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Citizenship Education in Changing Times

A discussion paper by Laden Yurttagüler

Interest in citizenship education, particularly, for young people has been increased since the early 1990s.¹ The subject took the attention of public authorities from local, regional and national level; actors from civil society who are working, again, on different levels; funding agencies such as public institutions and private foundations and supra-national organisations such as Council of Europe, European Union and United Nations.

Drastic political and social developments along the world have been caused the need to re-evaluate citizenship as a political institution and a focus of study.²

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, it has been witnessed regime changes in different parts of the world including the Eastern Europe and South American countries.

Since citizenship as a concept is the relation between the state and the individuals, changes on the regimes have revived the discussions on the rights of citizens along with the involvement strategies of the citizens. Citizenship education was considered a way “to promote democracy and build domestic and international legitimacy.”³

These developments coincide with the rising concerns regarding the representative democracy.⁴ On the one hand, inadequate participation in political life which was indicated

¹ Torney-Purta, J. (2000) “Comparative perspectives on political socialization and civic education.” *Comparative Education Review*, 44 (1), 88–95

² Kymlicka, W. (2003a) “Immigration, citizenship, multiculturalism: exploring the links”, *Political Quarterly* 74 (1), 195–208

³ Nelli Piattoeva, *Citizenship Education Policies and the State: Russia and Finland in a comparative perspective*, PhD, University of Tampere, the Faculty of Education, 2010. p. 23.

⁴ Frazer, E. (1999) “Introduction: the idea of political education”, *Oxford Review of Education* 25 (1/2), 5–23.

by the decline in voting rates and party membership was considered as a “threat to democracy.”⁵ In this context, citizenship education is perceived as a solution for participation problems with raising interest in political sphere and civic engagement among the, particularly, future citizens.⁶

On the other hand, citizenship education was seen as a tool for the empowerment of citizens where critics against the representative democratic systems were rising due to their failure in representation and involvement of the needs of the citizens.⁷

Citizenship education was considered as a way to raise awareness among the citizens about their rights and their responsibilities.

Also it was promoted to enable the citizens to construct alternative ways to participate, to develop an understanding and common ways of “living together.”

During the process, along with involvement of the actors from nation-states and supranational agencies, civil society organizations were also encouraged to contribute to the development the content and methods for citizenship education. Civil initiatives operating on different levels – local, national and/or international – and with varied capacities – starting from local civil initiatives to international civil society organizations – have developed the content for empowering citizens to take part in the decision making and policy making processes. They have provided various tools and methods on subjects related to citizen participation such as volunteering in the CSOs, campaigning about subjects, monitoring and reporting of public services.

Particularly in the last decade, citizenship education became a subject which was recognized with majority of the public institutions, yet, on which less and less discussions continued. It was assumed that there is a consensus or, at least, a common understanding, on the content, methods and providers (who needs to do) of citizenship education.

⁵ Naval, C., Print, M. & Veldhuis, R. (2002) “Education for democratic citizenship in the new Europe: context and reform.” *European Journal of Education*, 37 (2), 108–128

⁶ Kennedy, K.J. (1997) Citizenship education in review. Past perspectives and future needs. In: K. Kennedy (Ed.) *Citizenship Education and the Modern State*. London: The Falmer Press, 1–5. P. 2.

⁷ For a detailed discussion for the participation opportunities and practices of the citizens, see: Markus Miessen, *The Nightmare of Participation*, Sternberg Press, 2010.

However, in this decade, significant changes have been experienced in the understanding of citizenship concept, in the needs of the citizens and also in the participation processes and practices. Therefore, citizenship education is in need of reconsideration, if not, an extensive reflection to correspond current developments.

This discussion paper aims to bring new questions on the concept of and citizenship education considering the impact of current political and social developments on its content, methods and providers. These questions seek to inspire new discussions to assess current situation and to develop strategies for future activities. First part focuses on the concept of citizenship and the changing ways of its understanding regarding the citizenship education. Second part, the discussion touches upon the changes regarding the participation practices with taking into consideration current political events. Last part aims to examine the effects of the changes, which happened in the concept of citizenship and in the participation practices, on the citizenship education.

This discussion paper was prepared to contribute to the seminar on the role of youth work in citizenship education with young people, with a focus on its European dimension “YOUNG PEOPLE’S CITIZENSHIP AND EUROPE: WHICH WAYS FORWARD?”, organised on 2 – 4 May by the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth.

Citizenship as a Concept

The efforts to define the concept of citizenship have been seen more prominently in the 1990s in the literature.⁸ Prominent figures of the citizenship literature, Kymlicka and Norman have started to discuss the political implications of the emergence of the concept, citizenship, in their well-known work, “Return of the Citizen”, in 1994.⁹ Later, they have continued to designate the characteristics of citizenship. According to Kymlicka and Norman, citizenship as a concept, at an individual level, was a combination of three features: Status,

⁸ For some prominent discussions, see: Bryan Turner, “Outline of a Theory of Citizenship”, in *Dimensions of Radical Democracy. Pluralism, Citizenship, Community*, edited C. Mouffe (ed.), 1992. London: Verso, 33–63. Carole Pateman, *The Disorder of Women. Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory*, 1989, Cambridge: Polity Press.

⁹ Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman, “Return of the Citizen: A Survey of Recent Work on Citizenship Theory”, 1994, *Ethics*, 104 (2): 352–381.

Belonging and Activity.¹⁰ *Status* defines, fundamentally, the relation between the individual and the state. Citizenship implies the legal status held by citizens. It draws the limits of the rights and responsibilities of the citizens. In another way of saying, status is the designated term which refers to the social contract between the citizens (individuals) and the state. It gives the symbolic recognition as being a part of community to the individuals in the form of identity card and/or national passports. Status ensures equality among the citizens, at least, on the paper.¹¹

Belonging, on the other hand, defines the sense of being a part of a political community. The norms and the values around citizenship are formulated around the concept of belonging. It implies various particular identities such as class, race, ethnicity, gender, profession, sexual reference. In some countries, citizenship is defined based on the relation between the individual and the land/country. In this case, the birth place of the individual becomes one of the determining factors for the entitlement of citizenship status. In some countries, citizenship is defined through the blood ties. In other countries, the contribution and integration to the country and/or community could be a determining factor for the entitlement. The imperatives for the entitlement of the citizenship, also, identify the values around the understanding of citizenship in that particular country. In a country where nationalist values predominate, citizenship could be defined through the blood ties, where in a liberal understanding, contribution and integration of the individuals to the community could be sufficient fulfilments for the entitlement.

Kymlicka and Norman have proposed *Activity* as the complimentary and also indispensable feature of citizenship. Activity emphasized the opportunities and the ways through which citizens can participate to the decision making and policy making processes on different levels such as local, national and/or international and through a spectrum of activities including representative democracy mechanisms and/or civil society organizations. In the

¹⁰ Kymlicka, W., "Citizenship in Culturally Diverse Societies: Issues, Contexts, Concepts", in Kymlicka, W. and Norman, W. (eds.) *Citizenship in Diverse Societies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000, 1-41. P. 30.

¹¹ For feminist critiques, see: Phillips Anne. (1995) *The Politics of Presence*, Clarendon Press, Oxford. Pateman Carole. (1992). "Equality, difference, subordination: the politics of motherhood and woman's citizenship" in G. Bock and S. James (eds.). *Beyond Equality and Difference: Citizenship, Feminist Politics and Female Subjectivity*, Routledge, London.

Activity part, Kymlicka and Norman have discussed the potential and possible ways for the citizens to participate and to contribute to the decisions and/or policies about how to live together. Activity is about a person's civic virtue (will) to participate in the life of one's political community. Even they have brought the concept of Active Citizen to their readers to discuss the levels and deepness of the involvement and participation of the citizens. The conceptualization of Kymlicka and Norman has emphasized civil rights, particularly through the Status and political rights through the Activity.

Parallel to their emphasis on civil and political rights, a consensus is built on the recognition of civil and political rights of the citizens in the last 20 years. This recognition enabled the citizens to vocalize their needs and demands through varied governance mechanisms.¹²

However, looking from perspective of citizenship rights, their formulation has left social rights out.

T.H. Marshall, on the other hand, has defined citizenship as "the status granted to all actual members of the community" which could be achieved through the access and practice of civil, political and social rights all together.¹³ He considered three right groups as indivisible and interrelated which resembles to the principles of human rights.¹⁴ According to Marshall, civil and political rights of the citizens could only be practiced if their social rights were guaranteed by the state. Attempts for political participation could be set as an example within this framework. An individual who support a particular political party could only vocalize its engagement if she/he could be ensured that she/he is not fired from her/his job. Moreover, this individual needs assurances such as basic living support, basic health and/or accommodation support to survive with dignity in case she/he is dismissed due to her/his affiliation with a political thought and/or any other reason. Young people and their choices could be given as another example. Due to limited social services (rights) provided for young people in many countries in Europe, their well-being is highly dependent on their families, particularly during their schooling period (particularly university) since they do not have

¹² Kamila Czerwinska, "Open Method of Co-ordination: a new avenue for enhancing young people's active citizenship?", in *European Citizenship – In the process of construction*, edited by Ditta Dolejsiova and Miguel Angel Garcia Lopez, Council of Europe Publishing, 2009.

¹³ Marshall, T. H, 1950, *Citizenship and Social Class and Other Essays*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁴ Whelan, Daniel J. "Indivisible Human Rights." *Global Issues Series* (2010): 69.

relatively secure jobs in the labour market.¹⁵ Since their needs are provided by their families, their choices are bound within the limits of the *understanding* of their families. In another way of saying, since they are not autonomous due to the lack of guaranteed social services, their civil and/or political activities are subject to approval of their main providers, in this case, their families.¹⁶

Starting from their political engagements to their professions, the choices of young people are in the hand of their main provider if their social rights are not guaranteed with their social rights by the state. In another way of saying, the main providers, mostly the parents have the power to decide in the name of their children. Besides young people, other disadvantaged groups are also bound with the decisions of the main providers if their social needs are not provided by the public institutions based on a social contract instead of “*good-will.*”

Even though access to social rights enables the citizens to act autonomously, their recognition is vague and/or limited in the literature of citizenship studies. As a reflection of this vagueness, the discussion on social rights in the citizenship education existed barely, with only a couple of projects, in the last decade. The Enter! project, for example, is one of the few programmes that promotes social rights for young people. The Council of Europe’s youth sector launched the Enter! project in 2009 as a response to exclusion, discrimination and violence affecting young people, particularly in multicultural neighborhoods.¹⁷

Therefore, the first question of this paper is about the limits of recognition regarding the social rights in the citizenship discussions. What is the extent of social rights for the disadvantaged citizens in the citizenship literature?

¹⁵ For the detailed discussions about the types of welfare states, see: Gosta-Esping Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, Polity Press, 1990, Canbridge

¹⁶ As a case study see the results of the three different researches from Turkey: Laden Yurttagüler, “Gençlerin Özerkliği Var mı?” (Do the young people have autonomy), in *Özerklik Ve Özgürlükler Açısından Türkiye’de Gençlik Politikaları* (Youth Policy in Turkey regarding the freedom and autonomy) , by Laden Yurttagüler – Burcu Oy - Yörük Kurtaran, İstanbul Bilgi University Publishings, İstanbul, 2014. Pınar Uyan Semerci, Emre Erdoğan, Elif Sandal Önal, *Biz’liğin Aynasından Yansıyanlar* (Reflections from the Mirror of Us-dom), , İstanbul Bilgi University Publishings, İstanbul, 2017.

¹⁷ For a detailed info about ENTER!, see: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/enter/about-the-project> (27.6.2018)

Are the social rights of citizens coming from lower socio-economic background covered and to what extent? The coverage for the social rights of Roma people could be an example to open us a space to think about. Can the Roma people access fundamental services such as schooling, health services and/or modest accommodation conditions? Are they supported by the governmental mechanisms?¹⁸

Can citizenship education include the content regarding the social rights? If yes, what could be its limits? General principles of civil and political rights are promoted for the ones living in the same community. What about the ones living in the same community, but not the citizens such as refugees? The practices differ drastically when it comes to social rights. What about the social rights of refugees?

Changes in the Political Climate

The preliminary efforts on providing and promoting citizenship education (along with human rights education) in the formal educational settings and through the civil society organizations can be dated at the second part of the 1990s. Since then, “citizenship education” is included by many states in the (national) school curriculums. Also, many civil initiatives and CSOs on different level – local, national and international – have worked on enriching the content and methods of delivery, both for formal and non-formal educational settings. Moreover, transnational organizations such as Council of Europe and European Union have promoted officially citizenship education through establishing co-operations with civil society and governments with the 2000s. In 2000, the Directorate of Youth and Sport of Council of Europe launched its Human Rights Education Youth Programme. The programme has promoted the mainstreaming of human rights education in the Council’s work with young people and in youth policy and youth work.¹⁹ The programme has contributed to the field with resources such as Compass, the manual on human rights education with young people and trainings and capacity building activities during the first half of the 2000s.²⁰ The Council of Europe puts a special emphasis on promoting citizenship

¹⁸ Erika Szyszczak, Equal Access to Social Protection in the EU, <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=2808> (27.6.2018)

¹⁹ “Youth Policy and human rights education”, in Compass, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/introducing-human-rights-education>

²⁰ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass>

education and participation of young people between 2006 and 2008.²¹ The European Commission has provided instruments with “Europe for citizens” program to promote active European citizenship with the second half of the 2000s.²² Even, on the global level, United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner has launched a human rights education program in 2005 which was not same, but similar to the citizenship education regarding to content (and sometimes regarding to the methods).²³ Surely the developments in citizenship education have occurred within the framework of the changes in the political culture and civil society on different levels.

During the 1990s, the political culture and civil society, particularly, in Europe was affected by the discourse that promoted dialogue which leads the citizens to reach a consensus about the practices, policies and rules to live together. This discourse was particularly inhabited and encouraged by liberal political environment. Back then, even supranational organizations have launched campaigns and/or events such as European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008)²⁴ to recognize the importance of dialog among the citizens.

This trend has shifted, particularly, in the last 5 years not only in Europe, but also globally. In the last 5 years, we have witnessed the rise of right-wing political parties and movements.

Parallel to the rise of right-wing political parties and movements, the narrative that is developed within the right-wing and populist discourse has intervened, if not dominated, the political discussions. The political discussions transformed from “dialogue” oriented to a, more, “side-taking” (*partisan*) approach. As a result of this trend, political discussions that aimed to form general principles about “how to live together” have shifted from *understanding* each other to *winning* the argument.

²¹ Hanjo Schild, Yulia Pererva and Nathalie Stockwell, “Preface: European citizenship and young people in Europe”, in *European Citizenship – In the process of construction*, edited by Ditta Dolejsiova and Miguel Angel Garcia Lopez, Council of Europe Publishing, 2009, p. 4. For youth and participation, for further information: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/home> and for youth and education for democratic citizenship, for further information: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/edc>

²² For the programmes launched by the EU, see: http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/about-the-europe-for-citizens-programme/future-programme-2014-2020/index_en.htm

²³ For the world programme for Human Rights Education – first phase: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/WPHRE/FirstPhase/Pages/Firstphaseindex.aspx>

²⁴ For the official summary, see: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=LEGISSUM:l29017>

Not only was the attitude towards the discussions changed during the period. But also the approach towards the content has been affected by this nationalist and/or right wing trend. The content/arguments were produced with reference to the “known” values instead of critical perspective/thinking. A part of building the arguments on the “known” values involves abiding by the already existing values and beliefs while abandoning the attitude that aims to question and deconstruct established-norms. Since questioning and deconstruction of the norms are the fundamental steps of critical thinking, the attitude and discussion has pulled ahead of the critical discussions. As critical thinking lost its position and usage in developing arguments, political discussions became limited within the mind set of conventional norms, values and/or attitudes. Hence, nationalist and/or belief-based values are most repeated, familiar and established, they became more referred, accepted and repeated benchmarks in the political discourse without the concern of being “politically correct.”

These developments have created vital shifts in the political area in which citizens should/could decide how to live together. First and foremost, the segregation between the insiders and outsiders which refers to the membership of a community started to be highlighted more firmly. This accent, on the one hand, has sharpened the rules which determine the features of belonging to the community. On the other hand, the actors who establish rules have been replaced with others and/or changed their attitudes regarding the political discussion along with the flexibility and inclusiveness of these rules.

This shift has, even, caused, re-questioning the *Status* and *Belonging* of the already-defined citizens to the community. Although some groups and/or individuals owned the status of citizenship based on the existing laws/legislative framework; their involvement to the community was questioned with reference to re-invented values including their ethnic, cultural, religious and/or national identities.²⁵

Changing political culture has also affected the understanding of “living together” including the discussions on ethnic, cultural and religious differences. In a setting where policies

²⁵ «Black lives matter» movement in USA could be an important example for the citizenship discussions. <https://blacklivesmatter.com/>

regarding living together are defined based on the “known values” instead of “critical thinking” and where dialogue opportunities are precluded by the charge of “rightfulness”; will to understand and will to live together with the Others has weakened visibly.

Last but not least, the rise of nationalist and conservative values in the political culture/discussions has also an important impact on the conceptualization of citizenship. Apart from the “belonging” discussions, nationalist and/or conservative values enabled, also, the rise of patriarchal discourse in citizenship discussions. Women have a particular role and place in nationalist and conservative discourses which promote mothering identity along with other domestic activities for women to situate them in the “private” sphere. “Private” sphere where woman was associated to strengthen national values and fulfil their duties to the (national) community was/is defined as a “care” oriented space where political discourse has no place. In that worldview, women were assigned the role of care-givers in the household while men are assigned to the roles of husbands and/or fathers of the nation who should take care of the family as breadwinners and decide for the “good” of his *family*. Within this mind-set, while men are seen suitable as equal participants to practice, particularly, their political rights, women are assigned the role of followers.²⁶ In another way of saying, if citizenship is based on deciding “how to live”, then, male citizens are seen suitable to decide as full and equal citizens to articulate their opinions and choices, while women are boxed with the care-giver roles in the households. Besides the gender-oriented division, this worldview emphasizes implicitly the “employed” (even middle-class) individuals as valuable citizens since it assigns the role and duty of breadwinning to men. Last, it is based on a heteronormative value since it is built on a dualist and dichotomic reading of society. Considering these developments, the question about the formula of citizenship will be whether the features of citizenship shift towards more (hetero)normative values? In another way of saying, does the concept of citizenship equalize with male, heterosexual and middle-class dominated values?

The effects of above-mentioned developments on the formation and perception of citizenship is another subject that needs attention since its formulation shapes the content

²⁶ For further reading about the gender and citizenship, see: Carole Patemann, *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Political Theory and Feminism*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1989.

of the citizenship education. The rise in the populist (nationalist and conservative) discourse surely influences the concept of citizenship. Question is “to what extent can/will it affect the perception of citizenship?” more importantly, how can/will the populist discourse affect the content of citizenship education those, particularly, provided in the formal settings?

Can the change in the values that defines citizenship cause discrimination among the citizens? Hence, the descriptive features of citizenship started to become nationalist, ethnic, class-based and even gender related references; are the ones who position relatively distant from the norms (center of the norms) considered “less citizens?”

If norms about citizenship approach more nationalist, patriotic and conservative values, then can these developments influence the content, access and usage of the rights for vulnerable groups in the same community? Can it change the content and coverage of civil, political and social rights? Can it create and/or increase the inequality between the citizens of same county on the paper and/or in the practice?²⁷

How could this affect the participation practices of these citizens? For example, for the vulnerable groups and/or disadvantaged groups such as disabled, coming from lower-middle class, young people, coming from different ethnic, cultural, religious backgrounds than majority, can they take part in the decision making processes? Can they be a part of law and policy making processes? At least, can they be represented in the parliamentary systems?

Can the nationalist/populist discourse affect the processes how they (the citizens) reach consensus? Can the nationalist/populist discourse hinder some of the citizens to participate effectively, and/or at all?

Another question set can be raised about the effects of current political climate on the relations with the non-citizens. It brings the concerns about the involvement and/or participation of the ones who are not entitled with the citizenship status such migrants (for any reason, work or family) and/or refugees. Can they hold full membership to the community as equals? Or can the new understanding cause formal and/or social discriminative practices towards them?

²⁷ For a critical reading about the citizenship and gender, see: Anne Phillips, *Engendering Democracy*, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991.

Second is related to the perception/understanding of citizenship (which refers to the *Belonging* definition of Kymlicka and Norman). Does this change lock citizenship as a concept in the borders of nation-states? Does it influence the perception of beyond-borders citizenship, such as European citizenship, negatively? What kind of effects could the populist/nationalist trends have on the “global citizenship”, which also enables global solidarity (among the citizens of the planet) on the global problems such climate change?

Changes in Civil Society

The change in the political climate had an important impact on the practices of dialogue and discussion in civil society. The ultimate goal of discussion is reaching to a consensus for developing the norms and policies in order to *live together* peacefully. First, the aim of the discussion has changed drastically from understanding each other to trying to prove one’s own rightfulness. Since actors in civil society are also not safe from this trend, their contribution to the discussions about “living together” has also decreased or limited.

Hence, the aim has changed from “understanding each other” to proving rightfulness, subjects to be discussed have changed their focus. The efforts to create common and consensual rules to live together have been replaced with propagandizing the “right way” of living. The shift in the attitudes, surely, has affected the sense of deepness and multilayeredness of the content. Individuals and/or civil initiatives have withdrawn from the field of creating common platforms. Instead, they attempted to bolt the reasons and/or justifications why their way, due to any ethnic, cultural, social and/or religious reasons, of living is preferable.

This shift has also affected the approach towards the discussions. Critical approach towards the subjects was abandoned in favour of supporting populist arguments which was a reflection of preconceived attitude. Last but not least, the participants who are involved into the discussions are narrowed down from actors coming from broad and differentiating backgrounds to the power-holders and/or to the ones who are standing close to power mechanisms.

This change in dialogue mechanisms has affected greatly the civil initiatives and civil society organizations working on advocacy and/or rights-based issues. It has limited their movement and their opportunities. First and foremost, their organizational practices and their activities are interrupted, mostly, due to the – allegedly – security related concerns which has hindered the participation opportunities for/or the citizens. New legislations in several European countries have changed and/or limited enacted which have changed the ways of participation into the decision making and policy making mechanisms. Even in some cases, with newly enacted laws, CSOs are criminated due to their advocacy activities. Parallel to these changes, resources for the CSOs which are working on advocacy and/or rights-based issue have decreased gradually which caused decline in their activities and, eventually, their impact. The narrowing in the space of discussion, the legislative changes and the decrease in the resources are interpreted as the indicators of “shrinking civil society and/or public sphere” in the 2010s.²⁸

However, it is important to note that this statement is lacking when service-oriented CSOs are considered. While civil society is shrinking for the advocacy-based CSOs, it has flourished, for the service-oriented CSOs particularly in the last 5 years. Particularly, in the field of refugees, CSOs are invited for providing basic services for the individuals. Both on national and international level, public funds are provided and distributed among the CSOs which are working with/for refugees. This development can be considered as a delegation of public responsibilities to the CSOs which is drastically different than the activities of advocacy-based CSOs. Advocacy-based CSOs aim to take part in decision and law/policy making processes while service providing CSOs focus on meeting the needs of the disadvantaged groups – in this case, the refugees. Service-based CSOs operate on the ground level, mostly, without taking part in the decision making processes.

This change in the civil society has a particular importance since it affected the participation ways of the citizens through civil society and CSOs. In the new era, what kinds of participation ways become available, accepted and/or encouraged for the citizens? What

²⁸ Richard Youngs and Ana Echagüe, “Shrinking space for civil society: the EU response”, Directorate-General For External Policies Policy Department, European Union, 2017, Belgium.

kinds of participation ways are foreseen for the citizens since public sphere is shrinking for the advocacy-based CSOs? If the citizens will not take part in the decision and policy making processes, then, what is imagined for them as a way of participation? Last, but not least, will the new practices of participation change the concept of volunteering drastically? Moreover, will these new practices turn volunteering as a concept to a “*tool*” for low/no-cost labour instead of a mechanism for inclusion?

Changes regarding participation practices

The last two decades have witnessed, on the one hand, changes in the political culture and in the structure of civil society. On the other hand, the choices of the citizens regarding the ways of participation have changed simultaneously. Particularly, young people participated to the decision making and policy making processes differently in the last 10 years. Participation as a concept indicated being a part of decision making processes about how to live together. Apart from the mechanisms developed by the governments to involve citizens in the decision making processes, civil initiatives create an important part of the participatory spaces to develop dialogue, to decide and act together. In case of young people, several mechanisms have been promoted and/or developed by the local, national and/or supranational governmental bodies to provide young people an opportunity to identify the main challenges and issues for young people. Civil initiatives, on the other hand, provided a space for young people to voice their needs and demands. While new discussions emerged on the governmental part regarding involving young people into the decision making processes, civil society (and civil initiative in it) has also transformed.²⁹

First and foremost, as seen from the current movements, young people associated differently compared to the former decade. Their alignment and/or association with the CSOs is less structured and stable than the former generation. The majority of youth, political participation

²⁹ For a discussion that touches different subjects on youth participation briefly, see: Coyote, Issue 14, March 2009, Coyote Theme: Participation.

is happening outside political and/or social formal organizations.³⁰ In another way of saying, young people are engaged in the discussion and actions regarding the political and social change. However their way of building relations with organizations have changed. The relation with an organization, an associative form and/or a movement was used to be more durable and continuing. When a person associated with a particular movement and/or organization, that movement and/or association was taken as a descriptive feature of her/his struggle. A citizen could be part of ecology movement or women's movement and be engaged with the movement in the long term. However, recently, the engagements with the movements are established selectively based on the current needs and/or demands of the individuals. The associations with the movements and/or organizations are built more flexible, fast and reflexive. It is shaped based on the current needs, around that particular subject and to protect/change the everyday living practices and /or spaces.³¹ To follow the example, young people can be engaged with the ecology movement or women's movement for a while as long as it's binding her/his daily activities (their freedom of speech, daily habits, their appearance and/or their choices).

That, in return, caused emergence of new forms of civil initiatives. These new forms of civil initiatives are more horizontally organized and response-oriented structures. Not only are their organizational structures differently shaped. But also, their focus and their processes are more participatory, local and short-term. As an example, Istanbul Hepimizin (Istanbul belongs to all of us) movement sets its principles as being decentralized, participatory and local.³² Particularly on urban transformation and reclaiming the commons, there are many local civil initiatives all around the Europe which are working with local inhabitants, giving quick responses to the discussions which affect their daily practices such usage, change and/or renewal of the living place and open to participation of all parties.³³ Another reason for the emergence of this type of alternative organizations was stated by young people as

³⁰ Thomas Elliott and Jennifer Earl, Organizing the Next Generation: Youth Engagement with Activism Inside and Outside of Organizations, *Social Media + Society*, January-March 2018: 1–14, p. 10-11.

³¹ Meneses Rocha, M. E.; Ortega Gutiérrez, E. & Urbina Cortés, G. (2017). "Youth and Political Participation. #Yosoy132 and the struggle for Freedom of Expression in Mexico", *Communication & Society* 30 (1), 87-103. P. 95.

³² <http://www.istanbulhepimizin.org/istanbul-sozlesmesi/>

³³ See "Reclaim the Commons" web page for European wide responses and cooperations: <https://gef.eu/our-partners/>

the “closeness of the already established CSOs.” In other way of saying, young people consider established CSOs as close systems through which difficult to intervene and take part in their decision-making processes.

In parallel to the newly developed associative practices, participation aims have shifted from “*centre oriented structural changes*” to local and/or everyday practices changes. Young people prefer to “make a difference” in their local/everyday activities instead of trying to change the central laws and/or policies. When asked why they prefer to withdraw from these areas, they stated that they have lost their trust in the governmental and/or intergovernmental mechanisms.³⁴ As a result of this loss, if not instead of the representative democratic mechanisms or well-established CSOs, at least, parallel to them, young people preferred to participate through alternative mechanisms and to focus on more local and everyday practices subjects.

Citizenship Education

This part aims to state some questions about the citizenship education considering the impact of the changes starting from the concept of citizenship, to political conjecture, civil society and participation mechanisms. The part focuses, also, on the developments in providing citizenship education in the last 20 years. Therefore, the changes regarding the actors, settings, content and methods of citizenship education are assessed with a comparative perspective.

The profile of the actors who provide citizenship education has varied during the 20 years process. Along with human rights education, intercultural learning and gender education, citizenship education became a common element in the training programs of the CSOs during the process. In other way of saying, citizenship education is considered as a way of empowering citizens by the advocacy and/or rights-based working CSOs with a particular emphasis on the individuals coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. Along with the civil

³⁴ Van der Meer, Tom & Sonja Zmerli (2017), “The deeply rooted concern with political trust”. In Zmerli, Sonja & Tom van der Meer (eds.), *Handbook on political trust*: 1–16. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar

society field, public institutions in different European countries, particularly schools, have given part to citizenship education in their curriculum whether as a separate course or as a mainstreaming subject which crosscuts different subjects.

The content of citizenship education was formed based on the European (even global) principles which referred to civil and political rights with nation-specific reservations. In another way of saying, the concept of “*status*”³⁵ was covered, mainly, in the citizenship education content in different countries and encouraged also by the international organizations. However, as discussed before, social rights were either not included as a part of the content provided through citizenship education and/or mentioned slightly. As the complementary and inalienable part of citizenship rights, social rights are not only vital for the access and usage of all citizenship rights. But their importance lies, particularly, with the involvement and participation of disadvantaged groups since the domain of social rights, basically, is related to the provider (state, families or other providers) and coverage of (fundamental) social services. Discussion regarding the social rights is related to the distribution of common resources. Since the concept of social rights is based on deciding and producing policies how to distribute common resources among the members of the community, arguments which could hinder participation of “*some*” members also lied within this subject. One of the arguments is based on the “production capacity” of *some* citizens. Coming, mostly, from right-wing political discourse, it is argued that citizens should be benefited from the common resources as much as they contributed. Hence, contribution of lower-middle classes and/or disadvantaged groups is relatively less than the middle and upper-middle class groups, the coverage of social rights for their utilization turns a debate starting from the what kind of services should be provided by the public to on what capacity. However, as discussed before, rights are indivisible for the full membership to the community. If the fundamental social services could not be provided to the members of the community, then, they can also not practice their civil and political rights.

Another argument regarding the social rights is raised around the migrants and refugees. It is argued that the common resources of the community should be used and/or shared among the members of the community. The contours of community are drawn, mostly, with the

³⁵ Which was used and mentioned by Kymlicka and Norman.

borders of the nation-state and with the national citizenship status which is, frequently, supported by the nationalist, cultural and/or ethnic values. The mind-set that defines “belonging to a community” based on the conventional norms, excludes the migrants and refugees not only regarding the social rights. In connection, migrants and refugees are dismissed from their civil and political rights, let alone from the opportunities to participate as a full member of the society.

Last but not least, the coverage and methods of social rights differ from one nation state to another due to the variety of collecting and distributing common resource among different states. In another way of saying, it is relatively harder, unlike the civil and political rights, to come an international consensus to define and set the minimum limits of providing social rights. However, it is still possible to specify fundamental principle for social rights which should be provided to the citizens. Nevertheless, it is needed to ask the questions of how could social rights be integrated to the content of citizenship education and to what extent could it be integrated. Another question could be on the effects of exclusion of social rights from the content of citizenship education. Can the coverage of social rights affect the discussion of “living together” in a positive way, particularly, for the disadvantaged groups and/or refugees?

Another debated issue regarding the citizenship education is related to the general content of the topic. As mentioned above, citizenship education has universal/European moral aspects that underline particularly civil and political rights. Yet, since it is discussed within the framework of “citizenship” of a particular state, it could also require the patriotic values of its citizens. If patriotism is taught as a part of citizenship education in the school settings, then citizenship education betrays the ideals of universal/European morality. Archard describes this dilemma as a paradox which is encountered by citizenship education.³⁶ On the one hand, citizenship education can offer universal liberal values, which underlines the equality and solidarity among the citizens of the world while recognizing the civil, political and social rights of the individuals. On the other hand, a “patriotic” citizenship understanding can promote to enhance nationalist values where values and interests of a

³⁶ David Archard, “Should we teach patriotism?”, *studies in philosophy and education*, 18 (3), 1999, pp. 157-173. P. 167.

particular nation and its citizens put ahead of others which contradicts with the universal framework.

Considering the recent developments regarding the political culture – increase of populist right movements and parties, change towards the right-wing and nationalist parties in the governments - , reviewing the content of citizenship education could help to assess whether it is influenced or not by the current political nationalist and/or populist trends.

Dobbernack's solution for the aforementioned paradox is assigning the role of providing a safe and open space for young people to re-define citizenship with a critical perspective to the citizenship education. So that, he argues, young people can also build the kind of community they prefer to live in.³⁷ His suggestion brought important discussions to our attention. First, it is needed to question, all over again, the reasons of providing citizenship education to young people considering recent changes in the political culture, civil society and participation practices. If the reason is, as he suggested, the question can be restructured whether the content of citizenship education serves to develop the values for young people to discuss possible ways of "living together."

Going one step further, the content of citizenship education is in need of consideration whether it corresponds the "needs and expectations of young people" and "needs of time."³⁸ As mentioned before, the participation practices of young people have changed in the last two decades. There is a need to examine whether participation practices promoted and encouraged by citizenship education are compatible with the practices developed and preferred by young people.

Another question is related to the outreach of the providers. Both public institutions and CSOs are working with young people coming from different backgrounds in the last two decades. State public institutions, such as schools, have more conventional approach to

³⁷ Jan Dobbernack, *European citizenship: between patriotic sentiments and universal rights*, in *European Citizenship – In the process of construction*, edited by Ditta Dolejsiova and Miguel Angel Garcia Lopez, Council of Europe Publishing, 2009, p. 42.

³⁸ Yvonne Haigha, Karen Murcia^b and Lindy Norris, "Citizenship, civic education and politics: the education policy context for young Australian citizens", *Journal of Education Policy*, 2014, Vol. 29, No. 5, 598–616.

reach and to discuss the subject since they aimed to develop an average language to address all young people. Although CSOs have developed a variety of language, narratives and/or methods to reach young people coming from different experiences, since their resources are limited, their outreach did/could not cover all the needs of young people. Therefore it is necessary to make enquiries regarding the target group of citizenship education. First question contains the outreach range of citizenship education. In the last two decades, did citizenship education reach to the disadvantaged groups whether through the schools as a part of curriculum or through the CSOs as trainings? Second, if young people from disadvantaged backgrounds have met with citizenship education, as/is the *language* of citizenship education built considering diversified experiences of these young people? And third, if it has reached these groups, did/does it contribute to empower these young people to take part in the decision making process?

The last point about the content of citizenship education applies to the methods of delivery. Non-formal learning methods and setting were used to share the content of citizenship education during the last two decades. However, lately, young people prefer other tools such as digital tools to engage and to participate in different settings starting from learning settings to political debates. The last, but not least question can focus on the quality of the tools and methods used by citizenship education to correspond to the needs and experiences of young people.

To sum up

This paper aims to bring new questions to reflect upon the impact of the current political, social and economic developments on citizenship education. Surely, the answers to these questions will not be developed in a short period of time. Yet, even asking these questions can help to reconsider missing concepts, methods and tools which are needed by young people to discuss ways of *living together*.