. Their posture and discourse clearly framed how young beneficiaries are supposed to redefine themselves and their life, even when confronted with stigmatization
and group-based labeling, which also entailed the risk of being evaluated as “small” and “worthless” once again. Instead of interpreting this outcome in negative terms or as a research bias, we rather consider it as a magnifying glass revealing the kind of social relations in which disadvantaged young adults are inscribed when they are involved within institutional contexts.

**More results from the reflective group discussions**

The finalization sessions represented a unique occasion for the research team to submit the main findings of the collective inquiry to the young persons. Youngsters formulated a positive assessment of the research process and validated the presented description of their experience and results of the sessions. After a short presentation of the results, and their submission to the participants for validation, we started a more general discussion on the process and on the experiences they had made. It is important to point to the fact that no substantial critique came from the youngsters side, they mainly agreed with our interpretations. Nevertheless, the situation was slightly discomforting, as for in this concrete moment, we reclaimed to "know" what where their reasons for action, their evaluative frameworks and their critiques. As we decided from the front on 4 main findings that we submitted for a discussion "We had the impression that XXX... do you agree?".

**Will it change anything?**

To our own surprise, youngsters did not disagree with our interpretations, but had some serious questions about the "use" of the research report ("Who will read it? Why? What is this report good for?") and ultimately, if it "would change anything".

**On the use of knowledge produced trough participatory research**

We thus explained, once again, the set-up of the Research project, pointed to it’s European dimension, and described - in a down to earth fashion - that the report is submitted to the EC, and that it will be publicly available to everyone interested. As when it comes to the question of change, we had to admit that we were aware of the limited possible impact on policy making, and that it "probably won't change much". We precised that research can have a potential impact, but once findings are published, we had no control on its use, and that policies, as well as decisions about them are taken in other spheres. Nevertheless, we pointed to the importance and highlighted the value of the existence of knowledge that we thought was too often silenced. We explained that we see our responsibility in adequately reporting their situated knowledge, rather than turning them into policies. The young persons agreed, and we told them that we are aware of and reflected on the question that we had nothing substantial "to decide" but that this does in our eyes not invalidate the time we spent together.

**Participative research is no silver bullet for empowerment of disadvantaged youngsters**

While youngsters seemed to remain skeptical about the "impact" question ("will it change anything?") they agreed that the experience of participating in this project was valuable in
itself. They had gained more knowledge on the Swiss transition system, on how the employers "work" had learned how to put specific arguments and to confront "knowledgeable" adult person, and had gained a unique insight in how "the system works" and the "administrators function". Nevertheless, youngsters re-iterated that they felt that they had not been taken seriously by some of the persons invited. Some of them openly said that the invitees had "told stories" or tried to seduce them into believing that their initial impressions where wrong. Most of the youngsters said that they felt not to have been taken seriously. We described how we interpreted the issue, and explained that we had the impression that the invitees where, just as everybody "caught" in their own social worlds, which made specific things sayable and cognizable, but others not. The social worlds of the interlocutors where clearly more powerful and had more legitimation. We agreed with the youngsters that some of the invitees where to a lesser extent ready and perhaps also able to change take on others perspective, while others probably where simply not ready to enter into the discussion on certain issues. We then discussed specific episodes of the different encounters, and decided that despite some negative experiences, we have been able to confront some of the policy makers in a convincing way, and that all in all, it was a pleasant experience.