Youth Policy and Participation

Potentials of participation and informal learning in young people's transitions to the labour market. A comparative analysis in ten European regions. (YOYO)

Executive summary

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Objectives

How do and how can young people participate in society as citizens? With the increasing de-standardisation of young people's transitions between education and the labour market – young people's perspectives of life planning and social integration are increasingly blurred. They are caught in uncertain 'yo-yo'-transitions between youth and adulthood, a socio-political vacuum without clear social status. Several policies are to be found at national and European level concerning the participation of young people – however underlying these policies are different understandings of participation:

- Labour market policies aimed at young people's *employability* to participate in employment;
- In education and training, the focus lies on participation in *lifelong learning*;
- In social policies, *activation* refers to participation in terms of rights and responsibilities;
- Youth policy is concerned with youth participation as civic and political *involvement*.

These policies are concerned with high rates of youth unemployment, 'status zer0' youth, early school leaving, dependency on social benefits, declining election rates, decreasing involvement in associations, and increasing racism and violence. Yet, the discussions are more concerned about the status of young people than about their motivation. However, there are differences:

- The 'hard' policy sectors – education, training, labour market and social policies – where individual motivation is seen as an expected contribution of young people while de-motivation is addressed as an individual deficit.
- The 'soft' sector of youth work in contrast aims to enhance young people's motivation by providing opportunities of active influence according to subjective need and interests. However, this is mainly restricted to the areas of leisure, culture and associational life.

The YOYO project starts from young people's de-motivation and disengagement from education, training and the labour market. The underlying assumption is that there is a lack of integration between 'hard' and 'soft' policies for young people which contributes to a fragmentation of their citizenship status and reduces motivation. The main research question is therefore whether motivation for employability, lifelong learning, responsibility and involvement is more likely to develop in participatory settings. The project aims to assess whether motivation is an appropriate key to the relation between structure and agency in de-standardised youth transitions. It relates to the prerequisites of citizenship and assumptions of motivation in current activation policies.

Research design

Nine countries have been involved in YOYO covering a wide range of different European contexts: Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain, UK.

The analysis of young people's transitions and motivational careers in relation to participatory projects required a multi-dimensional approach. The research consequently combined aspects of biographical research, action research, policy analysis and comparative research. This has been addressed by a design consisting of four main research phases:

Phase 1: National reports on youth transitions, youth policy and participation on the relation between the socio-economic structures of young people's transitions to work, the institutional forms of (especially local) youth policies and discourses of participation.

Phase 2: Exploratory interviews with young people on their transition experiences and processes of motivation and demotivation. While the majority of the sample consisted of young people at risk of disengaging with the transition system, a contrast group of young people with choice biographies was interviewed ('trendsetters' such as young self-employed) to get insights into prerequisites of (intrinsic) motivation for transitions.

> **YOYO in figures:**
>
> 365 young people interviewed
>   (ca. 70% twice)
> 141 experts interviewed
> 28 case studies carried out
> 10 video films produced

Phase 3: Case studies with projects addressing young people in their transitions to work in a participatory way (three per country). The case study process consisted of three sub-steps:

- document analysis and expert interviews
- interviews with young people on experiences within projects
- participatory research by video films with young people on 'being in transition'

Phase 4: Joint analysis of the relation between participation and motivation and its impact on social inclusion across different types of projects and contexts.

Motivation and demotivation in de-standardised transitions

The YOYO project starts from the perspective on the changing nature of youth transitions, whereby they are seen as increasingly de-standardised, fragmented and reversible and the former biographical linearity is being replaced by 'yo-yo'-structures. Structural flexibilisation is reflected in individualisation: more and more decisions have to be taken alone; however on the

basis of unequal access to resources and opportunities according to class, education, region, gender and ethnicity, with the persistence of structural inequalities.

In the context of de-standardisation inequality does not only mean differentiation according to social status but also different risks of social exclusion and rather than through collective patterns it is reproduced through individual decisions. Therefore, youth transitions need to be analysed as an interplay of structure and agency. The respondents in our study can be clustered according to six different transition patterns, i.e. constellations of structural trajectories and individual transition steps and how these correspond to the logic of institutionally defined trajectories..

Transition patterns of YOYO-respondents:

- *smooth*: in line with institutional logic, no major interruptions;
- *institutionally repaired*: interruptions overcome by remedial intervention;
- *alternative*: leaving institutional logic (at least partly) by choice;
- *stagnant*: progress blocked by interruptions and failure, constant risk of exclusion;
- *downward/damaged*: accumulation of risks of social exclusion;
- *unknown/other:* if no clear pattern was observable.

Among the 'trendsetters' the 'alternative' pattern predominated, whilst the transitions of the 'disengaged' young people were mostly either 'stagnant' or 'institutionally repaired'.

In general, these different transition patterns reflect different underlying levels of motivation, however, although assuming a close relation between structural disadvantage and motivation the YOYO project was interested in a biographical perspective on the dynamics of careers and *motivational change:* where and how young people lost motivation and/or were re-motivated. De-motivation in most cases results from a discrepancy between initial orientations and actual experiences. The latter in most cases are mediated by institutional actors of the transition systems functioning as 'gate-keepers' and contributing to the cooling-out of young people's aspirations.

The first of these institutions is *school*, where young people criticise school for its "standardised education". Many of them held the view that teachers "didn't care" about them. While young migrants felt their achievements went unacknowledged and were actually devalued due to language deficits, as result many leave without qualifications. This negative evaluation extends to *professional orientation*, where some reported that they were openly discouraged while the feeling that "once you have chosen, you can't turn back" caused considerable stress.

While appearing more reflexive and able to maintain motivation young women on the other hand complain about structures of doing gender: "for the girls: only placement offers in hair-dressing and retail". Similarly, the *employment service* was criticised for a lack of efficiency, with limited time for counselling and addressing individual needs. In contrast to Northern European countries, in Southern and Eastern Europe where employment services are still in the process of being established young people complain about the absence or inefficiency of institutions. From the bureaucratic

"[In school] nobody makes demands on you as a person, only on your abilities" (Denmark, female, 18).

"'You have no hope, son, you'll never be anything' he [career officer] said" (UK, male, 19).

"[The career officer] dropped a list with professions and we were to choose one. It wasn't more than that" (Germany (East), female, 26).

"It is an adminstration after all … Just staring into your file, going bah, bah, they treat you like a cow." (Germany (West), male, 21).

""We are alone! If you are lucky enough to have some friends, fine … otherwise …" (Italy, female, 19)

"I am invisible, a number that doesn't exist. Because I am not getting any benefit" (Spain, male, 25).

"I think I'll just be a fucking victim" (UK, male, 17)

Motivational change results from the generation of subjective interest combined with a perception of increased self-efficacy

treatment, critique extends to the offers made by the employment service be it *jobs, training schemes or pre-vocational education*. Young men from Belfast reported that there options were to join the army or to go on a training course they did not want to be on. In Germany, young people who fail to enter regular training are channelled into pre-vocational education that does not provide additional qualifications while it is 'mere luck' if they lead to proper training or a job. In Southern Europe and especially Romania training is criticised for its mismatch with the labour market: "I wasn't trained properly."

These examples show that in particular those with bad starting positions are quite likely to have further de-motivating experiences. If they do not make any positive counter experiences de-motivation is generalised and the risk of disengagement increases. It is also not surprising that only a few made a distinction between a positive notion of 'learning' and the de-motivating experiences of formal education. However, a closer look showed that in fact there were several cases where young people maintained their motivation despite a lack of opportunities, while others made motivating experiences within participatory projects. The YOYO-research is interested in a biographical perspective of motivational change that is based on a dynamic

understanding of motivation. In psychological theory motivation is defined as resulting from two factors: *subjective needs and interests* on the one hand and the perception of *self-efficacy* on the other. Both aspects are open for experiences and potential change: motivational change can derive from discovering or losing interest or from increasing or decreasing experiences of self-efficacy; or a combination of both which may be subsumed under a growing (or declining) feeling of *self-determination*. Motivational change can be related to intrinsic aspects inherent within the experience of an activity and extrinsic aspects related to the instrumental quality of an action; while of course also intermediate constellations exist such as extrinsic motivation for actions related to self-chosen goals. In terms of transitions motivation is primarily seen as a prerequisite for learning. At the same time however motivational change can also be seen as biographical learning while de-standardised transitions increasingly demand reflexive *learning biographies* or 'biographicity'. The key question of the YOYO-project is to what extent can these processes be influenced by participatory projects?

Participation – motivation – learning

Why should participation allow for motivation, especially if participation itself depends on motivation? The basic assumption for formulating such a research question was that participation might allow for identification with self-chosen objectives and to develop self-efficacy beyond a selective and bureaucratic formal learning setting. This of course requires an understanding of participation as *active* influence (rather than formal involvement) and as an integral *principle* of policies (rather than a potential result of policy). One may also argue that participation is not learned unless 'by doing' and by experience – in all arenas of subjective relevance – which is the third key aspect: not to restrict participation to artificial ('soft') sectors but to allow for *biographical self-determination* within 'hard' transition policies.

Looking at the YOYO case study projects, only some of them addressed participation in this all-encompassing biographical sense. In most cases participation was referred to as voluntary access, involvement in project-related decision making or civic engagement. From a lifelong learning perspective, biographical self-determination relates to *participatory learning*. This implies a broad perspective of *competence* in which recognised (professional) knowledge, life skills, and biographical reflexivity ('biographicity') are integrated to the same extent as formal and non-formal types of learning.

One purpose of the case study analysis was to look for the relationships between different dimensions of participation and to identify aspects and forms of participation and non-formal learning which were applied by the project workers.

A basic issue in this respect is one of *choice* and one that allows for identification with subjectively meaningful goals. Choice in one respect means to be free of coercion but it also implies that alternatives are available. This relates to an understanding of policies as an infrastructure which young people – addressed as 'citizens in transition' – are free to use

> **ArciRagazzi** in Palermo, *Italy*, is a youth association organising leisure and cultural activities. In a context structured by 60% youth unemployment it aims at providing young people meaningful life perspectives. Participatory cultural activities based on young people's skills and wishes and encouraged to experiment and playfully reinforce them. In fact, experimentation for some men and women extends to careers from simple usership over voluntary engagement to semi-professional project leaders. *Pamela*, 21, relates her own motivational change to her progressive involvement in the project. In the meantime she is leader of a child recreation centre: *"You have to create your job yourself … nobody should tell you: 'do this and that'. You have to take decisions … We have made mistakes during this project but it was ok, it was growing up – like self-training."*

and which are *accessible*. This means that support or learning opportunities are situated in young people's life worlds and that thresholds for access are low. Addressing young people's choice can mean that (extrinsic) attractors and user resources (e.g. money, internet facilities, housing etc.) may be needed in order to allow young people positive experiences with non-formal learning. However, it can also mean that the intrinsic quality of leisure activities (like dance) is used to instil a feeling of self-efficacy also in terms of the more extrinsic aspects of life like training or work.

> The **Open Youth Education**, *Denmark*, was a countrywide initiative launched in 1994 (and closed in 2002). The goal was to offer all young people who either were not able or interested in attending existing types of education alternatives to pursue individual plans between formal and non-formal education. The purpose was stated as: "It is not up to us to decide why the young person does not want to pursue a traditional education … we cannot force her/him to do so, at least not in the kind of society we wish to have. But we can try to create incentives." *F., female, 19*, is not afraid to do things differently: *"It simply should not be like, that things can only be done in one way … It is my education. It is me who takes the decisions."* F. wants to learn and stresses that everything is possible as long as the individual works hard and is allowed to develop. Her *"fuel"* is the wish to develop her passions and her belief that social contact between people and life in general has to *"zigzag"*.

The aspect of choice also extends to the way young people make use of a project which requires that the outcomes of learning processes and directions of transitions are *open* rather than pre-structured. Within the context of de-standardised transitions young people increasingly are expected to take self-responsibility while the outcomes of destinations themselves are less predictable. Therefore policies and projects need to be *flexible* in terms of duration, activities, and intensity of support.

Another range of factors relates to providing young people with the *space* to experiment with their own ideas and capacities. This includes giving them *responsibility* for their own projects, in which they *learn 'by doing'* and by 'stealing with the eyes'. In particular the performing arts seem ideal in this respect. In the context of changed intergenerational relationships *peer learning* proves to be an effective form of learning. This however requires heterogeneous groups rather than projects focused solely on the so-called 'disadvantaged'. The dimension of space also includes existential aspects like housing and safety: spaces 'to be'.

Batoto Yetu in Lisbon, *Portugal*, is a dance project for young people of African origin. The project aims at bringing young people "in contact with their roots and develop self-esteem, perseverance and discipline" and give them visibility. The group performs on international tours as well as on TV. However, a condition for participating in performances is effort in school achievement. In fact many of them enter higher education. The project therefore is also meeting point for doing homework, leisure activities, and support in everyday life. *B, male, 19*, attends a training course in computing and is involved in the HipHop scene. Involvement in Batoto Yetu has influenced his learning attitude: *"We don't learn in school. We learn on the streets! We learn from the people we meet during our lives. We see who talks more, who says more trues than others, and we always keep those things in our head. Then (and talking in rime) 'It will come out and I'll come back ...and I'm beginning to improvise'."*

Participation is a form of *recognition* towards young people whereby who 'come as they are' do not have to adapt to formally set criteria or conditions. This means on the one hand not to reduce a person to deficits measured against the meritocratic competition for scarce careers. Focussing on strengths does not necessarily mean low level demands but may imply a focus on other activities – in which young people are more competent. It also means that it is important to address 'the whole person' and not to neglect aspects of life which may be subjectively more pressing than education or work. However, entitlement to benefits, allowances or wages are also powerful signs of recognition as a citizen.

The project **"We Want to Become Independent"** was carried out by the Community for Child Support Association (CCSA) in Bucharest, *Romania*. The key objective was to support young people from public care centres on their ways to independence and to train practitioners in this regard. First young people were prepared for everyday life activities such as preparing meals while also applying role play; second they were accompanied during a time in which they lived on their own in shared 'transition flats'. *Alexandra, 16,* has spent her childhood in a placement centre since the age of two. Although the atmosphere in the transition flat is not very different from the orphanage – *"We simply are not listened to."* – she feels more independent and has developed *"other plans, but it's like a dream ... I want to have a family, my own home, to be no longer dependent upon others."*

A final and again basic factor of participation with respect to motivation and non-formal learning are experiences of *trust* with both project workers and peers.

Many young people only get in contact as long as they trust the project workers not to follow the interests of institutions such as the employment service, social security or the police. Likewise, unconditional support implies the individual fulfilment of needs such as belonging and recognition. Relationships with 'adults' who are 'different' and therefore represent 'significant others' are an important prerequisite for biographical learning. They serve as role models but also as 'sounding boards' to act out experienced injustice and subsequently to reflect on biographical perspectives. In many instances young people even accept pressure regarding training or job search if

> The **Atelier LaSilhouette** from Munich, Germany, at the first glance offers normal certified vocational training in dressmaking for young women. At a closer look, it provides a holistic set of support and accompaniment as all participants have a migration background. to those who often are not even allowed to start a vocational training because of insecure residence permits. The project is highly attractive as the young women are also involved in the creation of an own collection which they present at fashion shows. And it is participatory inasmuch as they are involved in all project-related decisions. *Jelena, 21,* after school was desorientated, *"totally de-motivated"* with severe drug problems. Her project entry appears as the big counter experience from the very first moment: *"I sewed a bag ... and I did really well. I was so fascinated about this bag, about myself – about being creative. And had the impression this is a place where everybody is open, where you can manage."* She manages to stay in the project and go back to therapy – knowing what a fragile resource motivation is.

> **Lifting the Limits** in Armagh, Northern Ireland, UK, supports the inclusion of young mothers by providing training and employment in community leadership. Apart from theoretical and practical learning and the experience of outreach work in the community the young women are employed, receive a wage and assistance in childcare. The project provides a recognised qualification enabling for entry to higher education in youth and community work. Participation, which is self-evident as the young women are seen as adults, means "a kind of self-determination, freedom in choices … And the courage and self-confidence to stand up and say, 'This is the choices I want to make'". *Colette, 25*, left school at 18, worked for a while and got pregant. One year after the birth of her son she starts a youth group: *"I think it was my own drive just to go, look I can do this, I needed it – because I had to prove to myself that I could do it."* Lifting the Limits, which she comes across while volunteering at the local Women's Centre, rather than changing her motivational career is an opportunity to invest the high level of motivation she has maintained.

they perceive it as an act of care and friendship rather than control and repression.

Sustainable inclusion – inclusive citizenship?

The finding that participation can have a positive impact on motivational careers and learning biographies emerges rather unanimously from the analysis, this is much less the case with regard to social inclusion and citizenship; especially if a perspective is applied which takes account of both systemic and subjective dimensions of social integration. In this respect, the key question is to what extent projects actually succeed in combining soft and hard outcomes, i.e. motivational change, biographicity, social skills and creativity as well as qualifications, income and/or sustainable jobs.

Five main types of case study projects can be distinguished, according to their priority objectives; their target groups; their original field of practice; their function in the transition system; their ways to apply participation and non-formal education; and the relation of 'hard' and 'soft' outcomes:
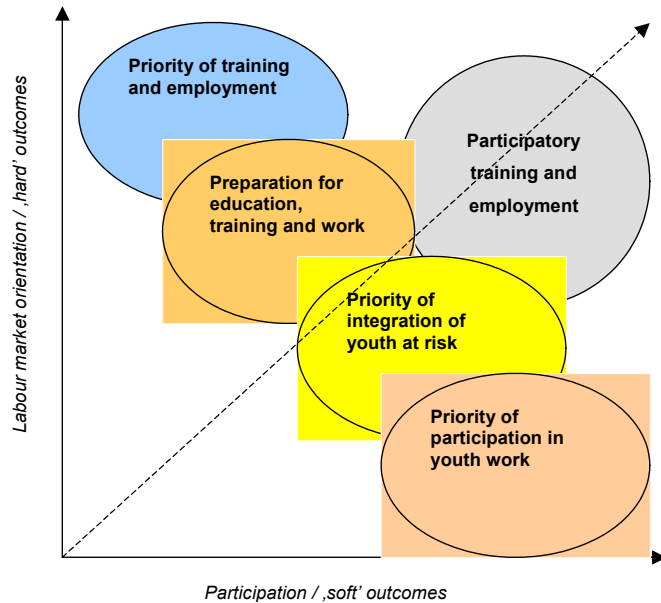
- <u>Priority of participation in youth work:</u> Youth work projects address 'all youth' according to a general prevention logic without having systematic links to the labour market. Participation is central and addresses at least the dimensions of voluntary access and project-related decisions or community development. Only in a few cases is biographical participation explicitly addressed through experience in voluntary work, the possibility of semi-professional careers or counselling. Non-formal education means learning-by-doing, cultural practice, peer education and relationships of trust. While most project workers see the need of a broader concept of competence, the structure and objectives of projects are primarily related to the provision of motivation, confidence, and social skills. It depends on the individuals to what extent they can successfully use this for their transitions (example *ArciRagazzi*).

- <u>Priority of integration of 'youth at risk':</u> These projects have the objective of selective prevention in relation to groups seen as particularly vulnerable. Cultural practice plays a central role in projects for ethnic minority youth to raise their self-esteem and provide them with experience of success. The transfer of such experiences is addressed more explicitly with regard to school than to the transition to work. In this sense, participation includes the biographical level while non-formal and peer learning are central (example *Batoto Yetu*). In projects for young people with multiple social disadvantage such as homelessness, drug use or growing up in public care transitions to work are one facet of a more holistic approach. At the same time the goals of integration and participation are more modest and pragmatic. Soft skills are the main aim while hard resources are restricted to the needs of everyday life. Thereby, sustainable biographic perspectives are limited (example *'We want to become independent'*).

- <u>Priority of preparation for training and work:</u> Pre-vocational measures that explicitly address the transition problems of young people with low education and/or a lack professional orientation in a remedial perspective. Methods and approaches are diverse such as individual education plans (example *Open Youth Education*), counselling, life planning, internships, and

voluntary work. Not in all, but in some cases involvement is not voluntary but imposed by welfare and labour market policies. Therefore the degree of participation varies from low to high in the sense of being voluntary, biographical and project-related. In most cases, soft skills are the major outcome of these projects, however in the labour market oriented sense: career (re-)orientation, life plans, preparation for job interviews, adaptability to work environments. In terms of hard resources, participants in some projects are entitled to benefits or allowances while only one measure provided the possibility to improve qualifications.

- <u>Priority of training and employment:</u> A series of measures primarily concerned with delivering hard resources like qualifications or jobs. This means either that the projects' prime objective is to close the gaps in the supply of training by flexible training programmes. However, the need to meet formal standards of training (also to ensure funding) implies that young people with severe problems in most cases do not enter the measures; or that these young people only profit in terms of pre-vocational training. In normal employment schemes access occurs through the bureaucratic principles of the employment service rather than by individual choice. Formal curricula, the function to 'clean' unemployment statistics and limited space, time and funding restrict potentials of participation but may allow for non-formal methods of training. However, soft skills tend to be secondary compared to hard outcomes.

- <u>Participatory training and employment projects:</u> There are some projects that consciously aim to empower young people by providing both 'hard' labour market relevant resources and 'soft' skills in a participatory setting. This can be support for young people in self-employment, alternatives project in which (long-term) unemployed young people continue to receive their benefits 'in exchange' for socially useful activity, cooperatives organising activities between voluntary work, occasional jobs and self-employment in a democratic way, projects providing regular training, but ones that are embedded in a holistic setting of support and participation and that relates to professions which are likely to attract the target group. Most of these projects focus on disadvantaged groups, like for example young mothers or young women from ethnic minorities (examples *Lifting the Limits* and *Atelier La Silhouette*). While starting from the objective to provide hard resources these projects are aware that these can only lead to sustainable inclusion if they are embedded in soft skills – and backed by (extrinsic) – and often existentially important – financial incentives. These projects apply peer

learning, respect of individual needs, scope for active participation and emphasise personal development as much as vocational training or employment.

Only where projects consciously extend from their original function and field of practice to the other pole of the continuum is it possible to reconcile 'soft' and 'hard' outcomes. It seems that this is easier for projects from the hard sector, especially if addressing particular disadvantaged groups, than for actors from the 'soft' sector lacking recognition within the transition system. In terms of the wider debate about *competence* we suggest to see this integration of 'hard' and 'soft' aspects, as well as of professional or technical, social and personal dimensions, as the key criterion of distinction between skills, abilities, knowledge or qualifications (see figure).

Contextualisation and transferability

Even more difficult to answer are questions about the transferability of such models of 'good practice'. A key factor in this respect are different 'transition regimes' whereby the interplay of socio-economic structures, institutions and cultural patterns structures is understood: the selectivity or permeability of education, the standardisation of training, regulation of labour market entrance, entitlements to social benefits, and dominant concepts of youth in general and of disadvantaged youth in particular. The analysis of the relationship between the case study projects and the respective regimes enables us to draw conclusions with regard to the perspectives of participatory support or the reconciliation between 'hard' and 'soft' policies in different contexts:

- In the *universalistic* transition regime (Denmark in the YOYO project) young people have choice even within the 'hard' policy sectors like education or active labour market policies. Combined with entitlements to allowances, wages or benefits as long as they remain active

this reflects the centrality of motivation for personal development in citizenship. However, evidenced not only by the closure of one of the case study projects (example *Open Youth Education*), but also by the fact that a so-called 'residual' group of migrant youth are not reached, suggests that young people need to buy into a specific cultural model before being able to profit from a transition system which in principle allows for participation and choice biographies.

- In the *liberal* transition regime (UK and Ireland) policies are much more clearly geared towards the early labour market integration and economic independence of young people (also if single parents; for example *Lifting the Limits*). On the one hand, priority of individual responsibility is reflected in a flexible system of education and training while in measures for the most vulnerable participation plays a certain a role. On the other hand, workfare policies exert pressure to ensure young people do not remain unemployed and dependent on social benefits. In sum, flexible spaces are counteracted by individualised risks and pressure.

- In the *employment-centred* regime (Germany and Netherlands) where transitions are structured by a selective school system and standardised vocational training youth is mainly interpreted as allocation to occupational positions. Those in regular trajectories are secure while others face high risks of exclusion; in Germany even without automatically being entitled to social benefits. Disadvantage means that individual deficits need to be compensated before making 'real' choices. Hard and soft policy sectors are strictly separated so that participation in transitions to work is basically a question of high school qualifications. While Germany is a rigid example (example *Atelier La Silhouette* as an exception), the Netherlands represent a more flexible version of this regime type.

- The main feature of the *sub-protective* transition regime in Southern Europe (Italy, Portugal, Spain) is a structural deficit with regard to both soft and hard policies for young people. The lack of links between education and employment results in long waiting periods, high unemployment and increasing precariousness while the lack of welfare rights makes young people dependent on their families. Youth organisations of the third sector increasingly are the only bridges towards an active social life – often without systematic links with the labour market. The structural deficit however implies that social space is less institutionalised so that

some voluntary initiative can eventually turn into careers; yet precarious ones (examples *ArciRagazzi* and *Batoto Yetu*).

- In the *post-socialist* transition regime (Romania) de-standardisation is especially dramatic. While in the communist period education and employment were tightly linked – with little individual choice but considerable security – toady education, training and the labour market fail to keep pace with transformation and the increasing risks of social exclusion. State institutions have lost credibility, in contrast to the few NGOs who manage to secure funding to close the gaps of training, youth work or social policies. Rather than finding spaces for experimentation and initiative young people have to accumulate any possible training and qualifications for potential opportunities. A minority of them succeed by opening up their own businesses. For the others participation mainly takes place in dreams of emigration.

If considering the transfer of selected good practice the complexity of contexts needs be taken into account. However, knowledge about factors of success allows for de-contextualisation and re-contextualisation by assessing whether functional equivalents exist in other contexts.

A factor of interest in this respect is also the potential impact of *EU-policies* concerned with young people's transitions to work applying the Open Method of Coordination to mainstream objectives in national policies. The picture here is again ambiguous:

- The European Employment Strategy relates to the 'hard' end of the scale – 'employability' – whilst conceding problems of labour market policies in attracting disadvantaged youth;
- The Lifelong Learning Strategy strongly promotes the validation of non-formal learning however it prioritises skills which may be directly applied in work contexts;
- The Social Inclusion Process follows a multi-dimensional approach of social inclusion that is related to complex needs; yet, participation is interpreted in terms of rights and responsibilities;
- The White Paper on Youth advocates a cross-sectoral youth policy based on the principle of participation although one that is largely reduced to procedural aspects.

> The most successful approaches are at risk due to funding problems

Most important for the perspective of transferability however is that many case study projects experienced major funding problems during the period of the project (across all regimes).

citizenship. In particular, the two participatory training projects addressing disadvantaged young women – which were closest to the YOYO objectives – have been or are at risk of closure through lack of funding

Amivalences and recommendations

Participation is a way to enhance young people's motivation and 'lived citizenship' as a status and a practice, but this does not apply for all concepts of participation and under all conditions. The above findings demonstrate that participation needs to be more than just a procedural pedagogical principle, but that it also is required to be a principle within 'hard' policies.

> *Participation* implies that young people have rights, resources and spaces which secure their negotiation power in relation to institutions of the transition system and the labour market. In order to allow for *motivational change*, participation means to re-open spaces for *choice* and *self-determination* including those with restricted opportunities. Participation and motivation only lead to sustainable social inclusion if related to a broader concept of *competence* integrating hard resources and soft skills in reflexive *learning biographies*.

If we look at current discourses and policies we find the opposite. This also applies to a broad understanding of competence which includes both hard and soft aspects. The more explicitly agencies refer to participatory principles the less they are recognised by the 'hard' sector and the less possibilities young people have to capitalise on their experiences in their transitions to work. The increasing demand of soft skills from the economy does not imply that formal qualifications have become less important. In contrast, it seems as if meritocracy expands by ascribing lacking qualifications to an assumed lack of soft skills (rather than the other way round).

It is noteworthy, that participation is promoted in times in which workers' participation in the economy is curtailed and individual autonomy undermined by activation policies. Or: the civil society is proclaimed while being disconnected from the welfare state; whereby participation risks becoming the mask of a 'new tyranny' of individualisation and self-responsibility.

> Participation is *ambivalent* if not secured by rights and resources. A key finding of the YOYO project is that social inclusion and citizenship of young people require both a welfare state approach of redistributing resources and opportunities and a civil society approach of participation. While welfare without participation can turn into alienating normalisation, participation without welfare carries the risk of individualised exclusion and precariousness.

Key recommendations

Assessment of young people's transition problems:
- Differentiate between the structural aspect of achieved transition progress – according to an institutional logic – and subjective motivational careers
- Understand de-motivation as resulting from experiences of denied choice, neglected needs and interests, and damaged confidence in self-efficacy rather than as individual deficits

Design, implementation and evaluation of policies:
- Allow for choice in terms of voluntary access and by providing alternative options
- Keep learning outcomes open and transition directions open rather than evaluating projects through one-dimensional success rates; foresee a flexible use of measures
- Provide spaces for experimentation and learning by doing
- Give young people responsibility for their transition projects while offering flexible support
- Recognise the whole person with his/her needs and interest, not only those related to transitions from school to work; evaluate projects in terms of soft *and* hard outcomes;
- Connect any activity which is either useful for personal development or for the wider community, or both, with social rights and entitlements to the existential minimum
- Allow for continuity of projects due to reliable funding structures
- Ask young people for subjective experiences when evaluating measures

Delivery of practice:
- Restrict learning opportunities to a framework rather than pre-structuring the learning process while providing support if required
- Do not restrict to fields of practice, official function and formal professionalism but extend to all areas relevant for the needs and interests of young people
- Focus on strengths by selecting the activities in which young people are competent rather than concentrating on the compensation of deficits
- Invest an advance of trust in young people and prove worthy of being trusted by young people by offering unconditional support
- Develop local partnerships from the perspective of increasing young people's choices and allowing for individualised networks

Research perspectives:
- Mainstream a biographical approach in transition research
- Adopt an Interdisciplinary approach related to separate policy fields and research perspectives which intersect young people's transitions
- Longitudinal research in biographical perspective to identify factors of sustainable inclusion