# Chapter 7
# Participation, Social Life and Politics

How do the politics of individual responsibility and the centrality of work in people's lives play out in the domains of citizenship, social life and the politics of social participation? This chapter argues that not only people have to learn to be good citizens, but the structures also have to be there, in social institutions of all kinds, for them to exercise citizenship rights and responsibilities actively and fully and in ways which make sense for the lifeworlds they inhabit. This applies throughout the life course and through work as well as in social and community life. Engaged social participation that gives access to powerful knowledge creates the conditions for people to find new ways of solving problems and working together to influence decisions that affect their lives.

Three commonly held misconceptions impede a mature understanding of what citizenship entails:

1) the view that citizenship is a status acquired at the age of majority (people do not therefore have to learn it or need only preparatory education while at school);
2) the view that the exercise of citizenship is an adjunct to the main business of earning a living; and
3) the view that most people still have standardised biography, in which status as an adult means being economically active for a period of 40 years before a retirement supported by benefits accrued during more or less continuous working life.

The idea that people gain and exercise rights and responsibilities sequentially and cumulatively is no longer the normal experience any more than the nuclear family. Changes in status are often provisional, sometimes reversible.

At the start of the 21st century, citizenship is more usefully conceptualised as a process through which people exercise responsibility and social contribution while having entitlements to forms of social support which enable them to manage their own life and work situations and pursue their own projects. This approach to citizenship recognises that institutional and social structures constrain or empower people in acquiring the various forms of knowledge and competence which are necessary to independent existence and social contribution. In spanning the public and private domains of existence, it recognises social inequalities and status inconsistency at

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various stages of the life course. Adults may, for example, be supporting a family while on a grant or still in training. Or they may hold responsible positions in work while remaining in their family of origin, still the child in the household, but supporting other members financially. In this way, individual roles and status become differentiated across the different domains of life and experience, and defining an individual as an adult and citizen may hinge on multiple roles performed. People may be caught in disjunctions and contradictions of policies which do not recognise the interplay of the private and public domains and are based on invalid assumptions about common characteristics and needs of age ranges or social groups. To understand transitions to adult, worker and citizen status, we also have to understand the private world of family life.

In public policy debates about preparing people for the demands of 'adult and working life', the exercise of citizenship has tended to be treated as though it were an adjunct to the main business of working for a living. The rather lukewarm reception given to proposals to strengthen citizenship education in schools turned stone cold in Britain when proposals from citizenship advocates started to point towards the need to extend the entitlements to provide continuing citizenship education beyond the age of 16. Preparation for 'real world' of employment starts to dominate in post-compulsory curriculum which readily accommodates 'key skills' yet struggles with citizenship issues when these extend beyond voluntary activities and club-based interests. This position has been consistently challenged by writers such as Crick who argues preparation for citizenship clearly cannot end at age 16 just as young people begin to have more access to the opportunities, rights and responsibilities of adult citizenship and the world of work. The need for an exploration of the ideas and practices of citizenship is evident whether young people are in education or in work-based training (2001, p. 27). I argue that this extends into and through adult life. These ideas are impeded by the concept of citizenship as a status acquired at a fixed point. They are facilitated when we approach citizenship as a lifelong process of engagement with the ideas and practices of democracy, in a developmental way.

How citizenship is conceptualised plays an important role in shaping perceptions and beliefs about the 'right' domains for the exercise of citizenship. I argue that citizenship, when viewed as a process, overarches work and economic contribution to society and encourages us to see the workplace as important an environment for the exercise of citizenship as the community and neighbourhood.

## 7.1 Social Dynamics, Experience and Participation

Any analysis of how citizenship culture can be advanced has to take account of the changing nature of work and the effects on people's lives of the changing social landscape. What are the conditions under which learning for adult life takes place? Which versions of citizenship are required? How can they best be achieved?

In all European countries, young adults are experiencing uncertain status and are dependent on state and parental support for longer periods than would have

been the case a generation ago (Chisholm and Bergeret 1991). Faced with changing opportunity structures, people have to find their own ways of reconciling personal aspirations with available opportunities and their own values in the domains of education, consumption, politics, work and family life.

In the work arena, transitions to worker status are defined by institutionalised rules concerning recognised qualifications and credentials. These credentials testify to the knowledge, competence and experience of the holder, and their acquisition and application depend on the way in which the various credentials and selection systems are negotiated (Ainley 1994; Raffe 1991). This in turn is heavily influenced by cultural and social 'capital', the resources which come from family background and social networks and are important in access to information, advice and social, financial and career support. Adults bring different behaviours to life situations, and success in negotiating these structures and networks can bring stability or instability to the life course. For those who are unsuccessful in gaining entry to jobs, long-term unemployment cuts young adults off from the opportunities of the market, from access to work-based credentialling systems and from the exercise of citizenship in any significant sense (Evans and Heinz 1994). Even successful entry to the labour market can bring another set of limitations and instabilities. Early work entry can create premature foreclosure of options and stereotyped work identities. In the 1950s, workplaces were described in the Crowther Report (Ministry of Education 1959) as deadening to the minds of young school leavers. Lifelong learning policies of the late 1990s now talk of learning organisations. These are claimed to provide the model for the future, providing new opportunities for democratic access to knowledge. But only a small minority of enterprises match up to the model, while for those in the increasing ranks of casualised labour, training in narrowly based competences is unlikely to be of any use over time. Members of casualised pools of labour kept in ongoing insecurity and instability are also unlikely to be able to engage in full participation in society.

I also argue, with reference to Morell (1991) and Dahrendorf (1997), that citizenship rights should not become a quid pro quo, a social contract in which rights are tied to employment status. However, it can be argued that social rights should be re-examined in the light of increased demands for people to be 'flexible' and 'adaptable' in relation to the labour market, with the high insecurity that entails. When people become more flexible to employers needs, this can often mean reduced scope for flexibility in other aspects of their lives. 'Hidden' works in the home, in caring for family members and in contributing to the community go unrecognised. Seeing citizenship as a process has implications for rights as well as responsibilities. Expanded social rights can include, for example, the right to choose more family friendly patterns of living and working. Expanding the conception of social rights in this way could go some way to stabilising the high-insecurity society and countering some of its most damaging features, while providing a strengthened base for a citizen culture.

How have the changing employment situations of the 1980s and 1990s affected people's attitudes to work? For some time, there was a version of the 'moral panic' over the effects of unemployment on people's motivations to work. The traditional

incentives of 'get good qualifications and get a good job' could not be invoked by teachers, and fears that a generation would be raised lacking the 'work-ethic' were pronounced in the early 1980s.

The expansion of post-compulsory education has produced a new set of structures and experiences between the end of the compulsory phase of schooling at 16 and first entry to the labour market, at ages up to the mid-20s. In England, the approach underlying 'vocationalism' has been to surround young people with a range of work-related opportunities for learning relatively early in their educational careers, but the opportunities for progressing from learning into work are haphazard and risky. There is also a prolonged dependency associated with extended post-compulsory education, which runs counter to the deeply embedded cultural values and expectations of a significant proportion of the working-class population, particularly among males. While access to education is a right of social citizenship, in the post-compulsory phase this has become associated with decreased social citizenship rights in other areas, associated with increased dependency and expectations of family support. In fact, the decline of employment opportunities 'tightened the bonds' between education and employment in a host of ways. High levels of work motivation and beliefs in personal responsibility for employment success were sustained

## 7.2 Self-Confidence, Independence and Responsibility

Levels of self-confidence felt in relation to employment issues are often linked to the extent to which people feel that they have been able to take important decisions independently. In the Anglo-German surveys, approximately half the young people felt that their present position was a result of their own plans, with chance being the second biggest perceived influence, followed by social connections.

In a Hanover discussion group, the following comments were made about self-confidence:

> I think I can claim to be quite self-confident. Nonetheless, I always try to keep it at a moderate level. It would be wrong to seem arrogant to people. I want to find my strengths, which I do – especially in my studies – and let them grow. But on the other hand, I feel the need to scrutinise myself closely, that is, either doing it by myself or letting others do it. That is my aim.
>
> I just thought about something you mentioned: reflection. I'm not very self-confident in some situations, especially when they are new and unknown to me. However, I know a lot of my strengths and weaknesses. I can assess myself well. I love to reflect on things. And that is how I would define 'self-confidence'. When I find myself in a situation where I feel insecure, then it is easier for me to understand myself.

These young adults were also asked how often they experienced a range of different types of responsibility at work, in their training schemes or in college and in their lives outside these settings and whether they felt able to set their own goals, felt stretched, felt able to make decisions, felt able to use their own initiative and felt a sense of achievement. The findings are set out in Fig. 7.1.

| | Higher Education | | | Employment | | | Unemployment | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Derby | Hanover | Leipzig | Derby | Hanover | Leipzig | Derby | Hanover | Leipzig |
| | OW/W | OW/W | OW/W | OW/W | OW/W | OW/W | OW/W | OW/W | OW/W |
| Feel given responsibility | 31/57 | 65/47 | 62/37 | 31/59 | 71/57 | 65/57 | 22/35 | 59/39 | 66/33 |
| Set own goals | 48/48 | 82/50 | 86/59 | 63/50 | 85/50 | 84/42 | 43/33 | 63/35 | 69/18 |
| Feel stretched | 27/49 | 54/54 | 54/74 | 26/44 | 55/62 | 56/53 | 27/23 | 47/35 | 52/29 |
| Make decisions | 78/68 | 45/56 | 93/50 | 93/67 | 92/47 | 92/42 | 70/45 | 75/29 | 79/26 |
| Have chance to use initiative | 52/52 | 65/39 | 70/42 | 66/64 | 68/45 | 64/48 | 47/28 | 62/35 | 59/33 |
| Feel sense of achievement | 31/29 | 72/47 | 76/79 | 31/42 | 77/57 | 78/80 | 64/39 | 64/39 | 66/45 |

OW = outside work, study or training; W = in work, study or training

**Fig. 7.1** Types of responsibility experienced 'often' in different settings (%)

These findings on responsibility and achievement are dramatically different from those obtained with a younger sample of 16–19-year-olds in an earlier study: *Youth and Work in England and Germany* (Evans and Heinz 1994). This found that young people in England felt more stretched and challenged and had more exposure to work-related responsibilities than their German counterparts at that age. We suggested that this was a reflection of the accelerated transitions into the labour market which were still common in the UK at that time, bringing earlier exposure to the challenges and responsibilities of the workplace. We anticipated that young Germans, with longer periods of work preparation with trainee/student status, would experience these responsibilities later and possibly at a higher level.

The more recent study revealed a complex picture among our older age group, which was affected by their experiences in education and the labour market. Among those in higher education in the English city, young people were more likely to report taking the initiative and being able to take their own decisions, but German higher education respondents were more likely to report feeling stretched and to experience a sense of achievement, particularly in the Leipzig groups. Initiative and decision-making also appear to be frequently experienced by more employed young people in Derby than their German counterparts, who, like their counterparts in higher education, were more likely to report a sense of achievement and feelings of being stretched. But all the unemployed groups were less likely to report experiences of responsibility and achievement than the employed and higher education groups. The English system does seem to foster characteristics that indicate a greater sense of agency and control, even though the demands made are similar. However, experience of unemployment produces a sense of powerlessness and lack of achievement which overrides national experiences.

Comparison of young people's experiences of responsibility and achievement *outside* the work or training environment showed that higher education students in all three cities reported feeling stretched more by their studies than by their life

outside, but the other groups felt that their life outside training gave more scope for the exercise of responsibility and initiative. Among employed young people in Germany, the picture is one of lives outside work offering at least as much, if not more, experience of responsibility and challenge than life at work. In contrast, young people from Derby reported that most experiences of responsibility arise in the work setting. The unemployed young people, both English and German, reported much richer experiences outside their training schemes than elsewhere. Again, both current experience of education, work or unemployment and cultural background seemed to affect young people's sense of agency and control outside the work setting.

## 7.3 'Flexibility' and Critical Engagement

While motivations can be sustained in education, preparation for what may be the harsh realities of the labour market requires development of strong learner identities with an orientation towards lifelong learning and continuous development of knowledge-based skill for 'flexibility'. Policies that emphasise people taking more control of their lives also link this to the suggestion that 'flexibility' to meet shifting labour market demands is the way to achieve this. More radical versions would emphasise ways of increasing people's capacities for critical engagement in the social practices of their workplaces and neighbourhoods. While participation in work has been a pre-occupation for policy makers, learning for citizenship must also relate to the ways in which people participate in their local communities. As well as being producers at work, they are also consumers, and they have a right to participate in the life of their local communities as citizens and voters.

The democratic citizen is a politically informed and active citizen. How far do our adult populations in Europe meet these criteria? It is instructive to ask whether political engagement is increasing or decreasing in Europe. Is it confined to well-educated minorities? Eurobarometer surveys and the European Values surveys indicate an increase in political participation since the 1950s, as a general trend in all countries. They also indicate that highly active forms of participation in politics are practised by a growing, but small, minority (increased from 4 to 10% between 1974 and 1990) with some engagement in political activity increasing from 27 to 46% over the same period. When the figures are broken down by country, they confirm a trend towards higher levels of political activity across all countries.

The majority of European citizens now have some form of engagement and participation in political activity, with an overall increase 56% by the turn of the 21st century (Budge and Newton 1997). These figures include all forms of political participation, including a rise in direct action. Identification with political parties has grown in Greece, Portugal and Spain in contrast with the decline in Sweden, Ireland, Italy and France. The decline in Britain and West Germany of the 1970s has been reversed in the 1980s and 1990s (Schmitt and Holmberg 1998). The Eurobarometer surveys show that 93% of western Europeans believed in the legitimacy

of democracy as the way to govern, and a stable 50–60% said that they were 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with the way in which democracy operated in their own country between 1976 and 1991 (Budge and Newton 1997). These were the critical years for political change in eastern Europe.

In Europe, general support for Western forms of democracy is stable and has continued at a high level. Governments often lose support, but active political engagement is generally low, and lack of support for particular governments has not presented a challenge to the general political system. In the post-communist states, however, the political culture (attitudes towards government and political authorities) necessary for the stability of the political system has been slow to develop. When access to hoped-for affluence is postponed, expectations are unfulfilled and disillusion sets in. There are differences between the post-communist world and Western democracies in the importance attached to voluntary organisations and interest groups reflecting the degree of former reliance on state-directed strategies. Civil society – in the form of interest groups independent of the state – has considerable political potential. It is argued that having groups able to organise themselves and act independently of the state is important for the viability of democracy, and the extent and form of interest group organisation within European countries is an important indicator of democracy and stability. However, in a 'high insecurity' society, the self-protective features of interest groups may have increasingly negative implications for stability. Civil society without civic virtues may be dangerous for the future of democracy.

Surveys in post-communist states also show that parliamentary trust and confidence decreased in the mid-1990s. Despite this, political engagement in the form of subjective interest in politics and future voting intentions is comparable with levels in western European countries and the principles of parliamentary democracy appear broadly accepted. These trends form the backcloth for research into the views, values and experiences of younger adults in changing socio-economic environments in western Europe.

Globalisation processes are often associated with people increasingly become disassociated from their 'traditional' contexts. This means that the search for identity or sense of wholeness and continuity as a person gains a new intensity (Baethge 1989). Intergenerational transmission of 'virtues' is reduced, and the channels to participation in political and social structures may become obscured. Engagement in citizenship in its maximal sense is thus made more difficult, and there have been signs that the pursuit of 'ego-driven' projects could become paramount (characterised as the 'me' generation), as people act to maximise personal opportunity and reduce risk. Yet, as noted in Chapter 1, over time this amounts to a zero-sum game.

Many of these 'choices' are rooted in partly formed social identities, the senses people have of who they are and what their capabilities are. Self-definition involves internalising the definitions and attributes ascribed by others. These subjective identities are associated with social class, gender and ethnicity. They also reflect educational credentials and other mediating factors associated with experiences in the labour market and wider social context, with narrowing career options playing

a part in shaping identities over time. While the latter are increasing in relative significance as traditional transition patterns become 'fractured' and extended, disadvantage continues to be concentrated in groups defined by class, gender and ethnicity in particular localities, as the 16–19 initiative demonstrated (Banks et al. 1992). Social identities are reflected in social attitudes. Changes in political involvements between 16 and 20 were incremental, with 'only a tiny minority (developing) any serious involvement in politics of the conventional kind' (Banks et al. p. 176). Their attitudes were not organised around political positions but around the politics of the personal. Changes in early adult life involved gradual increases in interest in political issues.

Post-school learning environments may be pivotal for future patterns of learning, social participation and the exercise of citizenship in later adult life, yet most attention, in the European context, is given to preparation for work and careers.

Do we know to what extent are 18–25-year-olds active agents in their lives outside work? How does this compare with their agency inside work and their work values?

Findings from the Anglo-German research played an important part in the ESRC Youth Citizenship and Social Change Programme in showing the ways in which individualised market-oriented behaviours appear most strongly in the setting in which markets have been deregulated and individualised behaviours have been most strongly encouraged or enforced – that of the English labour market. In all groups, the German respondents, both from the western and the eastern states of Germany, were less proactive in relation to the labour market (e.g. in job seeking) than their English counterparts. They also showed more politically active group behaviour in terms of participation in political events and engagement in political discussions (Fig. 7.2).

The juxtaposition of these two findings, which show market-orientated and politically active behaviours to be inversely related, suggests that concerns about the erosion of citizenship in consumer- and market-oriented socio-economic environments may be well founded. This is underlined when voting intentions and levels of political interest declared by respondents are examined. Answers to the 'would you vote . . .?' question suggest quite an important international difference. Seventy-three percent in east German sample and 78% in the west German sample said yes, compared to a considerably lower 61% in England. There were also important differences between groups, with more in the unemployed groups stating that they would not vote.

This wasn't just apathy on the part of English respondents because 37% did answer the question, but said 'no', they wouldn't vote. There were also important differences between groups, with more in the unemployed groups stating that they would not vote.

They seem to be making a conscious decision *not* to do something. Are the German political parties better at appealing to or representing this age group? The German interviews suggest a stronger interest and critical engagement in formal politics and political issues than is found in the English groups, although both are highly critical of politics and politicians. It should also be noted that political activity

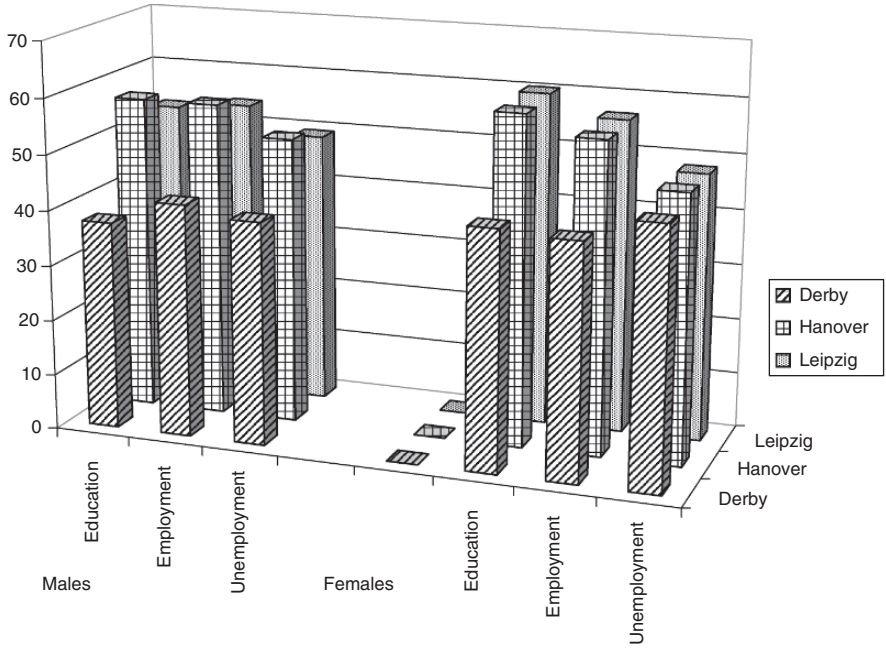


**Fig. 7.2** Politically active group behaviours

and interest increases with age (in all groups), a finding which reinforces those of previous studies and confirms that this is not a phenomenon of young Germans retaining 'student' identities longer in the more highly institutionalised German environment. There were important differences when different types of activity or behaviour are examined. Involvement in political organisations was also compared with involvement in religious and sports organisations, for relative importance with other aspects of personal and social life.

The table gives percentages of respondents ($n = 300$ in each city) who have engaged in the listed activity once or more (Table 7.1):

**Table 7.1** Participation in activities and organisations

| | Activities/organisations | Derby | Leipzig | Hanover |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Attended a political meeting/rally | 32 | 71 | 72 |
| 2. | Given views to a politician | 21 | 17 | 16 |
| 3. | Handed out leaflets | 25 | 9 | 11 |
| 4. | Helped organise public meetings | 32 | 37 | 47 |
| 5. | Discussed political views with family/friends | 74 | 90 | 91 |
| 6. | Joined a trade union | 16 | 15 | 13 |
| 7. | Joined a political party | 1 | 4 | 8 |
| 8. | Joined a religious organisation | 23 | 21 | 58 |
| 9. | Joined a sports organisation | 74 | 60 | 62 |

Activities 2 and 3, where the English outscore the Germans, are 'individual' political activities; the other items are arguably more social/communal. The behaviours among English 18–25-year-olds did not reflect a high degree of collective agency. The German/English difference on item 5 is noticeable, but not large. It is possible that more politics/citizenship education in schools and in post-school learning environments in England could lead to an increase in this kind of behaviour. The difference in item 1 also suggests more overt political activity on the part of the German respondents. Are the Germans more comfortable with day-to-day personal political interactions? Does their cultural context encourage this? The low numbers joining political organisations can be contrasted with the high levels of affiliation to sports organisations and the proportions who join religious organisations. (The high figure for religious affiliations in Hanover is typical for the area.)

Turning to the interview transcripts, the following extracts typify the range of German and English comments on politics. They reflect a mix of passive, resigned and resistant and proactive stances:

*Derby Higher Education Group*

It's hard for us to be interested really. I mean Labour got in and one of the first things they did was to cut student grants, wasn't it? So we can't really be happy about that.

We were all rooting for them and then they did that, and now it's like 'go away!'.

That's right. I think, well, I just can't be bothered anymore with any of it.

*Hanover Employed Group*

I do not know a thing about politics. I am not interested in it very much.

We cannot influence them anyway. Once they are the leaders they want to lead all alone. I believe that there is no use getting involved in it at all, that is, that there is anything I can do about it.

*Leipzig Employed Group*

I am not interested in politics, you know. These people who rule are of no use anyway. I can vote for a party but nothing will improve. I am fed up with politics when I look at the situation on the apprenticeship market.

*Derby Higher Education Group*

I do think it is important to some extent to understand the politics that affect you, not necessarily politics full stop. But, I'm not very up to date with it all myself.

*Derby Employment Group*

Politics, I think is quite important with the job I do, because with the benefits system, if they change it, I've got to be up to date on it because of the advice that I give people and if I give them the wrong advice then . . . .

But I don't really care for it myself. It's only when it's relevant to my job that I take any notice.

*Hanover Higher Education Group*

You are not serious, asking me this question are you? Of course, to me politics is very important, very, very important.

**Table 7.2** Percentages 'very or quite interested' in politics, by education/employment setting

| | Unemployed | Employed | Education | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Males | 77 | 91 | 94 | 87 |
| Females | 57 | 65 | 81 | 68 |

**Table 7.3** Interested in politics, by city

| | Derby | Hanover | Leipzig |
|---|---|---|---|
| Interested | 41 | 87 | 92 |
| not interested | 58 | 13 | 8 |
| no answer | 1 | – | – |

*Hanover Unemployment Group*

I think politics is very important. Politics creates the framework for our lives. It influences our lives in all spheres, work but also leisure too.

*Leipzig Higher Education Group*

Politics begins in your residential district. There you can change something. Big politics however . . ..

Yes, sure you can. For example, by organising a demo.

The strongest expressions of political and activism came from a minority of research participants in the German groups. Interest in the Derby group appeared to be more motivated by individual self-interest. But many in both countries take a negative view, along the lines of 'they're all the same' or 'you can't change anything'?

All the things they tell you at election time sound so good but when the election is over they do not remember what they promised to the people. I do not think that I can influence politics.

Although the English were often negative, it could be argued that this is more a case of rejection than apathy – they have usually 'made a choice' to be negative – again suggesting that the English parties have done too little to appeal to this age group.

The following picture, shown in Table 7.2, emerged of the young adults' interest in politics by collapsing together the categories of responses 'very interested' and 'quite interested' into 'interested' as well as 'not very interested' and 'not at all interested' into 'not interested' (Table 7.3).

Students in higher education exhibit the highest levels of interest and activity, when compared with those already in employment or experiencing periods of unemployment. Active engagement is strongest amongst German students.

## 7.4 Students' Participation in Politics

In Germany, students show a high level of interest in politics. This is reflected in the students' readiness to vote if an election would take place next week. In Hanover,

88% of the students would vote, in Leipzig 89% and in Derby 67%. In Derby, one-third (32%) of the students would not take part in an election.

The absolute majority in Hanover and Leipzig (95% and 92%, respectively) report regular discussions of political topics in the family or with friends. (In Derby, the number of those who never discusses political topics with the family or friends is considerably high (21)). Undoubtedly, political issues are important topics for German students as the following two young women indicate:

Young woman 1, Leipzig: I had to be blind and deaf to ignore politics completely. I do think that it is of importance to know about it but it is a matter of how close you let it near you. You are confronted with politics every day but it is up to you what you make of it.

Young woman 2, Leipzig: Our lives depend on politics. In order to reach something you need to be involved in politics, that is, to become a professional politician. Usually, you read and hear about politics. You can discuss about it but the interest will not go any further.

These opinions typify German students' views on politics. Furthermore, they differentiate between local government politics, country and federal politics, and higher education policy can also be picked out as a central theme. Some see political engagement as having its roots in one's local community. One student, for example, thought the offer for 'conversation' with inhabitants by the Leipzig mayor to be a good idea and pleaded for people to go there and make known their opinions. Other strongly held views include that of the young man who was horrified at the high percentage of votes of a right-wing extremist party in Saxony-Anhalt in the last regional election. He said he would like to give a good piece of his mind to every voter. A young woman was upset about the absolute majority of the CDU in the Saxon parliament and felt that she had not been represented as a citizen for years. In contrast, another student's attitude towards politics seemed atypical in Leipzig student circles:

> I do not think about politics. Maybe that is wrong. In elections I follow my parents. May be that will change in the future when I live my life independently.

Derby students expressed a lot of scepticism about the political process. This was generally the case regardless of their level of interest in politics. Many of the students claimed to be uninterested in politics. There appeared to be a general feeling that their concerns were not heard, and this explained why many of them had turned their backs on politics.

Young man 4, Derby: I think I did take an interest in it, but then sort of you vote for things, I don't know, on promises and stuff and then they don't seem to do it anyway. So I think, so well, why bother?

Young man 8, Derby: It's hard for us to be interested really 'cos I mean labour got in and one of the first things they did was to cut student grants, wasn't it. So we can't really be happy about that, being a student.

Young woman 3, Derby: We were all rooting for them and then they did that and now it's like go away. I think we don't have any belief in the system at all really, 'cause. . . .'

Young man 4, Derby: No, the politicians. It's all mouth really isn't it. I mean they, they oh family values and everything and yet they're the ones like having affairs left, right and centre.

Young man 9, Derby: I think we take them with a pinch of salt. They say one thing and you know full well, alright they're saying it but it's not going to happen. So even if you vote for them it's not going to happen.

Despite the distance the students feel to politics at the macro-level (great politics), in their personal dispositions they see ways how they could become engaged in politics. (In the group interviews, the political section was discussed very emotionally.) The majority of the German research participants (Hanover 86, Leipzig 78) had taken part in a public meeting or demonstration 'once' or 'more often'. This applied to 31 of the Derby respondents. The experience of helping to organise any public meeting or event was shared by 28% of the Derby students, 45% in Leipzig and 59% in Hanover. For the students speaking in the extract below, their experience of political action had diminished their belief in its efficacy.

Young woman 6, Derby: We can really and we can campaign all we like, like we did for not paying fees and such like, it's not going to work is it.

Young woman 7: It isn't no.

**Interviewer: So you did that?**

Young woman 6: Yeah. We did it. I'm a subject rep and I took part in the, you know in rallies and stuff and err filled in lots of post cards and posted them off and wrote letters to people and got nowhere.

Young man 9: Like beating your head against a brick wall.

Young woman 6: Yes, there's only so many times you do it before you give up.

Not all students in Derby were wholly dismissive of politics. There were people in both groups who saw it as having some relevance to their lives, although this acknowledgement was usually qualified with the admission that they did not know or understand as much as they might.

Young woman 11, Derby: A lot of it affects your future though doesn't it, like policies that are brought in.

Young man 10: Socially, as well, when you're working you go out and people start talking about you know things that are going on in the news and on telly and stuff and if you don't know, it doesn't matter how good you are at your job, if you don't know you know what's, you don't know what's going on, you're just going to look stupid really. You have to have quite a broad background so, to get on in anything really, I don't know.

Young woman 5: I'm quite interested in it but I mean you don't get the information about it around nowadays, I don't think. I mean they tried to, but where I live and the, the majority of the people don't really know what's going on. What they're voting for. They know they've got to vote, but they don't know what it's for, or what the arguments are for and against it and stuff like that. I mean it's just not well, I mean, we should all really know what the principles are behind it. I mean it involves all of us, but people don't. . .

Young woman 6: I think you need to know a certain amount so that you can see why decisions are made affecting you are made. Whether they're actually made because of a valid reason or whether they're simply just the politics of it, you know. Erm, one. . .

**Interviewer: So you want to understand why it is they are done?**

Young man 4: Yeah, why things are done.

Young woman 6: I do think it is important to some extent to understand the politics that affect you, not necessarily politics you know full stop.

Erm, but I'm not, I'm not very up to date with it myself. I'm not, you know stuff that affects me I maybe know a little bit about but not a great deal. I don't take a huge interest in it. Although I do believe that you should know something about it.

In the student groups, few of these self-reported views are associated with differences in self-initiative or participation in other areas of political participation. The results for 'never' are very high (between 77 and 99) in all three towns when asked if they had given views to an MP or local government or had handed out leaflets whether one had joined a political party or the trade union. Responses to the question of whether they belong to a church or religious organisation show that Hanover differed strongly from the two other localities (this is not often the case). This applies to 67 in Hanover, 36 in Leipzig and for only 22 in Derby.

Students' party preferences in the case of parliamentary elections lie within the usual trends. While students in Leipzig have no sympathy for liberal or the extreme right-wing parties and – in contrast to Hanover – the Green Party attracts hardly any response, the number of PDS voters was, at the time of the survey, in line with the last elections in Leipzig.[i]

### *7.4.1 Work Values and Activities Outside Work*

How far is the scope for responsibility and achievement reflected in work values, when considered alongside features such as wages, job security, atmosphere and collective contribution? The chart for the groups in employment settings is given in Fig. 7.3. The charts broadly followed similar patterns in the higher education and employment groups, the most important differences being the national ones.

In all settings, job security continued to be highly valued by the German research participants. A good salary or wage was most highly valued by the English but less so by the German respondents. 'Affiliation' factors to do with the people you meet and work with are important for a friendly atmosphere, but not for relationships. Collective and 'service to society' values were rated as important by only a few respondents in each setting and area. The previous socialisation of the Leipzig group into collective values and the subordination of the individual to the collective good have disappeared in the values expressed in this survey.

In 1997, in the second survey of the DJI (German Youth Institute), 7000 young people in east and west Germany were asked about their relationship towards politics. The findings of that study are consistent with the author's present study. Work

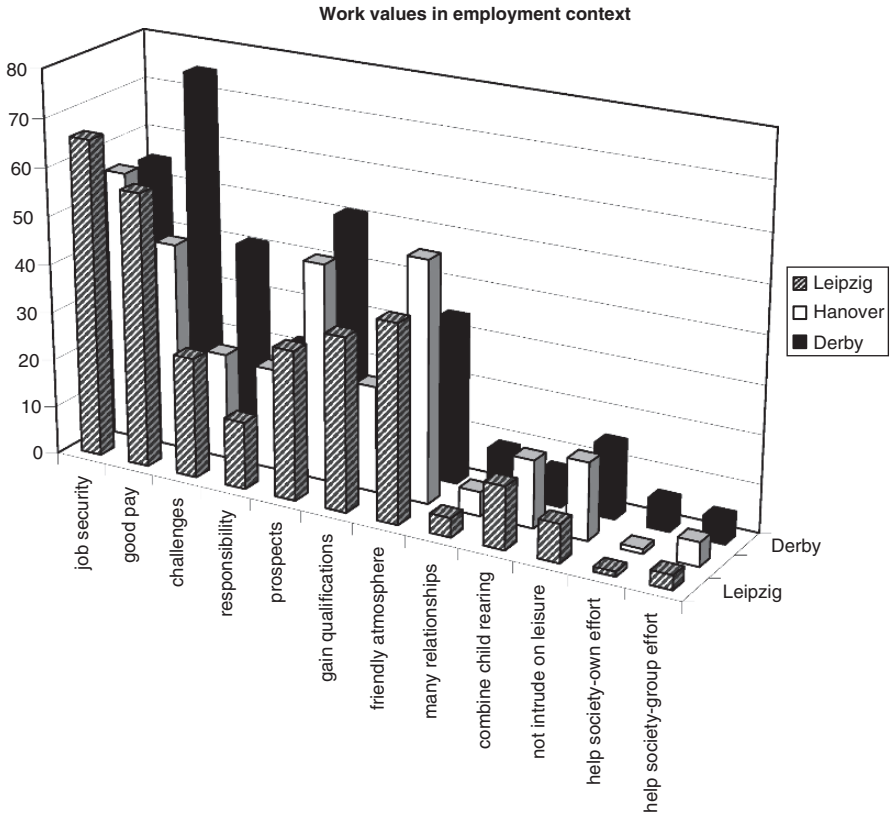


**Fig. 7.3** Work values in employment (N = 900, n = 100 in each setting in each city)

and profession are still central elements in the life planning of younger people. 'The risks of unemployment and uncertainties in professional biographies seem dangerous to them'. The first demand German young adults place on politics is to secure and enlarge opportunities for qualifications and rewarding workplaces. 'Work shall be more than earning money and citizenship more than voting' for German youth. The ideal of democracy is estimated highly including participation in school, university and public in general. The study showed that there was dissatisfaction with the 'realities' of the state, the parties and politicians and little confidence in the institutions.

In the eastern states, the majority of students show some dissatisfaction with the political realities of the Federal Republic. The gap between the support of the idea of democracy and the satisfaction with the democratic everyday reality is marked in the eastern states and consistent with the wider trends in post-communist societies. It has been suggested that the feelings of young east Germans reflect their belief that they are disadvantaged because they do not get their just share of the wealth – the subjective balance sheets turns out to be more often negative for the east Germans,

as Gille and Kruger (2000) have argued. The Anglo-German comparative findings show that eastern German respondents do not believe opportunities are given to all, while more of their western German counterparts do believe this.

East Germans perceive the influences of structurally based 'acquired' attributes are more important in affecting people's opportunities in life than their west German counterparts, while English respondents perceive these influences as least important.

## 7.5 Education for Citizenship in Adult Life

In England, government policy has tended to emphasise the need for a strong civil society combined with citizenship, and the question of citizenship education in adult life is periodically addressed. This needs to recognise that interest in politics increases with age and to understand better the ways in which biographical events occur, which make civic and political engagement more immediately relevant.

In Germany, where citizenship and value education has been enshrined in the curriculum not only at school but also in the Berufsschulen, the citizenship education debate has been centred on the 'integration' of the eastern states after the political upheavals and on the appropriate aims of citizenship education after 16. Questions of nationality and access to citizenship rights have also dominated the national agenda, with obvious implications for citizenship education. In eastern Germany, expectations of state-driven responses to social issues appear to remain quite high. For adult educators, the transformation process of adult education in the new federal states was presented as an opportunity to reconsider positions and prejudices in an uncritical manner (Kuchler 1993; Kade 1993) and to reflect on the impact the changes in structures of adult education had on the wider federal republic. In practice, the market forces which, according to Spöring (1995), 'swept a wave' of new market providers into the eastern states also deepened the mistrust of citizens.

Views, values and experiences of people differ according to their position in the social landscape, in the various settings of education, unemployment and employment. In all three cities, most recognise the structural constraints on their aspirations and scope for action. Citizenship education has high potential to engage with the multi-dimensional nature of people's lives and to expand awareness of the avenues for political, civic and social engagement. Yet this is undermined by the disengagement from collective activities that can stem from the pursuit of an 'individualised' life. The lack of connection into democratic structures in communities and workplaces appears to be the most pressing problem to be addressed (Fig. 7.4).

The metaphor for human agency which sees people as 'actors in the social landscape' carries implications for the 'curriculum' for citizenship. This must relate, at any age or stage, to a framework for interpreting the world as a 'social whole', to use Sedunary's (1996) expression, while understanding the sources of diversity and differentiation within it. In conjunction with this, inclusive policies, strategies

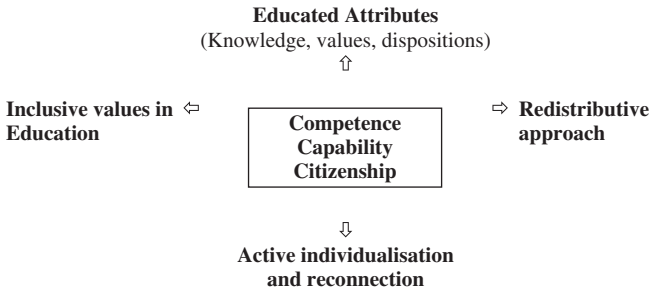


**Fig. 7.4** Bringing the elements together: education for citizenship

and forms of educational support are needed which value and recognise the capabilities of all, policies which recognise diversity and move away from normative assumptions abut the condition of particular age groups as a whole. Values and attitudes formed through learning are likely to have important effects in adult life across all social domains including health, crime, parenting as well as civic participation. What counts as positive civic participation varies according to social, religious groups. Processes of socialisation into work roles also shape attitudes and values salient on non-work contexts.

Research evidence on active social participation and citizenship throughout the life course shows that education can be significant in several ways. One perspective is to see education as an asset that individuals may draw on for political or civic knowledge and behaviours. According to this resource model of learning and citizenship, people develop a repertoire of civic and political responses and use rational choice to select which to use in any given situation, according to their own perception of benefits to be gained. In this perspective, knowledge mediates political choice and participatory citizenship. A contrasting perspective emphasises 'skills' and attitudes that can be fostered to enhance citizenship behaviours, including organisational and communication skills and attitudes such as a sense of civic duty. Democratic styles of teaching and free expression of opinion are associated with civic and political participation. Some jobs develop capabilities that are highly relevant to politics and many forms of social participation. While attributes may be developed through educational activities in schools, they are just as likely to be developed through work, community and interest-based activities of particular kinds. But only certain kinds of learning produce the meta-level competences necessary for active citizenship – critical and reflective abilities and capacities for self-determination and shared autonomy. These tend to be associated with higher educational levels. In 'public good' models of the relationships between education and citizenship, the argument is made that cumulative level of societal education may enhance tolerance and trust even if attitude change is not sufficient to prompt changes in behaviour (Puttman 1993).

The 'relative effects' model of education and citizenship (Emler and Fraser 1999) problematises this by recognising education as a positional good (Hirsch 1977). As argued in Chapter 1, access to the advantages of extended education such as

influential social networks and experiences relevant to active civic participation depends on relative rather than actual level of education. Differential access becomes another source of inequality. As Schuller et al. (2001) show, drawing on Dalton (1988) and Marsh (1990), individuals who are disaffected, often through lack of educational qualifications and poor employment prospects, 'respond to their situation through rejection of the conventional routes of political expression' (p. 44). Democratic enlightenment, according to Nie et al. (1996), involves adherence to norms of tolerance and acceptance of democracy. This should be distinguished from political and civic engagements that revolve around depth of awareness of the current political landscape, practical knowledge and direct involvement in political campaigns. The impact of education on democratic enlightenment, particularly in respect of support for democracy and tolerant attitudes with respect to ethnic minorities, is a well-established research finding. This impact is associated with absolute rather than relative education levels in the population according to Schuller et al. (2001). But the effects of education are much more bounded in their impact on the engagement attributes of citizenship. In this context, social networks are important and education becomes a positional good. The absolute levels that people have are not reflected in their social and political influence. It is relative educational levels, associated with social and cultural capital, that tend to give people added influence. This is as often expressed through political engagement in respect of local issues, children's schooling and health matters as through 'big' politics.

Empirical studies have attempted to answer the question 'what forms of learning lead to civic behaviours?' Socialisation practices begin early in family history and develop through school and other mediating institutions. Family achievement rather then personal achievement has been shown to be important (Hashway 1996), since this is most associated with long-term engagement in social networks and socialising experiences. For example, Preece et al. showed how people who exercise active citizenship in adult life often report having learned this through long-term family engagement in civic activities, although for women, adult participation in higher education sometimes prompted profound changes in social, civic and political engagement. Older people socialised into the values of civic participation frequently re-engage with civic matters after retirement, finding both personal satisfaction and opportunities for social contribution after the pre-occupations of working life. The patterns of engagement again tend to be class-, ethnicity- and gender based. Expanding the spaces for social participation and reducing the barriers to engagement in civic matters go hand in hand with support for learning in the 'transitional' life phases that provide turning points in people's lives (Antikainen 1996). For older people surviving traumatic experiences such as bereavement, divorce or unemployment, compelling arguments are made by advocacy bodies for improved support services. The positives of realising untapped potential through exposure to different activities and settings are equally important for older people, as universities of the 'third age' demonstrate. Being able to articulate issues and feelings and draw on as well as respond to the experience of others provides avenues for learning that are often undervalued.

Education can potentially develop awareness of how people are differently situated in the social landscape. Understanding variations in contexts and identities is central to the democratic enlightenment mentioned earlier. Identities relevant to social, civic and political participation may be spatial (local, national, European or international), temporal (intergenerational, cultural) or associated with virtual networks. Effective education, according to Heater (1992), enables people to locate themselves better in relation to these various contexts. Relationships vary by social and ethic group and geographical location. They also vary according to the prevailing political context. For example, devolution of powers to regional assemblies creates different meanings for citizenship through changing structures and cultures for voting and political participation.

Some writers contrast 'market' models of citizenship engagement with 'moral' models, for example Carr (1991) and Schuller et al. (2001).[1] It is more helpful to move beyond these polarisations to a greater recognition that both market-related and morally based rationales for civic and political engagement co-exist and have a complex interplay in the lives of people and their communities.

To achieve a strengthened culture of citizenship needs people to learn about, for and through the exercise of citizenship in everyday lives. For adults this means

- moving beyond policy pre-occupations with key skills and narrow form of competence, towards the development of what I have termed 'educated attributes' – the combination in adult life of values, knowledge skills and dispositions of Crick et al.;
- approaches which are both inclusive *and* redistributive; and
- improved connection into democratic structures where skills and dispositions of active citizenship can be exercised.

Where are these structures for those moving through and out of various forms of post-school education and training and trying to gain a foothold in the institutions of work and adult life? Where are they for those adults in insecure positions and caught in the revolving doors of the labour market? In local communities, democratic structures are there, but they are often not representative and do not attract broad-based community involvement and engagement. Industrial democratic structures such as work councils are generally not in existence in UK companies, and employee voice is often confined to 'consultation' of weak forms (cf. Works Councils in Germany). Even this is further weakened by conditions of globalisation and incorporation of 'employee voice' into dominant corporate cultures. This all adds to conception that citizenship, if exercised at all in its critical and active sense, is something that is exercised outside workplaces. Ascherson argues that these values and practices distinguish the UK (in all its constituent countries) from western European 'partners' in the European Union. Asking how European can or will we be, and suggesting that Britain is on a different 'Sonderweg' from the rest of Europe, Ascherson (2001) comments:

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[1] Report of the Centre for the Wider Benefits of Learning, 2000.

> Worse than the archaism of Britain's institutions, this autocracy in the workplace is the tallest barrier across the way to a more participative democracy. The thought that active participation in management and planning by the workforce could actually increase profitability is rarely encountered in Britain. So great was the bellow of disbelieving horror which went up in 1991, when it seemed that Maastricht might introduce a mild form of worker-participation into British boardrooms that the United Kingdom opted out of the whole Social Chapter. (pp. 62, 63)

Has democracy in the workplace reached a dead end, not only in Britain but also more widely, as countries worldwide accommodate global multinationals and embrace neo-liberal reforms? Cohen and Arato point out that while the point of production is not the prime locus of democratisation, 'receptors' exist within the workplace domains for challenges to anti-democratic practices. The potential is there to expand, in a democratic way, the structures for discussion and compromise. As Welton (2000) argues, projects of self-limiting democratic institutional reform can realistically be aimed for

- broadening and democratising the structures of discussion and compromise which already exist;
- enabling the exercise of expanded forms of social rights, through negotiation and agreement; and
- enabling worker representative bodies to play expanded roles in, for example, development of collective frameworks for learning and employee development.

Individual responsibilities to work have to be linked to individual rights at work and beyond the workplace. They derive their meanings from the context of employment and the social rights and responsibilities embedded in the wider society. Cases in earlier chapters show how employees personalise their workplaces through their values and interests, co-constructing environments and working together. Citizenship as a process can be strengthened through support for informal learning and wider workplace participation as well as entitlements for 'time off work for learning' at all levels of the workforce.

The exercise of citizenship as a process, in relation to changing structures of work and community, requires a more highly mobilised civil society, accompanied by 'civic virtues' and structures for democratic participation. Can an 'upward spiral' process be created with increased democratisation of structures strengthening civic virtues, expectations of participation and political knowledge in the population. Reflexively, how far can strengthening of civic virtues, political knowledge and expectations of participation through education and lifelong learning challenge anti-democratic practices and promote democratisation. (The spiral can also work in a downward direction, with erosion of citizenship.)

Policies need to be based on more holistic analyses of social dynamics and an understanding of ways in which experiences early in adult life can give stability or instability to the life course. This transcends national or even European boundaries, as earlier studies have demonstrated (Evans and Haffenden 1991). Effective education for the future depends on the extent of free and equal access and the 'redistributive' mechanisms for resources and social support which are employed;

the ways in which provision is linked structurally and methodologically, and relates to the life course; and the ways in which education links and draws with different domains of experience in work, community and family and promote reconnection into collective activity and democratic structures, creating the latter where they do not exist. This argument reflects a neo-Republican view in many respects. It is concerned about low engagements in politics, and it advocates support for community education to stimulate political participation and for direct democracy through creation of structures such as neighbourhood and modern versions of workplace councils. It also recognises that people learn to participate first in the collective 'free spaces' of life and argues that the non-commercialised free spaces of collective life have to be protected and expanded. Minimally they have to be protected from further erosion. Citizenship means engagement in both the institutionalised and informal discourses of political, civic and social lives. At the level of the individual citizen, it involves a complex interplay of rationality and subjectivity. Reconciliation between rationality and subjectivity comes when social actors can play a part in shaping their social environments. This means not only the competence to 'read the world' and reflect critically on it, as Welton (2000) argue, but also the dispositions to act in the world. Creation and recreation of the democratic structures that allow the disposition to act to be translated into effective action are essential to the safeguarding of democracy.

This is a radical perspective which envisages sustained educational engagement with the social reality of people's lives as actors in the social landscape of society and in their communities and challenges dominant assumptions about 'front-end' schooling. It also has implications for the form and content of the educational engagement.

The upsurge of interest in lifelong learning could, with political will behind it, accelerate the development of expanded approaches to citizenship education, but the latter requires much more emphasis on citizenship as a process. It also needs to recognise that citizenship is a larger category than work in people's lives. Citizenship is a lifelong process, which links rather than separates generations. It incorporates working lives. It is not an adjunct to the business of working for a living. It not only requires expanded conceptualisations of what constitutes learning about, for and through citizenship, but also depends on strengthening the support and development of the democratic structures and viable means of social/educational redistribution which can make the real exercise of citizenship possible for many more people.

## 7.6 Summary and Conclusions

On the face of it, the findings and analyses presented in this chapter offer few grounds for expecting widespread re-engagement in citizenship and social life in societies that have gone far down the road in enacting market liberalism. There is little evidence of engagement among young adults that extends beyond individual

strivings either in work or in social context. In social democratic structures that also regulate the training and employment relationships through strong social partnership, the new generation of adults are more socially engaged, although work values show some strong similarities across cultures, particularly in the erosion of a sense of service. A deeper analysis of these phenomena and their contexts shows the potentiality for change. We have seen individual strivings also show an awareness of social context and that engagement increases with age. There is little or no fatalism, and there is evidence that young people do question the dominant rationalities. At the same time, wider and longer term social trends in Europe are moving towards increased engagement in the adult populations

Education has a key role to play. The decline of employment opportunities throughout Europe 'tightened the bonds' between education and employment from 1970s onwards. Within the UK, fears of erosion of the work ethic were not widely realised as policies appeared successfully to propagate beliefs in personal responsibility for gaining and maintaining a place in the labour force, although emergence of intergenerational 'under-employment' in particular neighbourhoods has been an enduring reminder of the ways in which the logic of the market plays out in deprived communities.

Education has long been recognised as a key influence in social participation as well as 'employability'. When engagement in citizenship and related activities is seen as an outcome of education and is distinguished from other outcomes such as political awareness and tolerance, the effects of education are shown to be relative rather than absolute in their impact. The absolute levels of educational qualifications that people acquire are not reflected in the social and political influence they can command, but they are reflected in their political awareness. It is relative educational levels, associated with advantageous social and cultural capital, that tend to give people added influence. This is as often expressed through political engagement in respect of local issues, children's schooling and health matters as through 'big' politics. As argued in Chapter 1, when the tangible gains from investment in education are increasingly confined to a decreasing 'highly privileged' elite, discontent of the 'ordinary' but politically aware middle classes potentially contributes to creating the conditions for restoration of greater fairness in society, if not social justice.

The English socio-economic framework does seem to foster people's beliefs in the capacity (and responsibility) of individuals to take action to improve their situation despite the constraints on them. Despite this, substantial periods of unemployment do produce feelings of powerlessness and lack of control irrespective of the dominant societal framework. Available resources (in the form of purchasing power) are by no means the only determinants patterns of social and political participation, inside or outside the work setting. Life experiences including those in the labour market as well as those stemming from cultural background fundamentally affect people's engagements in social and political life.

The lack of connection into democratic structures for the expression of these strivings and insights appears to be the most pressing problem to be addressed. Cultures supportive of engaged citizenship have to extend to the workplace, which has to be seen as important an environment for the exercise of citizenship as are

communities and neighbourhoods. In both communities and workplaces, there is scope for broadening and democratising the structures of discussion and compromise which already exist. Expanding the conception of social rights at work to accommodate people's desires to engage in socially responsible ways with family and community is part of generating a culture of citizenship and stabilising the high-insecurity society and has been proceeding incrementally if very slowly. Citizenship as a process can be strengthened through support for informal learning and wider workplace participation as well as entitlements for 'time off work for learning' at all levels of the workforce. Expanding the spaces for social participation and reducing the barriers to engagement in civic matters go hand in hand with support for learning in the context of the life experiences in work, parenthood, health and ageing that can provide turning points in people's lives.

Finally, the chapter has put forward the challenge of creating an 'upward spiral' process in which increased democratisation of the channels of influence sustains the aspirations of ordinary people, strengthens civic virtues and expectations of participation and promotes political knowledge in the population. A more radical vision of lifelong learning could, with political will behind it, rise to this challenge.

## Note

i. Since the survey was conducted before the financial scandal in the CDU, it remains open whether and how this would have had an effect on the voting behaviour of the student electorate in Leipzig.