Gert Biesta · Maria De Bie
Danny Wildemeersch *Editors*

Civic Learning, Democratic Citizenship and the Public Sphere

Springer

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Gert Biesta (www.gertbiesta.com) is professor of educational theory and policy at the University of Luxembourg. He previously worked at universities in the Netherlands (1990–1999), England (1999–2007) and Scotland (2007–2012). His research focuses on the theory and philosophy of education and educational research, with a particular interest in questions of democracy and democratisation. In addition to theoretical work, he has also conducted empirical research on young people's citizenship and civic learning, on adult and vocational education, and on learning through the life course. Recent books include *Beyond Learning: Democratic Education for a Human Future* (Paradigm Publishers 2006); *Education, Democracy and the Moral Life* (co-edited with Michael Katz and Susan Verducci; Springer 2009); *Good Education in an Age of Measurement: Ethics, Politics, Democracy* (Paradigm Publishers 2010); *Learning Democracy in School and Society: Education, Lifelong Learning, and the Politics of Citizenship* (Sense Publishers 2011); and *The Beautiful Risk of Education* (Paradigm Publishers 2013). His work has been translated into many languages, including Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Finish, Polish, Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese, Italian and Mandarin.

Maria De Bie has a degree in political sciences and public administration from Ghent University. She is currently professor and head of the Department of Social Welfare Studies at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Ghent University, Belgium. Her research interests include the development of social work practices, with a particular focus on the interaction between social political developments and social work interventions in the social environment of children, young people and adults. A major focus of her research is the relationship between social work and social welfare rights. Her research focuses on different ways of understanding social problems, participation and community development, with an emphasis on social work, youth work, special youth care and poverty problems. She has published many journal articles and book chapters, mostly in Dutch but also in English peer-reviewed journals. In 2004, she started the Master of Social Work programme at Ghent University.

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Dr. Sven De Visscher is lecturer and researcher in the field of social pedagogy and social work at University College Ghent. He holds a Ph.D. degree in educational sciences. His Ph.D. research focussed on the social pedagogical meaning of the neighbourhood for children. His current research interests include processes of community development in close relation to concrete social work, adult education and community arts practices within the urban context; youth work and youth policy; and the concepts of child-friendly and age-friendly cities.

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Walter Lorenz was born in Germany where he studied theology (University of Tübingen). He qualified as a social worker at the London School of Economics and practised in East London before starting to teach social work in Ireland and later in Italy. He places special emphasis on promoting intercultural and participative approaches within a framework of critical social policy. He was coordinator of several European projects to develop international collaboration in the field of social

work and social policy, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989, and co-founded the journals *European Journal of Social Work* and *Social Work and Society*. His research interests and publications concern the history of social work in Europe and the critique of neoliberalism and managerialism encroaching on social work. Since 2008, he is principal of the Free University of Bozen/Bolzano, Italy.

Carmen Mathijssen obtained her Ph.D. in pedagogical sciences in 2008. Her research topics include poverty, employment, social economy, participation and citizenship. Since 2008, she works as programme coordinator with the cooperation Cera, where she is responsible for the national projects on the combat of poverty.

Dr. Jan Peeters is the coordinator of the VBJK Centre for Innovation in the Early Years, a research centre of the Department of Social Welfare Studies at Ghent University, Belgium. He has been promoting several innovative European ECEC action-research projects since 1992 and has written numerous articles and given many presentations on international conferences on professionalism, quality and diversity in the field of early childhood education and care. Together with other international colleagues, he founded in 1998 the European network DECET on diversity and social inclusion in ECE, and in 2001 the European magazine *Children in Europe*, a joint publication in 15 languages that is distributed in 17 countries. He is the author of the book *The Construction of a New Profession* (2008) on professionalism in ECE in England, Denmark, France, New Zealand and Belgium. He is an elected board member of the International Step by Step Association, a Central and Eastern European and Central Asian ECE network of 27 countries that works around social justice and social inclusion.

Together with Prof. Dr. Vandenbroeck and Katrien Van Laere (Ghent University) and Dr. Mathias Urban and Dr. Arianna Lazzari (East London University), he is the author of the CoRe research, the European Commission study on competence requirements in early childhood education and care (December 2009–October 2011). For the moment, he is involved as a key expert in the Early Childhood Education and Early School Leaving research project, commissioned by the European Commission (2013–2014).

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Carl Anders Säfström is professor of education at Mälardalen University, Sweden. Since 2008, he is editor of the book series Advanced Studies in Education with Liber publishers. Since 2011, he has been chair of the postgraduate program 'Philosophical Studies of Educational Relations', financed by The Swedish Research Council. Säfström has published widely on educational philosophy and theory, curriculum theory and didactics. His work has so far appeared in Swedish, English, Spanish, Danish, German, Finnish and Norwegian. His most recent book, *Levd demokrati? Skola och mobbning i ungdomars liv*. (*Lived Democracy? School and Bullying in the Lives of Youth*.), co-authored with Hedwig Ekerwald, appeared in 2012 published by Liber publishers. Other selected publications are as follows: Säfström, C.-A. (2012). What I talk about when I talk about teaching and learning. In G. J. J. Biesta (Ed.), *Making sense of education: Fifteen contemporary educational theorists in their own words*. Dordrecht/Boston: Springer Science+Business Media; Säfström, C.-A. (2012); Säfström (2012). Urgently in need of a different story. Questioning totalising frameworks. In I. F. Goodson, A. Loveless, & D. Stephens (Eds.), *Explorations in narrative research*. Rotterdam/Boston/Taipei: Sense; Säfström, C.-A. (2011). Equality and the poetics of teaching. In T. Werler, (Ed.), *General didactics – Challenged by diversity*. Munster: Waxman.

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Danny Wildemeersch is currently professor emeritus (with teaching assignment) of social and intercultural education at the University of Leuven in Belgium (1986–). He also was a full professor of social pedagogy and andragogy at the University of Nijmegen in the Netherlands (1994–2002). He is connected to the KU Leuven Laboratory for Education and Society. His research focuses on a variety of themes such as intercultural learning, learning and social participation, intercultural dialogue, learning and citizenship, environmental learning, transitions from school to work and participation in development cooperation. His current teaching includes adult education and global and intercultural education. He is a member of the editorial board of RELA (*European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults*).

Introduction: Civic Learning, Democratic Citizenship and the Public Sphere

Gert Biesta, Maria De Bie, and Danny Wildemeersch

The problem with democracy, Oscar Wilde once wrote, is that it takes too many evenings. This is not only funny, it is also true. Democracy, the way of conducting our common affairs with reference to the values of equality, freedom and solidarity, does neither come easy nor does it come cheap. There is therefore not only the ongoing temptation to replace democracy with other forms of governance and social coordination – forms that, at least in the short term, can often do things more quickly, effectively and efficiently; there is also the temptation to think that democracy neither requires investment (of time, resources, attention) nor 'maintenance work'. Yet, all this is not the case. We know all too well how difficult it is to truly conduct ourselves and our common affairs with reference to the values of equality, freedom and solidarity, so as to foster plurality and difference, rather than to see it as a hindrance towards achieving our goals. This not only suggests the fundamental *difficulty* of democracy – the democratic way is always the more challenging way – it also suggests the fundamental *vulnerability* of democracy – and thus the ongoing challenge to keep the democratic values of equality, freedom and solidarity alive.

This book focuses on one important 'resource' for the promotion and maintenance of democratic ways of being and doing, namely education. It takes education in the broadest possible sense, so as not only to include educational processes and

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practices in formal educational institutions such as schools, colleges and universities, but also to encompass the wide variety of processes of education, formation and learning that can occur at many different times and in many different settings throughout people's lives. The chapters in this book focus on the complex relationships between education and democracy – loosely referred to as processes and practices of 'civic learning' – and are particularly interested in the public dimension of such processes and practices. 'Public' here does not simply stand for the physical location of civic learning – although the question of the physical location of democratic processes and practices is of course important as well – but rather highlights a particular dimension or quality of social action and interaction, one that is aimed at fostering and maintaining interaction 'across difference', with an orientation towards the democratic values of equality, freedom and solidarity. Public relationships are in this sense different from private relationships of family and kinship, but also from economic relationships of transaction and exchange. This particular 'location' of the public sphere as the sphere where and through which democratic relationships can be established and enacted also shows one of the enduring problems for democracy – a problem that has become more prominent in an age of identity politics and neoliberalism – namely that the public sphere is being replaced or even destroyed by private relationships of identity or market relationships of competition and financial gain.

The chapters brought together in this book have their origin in a programme of work that was conducted in the spring of 2011 in the context of the Francqui International Interuniversity Professorship which was awarded by the Francqui Foundation in Belgium to Gert Biesta. The Francqui Professorship made it possible to organise a series of seminars and workshops, launched with an inaugural lecture by Gert Biesta (which formed the basis for Chapter 1 in this volume) and concluded by an international conference at which some of the contributors to this book from outside of Belgium gave presentations. The Francqui Professorship was based at the Department of Social Welfare Studies, University of Ghent, and was hosted by Maria De Bie, professor and chair of the Department in Ghent, and Danny Wildemeersch, professor of social and intercultural pedagogy at the University of Leuven.

The chapters that follow are not only characterised by their collective interest in questions about civic learning, democratic citizenship and the public sphere, but in most cases also take more public forms of educational and social action as their point of reference, either by directly focusing on social policy, youth work, social work, adult education, community work or educational questions at the level of society, or by engaging with the democratic dimensions of and democratic issues in formal educational settings such as schools or early years education. The chapters are grouped in three sections: chapters that focus more on theoretical and policy issues, chapters that look at the methodological dimensions of research relevant for the overall theme of the book, and chapters that provide more focused empirical case studies.

In Chapter 1, Gert Biesta explores some of the parameters of contemporary discussions about democracy, education and the public sphere. He asks to what extent democratic citizenship should be understood as a social or a political identity and

points at some of the dangers of understanding citizenship entirely in terms of social cohesion and integration. He also asks to what extent democracy should be understood as a fully definable 'order' or as something that in a very fundamental sense is beyond order and always requires reinvention. Again, he points at some of the dangers of limiting our understandings of democracy to its current manifestations and argues for an experimental openness towards a different democracy. Against this background, he introduces a distinction between two forms of civic learning, a socialisation conception that focuses on learning for participation in existing democratic processes and practices and a subjectification conception that focuses on the learning from engagement in what he refers to as the experiment *of* democracy (which he explicitly distinguishes from the experiment *with* democracy). He characterises the democratic experiment in terms of the transformation of 'private troubles' into 'public issues', thus strongly distinguishing democracy as a political concept from the market concept of 'choice'. The transformation of individual 'wants' into collective 'needs' is precisely the process in which things are being made public and is, therefore, a crucial dimension of the construction of public spheres, that is modes of human togetherness that are public and political rather than private and economic. From this, he concludes that suggestions about an alleged crisis in democracy should not so much be understood in terms of citizens lacking civic knowledge, skills and dispositions, but first and foremost have to do with a lack of opportunities for citizens to enact their citizenship through participation in always open democratic experiments. The chapters that follow take up many of the topics raised by Biesta in his first chapter in various ways. Some use the ideas as a frame of reference for further theoretical discussion or empirical study. Others take them as a background for more focused and detailed theoretical, methodological or empirical explorations. Still others go into discussion with Biesta in order to deepen the discussion.

In Chapter 2, the first chapter in the section 'Theory', Danny Wildemeersch revisits the concept of social learning that he and his colleagues developed in order to get a better sense of the roles of and possibilities for learning in concrete settings and connected to concrete social and political action. Wildemeersch particularly focuses on a point of criticism levelled at the idea of social learning, namely that it was too closely connected to and too much influenced by communitarian approaches to community and community building. In his chapter, Wildemeersch examines these concerns and, through this, expands the idea of social learning in a more political, a more democratic and a more public direction.

Chapter 3, by Walter Lorenz, examines the role played by public and non-public social services in terms of the need of industrial societies to balance social integration with individual freedom and entrepreneurial spirit. He shows how in the field of social work it has long been recognised that any act of 'helping' needs to be associated with a 'learner-oriented' pedagogical agenda in order to avoid the creation of dependence and passivity. Yet, whether the aims of this concept of intervention are either prescribed by professional or political 'regimes' or arrived at in democratic ways is a highly contentious issue. Through a discussion of the history of the development of various models of social welfare and of corresponding paradigms of social

intervention, Lorenz shows that professional decisions are always taken in a political context. This leads him to argue that the aim of responsible social work must be to foster a political, and not just a psychological, sense of belonging in terms of participative citizenship. This requires a corresponding understanding of socio-pedagogical processes – that is processes of social learning – which are able to combine personal autonomy with social responsibility and democratic sensibility.

In Chapter 4, Maria De Bie, Rudi Roose, Filip Coussée and Lieve Bradt look at the way in which social work can respond to the alleged crisis in democracy. Starting from Biesta's distinction between a social and a political conception of citizenship – the first having to do with civic virtue understood as the engagement to participate actively in the development of an existing 'model' of democracy and the second focusing on the citizen as a subject with civil, political and social rights – they ask whether the two conceptions of citizenship should be understood as two entirely different 'agendas' for social work, one focusing on social integration and the other on democratic politicisation. Against Biesta's suggestion that social work should focus on the latter rather than the former, De Bie, Roose, Coussée and Bradt argue that it is only in the *tension* between a social and a political conception of citizenship that the educational dimension of social work can become clear and that social work as an educational practice can become a truly democratic practice. The authors thus show that it is only in the dialectic tension between a social and a political conception of citizenship that a meaningful answer can be found to the question how social work can be related to democratic learning and (the) learning (of) democracy.

The suggestion that educational work needs to be located within society and needs to function for the democratic future of society is also the theme that is central in Chapter 5 by Micha de Winter. He locates this argument within a tradition of educational thinking – for example the work of Dewey, Montessori and Freire – that points to the close relationship between social and political issues and problems and the ways in which children are raised. De Winter observes that education and child-drearing have increasingly become private and privatised projects that aim at behaviour and the modification of behaviour. But such a narrow and individualistic scope forgets the wider educational responsibility for the democratic quality of society – and it is this task that de Winter wants to reinvigorate, both theoretically and practically. In his chapter, de Winter thus develops the empirical and normative argument that the future of democracy depends on the extent to which civil society is prepared to cultivate a democratic way of life – an idea he refers to as a socialising civil society. De Winter not only provides a theoretical case for this idea but also gives concrete examples of how this ambition might be achieved.

The first chapter in the section 'Methodology' – Chapter 6 by Sven De Visscher – focuses on the public spaces and places where and through which civic learning can take place. He introduces an expanded conception of place that not only covers the 'spatial background' for civic learning but actually sees place itself as a pedagogical process. De Visscher develops this through an exploration of the pedagogical meaning of the neighbourhood, focusing on three questions that are relevant for understanding children's citizenship in the here and now. These questions are: How are children *able* to be present in their neighbourhood? How are children *allowed* to

be present in their neighbourhood? And how are children *willing* to be present in their neighbourhood? Through examples from his own research on children's citizenship in a number of different settings, he provides an innovative methodological approach for research on the ways in which children enact their citizenship in and through concrete settings and locations.

In Chapter 7, Carmen Mathijssen and Danny Wildemeersch discuss the methodological challenges of conducting research on civic learning in the context of community work with people in poverty. Rather than simply asking technical questions about methods and designs, they focus on the more important and more difficult questions about designs, methodologies and methods that are appropriate and respectful for research organised with rather than on people in poverty, considering that such research should at the very same time try to be useful and of democratic value. Based on their own experiences with developing such a new form of research, they connect these experiences with wider and urgent questions about the extent to which and the ways in which research itself can be a democratic and democratising force.

One of the traditions that grew out of the explicit ambition for research to emancipate rather than to domesticate is action research. In Chapter 8, Rudi Roose, Maria De Bie and Griet Roets use their own experiences with action research to explore the extent to which and the ways in which action research can (still) live up to this potential. They suggest that action research can contribute to (the) learning (of) democracy when it operates as a democratic practice, that is a practice that involves the participation of all involved. Such participation needs to emerge from real questions and issues emerging from the situation rather than questions formulated by researchers from the outside. Similarly, any intervention needs to be connected to the meanings and interpretations of the participants in the situation with the ambition to contribute to humanisation and social justice. This means, so they suggest, that action research is not primarily focused on the implementation of solutions but rather on increasing the level of doubt about existing interpretations of, and actions on, realities and situations. Casting doubt thus implies challenging existing interpretations and understandings. They argue that this requires a performative attitude on the side of researchers so that the objective reality is linked to the intersubjective reality and the social environment of the actors involved.

In Chapter 9, the final chapter in the section 'Methodology', Peter Reyskens and Joke Vandenabeele challenge a common conception of research on community building practices, namely that such research should evaluate 'what works' for building good communities. They argue that such research starts from the assumption that it is possible to define in advance and from the outside what a good community is and that this provides the template and rationale for specific interventions towards the building of such a community. Such an approach, they suggest, has become highly problematic in an age of plurality and difference where it can no longer be taken for granted what the good community is. These considerations led them to the articulation of a different approach to research on community building, one that centres on the concept of 'witnessing' in a way in which the experience of community itself is put at stake. Such an approach, as they demonstrate through

examples from their own research, can work democratically and educationally at the very same time.

The third section of the book, 'Research', contains a number of empirical case studies that deal with the complexities of civic learning, democratic citizenship and the public sphere in relation to concrete cases and practices. In Chapter 10, Carl Anders Säfström, taking inspiration from the suggestion that democracy is not to be found (just) in existing socio-political configurations but in a sense always occurs outside of them, so that democracy in this sense is always 'out of order', suggests that democratic action is actually only possible in the gaps of the institution rather than at its centre. He explores this thesis through examples from his empirical research on learning democracy in schools, particularly focusing on the question of bullying as a problem for education and democratic action.

In Chapter 11, Michel Vandenbroeck and Jan Peeters take up the idea of democracy as an experiment in the context of early childhood education. They challenge the existing consensus about early childhood education and care which focuses strongly on alleged beneficial effects of early interventions for the individual and social development of children, particularly children from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This consensus, so they claim, leads to an instrumentalisation of children, parents and professionals and their relationships and masks a deeper 'dissensus' about what early childhood education and care are and what they should be. They show the democratic potential of dissensus and highlight how an alleged consensus may actually work against rather than for democracy. Through a discussion of their research on the professionalisation of the early childhood and care workforce, they highlight different pathways to professionalisation, pathways that leave more space for debate and reflection and thus ultimately for democracy and democratisation.

The tension between a professional and a democratic approach also plays a central role in Chapter 12 by Karel De Vos. De Vos focuses on the field of special youth care and the work with children who are considered to be 'at risk'. He shows how historically such work has predominantly been couched in a socialisation logic aimed at integrating children and young people into the existing social order. Against this way of understanding the task of special youth care, De Vos argues that social work practices in this context can distance themselves from the socialising pedagogical logic if they acknowledge that any pedagogical relation needs to start from an unconditional engagement and that pedagogical work and care are shaped by a fundamental interdependency of all involved. Such an acknowledgement opens up the possibility for changing the prevailing expectations upon which social work practices in special youth care rely. Taking inspiration from Biesta's distinction between socialisation and subjectification, De Vos argues that this can lead to a reorientation of expectations from the realisation of improved citizenship in the future towards the emergence of 'subjectified citizenship' – that is concrete subjectivity and agency – in the here and now and the concrete relations that emerge and evolve in these settings. This makes social work practices into vulnerable practices orientated towards the equal human dignity of all involved.

In Chapter 13, Griet Roets and Rudi Roose discuss their research in the public services sector in Belgium as a relevant case for exploring notions of citizenship in the context of anti-poverty strategies. They show how such policies and practices are based on a participatory logic in which policy makers seek to put people with experience of poverty in a participatory position in order to implement anti-poverty strategies effectively and successfully. Based on an analysis of the enacted practices of participation which are evolving in public policy units, and the emerging dynamics of learning, Roets and Roose explore the underlying notions of citizenship at stake in social practices and highlight potential risks and challenges of such practices, particularly with regard to the question of democracy and democratisation.

The final chapter of the book, Chapter 14, looks at the case of education for sustainable development. In the chapter, Katrien van Poeck and Joke Vandenabeele show how the dominant discourse in this field sees education as an instrument for the promotion of the values and principles of sustainable development and corresponding behavioural changes in order to qualify people for the role of active participants who contribute to the democratic realisation of sustainable development. They show how this discourse reflects what Biesta refers to as a socialisation conception of civic learning, where the relationship between education, citizenship and democracy is fundamentally an instrumental relationship. They argue that reducing civic learning to the socialisation of everyone into the same standard fails to acknowledge citizenship as an essentially contested concept and tends to exclude marginalised voices and alternative arguments and points of view. This is particularly problematic in the context of sustainability issues that are pre-eminently open to uncertainty and contestation and characterised by strongly intertwined, often irreconcilable values, interests and knowledge claims. In their chapter, Van Poeck and Vandenabeele present a different approach to education for sustainable development, one that rejects a socialisation logic in favour of one that considers sustainability issues as necessarily public issues and thus as a matter of public concern. Their chapter thus provides a concrete example of the necessarily public 'quality' of civic learning.

The chapters in this book, as can be seen from this brief overview, provide a rich palette of reflections on the complex relationships between civic learning, democratic citizenship and the public sphere. They all argue against the idea that education can simply be used as a policy instrument for the (re)production of a democratic society, and point, instead, to the more difficult challenge to work for the democratisation of social and political processes and practices and to consider these as possible forces in this wider challenge. The chapters show, on the one hand, what this means theoretically and, on the other hand, what it might mean empirically, both through empirical cases and through reflections on the methodological challenges of forms of research that do not simply want to represent a reality that is already assumed to be there, but that rather want to play an active role in furthering the ongoing experiment of democracy.

The chapters thus also raise an important challenge for educational research and theorists with regard to the democratic quality of their own practices – practices that take place in the centre or the margins of the university, an institution that itself is

increasingly under a neoliberal pressure to perform rather than to contribute to democratisation, including its own ongoing democratisation. This is not only a matter of activism – that is of research and theory contributing to the creation of new forms of practice – but also hints at the need for more reflective modes of research that focus, for example, on the relationship between educational intentions and what such intentions achieve. This question not only asks for a contextual view, but also requires historical modes of research so as to understand such relationships within longer historical trajectories. This, finally, also raises important questions about the extent to which educational 'work' itself is able to maintain its public-democratic orientation, particularly in the face of pressures to turn such work into individual interventions aimed at adjustment rather than emancipation and democratisation.

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Chapter 1
Learning in Public Places: Civic Learning for the Twenty-First Century

Gert Biesta

Citizenship, Social or Political?

I recently had to make a decision about the artwork for the cover of the book I wrote with the title *Learning Democracy in School and Society: Education, Lifelong Learning and the Politics of Citizenship* (Biesta 2011). This was not an easy task. What, after all, does 'learning' actually look like? How does one depict 'democracy'? And what does one do if one wishes to capture the two terms together and locate them in both school and society? After considering a wide range of different options – pictures of schools, adult education classes, study circles, art projects, protest marches and so on – I decided upon a rather simple and to a certain extent even idyllic picture of a flock of sheep walking away from the camera and one sheep turning its head towards the camera.[1] For me, however, this picture not only captures one of the central ideas of the book. It also provides a helpful image for the topic I wish to discuss in this chapter, which has to do with the complex relationships between education, democracy, citizenship and civic learning. I see the picture as a picture about citizenship. And the question it raises is whether the good citizen is the one who fits in, the one who goes with the flow and the one who is part of the whole, or whether the good citizen is the one who stands out from the crowd, the one who goes against the flow, the one who 'bucks the trend' and the one who, in a sense, is always slightly 'out of order'.

One could argue that the answer to this question has to be 'it depends' – and in a sense I would agree. It first of all depends on whether one sees citizenship primarily as a *social* identity, having to do with one's place and role in the life of society, or

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[1] The picture can be found on http://istockpho.to/h6LwRy and the book on www.senpublishers.com

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whether one sees citizenship primarily as a *political* identity, having to do with the relationships amongst individuals and individuals and the state, with their rights and duties, and with their participation in collective deliberation and decision-making. The current interest from politicians and policymakers in the question of citizenship certainly has elements of both. On the one hand discussions about citizenship focus strongly on social cohesion and integration and on the quality and strength of the social fabric. But politicians and policymakers are also interested in citizenship because of ongoing concerns about political participation and democratic legitimation (see Biesta and Lawy 2006). The rise in attention to citizenship from politicians and policymakers – something that has happened in many countries around the world over the past decades – can therefore be seen as responding both to an alleged crisis in society and to an alleged crisis in democracy.

Yet it is important to see that the social and the political understanding of citizenship are not the same and that they therefore should not be conflated. A cohesive society, a society with a strong social fabric, is, after all, not necessarily or automatically also a democratic society, that is – to put it briefly – a society orientated towards the democratic values of equality and freedom. And we do not need to go too far back into the history of Europe in order to understand how important this observation is.

One way to understand the difference between the social and the political understanding of citizenship is in terms of how each looks at plurality and difference. The social understanding of citizenship tends to see plurality and difference predominantly as a problem, as something that troubles and threatens the stability of society, and therefore as something that needs to be addressed and, to a certain extent, even needs to be overcome. That is why on this end of the spectrum we encounter a discourse of society falling apart and a focus on citizenship as having to do with common values, national identity, pro-social behaviour, care for one's neighbour and so on. In the political understanding of citizenship, on the other hand, plurality and difference are seen as the very *raison d'être* of democratic processes and practices and therefore as what needs to be protected and cultivated. When we look at the picture of the sheep in these terms, we could say, therefore, that it precisely expresses the difference between a social and a political understanding of citizenship, where the social understanding is represented by the flock, going collectively and cohesively in the same direction, and where the political understanding is represented by the one standing out, highlighting that democratic citizenship has an interest in plurality and difference, rather than in sameness.

From the angle of the political understanding of citizenship, there is, however, a different reading of the picture possible, one in which the flock represents all those who are committed to democracy and where the one standing out is the antidemocrat, the one who opposes the democratic project and rejects the values underpinning it. But this raises a further important question, which is whether it is indeed the case that we can understand democracy as a particular, clearly defined and clearly definable 'order' that you either sign up to – in which case you are 'in' – or that you do not sign up to – in which case you are 'out' – or whether we should understand the very idea of democracy in different terms. I wish to argue that the situation is

indeed more complicated and that to simply assume that the 'order' of democracy can be fully defined and determined may actually go against the idea of democracy itself. Let me try to give you an indication of what I have in mind.

Democracy, Arche or An-arche?

The first thing that needs to be acknowledged is that there is nothing natural about democracy and also nothing rational. Democracy is a particular historical invention, and although over the centuries many people have come to see it as a desirable way to deal with the question of governance and decision-making under condition of plurality, there are no compelling reasons for democracy, at least not until one commits oneself to the underlying values of equality and freedom. The idea of government 'of the people, by the people, and for the people' (Abraham Lincoln) is, after all, only an interesting option if one cares about the people and if one cares about *all* people and their freedom in an equal manner. In this respect I agree with Chantal Mouffe who, against certain tendencies in liberal political philosophy to 'naturalise' democracy, has argued that democracy is a thoroughly *political* project. This means that a choice for democracy it is neither rational nor irrational – it simply is a choice (or as I put it in my book, it is a choice following from the desire for the particular mode of political existence called 'democracy' – see also Biesta 2010). While we may well be able to give reasons for the desirability of democracy – and here we might favour Winston Churchill's 'minimal' definition of democracy as the worst form of government except for all other forms tried so far – the reasons we give only carry weight for those who are committed to its underlying values. This is why those who oppose democracy should not be seen as irrational but simply as opposing democracy. Or to put it in more abstract terms, we should be mindful that the division between rationality and irrationality does not automatically coincide with the division between democracy and its 'outside'.

To say that democracy is a thoroughly political project implies that it cannot be inclusive of everything and everyone. Mouffe (2005, p. 120) makes this point by arguing that democracy is not a 'pluralism without any frontiers' in that a democratic society 'cannot treat those who put its basic institutions into question as legitimate adversaries'. This does not mean, however, that the borders of the democratic community can only be drawn in one way and that the democratic order within these borders is fixed. This is what Mouffe expresses with her idea of democracy as a 'conflictual consensus' which entails 'consensus about the ethico-political values of liberty and equality for all, [but] dissent about their interpretation' (ibid.). The line to be drawn, therefore, is 'between those who reject those values outright and those who, while accepting them, fight for conflicting interpretations' (ibid.). While those who see democracy as natural or as rational would therefore identify the democratic order with the flock and would see the one standing out as antidemocratic and irrational, Mouffe helps us to see that the flock can only represent a particular democratic hegemony but can never lay claim to being a full and final

instantiation of the values of liberty and equality. (Mouffe also emphasises that the values of liberty and equality are always in tension, something to which she has referred as the 'democratic paradox' – see Mouffe 2000.) While the one standing out can be the one who opposes the values that inform the democratic project, it can also be the one who signifies the always necessarily incomplete nature of a particular democratic 'settlement'. The one standing out thus acts as a reminder that there is always the possibility of a 'different' democracy, that is, of a different configuration of the democratic 'order'.

One thinker who has taken these ideas in a more radical direction is Jacques Rancière (see Biesta 2011, Chapter 7; see also Bingham and Biesta 2010). There are two insights from Rancière that I would like to add to my considerations. The first has to do with his suggestion that no social order (or with the particular term Rancière uses no 'police order') can ever be fully equal. While in some societies or social configurations there may be more equality – or less inequality – than in others, the very way in which the social is structured precludes the possibility of full equality or at least makes it highly unlikely. In contrast to Mouffe, however, Rancière maintains that every social order is *all-inclusive* in that in any given order everyone has a particular place, role and identity. But this does not mean – and this is crucial – that everyone is included in the ruling of the order (and in this sense we could say that Rancière is in agreement with Mouffe, albeit for different reasons). After all, women, children, slaves and immigrants had a clear place and identity in the democracy of Athens, namely, as those who were not allowed to participate in the decision-making about the polis – which means that they were 'included as excluded', as Rancière puts it. Against this background Rancière then defines 'politics' – which for Rancière is always *democratic* politics – as the interruption of an existing social order with reference to the idea of equality. Politics, as the interruption of a particular order in which everyone has a place, is therefore manifest in actions 'that reconfigure the space where parties … have been defined' (Rancière 2003, p. 30). As Rancière puts it: 'It makes visible what had no business being seen, and makes heard a discourse where once there was only a place for noise' (ibid.).

Two consequences follow from this. The first is that democracy can no longer be understood as 'a regime or a social way of life' (ibid., p. 101), but has to be understood as occurring in those moments when the 'logic' of the existing social order is confronted with the 'logic' of equality. Rancière refers to this confrontation as *dissensus*. Dissensus, however, is not to be understood as the opposition of interests or opinions but 'as the production, within a determined, sensible world, of a given that is heterogeneous to it' (ibid., p. 266). Democracy thus ceases to be a particular order – and here Rancière clearly differs from Mouffe – but instead becomes *sporadic* (on this idea see Biesta 2009), occurring in those moments when a particular social order is interrupted 'in the name of' equality. On this account the occurrence of democracy is therefore represented neither by the flock nor by the one standing out. With Rancière we could say that both the flock and the one standing out are part of an existing social order, albeit that they are differently positioned within it. Democracy rather occurs at the moment when one of the sheep turns its head and

makes a claim for a way of acting and being that cannot be conceived within the existing order and in that way, therefore, does not yet exist as a possible identity within this order.

One of Rancière's examples is about women claiming the right to vote in a system that excludes them from voting. The point here is, and this leads to the second implication I wish to draw from Rancière's work, that this claim should not be understood as a request for inclusion into an order from which they were previously excluded. The reason for this is that women claiming the right to vote are not after an identity that already exists. They do not want to be men, but they want to be women with the right to vote – a claim made with reference to the idea of equality. They are thus claiming the very identity that is impossible in the existing social order and are thus introducing, within a determined social order, a 'given that is heterogeneous to it' – to use Rancière's phrase. The moment of democracy is therefore not merely an *interruption* of the existing order, but an interruption that results in a *reconfiguration* of this order into one in which new ways of being and acting exist and new identities come into play. This is why Rancière argues that the moment of democratic politics is not a process of identification – which is of taking up an existing identity – but rather of dis-identification or, as he puts it, *subjectification*, that is, of becoming a democratic subject. It is the moment of the 'birth' of democratic agency. But this 'birth' is always 'out of order'. It is represented neither by the flock nor by the one standing out but is, as I have suggested, the moment when one turns its head and speaks in a new and different way. This *event of democracy* – which is also the *event of subjectification* – is, as event, impossible to capture in a static picture.

Civic Learning, Socialisation or Subjectification?

I could have started this chapter where almost everyone who talks about the relationship between citizenship, learning and education seems to start, that is, by suggesting that civic learning has to do with the acquisition of the knowledge, skills and dispositions that are needed for good citizenship. Yet the reason why I did not start and could not start from there is twofold. It first of all has to do with the fact that the meaning of citizenship is contested – and perhaps it could even be argued that the meaning of citizenship is *essentially* contested, which means that the contestation over what good citizenship is, is actually part and parcel of what democracy is about. I have shown that there is not only discussion about whether citizenship should be understood as a social or as a political identity but have also made it clear that amongst those who see citizenship as fundamentally a political identity – which is the position I take as well – there are different views about what good citizenship is. More importantly, so I wish to suggest, there are also different views about whether citizenship is a positive identity – that is, an identity that can be positively identified and articulated – or whether citizenship is to be understood as a process of dis-identification, as a moment of political agency that is always necessarily 'out of order'.

The second reason why I did not and could not start with enlisting the knowledge, skills and dispositions that need to be learned in order to become a good citizen has to do with the fact that, unlike what many seem to assume, the way in which we understand the learning involved in citizenship is not neutral with regard to how we understand citizenship itself. It is not, therefore, that we can simply go to learning theory for the learning and to political theory for the citizenship and then weld the two together to create civic learning. The point here is that as long as we see citizenship as a positive, identifiable identity, we can indeed see the learning involved as a process of the acquisition of the knowledge, skills and dispositions that are needed to bring out this identity – or to put it from the other side, the knowledge, skills and dispositions that are needed to bring newcomers into the existing sociopolitical order. If, on the other hand, the moment of democracy is a moment of dis-identification with the existing sociopolitical order and if it is the case that it is in this moment that the democratic subject emerges, then the position and nature of the learning involved change. This is why I have suggested to make a distinction between a *socialisation* conception of civic learning, which is about the learning necessary to become part of an existing sociopolitical order, and a *subjectification* conception of civic learning, which is about the learning that is involved in engagement with what we might refer to as the 'experiment' of democracy (see Biesta 2011). Whereas a socialisation conception of civic learning is about learning *for future citizenship*, the subjectification conception of civic learning is about learning *from current citizenship*, from current experiences with and engagement in the ongoing experiment of democracy.

The Experiment of Democracy, from Private to Public

Before I say more about what characterises the latter kind of civic learning – and in the final step of my chapter I will argue that this is the kind of civic learning that, in our time, we need most – I need to say a few things about the experiment of democracy. It is, after all, only when we have some sense of what this experiment entails that we can begin to identify the kind of learning that matters in relation to this experiment. I use the phrase the 'experiment of democracy' in order to highlight the necessarily open character of democracy. While I agree with Mouffe that democracy cannot and should not be entirely 'anarchic' – that is, without any form – I do believe, with Mouffe and with Rancière, that the democratic process needs to remain fundamentally open towards the possibility not only of *more* democracy but also of *different* democracy, of a different distribution of parts and places and of a reconfiguration of democratic identities and subjectivities. To think of democracy as an ongoing and never-ending experiment is a way to capture this idea.

While there is a lot to say about the dynamics of democratic experimentation, one thing that I wish to emphasise in the context of this chapter is the idea that the

democratic experiment should be understood as a process of *transformation.* And perhaps the most important transformation that is at stake in the experiment of democracy is the transformation of 'private troubles' into 'public issues' – to use the phrase of C. Wright Mills (1959). By characterising democracy as a process of transformation, I distinguish myself from conceptions that see democracy purely in aggregative terms, that is, as a mathematical number game in which only the largest number counts and where minorities just need to adjust themselves to the majority. For me democracy entails as much a concern for the majority as it entails a concern for minorities which, after all, are only minorities because of the construction of a particular majority.

But the bigger point here is that the democratic experiment needs to be understood as having an orientation towards collective interests and the common good – or common goods. It needs to be understood as having an orientation towards the issues of the public – the *res publica*. What is always at stake, therefore, in the democratic experiment is the question to what extent and in what form private 'wants' – that what is desired by individuals or groups – can be supported as collective needs, that is, can be considered desirable at the level of the collective, given the plurality of individual wants and always limited resources (on the distinction between wants and needs, see Heller and Fehér 1989). This is not only a process where, as Zygmunt Bauman has put it, 'private problems are translated into the language of public issues' but also where 'public solutions are sought, negotiated and agreed for private troubles' (Bauman 2000, p. 39). To think about the democratic experiment in terms of transformation not only means that people's *issues* become transformed. As I have tried to highlight with Rancière, the engagement with the democratic experiment also transforms *people*, most importantly in that it has the potential to engender democratic subjectivity and political agency.

Because the experiment of democracy is a process of transformation, it is also, potentially, a learning process. But the learning that is at stake is not about the acquisition of the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to engage with the experiment in a 'proper' manner, most importantly because, being an experiment, it is never entirely clear what a proper way to engage with this experiment would look like. That is why we should conceive of civic learning in the subjectification mode as a process that is *non-linear:* it does not lead in a linear way from a state of *not* being a citizen to being a citizen, but fluctuates with people's actual experiences of citizenship and with their engagement in democratic experiments (see also Lawy and Biesta 2006; Van der Veen et al. 2007). We should also think of this learning as *recursive*: what is being learnt is not just stored somewhere but is always fed back into action. And while it is non-linear, civic learning in the subjectification mode is definitely *cumulative*: experiences from the past cannot simply be eradicated or overwritten, but continue to play a role in future experiences and actions. The latter point is particularly important because engagement with the experiment of democracy will generate both positive and negative experiences. We should not expect, therefore, that engagement with the democratic experiment will always strengthen the desire for democratic ways of acting and being – the opposite can be the case as well.

Public Places

If this gives an indication of what civic learning in the subjectification mode is about, we can now turn to the question *where* this kind of learning might take place. This brings me to the title of this chapter, as the point I wish to make is that this kind of civic learning occurs 'in' (see below) public places. This, of course, raises the further question what public places are, what they look like, where we can find them and also what the connection between place and learning is. While the notion of public place often conjures images of town squares, market places and parks, of the Greek agora or the Roman forum, the question whether such spaces can be characterised as *public* places does not so much have to do with what they look like as with what is *possible* in such locations. What makes a place public, so I wish to suggest, is precisely the extent to which it makes the transformation of private wants into collective needs possible. Public places, to put it differently, are locations where the experiment of democracy can be enacted and where something can be learned from this enactment.

This is how, for example, David Marquand in his book *Decline of the Public* (Marquand 2004) characterises what he refers to as the public domain, by emphasising that the public domain should be understood as a *dimension* of social life, not a sector of it. The public domain, in other words, is to be understood as a practice – Marquand calls it a 'set of activities' with its own norms and decision rules – not a geographical location. Marquand emphasises that the public domain is not only *different* from the private domain 'of love, friendship and personal connection' and from the market domain of 'buying and selling [and] interest and incentive' (ibid., p. 4), but is also *separate* from these domains. This is why he defines the public domain as 'a space, protected from the adjacent market and private domains, where strangers encounter each other as equal partners in the common life of the society' (ibid., p. 27). And the key function of the public domain, according to Marquand, is to define the public interest and to produce public goods (see ibid., p. 26). This implies that the values 'that sustain, and are sustained by, the public domain' are not the values of self-interest but of collective interest (ibid., p. 57). Given that collective interest may sometimes go against one's immediate self-interest, engagement with and commitment to the public domain, as Marquand puts it, implies 'a certain discipline' and 'a certain self-restraint' (ibid., p. 57). Interestingly, Marquand argues this does not come naturally but has to be 'learned and then internalized, sometimes painfully' (ibid.).

Marquand's positioning of the public domain as being different and separate from both the private domain and the market domain – or perhaps we should say as being different and separate from the 'logic' of private interactions and the 'logic' of the market – is helpful for addressing the question to what extent public place can still be 'realised' in our time. It is helpful, in other words, for identifying developments that threaten the possibility for the enactment of the democratic experiment. Structurally, there are two threats. On the one hand there is the constant risk that the public domain is taken over by the logic of the market. Many commentators have

written on this process, most notably through the critique of neo-liberalism. What characterises the shift from a public logic to a market logic is the process in which citizens are turned into consumers of public services and are being offered choice. But choice is not a democratic concept because what is lacking in choice is precisely the idea of transformation. Choice operates entirely at the level of private wants. It is about the selection from a set menu, rather than that it entails collective involvement in what should be on the menu in the first place.

The other development that threatens the public domain comes from the side of the private domain and the logic of private interactions – and this is a phenomenon about which far less has been written. Marquand identifies two aspects to this threat. The first is what he refers to as the 'revenge of the private' (ibid., p. 79) by which he has in mind the protest against the 'hard, demanding, "unnatural" austerities of public duty and public engagement' (ibid.). This can be seen as the reluctance to engage with the experiment of democracy because it is difficult and demanding. The second aspect touches on the idea of identity politics and is expressed in Marquand's observation that the assumption that 'the private self should be omni-competent and omnipresent' has made deliberative politics of any sort 'virtually impossible' (see ibid., pp. 80–82). This resonates with the point I made earlier that engagement with the experiment of democracy not only involves the possibility of the transformation of one's 'issues' – that is, of one's wants – but also of one's identity and one's self.

Many commentators have suggested that the decline of the public sphere and the wider 'crisis' in democracy – manifest in such things as low voter turnout in countries where there is no duty to vote, decreased membership of political parties and political organisations and a general decline in interest in democratic politics – is the result of a lack of interest and motivation on the side of citizens. This not only means that citizens are seen as the *cause* of the crisis in democracy – which explains why they are being blamed for it. It also explains the huge investments made in many countries around the world over the past decades in citizenship education, on the assumption that we need to create or produce better citizens in order to get better democracy.

This way of thinking fits with a socialisation conception of civic learning where the learning is supposed to produce the good citizen and where, in turn, good citizens are supposed to bring about good democracy. But there is a different reading possible of what is going on, one where the retreat from citizenship is not seen as the *cause* of the crisis in democracy but rather as its *effect*. By replacing democracy with choice, by letting the logic of the market into the public domain, and by giving up on the idea that democracy is ultimately about transformation, the possibilities for the enactment of democratic citizenship begin to disappear. While this may look like a process in which citizens are withdrawing from democracy, it is actually a process in which citizens are being 'pushed out' and in which, therefore, the very possibility of democratic citizenship is being pushed out. Rather, therefore, than to suggest that we need better citizens in order to get better democracy – which is the argument from the socialisation conception of civic learning – I wish to suggest that *we need more and better democracy in order to get better citizens* (an insight that also plays a central role in John Dewey's work; see Carr and Hartnett 1996). And

this is why the civic learning we need in our time, a time in which the experiment of democracy is under threat from a range of different directions, is the kind of civic learning that is intrinsically related to the enactment of the experiment of democracy. It is the kind of civic learning that not only happens in public places but that, in a sense, constitutes such places *as* public places.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have explored the relationships between citizenship, democracy and learning in order to articulate a conception of civic learning that can respond to some of the challenges contemporary democratic societies are faced with. One of these challenges has to do with the decline of the public sphere, the decline of the very sphere where the experiment of democracy can be enacted. I have argued that we should not see this decline as the *result* of a lack in good citizenship. For that reason I do not believe that investment in the production of good citizens – something which over the past decades has become a high priority on the agenda of policymakers and politicians and has had a significant impact on the curricula of schools and colleges – is the kind of civic learning we need. I have argued that rather than to blame individuals for an apparent lack of citizenship and civic spirit, we should start at the other end by asking about the actual opportunities for the enactment of the experiment of democracy that are available in our societies, on the assumption that participation in such practices can engender meaningful forms of citizenship and democratic agency.

In this respect I believe that democratic practices do indeed provide important learning opportunities (Van der Veen et al. 2007), bearing in mind that we should not understand such learning opportunities in terms of socialisation but rather in terms of subjectification. Whereas the first always runs the risk of domesticating the citizen by taking the existing sociopolitical order as its point of departure and frame of reference, the second has a more explicit focus on the more difficult and more complex ways in which, through the engagement with the experiment of democracy, political agency and democratic subjectivity can be promoted and supported. To highlight the role of learning in the experiment of democracy – something that follows from the fact that democracy is fundamentally a process of transformation – does not imply a requirement or a demand for such learning and particularly does not mean that the state could require or demand such learning from its citizens (on the politics at work in such demands see Biesta 2013). Unlike the socialisation conception of civic learning, the subjectification conception does not start from the assumption that people should acquire a set of civic knowledge, skills and dispositions before they are 'allowed' to enact their citizenship and engage in the experiment of democracy. There is, in other words, no such thing as a diploma or driving license for democracy. This is not to suggest, as I have argued, that democracy is entirely open, that it is without frontiers. Engagement in the experiment of democracy always needs to occur with reference to the democratic values of equality and

freedom. Engagement in this experiment is therefore not so much based upon a particular set of civic skills and competencies as that it is driven by a desire for the particular mode of political existence called democracy. This desire can neither be taught nor learned but can only be fuelled by engagement with the democratic experiment (Biesta 2010).

The most important conclusion to be drawn, therefore, from the ideas presented in this chapter for anyone concerned about the quality of our democratic processes and practices, is that the focus should not be on telling citizens that they need to learn more in order to become better citizens, but that the priority should lie with keeping open those places and spaces where the experiment of democracy can be conducted. This does not mean that we need to have more town squares and market places – albeit that that question of architecture is definitely not insignificant. But what it needs first and foremost is that we remain vigilant that the logic of democracy is not taken over by the logic of the market or the logic of the private domain.

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Part I
Theory

Chapter 2
Displacing Concepts of Social Learning and Democratic Citizenship

Danny Wildemeersch

The critic is not the one who debunks, but the one who assembles. The critic is not the one who lifts the rugs from under the feet of the naive believers, but the one who offers the participants arenas in which to gather. (Latour 2004, p. 246)

Introduction

Some 15 years ago, the Leuven research group on social pedagogy developed the notion of social learning to make sense of participatory civic practices of groups and communities. Ever since, the concept of social learning has gained increasing attention as a framework to analyse the learning in social systems. Especially the notion of 'communities of practice' has largely contributed to the popularity of the social learning approach. Increasingly, however, social learning is considered to contribute to the different consensus seeking processes in the public domain. Our concept never intended to be a contribution to such kind of practices in the first place. Yet, the way it was received in the field had such unintended effects. Taking into consideration Gert Biesta's suggestion that democratic learning in public spaces often is connected with moments of interruption of the existing order, the consensus orientation of social learning can be questioned. It is this question that is central in my chapter. I explore the reasons why the concept of social learning has been received in that particular way and how it can be redefined so that it does (better) justice to the ideas and practices of 'democratic learning in public spaces'. Various authors from different disciplines have inspired me in this investigation. In particular Bruno Latour's work, and that of his collaborators, has been very helpful in redefining what democratic practices are about and how social learning could be related to that.

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The Ongoing Debate on Democratic Citizenship

The debate on responsible citizenship has been coming and going ever since democracy was established in our societies. Recently, we have again witnessed a return of issues of democratic and/or active citizenship on the agenda of policymakers, of social researchers, of journalists and other people concerned about the state of society. This definitely is a sign of the times, or an important signal that so-called democratic, advanced liberal societies, are dealing with important challenges that urge for a reassessment of concepts and practices of democratic participation. Various actors and authors put the citizenship issue on the agenda for a thousand reasons. Some wanted to strengthen the national identity, whilst others warned against that. Some were nervous about the growing individualisation in late modern society, fearing an erosion of the support base of social solidarity. Others noticed an increased risk of indifference, ethnocentrism and racism in a society becoming rapidly multicultural. In relation to this, the growing group of newcomers was put under pressure to accommodate better to the mainstream values and norms of 'good citizenship' in our societies. Still others pointed to the welfare beneficiaries opting out of active commitment for society, thereby putting the welfare system under pressure. Furthermore, dynamics of globalisation were thought to be weakening the nation state and consequently fragmenting citizenry. There was also a variety of observations about the growing complexities of the social, cultural and economic conditions we live in today, creating unpredictability, ambivalence and insecurity. Some other critics began to openly disapprove of the liberal morals of the 68 generation in family life, education and the media which had allegedly undermined the traditional values and norms of good citizenship (see Furedi 2009; Dalrymple 2010). Finally, still other observers consider the increasing impact of market mechanisms on social and political life as an important reason for the indifference of citizens to public matters and the erosion of democratic practices.

This incomplete list gives some evidence of the multiple reasons and arguments pointing to the alleged problem of citizenship-at-risk and/or democracy-at-risk. In line with this, different conservative and progressive remedies have been developed to restore or renew practices of active and democratic citizenship and of political participation. Various 'activation' strategies have been put forward to reintegrate unemployed people into the labour market (see Weil et al. 2005). Several initiatives of co-governance have been developed by authorities on different levels to allow ordinary citizens to engage more actively in policies and political decision-making (Holford and van der Veen 2006). These observations elucidate the intensive debate among those who are concerned about the future of democratic and civic life. It is also evident that it is extremely difficult to conclude which argument has most validity. All arguments are rooted in specific worldviews, even in case of social researchers who base their reasoning on systematic empirical observations. Therefore, it is important to get the debate going and to try and respond seriously to the old and new arguments. Basically, democracy is about engaging in collective debates, actions and decision-making on how to organise the complexities of our

public life. Hence, as Johnston (2005) mentions, citizenship is not simply about the exertion of rights and duties following the membership of a particular nation state (citizenship as status), but also about actively engaging in practices that contribute to these debates, actions and decision-making (citizenship as practice). In what follows, we will explain how we are trying to (re-)position ourselves with regard to the ongoing debate on democratic citizenship as a learning opportunity. This exploration will hopefully also clarify how, over time, concepts that had a particular meaning some decades ago have been displaced in line with the transformations that took place in society at large.

In recent times, there has been a particular interest in the learning dimension of groups and communities, as an alternative to individualised perspectives (see Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998; Fenwick 2000; Latour 2005a, b). We have contributed to such theories by introducing the concept of social learning, to begin with, in 1995 (Wildemeersch 1995). Originally, we defined it as 'the learning of groups, networks, communities and social systems, engaged in problem solving activities, in conditions that are new, unexpected, uncertain, conflicting and hard to predict' (Wildemeersch et al. 1997). This approach was inspired by the risk society analysis, describing late modern times as chronically insecure, unstable and turbulent, due to both the complexities of society and the ongoing ambition of various actors such as scientists, technologists, politicians, business people and social activists to influence or direct the living conditions (Beck 1994; Giddens 1991). This obsession with change and transformation characteristic of advanced liberal societies also results into unexpected and sometimes paradoxical outcomes producing so-called self-manufactured risks. As a response to these late modern conditions, practices of reflexivity came to the fore. Dealing with these insecure conditions supposes in this perspective the mobilisation of reflective and even reflexive expertise of multiple agents so as to arrive at informed decision-making in various social, economic, cultural and environmental domains.

Inspired by this analysis, we introduced the notion of 'social learning' both as a frame of reference for relevant research mainly in non-formal learning contexts and as an opportunity in real-life settings to (a) increase the reflective and reflexive capacities of individuals and collectives, (b) create conditions of democratic participation enabling a maximum mobilisation of capacities of different actors involved in transformation processes, (c) empower the group or the community in terms of increased cohesion and/or identification and (d) strengthen the social fabric through increased participation in civil society. Hence, the concept had both an analytical and a normative dimension. The analytical dimension mainly related to the attempt to integrate various concepts of experiential learning and, while doing so, give the social aspects of such learning processes a more prominent place. As such, the theory of social learning would offer a comprehensive framework for the study of learning in and of groups and communities. The normative dimension had to do with the expected positive outcomes to be achieved in case of appropriate social learning practices. We applied the concept, in both directions, in various research projects in different domains such as policy planning for youth work organisations, environmental policy planning and multi-stakeholder negotiations for environmental
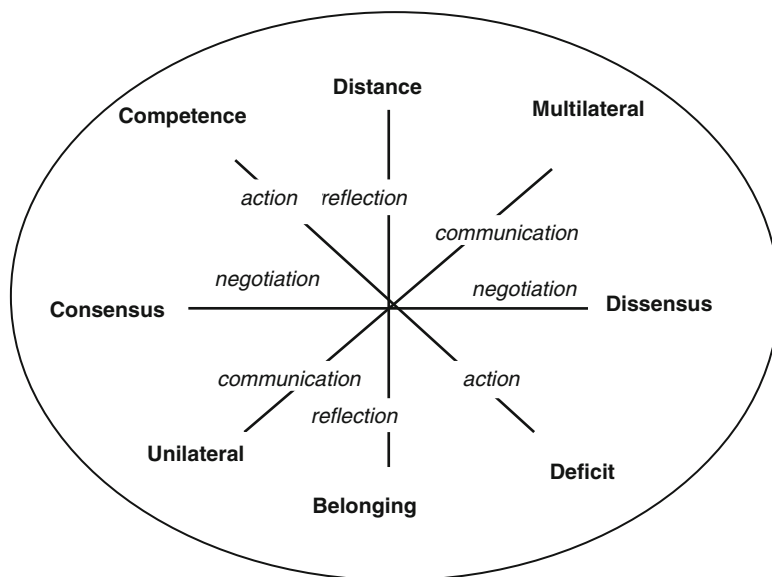
Fig. 2.1 Dimensions of social learning

protection and economic development. In all cases, we identified multiple actors engaging in informed actions, planning, collaborative and negotiation processes, thereby creating temporary communities of practice aimed at solving particular problems, at developing creative answers to challenges, at improving the living conditions, etc. We were careful not to let the normative dimension play too prominent a role in the theory by describing the process of social learning as a balancing act along tensions to be identified in every group or community engaging in problem-solving activities. We situated these tensions along the dimensions of action, reflection, communication and negotiation. In each dimension, we identified two opposite poles. In the action dimension, it was about 'need' versus 'competence', the reflection dimension opposed 'distance' to 'belonging', the communication dimension related to 'unilateral' and 'multilateral' poles and the negotiation dimension presented the tension of 'consensus' and 'dissensus'. The management of these tensions by the actors involved in problem-solving activities was identified as the central dynamics of the social learning process (Fig. 2.1).

Yet, the underlying normative/ethical dimension of this concept also related to the more or less explicit positive appreciation of the community orientation of social learning. Social learning was positioned as a positive contribution to the strengthening of communities. In addition, community building in its turn was considered a positive answer to processes of individualisation and fragmentation or the erosion of solidarity characteristic of late modern liberal societies. In other words, it was supposed to contribute to the renewal of active and democratic citizenship and the revitalisation of civil society. It was particularly this latter normative orientation of social learning which was criticised from different angles by various scholars.

We have brought these criticisms together under three types of critique on social learning. They will inspire us to refine our own position with respect to the social and political context in which it is supposed to operate.

The Communitarian Perspective Under Critique

Liberals consider the enlightenment principle that individuals free themselves from the shackles of ignorance a historical achievement of Western civilisation to be preserved at any cost. Therefore, they are worried and fear that the achievements of the enlightenment are not safe once and for all. Some liberal critics have argued that the social learning approach has a 'communitarian' flavour, which jeopardises some basic achievements and values of the enlightenment and modernity such as the individual autonomy and critical thinking.[1] Under suspicion of the liberals today are several tendencies which, for various reasons, point to the importance of communities rather than of individuals in the construction of the social and the political fabric. Indeed, a variety of agents ranging from conservative religious movements, over activists claiming the recognition of particular ethnic or cultural values and/or lifestyles, to social theorists criticising the erosion of social cohesion deplore the alleged loss of integrative bonds among the members of society. They have diverse arguments to emphasise the need of reinforcing all kinds of associative practices, which they consider 'the glue that holds society together' (Putnam 2000).

Both in social theory and in social policies and practices, we witness the revival of a communitarian approach, arguing that the identifications necessary for the constitution of society are constructed through practices of 'belonging' rather than through practices of 'autonomy'. Belonging, in this approach, is the result of the active social participation of people in groups or communities which form the linking pin between society at large and its individual members. It is argued that associations of citizens are the places where individuals learn to care about others, to value solidarity and to become responsible subjects and committed citizens. Therefore, the communitarians pay much attention to 'civil society', which is composed of multiple associations that constitute the 'social capital' of society at large (Field 2003). Civil society is considered a 'capital' because it is said to represent a vast reservoir of practices of social and civic integration. In this view, civic commitment is primarily based on practices of 'bonding' (Putnam 2000), creating experiences of 'sameness', of identification and belonging in communities or associations where people learn to transcend their private interests and end up sharing the same values and traditions and engage in more or less enduring relationships. Moreover,

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[1] The liberal critique to concept of the social learning was first formulated by Bas van Gent (formerly professor at the Leiden University in the Netherlands) at the occasion of our inaugural lecture (see Wildemeersch 1995). We have reflected on the argumentation ever since. An inspiring source which helped us to contextualise the former critique and to reconstruct the liberal, communitarian and radical positions clarified in this paper was Postma (2004).

under certain conditions, the ties of the members of such communities form the base for their social commitments in wider contexts. The emotional security that they derive from the membership of their community (or communities) enables them to link their communities with other ones, which do not necessarily have the same orientations or interests. These 'bridging' practices (Putnam, ibid), whereby people learn to take a distance from the references of their own communities, form the base for the constitution of civil society and for the identification with the so-called common good.

Social researchers such as Elchardus (2002) have argued, on the basis of extensive survey research, that especially people who have little or no sense of belonging, because they are alienated from associative forms of life and live their lives in relative isolation, express such negative and often bitter attitudes towards mainstream political decision-makers and/or newcomers in society. In line with these findings, not only politicians but also managers of the public broadcasting corporation, academics and leading figures in civil society have stimulated in many ways all kinds of events that bring people together and are expected to create a sense of belonging through active participation. In many communes in Flanders, for instance, local authorities now subsidise barbecues organised by street committees in order to foster warm communities.

So, in line with these communitarian arguments, social learning can be imagined as a process that contributes to the strengthening of civil society and counters processes of individualisation and fragmentation. As such, social learning can be considered both as a relevant framework to study these social phenomena and as a constructive practice, which contributes to the revitalisation of civil society. However, as we have shown, liberal critics are sceptical about the priority given to the community over the individual, also in the theory of social learning. And in addition to that, it is important to distinguish between 'community' and 'democracy'. In the communitarian view the ties of belonging are the best warranty for democratic commitment, whereas in a progressive liberal view – as we will see below – democracy is the result of opposing, often (ant)agonistic views on particular issues that divide, rather than unite citizens.

The Tyranny of Participation

As mentioned above, social learning is often related to participatory practices. Some authors who study such practices, especially in development contexts, have doubts about the emancipatory potential of such practices. Cook and Kothari (2004) even argue that participation has become a new tyranny. 'Power to the people' is no longer a slogan of radicals wanting to drastically change the power relationships in favour of the oppressed. It now has become an important instrument of marketeers, quality controllers, community developers, world bankers, politicians, managers, consultancy bureaus, etc. They all have introduced various direct democratic procedures, which should bring the voice of the citizen, the customer,

the student, the peasant and the audience to the fore. When some decades ago, direct participation was still a subversive wish, now participation is everywhere. According to the 'governmentality' perspective, drawing on the insights of the late Foucault, many of these participatory practices are part of a range of new technologies of persuasion, normalisation and inclusion (Rose 1999; Dean 1999; Quaghebeur 2006). Their 'hidden agenda' is that such participatory practices actually 'teach' the participants involved to define themselves as self-directed agents in an 'active society'. In line with this, participatory practices, which increasingly emerge in neo-managerial contexts, are considered by the governmentality scholars as a new kind of moral-ethical practice.

Our research on social learning concerning diverse participatory practices such as youth policy planning and multi-stakeholder collaboration on environmental issues seems to confirm partially some of these insights (Van Duffel et al. 2001; Wildemeersch 2007). Therefore, our initial enthusiasm about the social learning potential of participatory procedures has somewhat cooled down and resulted into a more nuanced picture of the pros and the cons of these collaborative practices. First, we observed that many of the participatory practices ended up with ambiguous results. Participation sometimes produces strong commitment of the actors involved, but also at other occasions, lots of refusal, resistance and sometimes resignation when eventually the procedures of collaboration turn out to be complex, bureaucratic and expert driven.

Similar reports come from the world of development projects in the South, where participatory planning is nowadays very mainstream and made concrete by procedures such as rapid rural appraisal, participatory rural appraisal and goal-oriented intervention planning. Originally, such methods were invented to reduce the power of technicians, experts, and policy makers and to create conditions of 'putting the first last' (Chambers 1997). However, the traditional experts are now being replaced by procedural experts who sometimes tend to 'impose' rather than 'give' the opportunity to participate (Tessier et al. 2004; Quaghebeur et al. 2004). Therefore, it is important to realise that participation, as a social learning process, is not necessarily equal to the application of techniques of co-governance. On the contrary, interesting and relevant social learning often comes about in situations where the actors actually do not (or no longer) engage in such formalised procedures and start questioning the rules of the game. In such cases, the social learning is actually 'confrontational' rather than 'consensual'. It is dividing rather than binding. It takes place in situations and contexts where the joint enterprise is interrupted rather than smoothly continued.

Interrupting the Joint Enterprise

This takes us to a third type of critique on participatory practices as social learning, which particularly problematises the consensual agenda implied in them. Especially the democracy theory of Mouffe (2005) has helped us to understand better the

current function of many participatory procedures including a variety of stakeholders in processes of co-governance. This political scientist makes a distinction between 'politics' and 'the political'. Politics is about creating consensus among different actors involved in a decision-making process, mainly by neglecting some of the basic conflicts, which often characterise practices of democratic decision-making. According to the author, various political observers claim that in advanced Western societies, we now have moved into an era where basic conflicts over major issues have increasingly been ruled out. In line with this, she firmly disagrees with authors such as Giddens (1994), who claim that we have today moved 'beyond left and right'. She further argues that politicians nowadays tend to reduce political problems to technical issues which can be resolved by experts. In this sense, our understanding of social learning as the mobilisation of problem-solving capacities available in communities of practice could be interpreted as an example of such technical reductionism of political questions. In line with this, Mouffe makes clear that today not all societal problems can be tackled with the help of the planning rationality of experts, as often is suggested. Many political issues remain basically conflict driven and therefore, politics is about dealing with conflicts rather than dealing with expert knowledge.

In opposition to the rationality of 'politics', Mouffe puts forward the notion of 'the political' by which she means that conflicts are not due to technical shortcomings that are best overcome by expertise, but are the reflection of old and new 'antagonisms' which govern our societies and our social and political life. As such, 'the political' is basically about dealing with conflicts. In the democratic arena, such conflicts are dealt with in a 'civilised' way, meaning that certain rules of conflict management are respected. In the context of 'the political', 'antagonisms' are turned into 'agonisms'. According to Mouffe, it is necessary for democratic practices to reclaim 'the political' by acknowledging the fact that 'difference' and 'agonisms' are constitutive to democracy. What makes democracy work are the 'differences' in opinions, in positions, in cultures and understandings which resist consensus and therefore, surface the painful oppositions which exist among the members of a community, a municipality or a nation. It is conflict or agonism which is the driving force behind democracy. The 'learning' which comes about in the context of conflicting democratic practices is not the learning connected with consensus-seeking, but the learning related to the resistance to accommodation, or the learning associated with the interruption of the joint enterprise. Or, as Biesta puts it: 'The moment of democracy is therefore not merely an *interruption* of the existing order, but an interruption that results in a *reconfiguration* of this order into one in which new ways of being and acting exist and new identities come into play' (Biesta 2011, p. 4).

It is not evident, however, to take conflict as the basis of democratic practice. It could sound like a counter-intuitive suggestion, even reinforcing the bitter oppositions in our societies, rather than appeasing them. The above-mentioned example of the politicians and the broadcasters mobilising civil society to restore social integration and social cohesion is a clear illustration of that. Yet, the problem with such an approach is that the reinforcement of the community dimension may actually not

result into a better integration of various communities but in a strengthening of the differences between the 'us' and the 'them', and a subsequent mutual stereotyping. Therefore, 'the community', especially when it refers to nostalgic interpretations of the togetherness and belonging, may not be the best space to experience 'democratic practices as learning opportunities'. They may rather function as exclusive and exclusionary spaces where the learning of citizenship ends up with the strengthening of the identities of those who are inside and negating the subjectivities of those who are outside.

Making 'Things' Public

So far, we have clarified in this chapter how our concept of social learning in participatory practices can be interpreted differently, depending on the theoretical perspective or on the context from which one observes democratic practices. However, the study of these different perspectives has taught us that at least in the context of advanced liberalism particular trends become dominant. Recently, Laessoe (2010) has presented a synthesis of these trends. He sees four major developments in this domain (ibid., pp. 49–50, our paraphrase):

- From a critical to a technical-functionalistic approach
- From a social mobilisation orientation to a consensus orientation
- From actions opposed to top-down strategies, to depoliticised local actions
- From a social learning approach, including broader contextual issues, to an approach limited to the concrete and decontextualised perspectives

Given these trends, the question arises how to position oneself, as a practitioner and as a researcher, vis-à-vis such developments. Should one try to modify such tendencies so that they become more genuinely democratic, or should one engage in more radical perspectives and democratic practices that 'interrupt the existing order' (see Biesta's introductory chapter in this book)? An inspiring answer to such questions has been given over the last 20 years by the French neo-pragmatist philosopher and scientist Bruno Latour, who has gained worldwide influence with his actor-network theory (2005a). In his work, he has developed models of research aimed both at interpreting some of the major issues we face today in our societies and at 'making such issues public' in view of stimulating democratic openness and debate, and solving the problems at hand. While doing so, he explicitly situates himself in the pragmatist tradition developed in the beginning of the twentieth century by the American philosopher John Dewey, who argued that democratic practices needed reinvention, due to the dramatic changes taking place in the society of those days.

Following Dewey, almost one century later, also Latour deals with the complexities of present-day society, and the limitations of the democratic and critical practices we have developed to handle them. He argues that the way our societies have dealt with challenges and problems, by making a clear distinction between, on the one hand, the experts or specialists who consider these matters in objective, detached

ways as 'matters of fact', and, on the other hand, the non-experts who are involved in these matters in subjective ways, informed by their own worries, histories, perspectives or self-interest, has become problematic. He argues that today, it is hard to make a clear distinction between 'matters of fact' and 'matters of concern'. 'It would imply, on the one hand, that there would be matters-of-fact which some enlightened people would have unmediated access to. On the other hand, disputable assertions would be practically worthless, useful only insofar they could feed the subjective passions of interested crowds. On the one side would be the truth and no mediation, no room for discussion on the other side would be opinions, many obscure intermediaries, perhaps some hecklings' (2005b, p. 9). Today, the possibility to identify transparent, unmediated and undisputable 'facts' has become increasingly rare. For many of the major challenges or crises that confront us this day, it is hard to distinguish between facts and moral, political or ideological judgements. All important matters that trouble or disturb us are subject to diverse interpretations, even among reputed scientists. 'For too long, objects have been wrongly portrayed as matters-of-fact. This is unfair to them, unfair to science, unfair to objectivity, unfair to experience' (ibid., p. 9).

To strengthen his argument, Latour goes back to the origins of democratic disputes in the European Middle Ages. He explains that in the Germanic tradition, the word 'Ding' referred both to 'a fact' and to 'a dispute'. 'Now, is it not extraordinary that the banal term we use for designating what is out there, unquestionably a thing, what lies out of any dispute, out of language, is also the oldest word we all have used to designate the oldest of the sites in which our ancestors did their dealing and tried to settle disputes' (Latour 2004, p. 233). Since originally in our language, the word object and the word 'gathering' were interconnected, Latour suggests that a return to this combination may be a fruitful way of handling many of the complex problems we face today. 'The point of reviving this old etymology is that we don't assemble because we agree, look alike, feel good, are socially compatible or wish to fuse together but because we are brought by divisive matters of concern into some neutral, isolated place in order to come to some sort of provisional makeshift (dis) agreement. If the *Ding* designates both those who assemble because they are concerned as well as what causes their concerns and divisions, it should become the centre of attention: *Back to Things!*' (Latour 2005b, p. 13).

In line with these observations, and in search of what he calls a new form of realism, he introduces the notion of 'object oriented democracy', which is a form of democracy that combines two forms of representation (Latour 2005b). One refers to ways to legitimately gather people around some issues. The other refers to the way the object of concern is represented to this gathering. 'But the two have to be taken together: *Who* is to be concerned; *What* is to be concerned' (ibid., p. 6). An important consequence of his understanding of this object-oriented democracy is that it indeed is not based on commonality but on difference. 'The general hypothesis is so simple that it might sound trivial – but being trivial might be part of what it is to become a 'realist' in politics. We might be more connected to each other by our worries, our matters of concern, the issues we care for, than by any other set of values, opinions, attitudes or principles' (ibid., p. 4).

Latour and his collaborators not only theoretically engage in forms of object-oriented democracy. They also design practical ways to investigate matters of concern and 'make them public' (see also Marres 2005). An example of such practices is the so-called hybrid forums that are set up to deal with controversial issues. These forums are hybrid 'because they are open spaces where groups can come together to discuss technical options involving the collective; hybrid because the groups involved and the spokespersons claiming to represent them are heterogeneous, including experts, politicians, technicians, and laypersons who consider themselves involved. They are also hybrid because the questions and problems taken up are addressed at different levels in a variety of domains …' (Callon et al. 2009). In their attempts to engage in such hybrid forums, the collaborators of Latour deal with a wide variety of matters of concern, such as the mad cow disease, HIV/AIDS, nanotechnologies, GGOs, and global warming, which are all examples of issues characterised by radical uncertainty, where neither science and technology nor social and political actors have clear answers and where indeed processes of social learning may contribute to finding ways out (see also Finger and Asun 2001).

Interesting in this view on learning is that the traditional distinction between experts and laypersons fades away to a certain extent. Latour even goes so far as to say that everyone involved in these hybrid processes is somehow handicapped and needs crutches to deal with the challenges. This applies as well to the expert as to the layperson. And, as a consequence, the traditional opposition between expert and layperson is getting blurred. 'By fostering the unfolding of these explorations and learning processes, hybrid forums take part in a challenge, a partial challenge at least, to the two great typical divisions of our Western societies: the division that separates specialists and laypersons and the division that distances ordinary citizens from their institutional representatives. These distinctions, and the asymmetries they entail, are scrambled in hybrid forums' (Callon et al. 2009). The way these hybrid forums are conceived and constructed in practice is definitely a valuable source of inspiration to further elaborate our perspectives on social learning. Furthermore, Latour's actor-network theory includes many of the principles we have also dealt with in this chapter, such as learning to engage with ambivalence and insecurity, value conflict as a constructive part of democratic practice and the notion of 'displacement' (or translation) being a central concept to make sense of social learning (see also Crawford 2004).

In Conclusion

In this chapter we have presented the concept of social learning, such as we have developed it over the last 15 years, in the context of research dealing with issues that were considered complex, hard to predict and insecure. We connected this concept to democratic participatory practices in a way similar to Biesta's exploration of citizenship and democracy in the opening chapter of this book, where he distinguishes between the social dimension of citizenship and the political dimension. The social

dimension refers to the embedment of individuals in the social fabric, while the political dimension refers to the way they participate in public deliberation and decision-making. In our positioning of social learning in connection with citizenship and democracy, we have considered both the social and political dimensions of citizenship. We started from the observation that some critics of our concept of social learning classified our concept as 'communitarian' in the sense that it would foster uncritical identifications with homogenising collectivities. When dealing with this critique, we explored the concept of community and how communitarians linked it to theories of social integration and civil society. We explained how in that reasoning, (the learning of) democratic practice is paralleled to the identification with the joint enterprise of a community. In their turn, such communities are expected to strengthen the social fabric, while creating the framework for active, democratic citizenship, thereby reducing citizenship to its social dimension. We observed that this communitarian approach is based on the premise that democratic practices should overcome difference and, while establishing a common language and a common logic, should enable a consensus among the members of the communities and within civil society. This observation helped us to understand how many of the practices of social learning, which we studied in various contexts, eventually, lost their initial momentum because they were compressed by the consensus-seeking rationality of various policy approaches.

The argument of some political scientists and philosophers that democratic practice is not about creating consensus, but about dealing with difference, agony and disturbance, helped us to relocate social learning as a democratic practice in the context of public space. In doing so, the political dimension of social learning was emphasised. In this view, social learning as a democratic practice is inevitably located in so-called communities of strangers (Latour 2005b) or communities of those who have nothing in common (Lingis 1994; see also Biesta 2006). Such 'hybrid' communities emerge today in all kinds of places and spaces where people engage with matters of concern connected to controversial issues. What is new, however, is the insight that ambivalence and discontinuity are inevitable characteristics of the communities we engage in and that – for the sake of democracy – we will have to learn to deal with the strangeness and otherness of our partners in dialogue. Therefore, communities as locations of democratic practice always have a provisional and open character.

One of our ambitions in this chapter was to make clear that particular concepts may have different meanings in different discursive contexts. For instance, the notions of empowerment, of social integration or of civil society have no 'universal', abstract meaning. They can have quite different meanings according to the differential discourses in which they function. Moreover, concepts also get displaced (Schön 1963) or translated (Latour in Crawford 2004), because they may emerge in one particular discursive context and be moved towards another one. This displacement of concepts sometimes makes discussion and debate very difficult, because the interlocutors use the same words but, in doing so, refer to very different discourses. Now, by way of conclusion, one could say that notions such as social learning, democratic practice or active citizenship are particularly vulnerable to

such displacements because they are social constructions, which are ambiguous and multi-interpretive. Therefore, the mapping of how concepts are (re)located in their discursive contexts – or in the arenas where participants gather as strangers – is an important analytical activity with high relevance for the fields of practice and policy-making.

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Chapter 3
Social Services and Their Educational Mandate in the Modern Nation State

Walter Lorenz

Introduction

The emergence of social services is one of the key characteristics of modern European nation states and has to be seen in the context of the realisation and shaping of notions of citizenship on various levels. Although the 'phase model' of the development of different dimensions of citizenship, proposed by T. H. Marshall (1992), and his assumption that successive forms of citizenship will automatically bring greater equality can be criticised in that civil citizenship, political citizenship and social citizenship were not necessarily achieved in Europe in neat succession, Marshall nevertheless highlighted the components necessary for the existence of a 'sense of belonging' in society under the conditions of modernity. The cultural, political and social effects of the intellectual movement, which can broadly be characterised as the Enlightenment, amounted to a mentality in which traditional bonds in social relationships and political allegiance gave way to the principle of autonomy and hence free choice in social relationships (marriage, occupation, religion, lifestyle) and in the corresponding structure and legitimation of political forms of governance (Habermas 1989).

Two fundamental principles thereby entered into a dialectical relationship with each other, the principle of liberty and that of participation, based on principles of equality, a tension that came to be the driver of all modern social and political developments and which constitutes according to Mouffe (2000) the 'democratic paradox'. In fact, it can be said that this constitutes the core characteristic of 'the social' in that the manner in which individuals in modern societies interact with each other both threatens and constitutes their individuality, makes them withdraw into their private spheres and reinforces their interdependence, creating the

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need for ever more pronounced differentiation and the recognition of uniqueness and the desire for universal equality.

At each of the levels at which the notion of citizenship formed, this dialectic is being acted out in different patterns (Turner 1990). In terms of social citizenship, the ability of the individual to enter freely into contracts with other citizens, regardless of their rank and social position and under conditions of equality and reciprocity, cannot remain a private arrangement when the question of the enforcement of those contractual agreements arises which necessitates a superseding structure of laws, of enforcement agencies and of sanctions which curtail the absolute freedom of the individual considerably.

At the political level the tension concerns the fundamental ambiguity of the democratic process between the desire for 'direct democracy' where citizens are being asked individually, by way of referenda usually, to express their views on single issues, which entails a strong mobilisation of civil society movements, and the formalisation of 'representative democracy' which ensures more continuity in planning and control over processes but at the same time tends to disregard the interests of minorities. More concretely the dialectic in the context of the development of political versions of the nation state in Europe gave rise to two fundamentally opposed models.

The civic-republican notion of citizenship gives priority to a sense of community both at the civil society level and as its embodiment in the form of the actual nation itself which is characterised and held together by shared cultural values. Citizens are dutiful members of a culturally distinct community, to which for instance a common language contributes centrally, while this nation community commits itself in turn to disseminating those values through a common education system and instilling a sense of pride in this nation with which citizens should identify, if necessary by being willing to sacrifice their lives.

The liberal tradition of citizenship emphasises by contrast the role of the individual citizen as agent in shaping the collective whole. Historically this took two very different political routes. In the libertarian form, the freedom of the individual citizen and his or her right to be unencumbered by the state is paramount (unless the law is transgressed or the arrangement of freedom guaranteed by the state is being challenged); here citizens are primarily private individuals, free to be different and to arrange their own affairs largely by 'playing the market' as the embodiment of this freedom. In the social-democratic form of citizenship, the freedom of the citizen rests on the right to be equal in his or her relationship to the state and hence also to each other, at least as far as the satisfaction of basic human needs is concerned. Citizens contract the state to ensure not only formal fairness but also substantial equality. They therefore invest heavily in a powerful, stable and efficient state, primarily by being prepared to pay a high level of taxes but also by ensuring the continuity of stable governments.

Social citizenship finally developed in Europe in the shape of three basic welfare traditions or rather in different combinations of three guiding principles which regulate the tension between freedom and equality, particularity of need and universality of service and private and public interests. It is important to recognise that they are

directly linked to the different notions of political citizenship that came to characterise the European nation states even though they in most cases developed much later in their history and took their decisive forms in the decades after the Second World War. These models or 'regimes' (in the terminology of Esping Andersen 1990) can be seen as different ways of resolving the fundamental tension contained in the project of modernity mentioned above.

In the conservative approach to ensuring the welfare of citizens and hence creating their social citizenship, which formed a significant part of the politics of national integration engineered by Bismarck in consolidating the founding of the 'Second German Reich' after 1871, a combination of private and public responsibilities prevails. As part of the politics of 'restoration' which asserted themselves in Europe after the crushing of the revolutionary movements of 1848, this model represents the attempt of conserving elements of solidarity structures which had characterised premodern societies and which were preserved in civil society organisations and activities like those of the churches and of civil charities and associations while at the same time involving the state in the creation of new solidarity structures through regulations and subsidies. In this way the principle of 'subsidiarity' distinguishes this model, a principle which also characterises the official approach of the Catholic Church to matters of welfare, meaning that priority in the provision of welfare and social assistance has to be given to the 'smaller unit', the family, the neighbourhood, the association, the local administrative unit etc. and that the state is only entitled to intervene when the capabilities of those units reach their limits – whereby in the 'strong' version of subsidiarity, the state at that point also has a duty to become active and to give support. Bismarck's measures of social insurance were based exactly on those principles and, having their origins in this crucial transition phase, where societies were faced with massive social disruption through industrialisation and the emergent market capitalism and restorative politics feared the impact of communism in the light of this disruption, were the first 'modern' public welfare provisions that gave citizens a certain level of protection from social risks associated with events like industrial accidents, illness, unemployment and old age. Citizens should feel the 'care' embodied in a (paternalistic) state while not being released from their individual and collective responsibilities and being made to adhere to their civil society allegiances in cultural terms.

By contrast the residual model of welfare, which manifested itself most clearly in the UK, fully embraces the principles of liberalism on which the emergent 'free market' bases itself. It appeals primarily to the initiative and hence the responsibility of the individual and limits the responsibilities of the state to a matter of 'last resource'. State intervention, when it is being called upon, therefore is invariably associated with a degree of stigma, exposing the failure on the part of the individual to make adequate private provisions for life's contingencies. This in turn ensures the individual, rationally acting citizen is unencumbered by the state whose role should be minimal and not interfering in the private affairs of free citizens, while those failing to make the right choices are granted only the promise of full citizenship pending on them demonstrating certain achievements (Lawy and Biesta 2006).

The 'Nordic' universal model of welfare developed much later and under very different historical and political conditions. It was not the result of Marxist revolutions as was the case with programmes in post-Revolutionary Russia, but emerged as the social-democratic 'correction' of Marxism in recognition of the necessity of an effective and strongly redistributive state under the geographic and social conditions of Northern European countries. These did not allow for massive industrialisation and a broad labour movement, but the programme had to include the interests of smallholders and fishermen and hence preserve the sustainability of agriculture and promote integrated social development (Stiernø 2004). Its priorities were ensuring the high quality of public services in all parts of the country and availability to all citizens who would thereby regard the state as their 'servant' and could identify with a universal entity which recognised their individuality precisely by providing the basic means of full participation in society. Social citizenship blended here neatly with political and civil citizenship, expressing a concern for a balance between the conflicting or ambiguous needs of the individual.

The development of social services under the at times and in certain respects very different political conditions of the European nation states is often studied merely from an organisational perspective. While the Nordic model favoured the establishment of public social services with civil society initiatives providing more the pioneering beginnings and the residual regime installed public services always as 'second best' in comparison to private ones, particularly in the area of schooling and health, the conservative regime placed and still places great importance on non-governmental social services. But the organisational structure does not on the whole determine the methodology adopted by the operators of these services. In fact, there is a great deal of uniformity in the contents of training programmes for personnel in the social professions across Europe and in that sense also in the methods taught which promote capacities of individuals and communities in solving their own problems, as evidenced for instance by the almost universal acceptance of the concept of 'empowerment' (Adams 2008).

However, the crucial question is how these capacities are to be brought about and fostered, and in this regard, the social professions are faced with a very particular challenge that sets them apart from both the school-based teaching and the clinical therapeutic professions. The 'social' in their title is on the one hand a relict of their past in the social history of modern social services symbolising their being part of the development of the various social welfare structures, and on the other hand, a reminder of the fact that 'the social' is not a reality which simply exists and can be taken for granted as a kind of by-product of the entity 'society', but is constantly changing and is dependent for its existence partly on a particular form of agency which is the 'spontaneous' contribution by all members of society, and partly on very specific efforts and activities which need to be explicitly organised and promoted.

This means that in the act of intervention by social services, in all types of organisational arrangements and in all types of welfare regimes, the nature of the social relationships prevailing under particular social and political conditions of the respective nation state, and hence the whole history of how these relationships were

formed and structured, is in a certain sense being re-enacted. Social citizenship only becomes a reality where it is being practised (Lawy and Biesta 2006), just as much as political citizenship manifests itself in elections and other moments where citizens become politically active within – or indeed against – a particular political framework. Seen from this perspective, it becomes evident that methodical and professional social interventions are also principally characterised by the dialectics contained in the respective citizenship model and that ultimately there can be no fixed reference points for these interventions, but only those reached by participation and negotiation in a project which is always still in the making.

The need for intervention, regardless of whether the request emanates from the individual concerned who perceives a need that requires assistance or from the collective entity which perceives the situation of the individual as problematic, calls for a change process which can be framed in very different formats and which is influenced by prevailing notions of political and social citizenship, or rather by the way in which a particular version evaluates the presented 'problem' either as an expression of the insufficient competence of the individual to master his or her own affairs independently or as resulting from lack of provisions, rights or care afforded to that individual by the collective whole (or a combination of both). In any case a process is required whereby the 'deficit' is not remedied without the participation of the person affected but only with her or his direct involvement in the changes that are necessary. This constitutes a learning process and hence an educational mandate on behalf of society which needs to be activated in these situations – even where this is not necessarily expressed in 'educational' terms (but, for instance, as social intervention, social therapy, social assistance or whatever). Citizens of modern states become full citizens through the exercise of their citizenship, whereby, as Lawy and Biesta (2006) point out, it is very much the question whether they must in the process 'earn' their citizenship through their purposeful learning efforts or whether such efforts are rather the consequence of what was made possible through the initially unconditional granting of citizenship as a basic right. The educational process necessary is therefore in essence a political process with considerable margins of interpretation, and it is not even universally accepted that it can rightly be called an educational process, as shall be demonstrated below.

This 'indeterminacy' has its origins however not just in the historical fluidity of political processes to which the contemporary epoch bears ample evidence but also in basic anthropological and psychological conditions in which 'assistance' in various forms is required at particular moments of crisis and 'need'. These situations tend to reactivate the dynamics of the constitutive elements of human psychological development which evolve in the tension between dependence and autonomy. Here it has been recognised that the human abilities to form social relations and to gain autonomy are directly related to early experiences of attachment and belonging (Kraemer 1992). While the early versions of attachment theory postulated direct causal correlations between bond disruption in early childhood and social adjustment problems in later life, particularly delinquency (Bowlby 1977), current thinking concentrates more on the vulnerability that difficulties in early social bond formation causes in individuals, whereby the element of resilience which can to

some extent compensate for deprivation, are also to be taken into account (Grossman et al. 2005). Nevertheless, a childhood period of taken-for-granted belonging has been recognised as an essential part of the human experience, whether in natural families or in substitute care arrangements, in correspondence to the utter physical dependency displayed by human beings at birth and for an extended period afterwards. Furthermore, humans are completely dependent on others not only for their physical survival but also for their intellectual development, for language acquisition and hence for the ability to live in community. Yet this dependency, or rather the reliability of bonds developing on that basis, is a necessary precondition for the infant sustaining periods of separation by forming an inner coherent sense of self and autonomy. As human beings grow up, reach beyond the bounds of their birth family, enter into relationships and commitments on a wider scale and more and more of their own choosing, the taken-for-granted sense of belonging is replaced or superseded by contractual arrangements that are conditional on particular secure forms of behaviour. This behaviour, apart from establishing a public sense of self, interacts with and constructs a web of rights and obligations which seek to stabilise those 'non-natural' relations in analogy, but also in corrective contrast, to the bonds characteristic of noncontractual family bonds or group identification processes (Hogg 2005).

At a structural level, it is therefore not surprising that human forms of community and solidarity develop in relation to, though not necessarily in correspondence with, this dual psychological need for unconditional belonging on the one hand and autonomy and the exercise of choice on the other. Traditionally, some forms of community take recourse to the model of the family and treat the corresponding form of national solidarity as an extension of kinship relations; however, the complexity of modern social interactions and particularly the division of labour with all its social consequences require then the establishment of the kind of structures of solidarity and belonging discussed above from the perspective of citizenship.

The social professions, as products of this fundamental reordering of solidarity structures and as an intricate and inalienable part therefore of social policy developments and particularly of the various welfare state projects after the Second World War, have to confront and negotiate two related sets of conditions: At the level of the immediate face-to-face encounter with the users of social services, they have to be prepared to meet persons for whom the necessity to seek (or to accept) assistance evokes possibly unresolved issues of vulnerability in relation to the balance between dependency and autonomy. This issue has now been recognised as of considerable importance also for instance in a medical context where the state of security or vulnerability of adult patients can make a considerable difference with regard to their ability to accept help and to their compliance with prescribed treatments. It is patients with unresolved issues concerning self-confidence and dependency who tend to 'emphasise psychological normality, independence and strength, or they seem preoccupied with their emotional needs and oscillate between seeing others as either wonderful or dreadful' (Adshead 2010, p. 210). These effects and uncertainties are exacerbated in the case of social instead of medical issues and mesh

directly with the way social and political communities are constituted on social values and political arrangements which give dependency and autonomy very distinctly, and contrasting connotations.

And this is where social workers and other social professionals have to take these structural issues into consideration as elements of their perceived roles. Requiring public assistance with social problems is potentially a shaming experience. These perceptions and expectations always precede the actual encounter and make it fraught with defensive and frequently hostile attitudes on the part of the client. In this sense, the welfare regime and the presuppositions of social citizenship, which social workers in particular are part of and represent, inevitably frame the actual method of intervention chosen to address a specific situation of need, or rather, far too little methodological attention is given to the necessity to relate methods of intervention to the principles guiding a country's social policy structure and social service practice.

This means not that the welfare regime context would determine the choice of method but rather that the change process negotiated with clients as a means of overcoming the actual sets of difficulties confronting the client, as a learning process, has to address both the client's personal history and in a certain way simultaneously the society's political history. This is the point at which the distinction between two fundamentally different approaches to social learning matters (Biesta 2011). Social learning conceived as a means of socialising people into the prevailing value and behaviour structure of a society ultimately suppresses the resistance which the helping process triggers initially, thereby 'wasting' its motivational potential and causing a fundamental disengagement of the person from the change process required. By contrast, the civic learning approach aims at mobilising the subject as an agent by giving recognition of the initial necessity to view critically the need for assistance and to deal with potential issues of shame and stigma. Only by placing the learning process in this wider context can the actual social mandate be carried out and the promise of social citizenship be realised. It entails, whatever the precise method of social learning used, a process of 'learning to realise social citizenship', whereby the fundamental ambiguity in the notion of learning has to be addressed – does this focus on a deficit on the part of the 'learner' which has to be remedied, or does this produce an 'enabling process' in which society as a whole is also called upon to make sure that nobody is 'left behind' in realising their full potential for the benefit of an integrated, culturally advanced and technically well functioning social organism?

This link with social policy, and the difference in connotation that the political context can make, becomes immediately visible in cross-country comparisons in relation to the implications of the two major methodological strands which developed in Europe in the field of the social professions. On the face of it, the 'educational' implications of the method paradigm of social work are less apparent than those of the social pedagogy approaches, which have the educational element in their (often misunderstood) title. But a brief look at the history of social work serves as an illustration of how in the context of a basically liberal approach to welfare, which prevailed in the countries that form the political context in which this model was first created (Britain and the USA), an educational element was indeed

present in the largely punitive public welfare measures that existed at the time of industrialisation. It was instrumentalised to drive the development of capitalist attitudes and comportments in those strata of society that were not immediately willing (or able) to adjust to the rules of capitalism. However, on account of the inefficiency of 'moral preaching' for people struggling with poverty, the 'lesson giving' had to be taken back and transformed into an individualised, psychologically understood change process based on the latest scientific insights derived from the therapeutic arena. Professional social work as case work (leaving aside for the moment the community and particularly the community education approaches that developed in the ambit of the settlement movements) sought to tread a path between wanting to rescue vulnerable people from the deliberately stigmatising forms of assistance enshrined in public institutions like the workhouse, the asylum, the prison and other receptacles for the poor on the one hand and the indiscriminate, unsystematic almsgiving of private charities on the other, which was considered to be of a bad (educational) influence on the character of the poor (Bosanquet 1914). The personal relationship with the individual 'cases' became thus a core element, not only for finding out whether they were 'deserving', but also to initiate a process of enabling which initially ranged from a mixture of material assistance and personal example to soft moral pressure and appeals to reason or decency (Peel 2011). In this context the advent of psychoanalytic insight into the working of the unconscious came to the rescue of those early social work pioneers who saw themselves confronted with a great deal of resistance, denial or con-compliance by their clients – for the psychological reasons discussed above. Only by recognising in these 'defences' the unconscious reactivation of unresolved earlier conflicts around autonomy and dependency could a scientific way be found to address these conflicts as a precondition for the resolution of the actual 'presenting' issue. The learning process thereby initiated addressed, according to Freud, the capacities of the Ego to develop a constructive relationship with 'reality', to 'mature' and grow strong (Robinson 1930).

As mentioned, there is no linear connection between the political principles of a liberal social policy regime and the development of this individualised case work orientation in the sense that politics would have determined the emergence of academic discourses; nevertheless, the policy context of a liberal tradition provided opportunities for a rather neat fit as far as the formation of citizens was concerned, particularly those on the margins of society, who could thereby be made to 'integrate' into a welfare model centred on enforcing their individual efforts as a precondition for gaining more autonomy. The parallel development of community approaches in the settlement tradition, also in liberal countries, bears witness to the emergence of a model of social learning that shifts the emphasis from the individual to the collective in protest against the prevailing political ideology and its enforcements through individualised intervention methods (Davis 1984). This approach to social issues holds on to the principle of self-help and introduces self-generated learning as the method to overcome adverse conditions lastingly without creating dependence. It thereby acknowledges the fact that in overcoming adversity, people need to mobilise the potential of cooperative action and this resolves also several of the problems associated with an exclusively individual orientation.

Settlements were basically centres of community learning, partly by means of instruction by the 'experts' who decided to share periods of their privileged lives as students or dons from Cambridge or Oxford with people in neighbourhoods at the bottom of the social scale, but partly also by means of autonomous learning processes generated by the community itself. This was the idea developed by Jane Addams for the Settlement 'Hull House' at Chicago (Addams 2002), an approach which incidentally greatly influenced John Dewey in his democratic education concept. It lived on as an educational tradition particularly in Scotland under the title of 'community education' (Scottish Education Department 1977). But the context in which these movements emerged in countries of a liberal tradition did not favour their consolidation, or only in 'pockets of resistance', nurtured mainly in traditional working-class neighbourhoods or other milieus of 'nonconformism' that turned against the prevailing tide of individualism and class distinction. It is for these reasons that the paradigm of social pedagogy never really took root in Britain because it would have required the corresponding notion of participative political citizenship to take root.

Social pedagogy as a response to the challenges of social disruption resonated instead particularly with a political regime which accepted that the creation of an integrated, stable society was not to be left to the sum of individual efforts to organise themselves out of sheer necessity and make private provisions for their social protection. A society of this 'communitarian' kind, promoting the notion of subsidiarity, is automatically and collectively involved in a continuous educational process which it regards part of its collective 'cultural reproduction'. Here it is accepted that the task of overcoming difficulties, particularly those that constituted 'the social question' as it was called in nineteenth-century Germany, could not be delegated to individual efforts alone and could not be achieved by means of increasing social control, but only by the whole society engaging in a collective learning process (Lorenz 2008). Just as schools did not come into existence merely for those incapable of learning by themselves but as a mainstay of the collective 'civilising process', so this social learning process had to extend to areas beyond the sphere of the school, and not only for purposes of 'correction'. Youth clubs, sports activities, leisure initiatives, evening educational institutes and the work of charities all carry this collective mandate to improve the state of society by means of learning ('*Bildung*') in view of the growing challenges of modernisation. Typically, in Germany, the romantic youth movement at the turn of the twentieth century did not set out to take impoverished youth from the slums into the fresh air of uncontaminated nature to teach them an alternative lifestyle – it was an inclusive movement that sought to redress the ills of industrialisation and the alienation from nature. Although being largely promoted by middle-class youth, it aimed at reducing class barriers in its idealistic, universal pursuit of leisure and rehabilitative activities, imitated also by working-class associations (Coussée 2008). The encounter with nature per se was seen as an educational, participative experience. Sports became the domain of cultural 'nation building' which gave all classes a sense of purpose and incorporation into the nation state project, even though their type of sports might be class divided.

The concept of social pedagogy that harnessed the core ideas of those movements can only be understood against this political background and as an alternative to the 'remedial' orientation of the social work paradigm. It accepts the legitimacy of comprehensive lifelong learning processes in which all members of society, not only those who show problems of adjustment and coping, have a stake. This is the reason why for instance the German Children and Youth Legislation, from its beginnings in the Weimar Republic to the Act of 1989, sought to unite universal educational measures and those specifically aimed at 'youngsters with problems', not only to avoid stigmatising the latter, but as an expression of the fundamental right to education of all children and young people. This cannot be reduced to the right to schooling but means a right to have a stake in all the formal and informal learning opportunities that a society provides.

In addition to its social policy affinity, this concept of pedagogy had deep roots in German philosophy inasmuch as the hermeneutic tradition that constituted the humanities (*Geisteswissenschaften*) provided the paradigm of an interactive, linguistically constituted community as the medium in which understanding is only possible, a social entity which in every generation and every cultural context has to be created and renewed. It is noteworthy that sociologists in this tradition like Max Weber, exponent of the sociological approach of '*Verstehen*', and Ferdinand Tönnies with his distinction of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* contributed as much to addressing the 'social question' (Schröer 1999) as did pedagogues like Friedrich Fröbel, founder of the Kindergarten movement, and Hermann Nohl, who helped to shape the youth policies of the Weimar Republic (Lorenz 2012).

However, also in the case of social pedagogy, the proximity to a particular social policy regime can bring the danger of incorporation into this regime for purposes of legitimating the state of affairs that a conservative government maintains considerable degrees of social inequality. The emphasis on learning how to be and to behave as a citizen can allocate people to social ranks or cultural or ethnic entities that confine them to their boundaries of possibilities and opportunities in the typical gesture of civic learning as an instrument of socialisation (Biesta 2011). Only a political and socially critical reading of social pedagogy addresses the risks involved in forging such links and challenges the limits of socially and culturally constructed horizons in order to arrive at a practice of democracy as a constant challenge to the existing social order (Mouffe 2000). These 'subjectivising' versions of social pedagogy, of which the 'pedagogy of the oppressed' by Paulo Freire (1970) is perhaps the best known, have their own tradition and uphold particularly the values of collective, self-generated learning processes where the issue to be addressed has equal importance as the process and the mode of working towards its realisation. The political implication of social pedagogy in this critical sense is always that the community which is meant to be shaped and organised by the pedagogical process is ultimately seen as a political community, constituted and at the same time constantly transformed by a process of open democracy which challenges predetermined objectives (Biesta 2011). Even where it takes place in institutions like the school, it implies a lived form of social citizenship in which participation is seen as a right and where the members of a learning community value and practise their

differences as the essence of a democratically constituted community (Shor 1992; see also Wildemeersch in this volume).

This brief analysis shows that the practice of both social work and social pedagogy implies different forms of learning but is always bound up with social policies and that this practice requires therefore always an active engagement with social policies. Indifference to this social policy context already implies taking a political stance that accepts the limits set by these policies and furthermore interprets social citizenship only in a passive way of 'belonging' whereas particularly the tradition of social pedagogy emphasises its active, collective and transformative practice.

This is particularly acute at a time when neoliberal ideologies are curtailing the dimension of citizen rights and lean more heavily towards citizen duties (Cox 1998). The impact of these principles on social policies in all parts of Europe has been considerable with the result that social service staff become enlisted in an extensive programme of 'activating' users of those services designed to prevent long-term dependency on social benefit payments in cases of unemployment or incapacity to work. In this context the full ambiguity of the concept of 'help towards self-help' and hence also of 'participation' manifests itself anew and brings all the tensions and conflicts characteristic of the initial formation of welfare models back into play (Clarke 2005). While being deprived of a job or lacking in physical or cognitive skills to 'look after oneself' can indeed be associated with a loss of self-respect and confidence, the task of motivating and enabling people to regain those skills and engage in retraining or more systematic job searching is embedded in political and economic conditions which either can offer realistic hopes for such participation or are geared towards denying the very means of participation. In the latter case, efforts and techniques of activation can easily be perceived as a cynical ploy of shifting attention and blame from 'the system' to the individual (Raeymaeckers and Dierckx 2012). When defects at the structural political or economic level are presented as learning problems at the individual level, the seeds of fundamental mistrust in both these educational efforts and in the political system and its intentions are being sown (Biesta 2012). This ploy in turn spreads the perception that all rights of full citizenship, social, political and ultimately also civil, have to be 'earned' and that to receive assistance from the collective is associated with shame. Social work interventions linked to a 'workfare-as-welfare agenda' (Roets et al. 2012) acquire once more the flavour of distinguishing the 'deserving' from the 'undeserving' and of extending the 'privileges' of full citizenship only to those willing to adjust and to learn how to modify their behaviour.

Contemporary interests in the UK in adopting the paradigm of social pedagogy have to be assessed in this light (Cameron and Petrie 2009). While the widening of the prevailing methodological discourse there in a social pedagogical direction can indeed enrich various fields of the social services and provide a much needed theoretical underpinning of the fast growing 'care sector', where scant attention had been paid previously to systematic professional training, close attention has to be paid to the very different sociopolitical implications of the approach in its original German context and in that of the UK. Where learning becomes 'being taught a lesson', new dependencies arise and the old dichotomy of care and control,

which all post-war models of the welfare state attempted to shift towards care as a social-educational means of obviating the need for control, resolves into one comprehensive and insidious programme of adjustment and thereby control in the disguise of care.

The essence of social learning, in whatever context it takes place, is that it gives expression to and enacts in being practised a particular version of 'the social' and thereby of the way in which social solidarity is understood and organised in a society. This applies equally to formal and informal learning processes. In the face of a colossal re-education process instigated by the combined forces of commercial interests and neoliberal policies and aimed at constructing the 'free agent' of *homo economicus*, pedagogues in all settings need to take position to these pressures as part of their pedagogical competence and commitment and apply their professional knowledge and skills also in a political arena. Such knowledge points towards the necessity of establishing a correspondence between anthropologically and psychologically evidenced needs for constructive forms of dependence in dialectical relations to those of identity and autonomy on the one hand and their recognition in public and civil society arrangements of solidarity on the other. In this sense, achieving social citizenship by practising democracy is indeed a pedagogical task, but one that requires careful theoretical grounding and focused, determined and critical political practice at all levels.

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Chapter 4
Learning Democracy in Social Work

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Introduction: Social Work, Citizenship and Democracy

Social work and democracy are historically closely connected. The development of social work is often linked to the social question (Castel 1995; Rosanvallon 1995). Against the background of processes of industrialisation, proletarianisation and urbanisation, social work was developed as an answer to poverty and delinquency, which were regarded as problems of deficient social integration (Donzelot 1984). As such, social work's development should be understood in relation to the transformation of an estates society model to a modern model, with strong emphasis on the individual and, more specifically, on the figure of the citizen. Hence, in modern democracies, education and social work were defined as outstanding instruments to socialise the individual into the citizen and to teach these citizens uprightness and dedication to the law (Lorenz 2004). From this perspective, the educational dimension is essential to social work: social work is about understanding the relationship between the individual and society, as a key question in the debate on democracy and citizenship.

The development of democracy and citizenship are historical processes, characterised by conflicts and complexity. Through the successive recognition of civil, political and social rights (Marshall 1950), citizenship has become a layered concept. Citizenship is interpreted as both *political* and *social* citizenship. The political citizen is the entitled individual, whose freedom to act is protected by civil rights and who can participate in the political project of democracy. This political participation is grounded in the right to vote and the entitlement to be elected. The social citizen is the citizen acknowledged as a member of the community: social

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citizenship refers to an intersubjective identity, which implies the recognition of one's own identity together with the recognition of the other as equal. Whereas political citizenship is the fundamental condition of being acknowledged as an individual citizen in your own right, social citizenship is vital to the possibility of making an appeal to the solidarity of the society of which individuals are members (Raes 2003).

At present, the question of the relationship between political and social citizenship is extremely important due to an increased feeling of a democratic decline: low levels of political participation and a growing concern about different forms of antisocial behaviour give rise to a strong call for a 'new democratic offensive' (de Winter 2007). This results in a renewed appeal for social work to investigate socialisation for democracy. Remarkable in this appeal is an increasing tendency to emphasise social integration as a condition for citizenship. Biesta (2011) argues that the emphasis on social integration implies a shift from a political to a social *conception* of citizenship. C*itizenship as a political concept* refers to the citizen as subject, protected in his freedom to act by the recognition of civil rights and respected as equal by the recognition of political and social rights. *A social conception of citizenship* reduces citizenship to civic virtue, defined as the engagement to participate actively in the endorsement and further development of a model of democracy. In Biesta's view, the shift from a political to a social conception of citizenship is problematic for democracy, as it lays the focus on the question how society can be consolidated as a safe, stable, cohesive and inclusive project through the social education of its citizens. As such, this shift draws the attention away from the conditions in which citizens can participate in the making of society. In this evolution, Biesta reveals a shift from citizenship as a rights-based practice to citizenship as a duty-based practice.

Biesta's observation challenges social work to reflect critically and explicitly on citizenship and democracy and on the function of social work in the making of democracy. Social work has a fundamentally different position in both conceptions of citizenship. Biesta's observation suggests that in a political conception, social work supports citizens in taking part in the process of democracy, whereas in a social conception, social work becomes a policy instrument focusing on the citizen's duty to smoothly integrate in the prevailing democratic project and, in doing so, to contribute to social cohesion. In this chapter, we challenge this suggestion. We agree that there is a historical tension between a social and political conception of citizenship, but we argue that only in this tension the educational dimension of social work becomes clear, and it is through this dimension that social work can become a democratic practice. The educational dimension in social work is crucial to conceptualise democracy as an open and ongoing process and not as a predefined project. This argument results from a pedagogical perspective on social work. This perspective enables us to connect rather than oppose social and political conceptions of citizenship. It is in this dialectic tension that we find a meaningful answer to the question of how to relate social work to learning democracy.

Social Work: Carrier of Both a Private and a Public Mandate

In order to clarify social work's role in the process of democracy, we need to highlight an essential characteristic of social work throughout European history. Social work has always been concerned with mediating the relationship between the public and the private spheres (Jordan and Parton 2004). Of course, we can distinguish between countries with regard to the role of the state in running social work practices and shaping social policies. Despite these differences, however, a common element is that social work carries both a private and a public mandate (Lorenz 2004). The private mandate refers to social work as a relational practice dealing with the personal troubles of individuals, families and communities. Social work also carries a public mandate in negotiating the connection between private problems and public issues (Mills 1959). As Lorenz (2004, p. 5) puts it, it is 'important to recognise that the origins of social work are not just linked to social transformation processes at the core of the rise of modernity associated with reflexivity and the need for new life world forms of solidarity, but even more so to political agendas for their systemic stabilisation such as represented by the nation state project. As such social work, in all its forms, shares in the fundamental ambiguity of modernity in general and is also caught up in the contradictions that constituted the nation state, and this regardless whether we are looking at social work as a public or a nongovernmental activity'.

However, the relationship between these private and public mandates is not fixed. It is embedded in historical and societal contexts and developments. The shift from a constitutional state to a democracy went together with the introduction of new views on the role of education and social work. Another turning point was the construction of a post-war welfare state that occurred in many countries in a clear attempt to prevent the social unrest that paved the way for World War II (Pasture 1993).

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, social work (as well as compulsory education) was seen as a solution to the problems of the constitutional state (Dingwall et al. 1983). The main responsibility of the government was to protect civil rights by guaranteeing the application of the law. In this concept, the public and private spheres are well defined and clearly distinguished from each other. The basic idea is that modern societies are ruled by law. From this perspective, laws are characterised by their 'universality': the law is equal for all and does not take personal differences into account. The social sphere, then, can be regarded as a disciplinary connection between the individual and society (Butler and Pugh 2004). Simultaneously, in the attempt to bring the private sphere in line with the public interest, the construction of the social sphere results in a blurring of the borders between the private and public spheres. Next to its disciplinary function, the social sphere is also discovered as a forum to raise one's voice and to appeal to the solidarity of society. Thus, the social sphere evokes the possible tensions between a political and a social conception of democratic citizenship.

Transforming the Social

Democracy is not a static model. Throughout the development of Western countries, there has been a manifest evolution towards a widening and deepening of the concepts of democracy and citizenship. This evolution is related to the evolution from tributary suffrage to universal suffrage and to the introduction of the universal right to a dignified existence. Within the concept of tributary suffrage, social work carries a one-sided conceptualisation of social citizenship. Social work practices are charged with the socialisation of individuals into responsible citizens. Notwithstanding this clear focus on social integration as the core business of social work, social work practices were supported by two different educational ideologies (Simon and Van Damme 1989). On the one hand, a conservative educational ideology intended to teach citizens to act as 'good citizens', being aware of their duties towards the public good, and acting accordingly. The underlying concept of citizenship is one of *passive* citizenship, meaning that an individual has to act conform the dominant values in society and, in exchange, is recognised as a citizen. In such an approach, the 'social' in social work refers to a set of skills and values to be acquired. The underlying educational concept is one of discipline and adjustment to self-evident societal norms. On the other hand, a more progressive educational ideology intended to support the lower classes to emancipate from their marginalised societal position, by offering them possibilities to acquire knowledge and skills to contribute to their chances of social mobility. Here, the underlying concept of citizenship is a concept of *active* citizenship. Active citizenship is seen as the outcome of emancipative learning and as the result of individual achievement in a supportive context. In this approach, the 'social' in social work is linked to a broader social political commitment, creating supportive conditions in which individual competencies and individual aspirations can become real. In this sense the progressive ideology also carries a concept of *postponed* citizenship, which makes clear that it is still embedded in a social integrative conceptualisation of social work. It is this concept of active, albeit postponed, citizenship that laid the foundations of the post-war welfare state. The meaning of the 'social' in social work, also in this more progressive ideology, emerges as a 'pursuit' to support people to become aware of their need to be socially integrated and to offer them opportunities to meet this need.

So, historically, social work inevitably involves both control and care, although the relationship between both components can take different shapes (Jordan and Parton 2004). With the extension from tributary to universal suffrage, the understanding of citizenship is deepened from a focus on individual freedom to a growing emphasis on greater equality and equal access to societal resources. This emphasis went hand in hand with the recognition of Human Rights as universal basic rights, grounded in the right to live a dignified life. In the Final Declaration of the UN World Conference on Human Rights, which took place in Vienna in 1993, it was stated that 'democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing (…) Democracy is based on the freely expressed will of the people to determine their own political, economic,

social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives' (Vienna Declaration UN World Conference on Human Rights 1993, in Lemmens and Schaiko 2012, p. 391).

The widening and deepening of the concept of citizenship towards the recognition of social rights resulted in a substantial change in the definition of the 'social'. From a constitutional element of social order under the conditions of modernity, the 'social' grows into a relatively autonomous field of action, with a substantial impact on the public as well as on the private sphere (Raes 2003). The social becomes not only an institutional layer of the implementation of social rights but also a possible lever to transform private problems into public issues. Precisely in this transformation, a key question arises: is it the ambition of social work to integrate people in a particular order, or is it (also) the ambition to make political subjectivity possible? The meaning of the social in social work is dependent on how social work answers this question. If the focus is on problems of social integration, the social is – in line with its historical origins – a support as well as an incentive for people to participate in societal developments and to contribute to the public interest. The emphasis, then, lays on a social conception of citizenship. If social work focuses on supporting political agency, then, the social in social work is seen as creating a forum wherein different opinions on living and on living together are confronted with each other. As such, the social is not only a sphere that contributes to individual integration but also a sphere of public debate and a possible support of political emancipation. The nature of the social then shifts from dedication to a delineated democratic model towards the experience of a possible radicalisation of democracy, in the sense of human dignity and social justice for all. As a consequence, the meaning of the 'social' in social work becomes more powerful, yet much more ambiguous: historically linked to the nation state-building project of democracy, in the post-war concept of the welfare state social work can also be the bearer of a new understanding of democracy, not only as a model of social order but as a sense of living together in a democratic way – i.e. understanding human rights as a fundamental democratic activity. In addition, the social sphere opens up the possibility to contextualise and deepen fundamental democratic concepts of freedom, equality and solidarity (Mortier 2002). Development of the latter needs enquiry into how social work defines the 'social' in social work theory and practices (Bradt 2009).

The Temptation of Professional Autonomy Through Methodisation

The debate on the 'social' in social work related to the ambiguous position of social work in Western welfare regimes urges a critical analysis of the way in which social work responds to the relationship between individual and society. Lorenz (2011) points to the different traditions in Europe, distinguishing between liberal and civic

republican versions of citizenship and showing their correspondence with social work paradigms. Liberal versions of citizenship emphasise a functional orientation of social work focusing on those moments in which social cohesion is threatened. In this functional orientation, the important aims of social work relate to supporting individuals in their integration into society; the emphasis lies on the political conception of citizenship.

Civic republican versions of citizenship emphasise public virtue: the reproduction of civilising principles, practices and attitudes which ensure the stability of a society as a community of belonging. In this orientation, an important aim of social work lies in community building; the emphasis is on social citizenship as a condition of being recognised as a full member of society. In this tradition, the educational role of social work is to link citizenship with possibilities of appropriation of social and cultural identities. Both traditions meet each other in the question of how to create a frame of reference, shared by both the government and citizens, in which freedom, equality and solidarity can become real. Consequently, social work has to shift the orientation from citizenship as a condition or a set of skills and values to citizenship as a practice (Lorenz 2004). Through this approach people can experience solidarity as the possibility to appeal to societal resources as an integral part of their rights as a citizen and not as an alternative to these rights (Marshall 1992, as cited in Lorenz 2004).

It is true that such a contribution of social work to solidarity is not clearly defined, but it enables us to comprehend the changing position of social work in Western welfare regimes and more specifically the feeling that social work is increasingly demanding and controlling (Pratt 1985; Jordan 2004) and its emancipatory capacity seems to be eroding (Stepney 2006). For sure, the focus on control as a dominating rationale in social work (Parton 2000) has strengthened under the influence of neoliberal ideas and 'Third Way' thinking (Dominelli and Hoogvelt 1996; Biesta 2011). A main problem in social work, however, is that it has not been very critical about its own role in the development of the welfare state and has failed to deepen the link between social work and broader social political developments (Lorenz 2004, 2005). Throughout the development of social work, social workers have generally tended to consider their ambiguous position as a result of a lack of professional autonomy. They sought to build up this autonomy by making a stronger distinction between social work practice and social policy. In developing a pedagogical perspective on social work, it becomes clear that this pursuit only brings a fake solution. For, in this distinction social work refers to a welfare practice, while social policy refers to a governmental duty to create the social and political conditions under which social work can contribute to more social solidarity and equality. In establishing this distinction, social work has (re)locked itself into an approach to the social sphere as an instrumental connection between the private and the public sphere, ignoring its potentially powerful, yet ambiguous position. This explains why social work is often absent in social political discussions about defining social problems (Bradt 2009). Social work then restricts its critical task to the development of 'anti-discriminatory', 'empowering' methods rather than to investigate the connection

with lived realities of people and then critically analyse its position with regard to the state-citizen relationship.

There are several key elements in the development of this technical approach to social work. A first element is the increased focus on the early prevention of social problems. This might be important from a societal point of view, but it also re-establishes the distinction between 'the solution' and 'the definition' of social problems. Second, social work increasingly relies on its traditional concern with individual and family casework interventions. Therefore, current social work (research) is mainly focused on the micro-level, the relationship between social workers and their 'clients'. As a consequence, it is difficult for social workers to gain insight into how the micro-level is related to the macro-level. Finally, social work theory has tried to develop a welfare perspective on social problems as a distinct professional perspective, rather than as a distinct perspective in the broader social political debate (Bradt and Bouverne-De Bie 2009). Notwithstanding social workers' numerous references to human rights and social justice, social work practice often reduces itself to social policy administration (Roose and De Bie 2008). In that way, social work has mainly developed as a 'sedimentary practice': a practice that has lost its initial political orientation and is accepted as self-evident (Mouffe 2005). As such, social work has become not only a constitutive practice to existing society but also a self-referential practice (Harris 2008; Roose et al. 2012). The development of social work as a sedimentary practice runs parallel to an increasing methodisation of social work's inherent pedagogical dimension. Instead of deepening the meaning of social work as a pedagogical approach to social problems, emphasis is put on questions of how to solve predefined social problems, without questioning the underlying problem definitions. The basic idea behind this technical approach to social work is that social problems rise from educational deficits. Because of these deficits, public intervention in the private sphere – even if preventative – seems legitimate. This public intervention is directed by an appeal to people to *become* citizens: worthy members of society (De Vos et al. 2012).

As described above, this appeal is inherent to social work, which originated from a strong conservative and moralising point of view, but also knew more progressive, emancipative approaches. These moral and political tensions in social work practice were gradually overcome through the development of a scientific, yet technical approach. On the one hand, the reliance on rational principles of intervention did help to overcome moralism, but on the other, it ended up in an establishment of universal standards of normality. The pedagogical dimension was restricted to the implementation of habits, skills and values, functional to criteria of normal personal, social and cultural development. This focus on personal 'developmentalism' stressed the role of professional competency and diagnosis, but at the same time alienated social work practices from a perspective on social work as a reciprocal activity, grounded in the question of how to construct solidarity in a world of difference and pluralism. Therefore, we argue that social work needs to deepen the pedagogical perspective on social work, and learning democracy in social work requires a re-evaluation of the political dimension in social work.

Learning Democracy in Social Work

Social work is often promoted as a strong change agent, a 'heroic agent' (Marston and McDonald 2012) that solves social problems (Segal et al. 2009). From that perspective, societal development becomes a technical question instead of a result of human interactions (Heyting 1998). As a consequence, social work is seen as a field of action in itself, and a tension emerges between social work as a (limited) supply of social welfare services and people's possibilities of appealing to these services. This tension has its origins in the idea that criteria for deploying social services are to be defined in a universal way, independently of people's concrete lifeworld. So, criteria for deploying social services refer to predefined needs, excluding other questions that are experienced as urgent but do not fit the developed criteria. The broader societal debate on the balance between individual and societal responsibility remains silent.

However, from a democratic perspective, social work starts from awareness of the diversity of meanings of the same situation and from the responsibility to understand these meanings through interaction and communication with the people involved. Political agency needs public debate: a particular quality of interaction that makes it possible to acquire the capacity of joint action for transforming private problems into public issues. This quality of interaction is a source of democratic power as well as a call for the democratic account of institutionalised social policy. It shows how public debate can result in social political action (Tinnevelt 2010). This means that public debate is fundamentally not grounded in an endeavour for consensus, but in the creation of fora for dissensus and public debate. Social work can offer such a forum, under the condition that it sees its legitimacy not only in the 'needs' of people or society, but first of all in the quest to support the democratic discussion on the transformation of private problems into public issues. Herein, a fundamental key is the recognition of human rights. The recognition of the right to a dignified existence for every citizen involves the commitment of society to guarantee the realisation of rights necessary to realise equal opportunities to be recognised as a citizen and to participate in the definition of the objectives of social policy. This implies that social work has to be dedicated to guarantee the freedom of people to determine a personal position on the definition of an assumed need and/or a demand for social services, as well as to communicate its own position towards needs and/or demands. From this perspective, social work is a potential source of political agency and power.

Notwithstanding the fact that the political power emerging from public debate can influence social policy, the democratisation of social policy is also a question of transforming societal laws and rules. The public debate has to result in parliamentary debate, wherein the transformation of private problems into public issues is verified and reviewed in the light of democratic decision processes. In that light, the notion of 'public debate' is twofold. On the one hand, it refers to the quality of social interaction as a condition for political agency; on the other hand, it refers to parliamentary debate to transform public opinion in societal laws and rules and to

guarantee the possibilities of public debate in society (Habermas, in Tinnevelt 2010). In line with this insight, the link between democracy and human rights is that 'democracy fosters the full realisation of all human rights, and vice versa' (Commission of Human Rights 1999, in Lemmens and Schaiko 2012, p. 392). This does not mean that there is one universal model of democracy. The link between human rights and democracy is established by the awareness that human rights stand for some substantive elements of the notion of democracy, namely, the participation of the citizen, the existence of well-functioning state authorities to take positive measures aimed at protecting the fundamental rights of the citizens and private institutions protecting cultural and social heritage and respect for pluralism and diversity in society. In their analysis of democracy in Europe, from a human rights perspective, Lemmens and Schaiko state that 'pluralism and diversity in a democratic society not only reflects how society is, but in addition how society ought to be' (Lemmens and Schaiko 2012, p. 01). This statement refers to the necessity to shape social work as a participatory practice of 'cultural action' (Freire 1972). Then democratic learning is not so much socialisation into a specific model of democracy, but refers to an engagement in the 'democratic experiment' (Biesta 2011).

In acting and reflecting, it is impossible for social workers to take a neutral point of view. They simultaneously have to respect the freedom, rights and aspirations of the individual citizen and the collective expectations and considerations of solidarity and equality. This ambiguity of social work implies that, on a relational level, social work can never obtain a clear-cut solution to social problems, because by nature these problems are embedded in social political discussions. The vital issue at stake is the role social workers take with regard to social problem constructions. The tension between the private and public mandates of social work requires a social work practice in which the potential to explore a myriad of ways and strategies to define, construct and cope with social problems is a key element (Fook 2002). Social work cannot escape this ambiguity: it has to support people on an individual level, while at the same time opening up discussion on the democratic character of problem constructions (Roose et al. 2012).

We have argued that a pedagogical perspective on social work deepens the political dimension of social work. The educational relationship between social workers and the people in whose lifeworld they intervene is fundamental to approach social work as a democratic practice, as it connects social work practice with the lifeworld of people living in a diversity of social contexts (Coussée et al. 2010). From this perspective, education is understood as a shared activity, creating space for dialogue, uncertainty and unpredictability. However, uncertainty and unpredictability are not merely characteristics of the relation between clients and social workers, but basic characteristics of the 'social' in social work. Against this background, reflexive acting includes consciousness of the inevitability of unpredictable and undesirable outcomes and the impossibility of social work practices acting as a radical solution to social problems. In that way, social workers have to act from the perspective of being significant, yet at the same time limited (Roose et al. 2012).

The relationship between social work and democracy lays in practices which are aware of the necessity of learning democracy. Social workers as well as the people

they are involved with can learn to act political by being engaged in public debate, not as a conflict of interests, but as joint action to understand democracy as an engagement to human dignity and social justice. According to Biesta (2011), learning democracy emphasises the importance of the democratic quality of the processes and practices that make up the everyday lives of children, young people and adults in their ongoing formation as democratic citizens. Critical analysis of the democratic quality of social work practices includes theoretical, empirical and historical research. This research is neither a linear nor a comforting activity. A salient observation is that in current developments, the establishment of the 'social' as a central mandate of social work is being eliminated from the agenda, because service users are dominantly seen as individuals or groups of individuals defined by their own characteristics (Lorenz 2009). The appeal for social work to contribute to learning democracy means that social work must reinvestigate establishment of the 'social' as an important dimension of democratic citizenship: a dimension of belonging to the community, including the right to make a strong appeal regarding principles of human rights and social justice. Citizenship, as a rights-based status, requires engagement of the community in experiencing civil, political and social rights as recognisable and true in daily life.

Conclusion

Exploring learning democracy in social work seems to offer little cause for optimism about the 'democratic output' capacities of social work. Nevertheless, this conclusion is premature. Our argument for a pedagogical perspective on social work shows fragile but fertile impulses to construct social work as a democratic practice. It is important to see social work as a limited though significant task that takes the 'democratic experiment' seriously, while at the same time allowing for a critical positioning towards its own contribution to this experiment. Learning democracy in social work includes renewed curiosity about the construction of social problems as well as the historical shifts in democracy as both a political and a pedagogical project. A pedagogical perspective on social work is an invitation to a permanent questioning of the relationship between the political and social conceptions of citizenship. From that perspective, the meaning of the 'social' in social work has to be examined in relation to principles of human rights and social justice.

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Chapter 5
Subjectificating Socialisation for the Common Good: The Case for a Democratic Offensive in Upbringing and Education

Micha de Winter

Introduction

In a well-known collection of essays edited by Kessel and Siegel, *The Child and other Cultural Inventions* (1983), the Swedish developmental psychologist Rita Liljeström suggested that the traditional 'child of the family' in the Western world has gradually had to give way to two new types of child: the public child and the commercial child (Liljeström 1983). The author is here alluding to the fact that, over the course of Western history, the family has lost considerable ground as a source of influence and values in children's upbringing, while two other spheres of influence have become much more significant: firstly, the government and professional institutions, which have increasingly assumed responsibility for the welfare and education of children, and secondly, the market economy which, in the author's opinion, has succeeded to a remarkable degree in filling the moral and emotional vacuum in which children grow up. According to Liljeström, these two influences have combined in a disturbing way to undermine parenthood and responsible citizenship.

Whether this diagnosis is correct is still difficult to say. Nevertheless, the fact is that some 20 years later, the call heard on all sides is for a greater sense of responsibility from citizens – and from parents in particular. The currently dominant ideology is that citizens in general have become too dependent on government and professionals. The market is no longer a threat to independence, but has become celebrated as an ideal that is supposed to liberate citizens and parents from their alleged inertia. The idealised parent of today chooses – whether it is a childcare centre, or some product in the field of child nurture, or a series of childcare modules – on the basis of a comparative quality analysis. Governments are increasingly withdrawing and want to lay more responsibility at the feet of the caretakers, but

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when it comes to combating such social problems as juvenile criminality and the rise of radicalisation, there is no question of government withdrawal. On the contrary, the credo is 'not withdrawal, but action'. This remarkable scissor movement – on the one hand greater aloofness, on the other, ever more forceful interference – fits seamlessly into the neo-conservative outlook that the government's concern should lie with matters of public order and security. Socialisation, that is, the parenting and upbringing of children to become constructive citizens in society, thus becomes increasingly a private affair and a task for the social middle ground of schools and institutions which, in turn, are more and more governed by the laws of market forces. The question is thus whether the public child does not lose out, through neglect, to the private and the commercial child.

In this chapter, I want to draw attention to the public, general good that is at stake in children's upbringing. That this general good is an important goal of child raising has, in my view, been sadly neglected. Under the influence of various social developments, child nurture, education and youth policy have become almost exclusively focused on the personal interests of young people themselves. This emphasis on the individual finds expression in the objectives of modern child-rearing and child psychology, such as discovering one's own identity, functional autonomy, being happy, developing your talents, making a career and physical and mental health. These all reflect the emancipation of the child, which can rightly be considered an enormous historical and social achievement. We see the child as not so much as a means to a higher end, but as a person, which is not only good for the child but also for society.

Indisputably, achieving these individual goals (sometimes referred to as 'developmental tasks') not only benefits the person and his or her social network but also to some extent the society as a whole, yet the lack of any reference to 'the general good' is a conspicuous omission. After all, no society in the world can function well if it consists purely of unquestioning citizens who see themselves simply and correctly having fulfilled their individual developmental tasks. Surely such citizens must also, at the very least, want to raise among themselves about the way they should live together. They must, for instance, be prepared to find consensus over ways of dealing with each other in their personal and social lives, about justice, solidarity and how to deal with social norms. Such social engagement does not automatically come into being by itself: it has to be actively formed, and for this reason, the nurturing and education of new generations of young people directly involves the general good of society; we have to think in terms of the 'societal upbringing of children' (De Winter 2000). Naturally, this does not mean putting knowledge, skills and attitudes about citizenship into young people's heads. Societal upbringing in my view is at least a two-way process. Children, for example, need to learn from adults what democracy is or could be, how it can be practiced in different ways, what the alternatives are, etc. But the fostering of democratic values will only be successful if children grow up in educative contexts that indeed allow and invite them to put democracy into practice and to reflect on it. In terms of Biesta's distinction (see Chapter 1) between 'socialisation' (i.e. telling citizens that they need to learn more in order to become better citizens') and 'subjectification' (creating spaces where the experiment of democracy can be conducted), I would rather consider societal upbringing as 'subjectificating socialisation'.

The Common Good as the Goal of Child Upbringing

What precisely should be understood by the 'general good' very much depends on the type of society one is referring to. For Western societies it may be defined as the maintenance and development of democracy, based on the assumption that most citizens prefer this system to a dictatorship and is thus the greatest common denominator of interests. It should at once be added that it is not only a question of the formal aspects of democracy, such as those laid down in the constitution and in human rights treaties. Democracy is also – and predominantly – characterised by a social ethic, or as the American philosopher John Dewey called it, 'a democratic way of life', whose core lies in the recognition of shared interests of individuals and groups, in the way in which people associate, consult, discuss and debate their experience and participate in communal practices (Dewey 1923; Berding 1999, p. 166). Such a democratic way of living together assumes, for example, that citizens are prepared to resolve conflicts through dialogue and negotiation, if necessary through the mediation of the law, but in any case not through the resort to violence. More succinctly perhaps, democracy could be described as a form of living together designed to resolve conflicts between individuals and/or groups in a humane, orderly and peaceful manner (Gutmann and Thompson 1996; White 1999).

Apart from conflict resolution, in a democratic ethos, there are also issues of equality and parity, social responsibility, rights and obligations, the proscription of discrimination on the grounds of belief, background or disposition, etc. The guiding principle is that a democratic state is the only form of society that allows the peaceful, orderly coexistence of different forms of, for example, religious, cultural or political conviction. This also implies the protection of minorities against the rule of the strongest containment of the power of fanatics, while the use of violence is the preserve of government and the freedom of the individual is constrained by the freedom of others. The great force of democratic states, according to Holmes (1995), is that so far they seem to have succeeded in solving the problems of both anarchy *and* tyranny in a single coherent regulatory system. At the same time, this democracy is highly vulnerable, both as a political system and as a form of society: it is always open to threat from lack of interest, from the assumption that it is the obvious, natural form life that goes without saying (or effort), and from the concerted attacks of those who would forcibly impose on everyone their own totalitarian values.

Children's Upbringing as Essential Interest of Society

The fact that the *general good* features nowhere as a principle for the orientation of children's upbringing and education is not only remarkable, it is above all cause for concern. In the first place, children are not just the product or possession of their parents; they are also the future citizens of a free society. This means that the citizens as a whole – and that includes the children themselves – will either profit or suffer from the success or failure of their upbringing. Whether one wants it or not,

upbringing by definition has consequences for others. In the second place, child upbringing and socialisation are inextricably linked with the conscious reproduction of the democratic state (Gutmann 1987; Gutmann and Thompson 1996). This kind of constitutional state can only function when there is sufficient willingness and capacity on the part of its citizens to support and reproduce this form of society.

There are various signals indicating that the democratic outlook can easily lose its hegemony as the self-evident form of social organisation. There are various reasons for this. Increasing emphasis on individual interests, calculating citizenship, migration from other countries whose regimes and culture are far less democratic, lack of identification with the common good, the rise of fundamentalism and political apathy all play a part. Some even predict the end of democracy as a consequence of internationalisation and globalisation (Guéhenno 1993).

It is precisely in a period of individualisation, fragmentation and increasing diversity that the general interest, the common good, needs to regain a more central position in our thinking and policymaking about the upbringing and education of children. If we are to prevent an implosion as a result of negligence or an explosion through direct attacks, democracy and its associated forms of social life must be much more strongly foregrounded and actively cultivated. Unlike a dictatorship, a democracy cannot enforce its basic principles by decree: it can only try to instil them by persuasion (e.g. Frimannsson 2001). And for this reason it should be obvious that the aim of socialisation is the formation of democratic personalities for whom, to refer to Dewey again, seeking a balance between individual and social needs is second nature: 'If then, society and the individual are really organic to each other, then the individual is society concentrated. He is not merely its image or mirror. He is the localized manifestation of its life' (Dewey as cited in Berding 1999, p. 162).

'Democrats Are Made, Not Born'

Too few people have much idea of exactly what democracy is. To be able to appreciate this democracy, you must at least be aware of the alternatives. What it comes down to is the opposition between self-governance by citizens on the one hand and either anarchy or dictatorship on the other. Unless one understands that historically such a system has usually been gained only through hard struggle, one is likely to find it difficult to identify with it – let alone take up arms to defend it. There is therefore every reason to look critically at the ground support for democracy. The steadily diminishing turnout for elections in various Western countries is often seen as a sign of the erosion of the vitality of a democracy (see Kymlicka and Norman 1994). In particular, observers have remarked that the zest for democracy is weak among young people. A comparative study conducted in 24 countries shows that civic education almost everywhere is accorded low status and priority and that there is similarly little interest in the subject from students (Torney-Purta et al. 1999). One of the conclusions of this study is that many students in secondary education do not meet

the criteria of 'good enough democratic citizenship', that is, the criteria of support for democracy, being well informed about politics, having a political preference and being prepared to go out and vote (Dekker 1999).

A lack of knowledge of and involvement in democracy makes democracy extremely vulnerable. If too many citizens lack any interest in it, the democratic structure and rules themselves eventually have no basis, claims the American political scientist Meira Levinson. The 'liberal state' is a communal good that has to be maintained communally by the citizens: 'It depends for its stability and preservation on there being a sufficiently high percentage of citizens who behave in public and private in ways that advance democracy, toleration and non-discrimination' (Levinson 1999, p. 43). Every democratic state is seriously weakened if it remains underused – which is to say, if too many people adopt a passive or sceptical attitude toward the political process and each other. In that case, the sociopolitical order can very quickly develop in a direction antithetical to freedom, where a small, fanatical minority can make all the running (Levinson, ibid.). The best way of combating underuse and neglect is to ensure that there are a growing number of citizens who take democracy seriously and for whom involvement is a habit. The essential remedy, therefore, lies with the upbringing and education of children. At the same time, although the transfer of knowledge is necessary, it is not a sufficient condition. Future democrats must be certain kinds of person, according to Patricia White – to whom, in fact, the heading of this section refers (White 1999). Knowledge and skills can be learned, assuming that someone is prepared to learn. Motivation and openness to the views and needs of others are therefore an important point to attend to.

Moralising or Democratising

Some behaviours and utterances on the part of youth arouse disquiet and indignation in Western societies: anti-Semitism, discrimination against homosexuals, provocative ostentatious religious utterances and manifestations, violence, etc. These expressions are sometimes seen as merely adolescent provocation by young people in search of their own identity but also sometimes as expressions of fundamentalism or cultural backwardness that have to be taken seriously. In any case, they can count on little sympathy.

These days it has become rather popular (though actually tautological) to apply psychological labels: someone who behaves in an antisocial manner is almost automatically suffering from an 'antisocial personality' disorder. In certain situations, of course, this kind of 'explanation' may be valid for certain youths. But when we choose the basic principles and forms of conduct of democracy as our frame of reference for judging such expressions and behaviours, perhaps we should rather speak of a *democratic deficit*. When this kind of deficiency is manifest in the behaviour of young people, of course, they bear their own responsibility for it, but it has to be stressed that it is also a failure of the socialising persons and institutions and indeed of the functioning of democracy itself. According to Biesta, the

decline of the public sphere should not so much be seen as the *result* of a lack of good citizenship, but rather, he argues, the cause. Instead of blaming 'individuals for an apparent lack of citizenship and civic spirit, we should start at the other end by asking about the actual opportunities for the enactment of the experiment of democracy that are available in our societies, on the assumption that participation in such practices can engender meaningful forms of citizenship and democratic agency' (Biesta 2011, p. 8).

As is well known, alarm over the behaviour and moral outlook of the younger generation is not limited to Europe or even to the present time. In the United States, one of the forms taken by this disquiet is the movement of 'Character Education', whose basic idea is that 'good' character (defined by such virtues as honesty, sense of justice, care for others, self-discipline etc.) is necessary to become fully human and to realise a moral society. This is a clearly normative, moralising approach which deviates from the dominant model of psychosocial health, according to which any judgement of behaviour takes average scores in the population as its point of reference.

The problem with concepts like 'character' and 'virtues', however, is that they – to put it euphemistically – are rather open to multiple interpretation. Many virtues or descriptions of 'good character' would seem to be universal: they are found in Aristotle, the Ten Commandments, the Koran or even in manifestos of the Komsomol, but in their more specific interpretations, they turn out to be highly ideological (Nikandrov 1999). In any case, the question of which virtues should be taught and in what manner arouses strong differences of opinion. There is a clearly discernible conflict over the essence of virtue between neo-conservative schools of thought on the one hand and the progressive liberals on the other. In neo-conservative thinking, it is essentially a question of the transfer of religious and family values, national pride and love of fatherland (Bennett 1993; Wynn 1992), while for the progressives, the meaning of virtue lies in social values such as care, reciprocal regard for others, solidarity and tolerance (Steutel and Spiecker 2000). Whereas the neo-conservatives have, as one would expect, a strong preference for authoritative methods of instruction, for rules and group pressure, the liberal ethics tend toward methods more in keeping with their content, viz. methods based on mutual regard and responsibility. It is striking, however, that from whichever position on the ideological spectrum, there is almost always a reference to democracy. On the importance of this, there is a remarkable degree of consensus.

Writing about the need to inculcate values for citizenship, White says: 'There is no need to search around for a basic framework for citizenship education, still less to attempt to find an insecurely based consensus on values. There exists a framework of values given by the democratic values which are embodied more or less successfully and full heartedly in the institutions of our society' (White 1999, p. 60).

The best evidence for this proposition is in fact the struggle itself between the various champions of morality competing with each other. The evidently still sufficiently shared values of the democratic state make it possible for the competing parties to hold fundamentally different views over the desired morality without this turning into religious strife. In my own view, the cultivation and maintenance of

democracy is therefore more fundamentally important than finding consensus over morality. The focus on morality leads to an amplification of difference and to ethnocentrism, which in turn promotes further discrimination and injustice (Puka 2000, p. 133). A democratic ethic, on the contrary, is characterised by the acknowledgement of mutual interests, by the recognition of difference and by 'the interaction of as many individuals and groups as possible, as intensively and with as few barriers as possible' (Berding 1999, p. 165).

Giving shape to an educative upbringing out of the general interest demands no less than a reversal of cultural attitudes toward child raising. To achieve anything like this will require new socialising arrangements, for example, in order to give a structural place to the active participation of youth and to promote the sharing of responsibility for child upbringing (e.g. between parents and schools). I limit myself here to the discussion of consequences for family upbringing. The implications for education and youth policy will be briefly dealt with at the end of this chapter.

Family Upbringing and Democracy

Over recent decades a considerable amount of research has been devoted to the question of democracy within the family. Under the influence of general processes of democratisation in society, the Western family has also undergone a modernisation process of its own: power differentials have been reduced, both between parents and between parents and children. Personal development and the emancipation of family members have become more important; there has been more room for the expression of feelings, and the running of the household has changed altogether from a command economy to one of negotiation (De Swaan 1979; Torrance 1998). Children have increasingly been allowed to have their say over more issues, which has been interpreted by some commentators as an incapacitation of parents, making it impossible for them to run the family and cited as a possible cause of various behavioural problems (Lodewijcks-Frencken 1989; De Winter 1995; Schöttelndreier 1996). In the Netherlands and many other Western countries, the negotiating family seems to have become more or less the norm. Of course, there are still many families, both immigrant and indigenous, where manners and authority are more traditionally maintained, but even there, one observes changes (Kagitcibasi 2001; Nijsten and Pels 2000). If the nature of the family has become more democratic, does this mean that democracy itself has become a more important objective of family upbringing? Or in other words, do parents have 'democratic virtues' in mind when they describe the aims underlying the way they bring up their children?

Research on upbringing in the Netherlands reveals that most indigenous parents score highly for autonomy and social awareness (Rispens et al. 1996). Large groups of immigrant parents also increasingly give priority to such aims. The greater importance they attach to conformity, obedience and performance gradually becomes mixed with the realisation that personal development can enhance their children's chances of social success in a Western society. The goals of upbringing

are found to be closely linked (among other factors) to economic background, social provision, level of education and work, migration, culture and custom (Kohn 1977; Kagitcibasi 2001; Nijsten and Pels 2000). Thus, although parents raise their children to help them become independent, socially aware and concerned adults, so far this research has found nothing like 'the common good' or a 'democratic attitude' mentioned by parents as an ideal or objective of upbringing. It is impossible to say whether this is due to the parents' answers or perhaps to a blind spot of the researchers themselves.

Because the attitude and behaviour of certain groups of children and youths give rise to public alarm, one increasingly hears criticism of the parents. Do they instil the right norms and values in their children? Does their upbringing adequately meet the demands of modern society? Do they sufficiently keep an eye on what their children are doing, who they associate with and what they get up to at school and in their free time?

There is no debate about the fact that parents play an important and, in certain respects, a decisive role in their children's upbringing, but the extent of that role and its influence is indeed open to question (Harris 1998). That a so-called authoritative style of parenting, measured against the demands of modern Western society, leads to the best developmental outcome for the children living in such a society is even more open to doubt (see, e.g. Baumrind 1971; Maccoby 1980; Hoffman 2000). After all, excessively authoritarian parenting allows insufficient possibilities for adolescents to develop their own identity and sense of responsibility, whereas an all-too-permissive attitude means an absence of boundaries and leads to uncertainty. On the other hand, the authoritative style, that is, a well-balanced mix of support and monitoring, when combined with a less explicit way of correcting, leads to an optimal fulfilment of developmental tasks (again, in the context of a modern Western society).

The authoritative style of parenting is associated with an image of the family as a mini-democracy. Although the 'results' of this style are almost always measured in terms of personal development and individual psychosocial health (and therefore not in terms of social objectives, e.g. democratic citizenship), these certainly include character traits relevant to social functioning. Important democratic faculties like the will and the ability to reach consensus are in the first place learned by many children within the family. As a civic virtue that can be applied in a wider context, suggests Frimannsson (2001), this should be practised and extended later in education. But it is the family context which is supremely appropriate for the transmission of these so-called hot cognitions (i.e. affectively charged cognitions), because of the enduring and intimate affective relations between parents and children.

It is known from the well-known study by Oliner and Oliner (1989) of the motives and backgrounds of persons who saved Jews during the Second World War that the vast majority of these individuals came from warm, close-knit families that placed high demands on individual responsibility and moral behaviour. They were people who were conspicuous for their many and firm relationships with others. But the characteristic the authors singled out by as playing an especially important role was their moral commitment to the values of care for others, justice and humanity.

On the basis of the available empirical literature, Berkowitz and Grych (1998) identify five strategic principles that parents can implement to promote morality in their children:

– Induction
– Considerateness and support
– Making demands and setting boundaries
– Providing a living example of social-moral behaviour
– Open democratic discussions and conflict resolution

What morality actually entails, however, is left rather unspecified here and thus the principles can be applied in various directions. It is therefore important, as Hoffman says, to ensure that a clear content, a *moral ethic*, is communicated. Just as in a pluralistic democratic society, it is important that parents and other moral educators make children aware of the similarities between people, for instance in their emotional reactions, their reactions to unfair treatment or in their reactions to major life events such as divorce, loss and becoming a parent (Hoffman 2000).

Democracy and Education in Parent Education

Family upbringing is of great influence on the development of values and morality. Research has shown unequivocally that, in the context of Western democratic societies at least, a democratic, authoritative style of parenting leads to the best developmental results. The term 'authoritative parenting' primarily refers to a style, to the character of the process of parenting; no moral content is determined by it. One principle of moral content, however, is inextricably linked to this style, and that is democracy itself. Anyone wanting to transmit anti-democratic values to his children is, after all, unlikely to employ an authoritative style of parenting. On the other hand, anyone who wants to pass on democracy and inspire by example can hardly do so by *authoritarian* means.

The implication of all this is that the general interest – defined in terms of a democratic state – is best served with as many parents as possible, raising their children in an authoritative manner. In all probability, they play a crucial role in establishing a democratic habit in the young. In the context of the 'conscious social reproduction of democracy', therefore, we should be thinking of different ways in which the relation between parenting and democracy can be given far greater prominence – whether through counselling and advice, parental education, media attention, courses in citizenship, etc.

Parental support these days is mainly concerned with the recognition and remedying of problems; normative discussions over the goals of parenting are mostly avoided. Research, however, shows that parental support becomes much more effective when it is focused much more strongly on these objectives – in fact, by adopting a goal-based approach. Bettler and Burns (2003) point to three specific gains:

– Reflection on the goals of parenting lays a foundation for parenting methods that one learns.

– This way of working dispenses with the 'deficit approach' that has so long characterised parental assistance.
– It offers more possibility to do justice to the cultural and social diversity of the goals of parenting.

To this one should add that the avoidance of normative discussions in parental support misses out on many opportunities to promote involvement and integration in society. Firm discussions of the direction of upbringing can help to break down isolation, apathy and a culture of aloofness. For parents, who naturally want to create the best possible chances for their children in today's society, it is enormously important to learn how they can advance those opportunities. In that light I want to argue the case for a consultative approach, oriented toward dialogue, whereby the specific demands that living in a democratic state places on children (and thus also on parents) are discussed with parents in a pragmatic fashion. Because such knowledge is part of the basic equipment that parents need to be able to bring up their children successfully in a democratic society, it would seem an obvious move to expand the standard advice offered by child-health clinics for parents of infants and toddlers with courses on authoritative parenting.

The Public Child and the 'Socialisation Gap'

In earlier publications, I devoted considerable attention to the holes that have appeared over recent years in the layers of necessary provisions and activities aimed at the raising and education of youth, in other words in the infrastructure for socialisation and education (see, e.g. De Winter 2000; Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling 2001). Among other things, these gaps relate to the decay of the traditional continuity between the different contexts in which children and adolescents are brought up. It would appear that family, neighbourhood, school, church and the clubs no longer play the same significant role as parts of the infrastructure for socialisation and education that they once did. At the same time, they are far less coherently attuned to each other. We know, for example, that many youths from deprived areas often feel themselves to be merely a cipher at school, unsafe in their own neighbourhood as well as unwelcome in and superfluous in society. Their description of the world they lived in evokes an image of a social no man's land in which, apart from parents and friends, there were few people who actually bothered with them. An ideal breeding ground for various possible kinds of derailment, which these youths themselves also thought, all the more so when problems they encountered in the one domain (e.g. on the streets), tended to extend to other domains, such as the family and school (De Winter and Kroneman 1998).

In fact, what these youths complained of was an inadequate public upbringing or education. When they receive insufficient support or any counterbalance from adults in public life, they take this as an invitation to educate themselves. In this way the so-called street code very quickly takes over (Anderson 1999; De Winter 2005).

Anyone in society who feels insufficiently respected or valued, who sees little prospect at work and minimal social status, is going to take his sense of self-esteem from the degree to which he can command respect from the world he inhabits daily. You get respect on the street through your capacity and willingness to use violence. American research on young people growing up in large inner city ghettoes shows that children learn to be 'tough' from a very early age. The first lesson of the street is that survival is never a matter of course. Children must (also literally) learn to fight for their place in the world and that happens by commanding respect, whether by verbal or physical means (Brezina et al. 2004). Anyone who does not succeed runs the constant danger of being humiliated in public, molested or worse. Anderson (1999) explains this hard social reality by the enormous gulf that even young ghetto dwellers experience between themselves and the rest of society. He considers the street code as a cultural adaptation to a deep-rooted lack of confidence in the democratic state and its institutions.

Against this stubborn reality stands the increasing quantity of hard data that tell exactly what such a socialising and educative infrastructure would have to look like to offer these young people a better chance of individual and social development. In the so-called developmental assets approach, for example, some 40 factors are listed, all empirically established as contributing to the healthy social development of children and adolescents. Families, neighbourhoods and schools should provide, among other things, adequate care, support, involvement and clear boundaries. Young people should be appealed to for the constructive contributions that they can make to society, rather than being seen in advance as a potential source of problems (Benson 2003). Such data mean that investing in a high-quality, principled *social-pedagogical* infrastructure is in the direct interests of society. A youth policy that neglects the upbringing of children in the public domain (as we now have, for instance, aimed at a one-sided repression of undesirable behaviour) is damaging the future of the democratic and, of course, the possibilities of individual development for the young people directly concerned.

Traditionally, education also played an important part in the public upbringing of young people. But as a consequence of individualisation and the growing influence of the market, this sector threatens to lose sight of that public interest. Schools are forced to concentrate more on their image and 'customer pool' and their work is increasingly 'demand-oriented', that is, the individual 'customer' is king and the interests of society are shoed to the background. For example, anyone looking in the present-day educational curriculum for a systematic approach to democratic education will be generally disappointed. On the question of how you can impart to children from a young age the knowledge, attitude and skills that they will need to be able to participate as democratic citizens in society, there is very little consensus in the land of education. Of course, there is the odd school that has a course on conflict management, another teaches social skills and yet another has a project running on European elections. But in countries like the Netherlands which have no national curriculum, schools have a large degree of autonomy, certainly when it comes to the 'soft' subjects like civic knowledge. And there the risk is that, because they are free to give almost any interpretation they like to this subject, schools can teach ideas of

citizenship that are at odds with the principles of the democratic state – such as, for example, discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or religion. In my own view, there should be a clear limit to the autonomy of the school. For the future of democracy and the 'democratic way of life', it is necessary to transmit to children via education the knowledge, attitudes and skills they need. This, I believe, should be a firm requirement of all schools, whether public or private.

The Need for a Democratic Offensive in Upbringing and Education

> The price of liberty may once have been eternal vigilance; the splendid thing about Civil Society is that even the absent-minded, or those preoccupied with their private concerns or for any other reason ill-suited to the exercise of eternal and intimidating vigilance, can look forward to enjoying liberty. Civil Society bestows liberty even on the non-vigilant. (Gellner 1996)

The picture sketched here by Ernest Gellner is a reassuring one. Civil society with its active, involved citizens, its social networks and organisations has more than adequate consistency to maintain democratic values, even though there are many citizens who never involve themselves in the active propagation of those values. But I mentioned two cases which serve to undermine somewhat this image: an implosion of democracy through an increasing fixation on one's own interests coupled with a lack of interest in public affairs and an explosion through the growth of anti-democratic sentiments, possibly accompanied by a deliberate undermining of the state. In this context, Bauman (1999, p. 156) also refers to the danger of complacent or ideologically driven government constantly giving ground to the market: the further this process advances, the more the citizen changes into a consumer. This may be good for the economy, but it leads inexorably to fewer and fewer citizens prepared to contribute actively to the functioning of democracy. It becomes a sport to outwit the government while rules and regulations are seen as mainly applicable to others.

Of course, the first line of defence against implosion or explosion is a good system setting laws and regulations plus a willingness to maintain them. But ground-level support from the citizenry is need for this, and that is not self-evidently present. A democratic society must therefore consciously engage in its own reproduction and renewal, through socialisation or, amending Gert Biesta's theoretical distinction, through subjectificating socialisation. For various social and historical reasons, there is a great resistance among Western citizens to looking at the upbringing and education of children from the viewpoint of the social interest. Discussions over family upbringing almost immediately run up against objections to the invasion of privacy and parents' right to determine for themselves how they will bring up their children.

The fear that the state might control the upbringing of children is apparently so great in many countries that it threatens to throw out the baby with the bathwater.

This fear – or rejection – has long prevented Western society from strengthening its defence of a common interest in a democratic state through the education of the young. And perhaps this has not for a long time been seen as a matter of urgency. The collective abhorrence of violent dictatorship after the Second World War was probably sufficient in itself to maintain a sufficient degree of commitment to democracy. But now that those experiences are gradually disappearing from the collective memory, the foundations of the democratic state need to be renewed and strengthened. Individual freedoms can only be gained through the collective efforts of citizens. This is why I argue for (what I call) a democratic offensive in upbringing and education. This does not mean child raising by the state but a conscious effort by citizens, organisations and government – not a one-off effort: socialisation is a longitudinal process that has to be exercised and maintained from different domains, both private and public. Such a democratic upbringing by citizens implies the transfer of knowledge, attitude and skills and is essential for a well-functioning democracy. But because democracy is a process and not static and therefore has constantly to be reinvented, it is of essential importance that children and adolescents get sufficient opportunity to experience democracy personally and actively participate, in situations that have meaning for them. There is probably no better way to inspire new generations with enthusiasm for democracy than letting them see from an early age that active engagement in the common life of the society is worth the effort. You can be heard; you are part of a joint venture. But such engagement does not happen by itself. To harmonise your needs and actions with those of others, you must, according to Marquand, have command of 'a certain discipline' and 'a certain self-restraint' that does not come by itself. 'It has to be learned and then internalized, sometimes painfully' (Marquand 2004, p. 57, cit. Biesta 2011).

The genre of 'subjectificating socialisation' is not just a semantic solution for the theoretical distinction that Gert Biesta has rightfully presented. In different 'experiments' we have put this bridging concept into practice, without – admittedly – using this phrase. Particularly both the so-called *Peaceful School*[1] and the *Peaceful Neighbourhood* programmes explicitly integrate both educative genres. The main purpose of these programmes is to try to change schools and neighbourhoods into democratic communities where children and youngsters are being inspired to participate in different ways of democratic decision-making, together with parents, teachers and other involved professionals (de Winter 2012). As many children come from families where democratic values and practices are uncommon, programmes such as these necessarily include the teaching through practice of basic democratic competencies such as critical thinking, dealing with conflicts, dealing with diversity and democratic literacy (Verhoeven 2012). Moreover, not all children understand by nature that 'plurality and difference are seen as the very raison d'être of democratic processes and practices' (Biesta, Chapter 1 this book). Therefore, the peaceful programmes create subjectificating contexts – such as the 'peaceful children's farm' where children and adults negotiate solutions for conflicts that sometimes accompany plurality and diversity. Mediation, for example,

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[1] See, for example, http://www.pointofview.nl/vreedzameschool/

can be such a solution and is indeed practiced by child mediators when different groups of parents and children appear to have very different views of animal rights and of ways to handle pets. On the other hand, socialisation and instruction are indispensable for this process: children, for example, need to learn that not only they themselves have rights, but animals too. Or through teaching (local) social history, children can learn how and why our ancestors failed or succeeded in finding democratic solutions for social problems and conflicts of their time. Integrating socialisation and subjectification in my view fertilises the ground on which new democratic practices – or as I call it, an educative civil society – can be built and reinvented.

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Part II
Methodology

Chapter 6
Mapping Children's Presence in the Neighbourhood

Sven De Visscher

Introduction

The framework of civic learning that has been introduced by Gert Biesta (2011) starts from the idea that democratic education should not be interpreted as the preparation of children and young people for their future participation in democratic life, but as the creation of experiences for learning from current citizenship or the creation of possibilities to engage with the experiment of democracy. This kind of learning takes primarily place in public places. These public places are understood as places where the transformation of private wants into collective needs is made possible, or put differently, 'locations where the experiment of democracy can be enacted and where something can be learned from this enactment'.

In this chapter, I would like to link some of these ideas to the pedagogical discussion about children's presence in the neighbourhood. The relationship between children and the neighbourhood is not a very popular topic in pedagogical research. And wherever the neighbourhood is integrated within the pedagogical discussion, it often appears in the first place as a background against which formal, informal and nonformal learning processes, developmental processes and socialisation processes of young people take place. This approach is reflected in the international pedagogical literature in concepts like *educating cities* (Bernet 1990), *pedagogy of the city* (Schugurensky and Myers 2008), *community schooling* (Hiemstra 1972) or *urban education* (Pink and Noblit 2007). This background then needs to be planned and designed through social and spatial interventions in such a way that it meets the developmental needs of young people in the best possible way. Throughout the twentieth century, the content of this prescriptive

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perspective evolved from a play area approach to the *play-inclusive* design of public space and the more recent child-friendly and child-oriented design of public space (De Visscher and Bouverne-De Bie 2008).

In my research, however, I have started from the reality that children grow up into very different neighbourhoods, most of which do not meet the predefined child-friendly criteria, which leaves the question open what the neighbourhood 'as it is' means for the interrelationships between learning, citizenship, democracy and the public sphere. The neighbourhood places children spatially and socially into society; it gives them a specific place in the world. Moreover, the neighbourhood is also made *by* its residents and users themselves, including children. The prescriptive approach largely fails to reveal the meaning children themselves give to their neighbourhood, which often goes beyond the play opportunities (see Cope 2006). Also, it offers a narrow view on children's fellow citizenship. Different neighbourhoods create different perceptions of the social world – including children's own position in it – and different opportunities for children to act upon this world. In order to understand this pedagogical meaning of the neighbourhood, empirical research is needed that reflects the complexity of neighbourhoods and life situations of children. Starting from the neighbourhood as it is requires an understanding of the spatial, social and personal dimensions involved. This, in turn, implies that the neighbourhood should be studied simultaneously as a built environment, a collection of bricks and architectural concepts; a shared environment, a collection of people that inhabit, appropriate and give collectively meanings to the bricks and architecture plans; and as a lived environment, a collection of individual meanings, actions and preferences within this environment.

In this chapter, I will first elaborate on the citizenship discussion and link it to a pedagogical discussion about children's presence in the neighbourhood. What I will do is to move the perspective from the *educator* who is trying to create the best educational environments for children, to the *child* who grows up in, interacts with and acts upon very different environments. This, in turn, changes the way in which the child is given a place within pedagogical research: from a learning subject to a fellow citizen. Next, I will explain how I have translated these ideas into a methodological framework for my empirical research on children's presence in the neighbourhood.

The Child as a Fellow Citizen

When it comes to children's citizenship, Lawy and Biesta (2006) make a useful distinction between citizenship as *status* into which children have to be introduced and citizenship as a quality of everyday social *practices* that children also take part of. '[Children's] citizenry is not a status or possession, nor is it the outcome of a developmental and/or educational trajectory that can be socially engineered. It is a practice, interwoven and transformed over time in all the distinctive and different dimensions of their lives' (Lawy and Biesta 2006, p. 47).

Recognising children as actual fellow citizens has been debated before, mainly within the sociology of childhood tradition. James and Prout (1997) argued extensively for a deeper sociological understanding of childhood and to invest in empirical data on the actual social position that children take in different societies, including their own view on their lifeworlds. The sociology of childhood was successful in making children's fellow citizenship visible within society, but in doing so, it was faced with other pitfalls, like the risk of (over)generalising children's different and unequal situations into a single sociological category, irrespective of other categories such as gender or socio-economic position. Reducing children into an age-based social category with a specific culture, meanings and symbols that distinguishes them from adults can end up in different kinds of social and spatial segregation (Zeiher et al. 2007). An example of such thinking is the reduction of children's social position into a citizenship status based on play (Jans 2004). In this line of thinking, children are recognised as here-and-now fellow citizens, but in the same time, the value of their citizenship is predefined by adult expectations and imaginations about childhood, staying close to the romantic view on childhood that precisely is trying to be avoided. Citizenship is furthermore reduced to the experience of being part of a community and having a voice – in the case of Jans by defining children's play as an expression of citizenship. The political dimension of children's citizenship tends to vanish behind the pedagogical intention to promote children's participation in the community. Or to put in the words of Gert Biesta: children's fellow citizenship is easily translated into a *social* identity, having to do with one's place and role in the life of society, without opening a perspective on the possibility of other places and roles within society.

Citizenship as a *political* identity has to do with the relationships between individuals and between individuals and the state, with their rights and duties and with their participation in collective deliberation and decision-making. Applied to the pedagogical discussion on children's presence in the neighbourhood, this implies that public spaces are not a neutral, objective reality that stands outside the people (and as such it is not correct to speak about *the* relationship between the neighbourhood and (a generalised notion of) children), but public space is constantly (re)constructed through the everyday social actions of citizens, including children. In other words, urban public space is a social construction and different opinions about (the proper use of) this space are the product of the societal context in which they arise (Massey 1995). As a consequence, the ways in which children are present in the neighbourhood are linked with the social, cultural and historical context of the city and the relationships between residents and take part of the different forms of actual participation that arise within public space.

Towards a Methodological Framework

The dominance of a play discourse, both in defining children's social position and their spatial position within the neighbourhood, tends not to move beyond age-specific, prescriptive statements about children's fellow citizenship.

Studies that start from this approach often result in prescriptive, idealistic models about the *good* child (as opposed to unwanted behaviour of the child) in the *good* neighbourhood (as opposed to pedagogically unfit environments for the ideal development of the child). The *good* child is taught to behave and interact 'properly' within a *good* pedagogically sound environment. What is 'good' or 'proper' depends on historically, socially and culturally based norms and rules. Blinkert (2004), for example, defines a child-friendly neighbourhood based on criteria such as speed limit, street width and number of skate or football spots within a reach of 200 m. The good child in the good neighbourhood of Blinkert is measured by the amount of time spent in front of a TV. Blinkert's conclusion is that well-equipped neighbourhoods result in fewer hours spent by children in front of the TV. What this type of research addresses to a lesser extent is the question who defines the characteristics of a good neighbourhood, whether these are good for all children, whether neighbourhoods that do not meet these criteria are pedagogically undesirable, and how children look at their neighbourhood (good or bad) themselves. A good neighbourhood, according to the predefined criteria for child friendliness, is, for instance, not necessarily a neighbourhood that is accessible for all. In other words, this asks for an explicitation of the underlying pedagogy.

The above-described prescriptive approach to the relationship between children and public space departs from an individual pedagogy that tends to generalise differences and inequalities between different groups of children and between different kinds of neighbourhoods. By 'individual' pedagogy I refer to the developmental psychological tradition that focuses on the (physical, psychosocial, mental) development of the individual child. A universalistic model of the ideal child (and his or her socialisation) in the ideal neighbourhood is constructed that enables to rank neighbourhoods according to their pedagogical value and to educate children in order to behave properly in public space. As such, the neighbourhood, like other pedagogical environments, is considered as an element that structures children's 'coming into the world'.

Besides this prescriptive approach, it is also interesting to explore children's different social and spatial positions and the pedagogical assumptions, opportunities and characteristics of the neighbourhood 'as it is', irrespective of its play facilities or child friendliness. From a more social-pedagogical perspective, the individual child is always considered as part of a larger community and as a citizen of a broader society. More precisely, the focus is not on the future citizenship of children, but on their here-and-now position within society. The focus shifts from children's 'coming into the world' towards children's 'being in the world', and from a prescriptive to a more descriptive approach. Social pedagogy puts the relationship between individual and society at the basis of educational interventions. This shifts the focus from the individual child and his or her behaviour towards the neighbourhood as a direct influence on the relationship between child and society and a reproduction of the social position of children in society. The individual child becomes more visible as a fellow citizen, undergoing and co-constructing the same social circumstances as adults are.

From this perspective, children are not seen as individual learners, but as here-and-now fellow citizens. The question I want to explore here is what this approach to children and to education might imply for setting up research on and interventions in relation to children's presence in the neighbourhood. Studying the neighbourhood from a social-pedagogical perspective then requires three types of questions about the neighbourhood as it is, in order to gain understanding of how this space intervenes into the relation between the individual child and society. These questions contrast with the normative question about how the child *should* be present in the neighbourhood. A first question is how children are *able* to be present in the neighbourhood. This question refers to the neighbourhood as a physically built and confined space. A second question is how children are *allowed* to be present in the neighbourhood. This refers to the neighbourhood as a shared space with socialised meanings, practices, traditions, possibilities and restrictions. The third question is how children are *willing* to be present in the neighbourhood. This refers to the individual, lived experiences of children within their everyday lifeworld and their actual presence and agency within the neighbourhood.

A Three-Dimensional Social Cartography

In my empirical research, I have translated these three questions on children's citizenship into a three-dimensional cartography, consisting of three interrelated maps of children's position in the neighbourhood. The first map, the socio-spatial map, describes the social and spatial conditions of the selected neighbourhoods. Different social and spatial constructions of the neighbourhood create different opportunities and restrictions. The second map, the mental map, describes how residents have created shared meanings about the features of and changes in their neighbourhood. And the third map, the personal map, represents children's actual presence in and movement through the neighbourhood.

Being Able to Be Present: The Neighbourhood as a Physically Built Environment

The concept of neighbourhood is generally understood as primarily a physical environment. Kearns and Parkinson (2001), for instance, define the neighbourhood as the smallest spatial unit, the area that is situated within a 5–10 min walking distance from the home. Others confine the neighbourhood based on surface criteria (e.g. the area within a range of 500 m from one's house) or the number of families within a spatial unit. Furthermore, Kearns and Parkinson state that the neighbourhood should not be seen as a separate or isolated space. The meaning of the neighbourhood is inseparable from the spatial context of higher spatial scales within which it is embedded. Besides the neighbourhood, Kearns and Parkinson make a distinction

in urban space between the home area (the smallest scale), the locality (the broader neighbourhood or city district where the neighbourhood is located) and the urban district or region. The meaning and characteristics of the neighbourhood depend on the status, reputation and social and cultural features of its larger surrounding and on the social, cultural and economical opportunities that the city offers. City and neighbourhood are further influenced by national politics and global developments. The neighbourhood can serve different functions, such as 'relaxation and recreation of self; making connections with others; fostering attachments and belonging; and demonstrating or reflecting one's own values' (Kearns and Parkinson 2001, p. 2103). A different way to define the neighbourhood as a physical space is by referring to the combination of recognisable physical elements (e.g. houses and buildings) and public provisions (e.g. school, church, shops) that transform an abstract notion of neighbourhood into a recognisable spatial unit that reflects a certain spatial coherence.

The pedagogical meaning of the physically built environment – also in relation to the question of civic learning – refers to the approach of living together and the relation between private and public spheres that are embedded within the design of a neighbourhood. Space is a meaningful witness of social and societal changes in history and the present. It creates the material basis for people's social (inter)actions within their community but in the same time results from these social (inter)actions. The spatial structure of the neighbourhood reflects particular political choices and perspectives. To build something in an existing spatial structure is influenced by a particular social, economical, technological and cultural context: new residential neighbourhoods will not be built when the population is decreasing, no new offices or factories when the economy is stagnating and no rail stations when transportation is not organised on railways (Linters 1990). Studying children's presence in the neighbourhood includes the question what meanings, values and perspectives on citizenship and community are included in the design of the neighbourhood and how the built neighbourhood creates or prevents opportunities for social and cultural development and for the experiment of democracy. In other words, what conditions are created by the neighbourhood to bring citizenship into practice? And to what kind(s) of citizenship does the neighbourhood contribute?

Spatial interventions are always somehow inspired by an image of the *possible* world, of the world *as it could be* (Shaw 2008). I will give two examples from my research in Ghent to illustrate this idea. In this research I have studied the socio-spatial map from different neighbourhoods by performing a content analysis on different written sources, such as demographic data, architectural plans and historical data. The first neighbourhood that I have studied – Sint-Pieters-Buiten, also referred to as the *millions quarter* of Ghent – is an exclusive residential neighbourhood. The spatial structure and the social status of the area have been strongly influenced by the world exposition that took place in this area in 1913 and the unique collection of Interbellum architecture that has turned this area into a kind of open-air museum. The spatial design of this neighbourhood reflects a bourgeois-liberal approach to neighbourhood planning. This implies a public space that is subordinate to the private sphere and that mostly serves functions of

personal development and expression. The design of the neighbourhood intends to reflect quietness, order and aesthetics. The aesthetic layout of the neighbourhood's public space should create the appropriate décor for the architectural and historical value of the private houses. The idea of a *defensive* architecture is strikingly applicable to this context. The original building guidelines included the obligation to provide wrought iron fences to close off the private gardens from the public space. This does not only protect and cut off the privacy of the intimate, bourgeois family from public interference, it also evokes the impression of living with one's back turned to the rest of the city. The city is physically excluded by positioning this neighbourhood at the edge of the city. But also in a social and cultural sense, the plurality and intercultural encountering that belong to urban life are excluded from this neighbourhood.

A second neighbourhood that I have studied, Steenakker, is a social housing neighbourhood that is located next to Sint-Pieters-Buiten. Steenakker is a typical example of the Garden City movement (Ward 1992), in the way that it has been applied in Belgium through the 1920s. Garden suburbs were supposed to be small, village-like communes at the edge of the city where working-class families could own a house, far removed from the unhealthy workers' barracks and polluting factories in the inner cities. They were meant to protect the higher working class against the negative socialising influences and perils of the city, in a time when the socialist movement had a growing influence. A difference with the Sint-Pieters-Buiten neighbourhood is that the design of public space does not only aim to protect the private sphere of the home but also tries to stimulate public interactions and the social cohesion necessary for the working-class families in order to support each other in difficult times. The spatial design reflects a rather communitarian approach to neighbourhood planning.

These two examples from Ghent show that a socio-spatial map can open up a lot of information on how a particular neighbourhood, by its design, creates different social and spatial opportunities. However, isolating this perspective from other, social and individual perspectives poses a risk of spatial determinism: the positivist idea that the behaviour and dispositions of individuals and groups can be controlled and predicted by managing certain spatial conditions. People, individually and collectively, give meaning to the objects, structures and other people within their lifeworld. Silk et al. (2004), for instance, state that any definition of the neighbourhood based on physical criteria is insufficient to capture residents' subjective experience of their neighbourhood and its boundaries. This subjective experience can entail the immediate housing block where one lives, as well as the environment where family or friends live, at a larger distance from the home. Different individuals and groups develop different physical definitions of the same neighbourhood. Or more precisely, the definition of the neighbourhood is not only personally subjective but also socially and historically constructed. As such, a second layer and a third layer are required that complement and deepen the information from the socio-spatial map, based on collective meaning constructions and personal experiences from the users of a certain neighbourhood.

Being Allowed to Be Present: The Neighbourhood
as a Socially Shared Environment

Within sociological theories, the neighbourhood is defined as a local community, focusing on the collective meanings, practices and actions that people develop within a particular environment and on the social and cultural opportunities that this environment has to offer. Attention is given to the social interactions that take place in the neighbourhood and the balance between the private, public and parochial spheres of interactions with the neighbourhood (Lofland 1998). The 'private' sphere refers to the intimate relations between primary groups such as the family and close friends. The 'parochial' sphere refers to group interactions based on a certain level of commonality between neighbours, co-workers, members of a certain organisation, practitioners of a similar hobby, etc. And the 'public' sphere refers to the world of strangers, people who we do not know and with whom we have little in common. All three spheres coexist within the neighbourhood and occur within public, semi-public as well as private places.

The socially shared neighbourhood refers to the ways in which residents (including children) give and have given meaning to their physically built environment and the spatial and social changes in it. Mapping the shared environment requires attention for the different citizenship practices that people develop within their neighbourhood. These different practices reflect divergent positions in the balance between the private and the public sphere. The *habitus* concept (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) offers a useful framework to capture these social and cultural practices within a neighbourhood. The habitus can be defined as a set of unconscious schemes that structure our situation-specific ways of thinking, perceiving and acting. Applied to the neighbourhood this means that we 'read' and 'write' the city as we have learned to think, speak and behave in (class and cultural) specific ways (Blondeel 2005). The habitus structures people's everyday social actions, but in the same time it is socially (re)constructed through these social actions. Again, I will illustrate these ideas with reference to the research in Ghent. In that research, the shared neighbourhood has been studied with the use of oral histories. I have interviewed adult residents who grew up in one of the selected neighbourhoods and who were also living there at the moment of the research. I asked questions about the past and present of their neighbourhood; their childhood memories about being allowed, able and willing to be present in the neighbourhood; and the collective past and present meanings and practices about living together in their neighbourhood.

Residents from the Sint-Pieters-Buiten neighbourhood indicated a specific relationship and involvement with their neighbourhood that can be summarised with the expression that 'everyone tends to go his or her own way'. People know a lot about each other and about the local community without being around each other's houses all the time. Residents recognise themselves as a community – not necessarily as a consequence of intense mutual contacts but because they recognise themselves as a group of like-minded. Several references were made to this idea throughout the oral histories, such as the statement that the neighbourhood mostly

'attracts people who have reached something in their lives' or 'who share a certain cultural capital'. Community life consists of autonomous individuals (or families) who share a local public space with other autonomous individuals (or families) and who are connected to each other as consumers of collective provisions within and outside the neighbourhood. As such, residents from Sint-Pieters-Buiten do not conceptualise their neighbourhood primarily as context for social interactions, but rather in *practical* (i.e. related to the local provisions that they use) and *symbolic* (i.e. related to social positioning) terms (see Blokland 2003). Citizenship and involvement with the community becomes especially visible whenever the shared values are threatened from outside, for example, when litter and garbage disturb the neatness of the parks, or when the local government plans to install parking metres that might disturb the aesthetic quality of the public domain, or when a possible night shop might attract too many outside people into the neighbourhood. The answer to these threats is found in direct negotiations with the government and politicians about the legal rights of the residents.

In Steenakker, citizenship practices build on the identification with one or more social groups within the neighbourhood. These groups are based on a set of shared meanings, values, norms and ways of making use of public space and produce different processes of social inclusion and exclusion. In Steenakker, people from very different social and cultural backgrounds share the same neighbourhood. Nevertheless, this multicultural situation does not necessarily create a multicultural community with intercultural interactions. A common theme throughout the oral histories in Steenakker is that since the early history of the neighbourhood, there have always been different social and cultural groups that have had a strong impact on the local social life and relationships. The dividing lines between these groups, however, have altered throughout history. During the 1950s the difference between 'us' and 'them' was mostly based on the influence of the ideological pillars. The most dominant dividing line existed between Catholics and socialists: contacts or any kind of relations between these groups were not done. This division could also be recognised in the use of public space: certain areas within the neighbourhood clearly belonged to either the Catholics or the socialists, and each other's borders were mostly respected. From the 1970s onwards, the dividing line gradually shifted to the difference between the 'original' residents from the older parts of Steenakker that were built during the 1920s–1930s and the newcomers who occupied the more recently built parts of the neighbourhood or from the new neighbouring neighbourhood Nieuw Gent who were seen as lower class. In the 1990s yet another dividing line developed, based on ethnicity. Large groups of second and third generation Turkish immigrants arrived within the neighbourhood and bought some of the houses of the deceased original residents. Each one of these dividing lines created new group identities and subgroups within the same neighbourhood. Presently, all these different dividing lines still play a role in the social relations within the neighbourhood, be it to a different extent.

Similar to the previous statement that isolating the physical dimension of the neighbourhood can end up in spatial determinism, there is also a risk of social determinism when community issues are cut off from the related physical and political

dimensions. The very concept of community is indeed problematic. It covers very different, often conflicting meanings (Lynn 2006; Shaw 2008). For example, the communitarian tradition (Etzioni 1998) approaches community as a shared identity, accompanied by a number of shared values, norms and meanings or a common story. Soenen (2006) calls this *thick communities*, based on sustainable, strong relationships that individuals experience as meaningful, that are relatively constant within their lifeworld and that create the basis for a sense of social identity. A different approach rather focuses on *imagined communities*. 'Imagined' is not synonymous to imaginary, but refers to the statement that the imagination of a community within the experiences of people is not always linked to real, assignable social interactions between individuals. Imagined communities refer to the mental presumptions of thinking and feeling to belong to a particular community (Blokland 2003). They are not (necessarily) based on intense social relations but rather on the recognition of shared features, meanings, values and norms and on the social positioning against others with other features, meaning, values and norms. In other words, community is defined as the affective sense of belonging to a certain 'us' group (and therefore to distinguish oneself from 'the others'), based on imagined commonalities. The problem with both of the above-mentioned approaches to the community issue is that they ignore the awareness that social identities are constantly changing and developing. Identity is an active and critical process that develops in relation to other people and in different temporal and spatial settings. Identities are never fixed. Therefore, a third approach to community departs from a relational framework. This approach implies that community is seen not as a collective identity or a shared set of norms and values that produce processes of social inclusion and exclusion but as something that is realised between people, through human(e), interpersonal relationships and through which people develop a specific awareness about what it means or *can* mean to live together in a shared space. In this line of thinking, community and social interactions are strongly connected to ambivalence. Community based on ambivalence arises from the actual social interactions (whatever these may look like or develop) among people.

Therefore, a third layer in the cartography of the neighbourhood is needed, in order to have a comprehensive understanding of the neighbourhood as a co-educator – a layer that connects the abstract and decontextualised notion of community to the everyday practices and relations from people within their neighbourhood.

Willing to Be Present: The Neighbourhood as a 'Lived' Reality

The 'lived' neighbourhood refers to the differential ways in which children really move through, make use of and identify with (specific places in) their neighbourhood (as opposed to how they abstractly talk or feel about it). From a social-pedagogical point of view, I am interested in the meanings that children attach to the social and cultural opportunities of their neighbourhood and in the actual position that they take within public space. In doing so, I approach children as fully

competent social and cultural agents, *by definition*. In his theory of structuration, Giddens (1997) links the everyday, contextual actions of agents to the meaning of those actions for the production and reproduction of societal structures. According to Giddens, all social actions are *structured*, this means that people's social actions are based on the existing social structures within society, which are linked to one's social position. Thereby, agents simultaneously reproduce these structures through their everyday social actions. This implies that children's presence and interactions in the neighbourhood are 'structured' by the social position that they have and by the local community that they are part of and that they are capable of (re) producing (and hence also of changing) these social structures by their everyday actions within the neighbourhood. Again I will illustrate this with some findings from the Ghent study.

In order to gain a perspective on the variety of personal maps of young residents, a group of 39 children were asked to keep pictures about their neighbourhood for a period of 1 week. I clearly instructed the children not to take pictures of 'typical', 'beautiful' or 'well-known' places, but to focus on those places where they were actually present or that they actually passed by during that week. Afterwards, an interview took place with each child about his or her pictures. During these 'photo-elicited' interviews (see Prosser and Schwartz 1998), children were asked to choose three pictures about which they would talk and the researcher additionally chose two other pictures. I asked questions about what was on the picture, when it was taken, who was around when the picture was taken, what the person was doing in that place when taking the picture and why he or she had decided to take that picture. I did not restrict the interviews to the content of the five selected pictures, but I tried to assess the neighbourhood's opportunities and restrictions from children's point of view in a comprehensive way, by also asking more general questions about the neighbourhood.

The places that came out of these personal maps were, in a next step, the basis for a task-based focus group discussion in each neighbourhood. This focus group discussion was conceived as a child-guided walk through each neighbourhood, in which the participating children were asked to walk to the nodes, explore each other's views on the same places and add extra information. The aim was to find out more about the characteristics of the different nodes. As a final step, the information was presented in an exposition during a local community event staged in each neighbourhood, acting as a vehicle to present the results to the participants and the local community and to verify the information within a larger context.

In Sint-Pieters-Buiten children's presence in the neighbourhood appeared to be rather limited. There are a number of explanations for that observation. One of them is that children have a busy leisure agenda that results from the institutionalised individualisation of their everyday use of time and space (see Kampmann 2004). Their leisure agenda is institutionalised, because children find social and cultural opportunities mainly within formally organised (pedagogical) settings. It is individualised because the everyday use of time and space depends on the development of a personal life trajectory with personal preferences and interests. The personal maps of children living in Sint-Pieters-Buiten

consisted mostly of institutional places like the school, scouts centre and church and the routes between their homes and these places. Besides these institutional settings, children often referred to places outside their neighbourhood: private sport clubs and friends' homes, mostly situated in the richer towns outside Ghent. That leaves little time to do things within the neighbourhood's public space. Connected to this, children indicated that they feel little attracted by public space as an everyday socialising context 'because nothing really happens there'. As a consequence of the institutionalised individualisation of children's use of time and space, there remains little opportunity for informal encounters or unexpected situations within public space. Children from Sint-Pieters-Buiten are therefore easily capable of remaining within a group of like-minded peers with a similar social and cultural background, without being confronted with the broader plurality of the urban context in which they live. For some children, the exclusion of public space from their everyday lifeworld results in the perception of public space as an unfamiliar, unreliable or unsafe environment. Resulting from this situation, children identify only to a limited extent with public space within their neighbourhood.

In Steenakker, public space seems to take a more important position as an everyday socialising context for children. There is a very vivid public space within the neighbourhood, with a visible presence of children as well as adults. The social and cultural opportunities within public space depend partly upon the social group to which one belongs. Children of Turkish origin, for example, described their neighbourhood almost exclusively in terms of where different members of their family and Turkish friends lived, worked or gathered. And the formal and informal play spaces in the northern part of the neighbourhood were, to give another example, unfamiliar and even uncomfortable territory to the children living in the southern part of the neighbourhood. Still, these different groups do not live completely segregated. The different group-related patterns meet each other in certain places, which are mostly functionally unspecific or multifunctional places like a central square or road in the neighbourhood. The social interactions that arise within the neighbourhood are based not only on encounters with family, friends or familiar like-minded others but also on the awareness of and confrontation with 'other' people on certain places within the neighbourhood. In some cases, these confrontations are passive and do not result in social interactions: children perceive and experience the unfamiliar other and become aware of the diversity of habits, values and meaning within the same neighbourhood. In other cases, the confrontations lead to more active interactions like conflicts or new social relationships.

Just as the other two maps should not be analysed unidimensionally, there is a risk in isolating the personal maps from the physical and social perspectives, namely, a risk of individualisation and decontextualisation of children's perspectives on their social and physical environments, as is the case in some types of participatory or hyper-interpretative childhood research. Studying the neighbourhood as co-educator requires a truly three-dimensional lens that contextualises and enriches the information that results from each one of the individual perspectives involved.

Boundaries Matter

The suggested three-dimensional cartography requires that the study of the neighbourhood of children as a pedagogical field includes the combination of the three questions mentioned earlier: how are they able, allowed and willing to be present in the neighbourhood, in which the neighbourhood is understood as not just a collection of bricks, mortar and individuals but as a social and political space. As such, this combination of perspectives turns the attention to the boundaries within and around the neighbourhood as well as the ways in which children simultaneously reproduce these boundaries through their everyday actions and question/shift some of these boundaries.

Boundaries are an important concept because they shape and are shaped by social identities. Boundaries are the carriers of processes of social inclusion and exclusion. Through processes of appropriation and identification, boundaries can become carriers of social divisions and inequalities, the way in which the neighbourhood and its boundaries are socially constructed by and for children. Social class, for example, in itself does not affect the way children experience their neighbourhood. It is rather the way in which the neighbourhood is constructed differently vis-à-vis children from different social classes which affects the children's patterns of use of their neighbourhood. To put it shortly, boundaries matter: the construction of these boundaries is meaningful because they influence people's sense of social identity and they organise social space through geographies of power (Malone 2002).

Agency implies that children co-influence the reality they are part of. It refers to the ways in which children deal with the rules and norms prevailing in their community in a specific historical and social setting and thus also the ways in which they influence this community (Holloway and Valentine 2000). Agency refers to the process through which children develop an identity, not against but as part of a social reality. The agency concept is therefore related to the dynamics between the social world and the individual participant.

Physically speaking, all three neighbourhoods in my research offered quite some open spaces for children to play outside. Yet, in each case, children are confronted with specific boundaries and restrictions in their presence in public space. These boundaries are connected to the spatial, social and political features of the relation between child and public space. In each case the balance between being able, allowed and willing to be present in public space is different. Of course all three dimensions are present in each of the neighbourhoods, but different focuses can be observed.

In Sint-Pieters-Buiten this balance is mostly influenced by the question how children are still willing to be present in public space. The physical design of the public space creates a lot of opportunities for children to play and meet each other: for example, there is lot of open space and there are safe sidewalks. However, children are scarcely present in public space. This observation relates to the observation that children's everyday use of time and space is heavily determined by a

busy, institutionalised leisure agenda, a situation that Kampmann (2004) refers to as 'institutionalised individualisation'. As a consequence, there is little room left for informal encounters in public space. In Steenakker, boundaries are mostly related to the question how children are actually *able* to be present in public space, taking into account the presence and spatial claims of other groups in public space and the influence of their own social group on their use of time and space. And in Nieuw Gent, boundaries to children's presence in public space are mostly related to the question how they are allowed to be present in public space. This is connected to the warnings and rules that parents give in relation to places or strangers that should be avoided. Children seem to have little difficulty in accepting these rules. They are aware of the fact that they share the neighbourhood with individuals and groups who they have little in common with. However, the children from Nieuw Gent who participated in the research did not really seem to link the perceived diversity in their neighbourhood with feelings of unsafety, as some of the adult residents did. As such, their personalised social networks within public space overcame some of the social and cultural dividing lines that adults experienced.

So at first sight, children seem to accept most of the boundaries imposed on their presence in the neighbourhood and to elaborate strategies to maximise their social and cultural opportunities within these boundaries. But a closer look shows how children perceive boundaries as a window on new opportunities. The ruling boundaries are not contested by disobedience against parents or other educators. But through their everyday presence in and use of the neighbourhood, sporadic situations occur in which some boundaries shift little by little.

Discussion: Civic Learning and the Educational Researcher

Can educational research be seen as a democratic practice in itself? Democratic research practice starts by defining a research topic and research questions that recognise children's citizenship. In other words, the question what topics are being studied is equally interesting with regard to the development of a democratic research practice as the methods involved. As I have discussed earlier, pedagogical research into the relation between children and their neighbourhood often ends up in endless lists of criteria for a *good* or child-friendly space within the city. These so-called universal child-friendly criteria tell us more about the disciplinary and discursive concerns of adults (see Nespor 1998), rather than meeting the diverse specific situations in which children grow up. Most of the time, these design principles are based on theoretical and often taken-for-granted assumptions about children's development and the expected use of public space by children. In many cases, the democratic nature of research is looked for on the level of the research methods. In this line of reasoning, research designs that enable active participation of children in different stages of the research are supposed to generate a more democratic research practice than research designs that approach children only as passive sources of information.

In this chapter, I have focused on the methodological implications of a social-pedagogical approach to the discussion on children's presence in the neighbourhood. The view on children as actual, here-and-now, citizens is reflected in three guiding questions about children's presence in public space: how are they able, allowed and willing to be present in (the neighbourhood's) public space. I have argued that these questions differ fundamentally from the question how they should be present in the neighbourhood. The latter type of question departs from a rather prescriptive model of the neighbourhood that is mostly oriented at organising children's *coming into the world* in the best possible way. The former type of questions changes the scope to children's different ways of *being in the world*. Another methodological consequence from these theoretical options is that the child (and his or her behaviour, dispositions, etc.) is not the object of research but becomes a research subject. The research object is the neighbourhood's public space and the opportunities and restrictions that it holds for children to realise their citizenship. Educational research is an intervention into the life situation of children, and therefore, the role of the educational researcher is not a neutral one. Taking the perspective on children on how they are able, allowed and willing to be present in their neighbourhood raises critical questions about the democratic quality of public space within the city. As I have argued earlier, the experience from the research in Ghent show that children influence the boundaries *of* and *within* their neighbourhood steadily and sporadically through their everyday presence and social actions within this space. However, it should also be clear that the three different neighbourhoods create different conditions, possibilities and restraints for children to act upon their environment.

In that sense, my methodological framework has been limited in that it does not reveal the concrete learning processes or the specific democratic moments that took place in each of these neighbourhoods.

The research results should however challenge us to rethink the pedagogical meaning of the neighbourhood in relation to processes of civic learning. Children are socialised into very different societal orders, with different conceptions of citizenship and community, including their own position within it. The neighbourhood is a setting where diverse citizenship practices and community practices are continuously constructed and reconstructed through the everyday social actions of its residents. As such, the research in Ghent shows, for example, how in a neighbourhood like Sint-Pieters-Buiten children are socialised into a bourgeois-liberal or utilitarian notion of citizenship, emphasising individual rights and freedoms and collective civic norms and virtues. In a Steenakker, children seem to be socialised in a rather communitarian or social notion of citizenship, focused on group membership, solidarity and collective practice. These differences need to be situated within the combination of architectural and social elements and children's agency. The very observation of the different (unequal) conditions into which children live in itself already carries a political meaning, but also in terms of the civic learning opportunities *in the subjectification mode*, differences, for example, into what counts for a democratic moment and under which conditions such democratic experiments can develop, can be expected.

Furthermore, the analysis should not end at this point, but should be a starting point for pedagogical interventions that are inspired by *the world as it could be* (Shaw 2008). This implies a certain normative positioning towards the possible society and the possibility of social change. At this point I clearly follow Biesta's ideas on civic learning (Biesta 2011) in that the answer to the educational question about the neighbourhood is not to be found in turning all neighbourhoods towards a specific ideal model, a kind of new democratically inspired child-friendly framework, that aims to socialise children into (more) democratic ways of being present in the neighbourhood and of interacting with others. In other words, the normativity that I want to suggest is not a matter of imposing our own view on citizenship and democracy to others. In my opinion, the normative challenge is to understand first of all the neighbourhood as it is, and the citizenship practices as they are performed within that particular neighbourhood, in order to generate situations where democratic moments may occur that question the social order of that particular neighbourhood.

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Chapter 7
Research as Response: Methodological Reflections

Carmen Mathijssen and Danny Wildemeersch

Introduction

The following methodological reflections popped up in the aftermath of a Ph.D. research on the 'activation'[1] of people in poverty. The theoretical framework of this research was (amongst others) inspired by Biesta's notion of 'learning as response' (2006). 'Learning as response' presented a fruitful guidance to describe a more reflexive or responsive stance for practitioners working with people in poverty. The term 'practitioners' refers to coordinators, facilitators, community workers, instructors and neighbourhood support workers – in short, the varied support staff operating in social and cultural practices. The initial question for this contribution was as follows: can the concept of 'learning as response' be a useful and relevant source of inspiration to guide a participatory research methodology?

Before we go deeper into these methodological issues, we clarify our definition of 'poverty', since the practitioners we refer to in this paper work with people in poverty. In the Flemish part of Belgium the academic and policy discussion on poverty is often inspired by Vranken's (2004, p. 50) multi-aspectual definition of poverty. In poverty, 'different types of exclusion interact and reinforce each other'. Poverty not only has a financial aspect but is also connected to inadequate housing, restricted access to health care, educational difficulties, unemployment or limited access to the labour market and last but not least limited participation in society and social isolation. This definition has also given direction to our research.

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[1] 'Activation' is a concept used mainly in continental European policy contexts, aimed at increasing the participation of different groups of citizens (the poor, the elderly, the unemployed) in different social contexts. The notion often refers to the increase of the employability of these categories.

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Learning as Response

Learning as response is a central notion in this paper. Before we describe this notion in a theoretical way, we recall an experience during the research process which could be considered 'learning as response'. In the course of this research, the practitioners of six West-Flemish social economy initiatives took action to develop a more reflexive activation strategy to the benefit of people that are considered disadvantaged. The practitioners wanted to initiate a more humane approach to activation, in response to the increased pressure, mainly by policymakers, to organise the activation practices in a more restrictive way. Social economy initiatives are aimed at the activation of specific target groups, such as the low-skilled or the long-term unemployed. People living in poverty and the activation practitioners involved in our study repeatedly pointed out that the new emerging sector of community services sought to provide an alternative for the dominant forms of restrictive activation. The community services in the disadvantaged area under study have the ambition to engage in support activities, starting from the concrete problems faced by people in poverty, from their everyday insecurities and from the experienced complexities and contradictions. From the very beginning, the practitioners and the people in poverty embarked on a joint learning process. At the occasion of round table discussions of the six community services involved, the practitioners repeatedly referred to the difficulty to articulate to outsiders that they wanted to achieve more than just providing employment for vulnerable groups. This inability to demonstrate to policymakers their participatory approach was chosen as the starting point of an intensive reflection day.

The practitioners expressed their concern that, because they were in need of funding from the authorities, they accommodated to the restrictive employability discourse of the policymakers. The community workers agreed that employability is an important concept which they do not want to totally brush aside. However, they do object to the fact that other aspects of their work – such as enhancing justice, solidarity or care for the most vulnerable – are often rejected as 'not relevant' in debates with policymakers. The practitioners stated that this restrictive discourse is offensive to their target group of people living in poverty. The brainstorming undertaken in the context of this research encouraged these six community services to challenge the dominant discourse and to draw attention to their alternative discourse of participation and respect. The community services thereby wished to demonstrate that a one-sided emphasis on employability affects the most vulnerable people in our society.

> 'We need to fight for another discourse highlighting social demarcations, and reveal the tensions and problems within the instruments being used. (…) It shows that the instrumental discourse curtails and restricts us. (…) The projects confront people with societal dividing lines, with certain responsibilities facing them, and offer them opportunities, space and the freedom to take this responsibility' (reflection day 10.07.2006).

Like this, our research started from a condition of uncertainty, ambiguity and contradiction. Again and again, we were surprised by practitioners' eagerness to

learn and by their openness during round table discussions. In addition to maintaining and developing their community services, they also aimed at empowering each other through the round table discussions and to contribute actively to this study. To that end, various activities were set up, such as an information meeting for local policymakers and even the making of a social documentary video. We will further demonstrate in this contribution how the learning of the practitioners can be understood as a form of 'learning as response'.

Maybe this kind of observation is only possible when the practitioners not only trust the researcher but also trust each other. This presupposes that they enter the research process with an attitude of cooperation rather than competition. This certainly is not self-evident. Often organisations that receive government funding are not keen to expose their vulnerabilities and weaknesses, because they fear negative implications for their budget.

Biesta links his concept of 'learning as response' to the notion of 'the community of those who have nothing in common', developed by Lingis (1994). Members of such community live in different worlds that are not connected to each other by tradition, culture or ethnicity. The encounter with others within this 'uncommon community' requires a response to this experience of strangeness. The language of responsibility is driven by an ethical relationship of unlimited responsibility for the other. This community of those who have nothing in common is constituted by 'our response to the stranger, the one who asks, seeks – demands, as Levinas would say – *my* response, who seeks to hear *my* unique voice' (Biesta 2006, p. 65). According to Biesta (1999, pp. 212–213) Levinas' starting point is a critique on the presupposition of Western philosophy that the primary relationship of the 'ego' with the world is a knowledge relationship, as expressed in the Cartesian formula 'je pense, donc je suis'. Biesta (2002, p. 45) stresses with Levinas

> 'that Western philosophy has been unable to recognize the alterity of the other because it understands the relationship between human beings and the world (including other human beings) primarily as an epistemological relationship, a relationship where an isolated, self-present mind or ego attempts to get accurate knowledge of the external world'.

This way of engaging with the world is typical for what Lingis (1994) calls the 'rational community'. This is the community where so-called rational actors interact with each other, driven by knowledge relations and cognition patterns proper to their own community. In order to be a reasonable member of that community, one has to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and dispositions. This activity can be described as 'learning as acquisition'. In contrast to this, the learning that takes place when trying to engage with the alterity of the community of strangers could be interpreted as 'learning as response'.

The 'rational community' and the 'community of strangers' are not strictly divided. They are not two options to choose from. 'The community of strangers lives 'inside' the rational community as a constant possibility and comes into presence as soon as one responds to the other, to the otherness of the other, to what is strange in relation to the discourse and logic of the rational community' (Biesta 2006, p. 66). As a consequence, 'learning as response' cannot be

instrumentalised on the basis of an instructional process. However, it is possible to create a space where that kind of learning might occur. Such pedagogy creates opportunities for encounters with 'otherness', with unfamiliar and diverse situations, events, contexts and people. The learning taking place in such spaces is a non-linear but cumulative learning process. The distinction between these two types of communities and the different types of learning connected to them is also important for the world of social research. Often, social researchers limit their observations and interpretations to the 'rational community' while putting the 'community of strangers' between brackets.

In contrast to this, we depart from the assertion that an exclusive knowledge relation is, also for a researcher, not necessarily the most fruitful, important or liberating way to relate to the world. When taking responsibility for the other, there is no need for knowledge about the other. 'Responsibility excludes and opposes calculation' (Biesta 2004, p. 322). If our relation to the world and other human beings is not primarily a knowledge relationship, what is it then? Levinas describes how the subject is involved in a relationship that is 'older' than the ego. This relation is an ethical relationship of unlimited responsibility for the other (Biesta 1999). We experience a moral demand preceding all knowledge. Biesta (2006, p. 49) refers to the insight that 'our primordial being-in-the-world is a being-in-the-world-with-others'. This can be summarised in the simple yet worrying phrase that the subject is a hostage, obsessed by his/her responsibilities (Biesta 2006, p. 51). These responsibilities are not products of decisions or choices by this subject. It is not the case that our 'response' is based on knowledge about the other. It is not the case that we first need to know what we will be responsible for and then decide whether to take up this responsibility. 'It is a responsibility without knowledge of what one is responsible for' (Biesta 2006, p. 116).

All human beings – including researchers – are not only engaged in relations, but are constituted by relations. Levinas stresses that the responsibility for the other is not a responsibility we can choose to take up, to ignore or neglect (Biesta 1999, p. 213). We are even responsible for 'that which we do not will or intend' (Chinnery 2003, p. 11). Chinnery (2003, p. 15) describes this ethical responsibility as 'a position of existential debt wherein the other's existence puts obligations on me which I will never be able to fulfil but from which I am also never released'. Responsibility has to do with openness to the other, with saying 'yes' to the otherness of the other, with suffering through painful situations not caused by us, 'but to which we are nonetheless called to respond' (Chinnery 2003, p. 7).

Often this response is ethical or political. In our research we started from an ethical stance that took the concrete form of participatory research, where participants (in our case practitioners) co-constructed the research design, the research aims, the research questions and all the other phases of the research process. We considered it important that not only the researchers would gain knowledge (and power), but that the knowledge development would be democratically shared with the practitioners. Here the ethical translated into the political. This research tried to fight oppressive and restrictive structures in the everyday life of practitioners and the people in poverty they work with. We agree with Lather (1986, p. 67) that once we recognise that

'there is no neutral research, we no longer need to apologize for unabashedly ideological research and its open commitment to using research to criticize and change the status quo'. This critical and democratic stance is not new in the tradition of action research. Action researchers embrace approaches to research 'in which the spurious dichotomy between theory and practice is mediated, in which multidisciplinary and multi-stakeholder teams are central, and in which objectivity is replaced by a public commitment to achieving liberating, sustainable, and democratizing outcomes' (Greenwood 2002, p. 125). Both research as response and action research are not about imposing expert knowledge on stakeholders. Action research is about collaborative environments where researchers and local stakeholders 'can share their very different kinds of knowledge in the process of analyzing their problems, studying them, and collaboratively designing actions that can ameliorate the problems' (Greenwood 2002, p. 127). The kind of ethical relationship that is described in 'research as response' resonates the action research relationship, which is also based on active co-construction. Hilsen (2006, p. 34) makes a strong point about action research that according to us also is valid for 'research as response': 'The ethical demand can never be non-political, as politics is the practical side of the society we construct through our practice.' Researchers have to accept responsibility for the kind of society to which we contribute; here the ethical and the political are closely intertwined.

Research as Response: The Ethical Demand

Before we further elaborate on the methodological issues at hand, we need to explain why we think 'activation' to be an important issue. During this Ph.D., we formulated some fundamental concerns and critiques on the activation for employment of people in poverty. While recognising the positive effect that employment *can* have in a person's life, we tried to contribute to the development of an alternative activation discourse and practice. Since the 1980s and the 1990s, a wide range of activation policies were being developed in Flanders. The central aim is to increase the employability of the unemployed thereby increasing the labour market participation rates. Work is considered to be the best means for inclusion in society and the best protection against poverty. Mobility and flexibility are considered to be necessary and unavoidable. People in poverty are mostly confronted with the dark side of flexibility with flexible jobs, flexible contracts and flexible rules for downsizing. Even social economy initiatives trying to work 'bottom-up' in a participatory manner have to adapt to the 'top-down' employability criteria or are excluded from funding. A rather restrictive activation logic seems to have gained ground through the policy frameworks and through the funding criteria social economy initiatives have to meet (Weil et al. 2005). For policymakers, the first priority is to integrate unemployed groups into the regular economic system. More reflexive activation initiatives are diverted from their original ambitions – the combat of poverty in a participatory way – towards objectives favoured by the policymakers: job creation

and insertion of the unemployed into the labour market. We find it important to reflect on the limitations of the employability discourse, where economic concerns are privileged over social concerns. We fear we may be moving towards a work-first situation with a growing group of 'working poor' if we keep on imposing this individualising restrictive activation discourse on all vulnerable groups, especially on people in generational poverty (Mathijssen 2008).

In our research on the activation of people in poverty, we were explicitly confronted with the issue of ethical responsibility, as an obligation which we were never able to fulfil, but from which we were also never released. In line with Pinchevski (2005, p. 217), responsibility means exceeding rather than following social norms. Responsibility for researchers in this sense means exceeding rather than just following methodological prescriptions or guidelines. Responsibility is not the result of rational calculation. It has nothing to do with a social or legal code.

Hilsen (2006) argues that we need an ethical demand for research, rather than an ethical code. The ethical demand is unconditional. We cannot choose when we find it appropriate to follow. The ethical demand is there, even when it is not in my (research) interest to follow or when it does not favour me or my research. The ethical demand is also a demand to accept responsibility for the kind of society to which we contribute.

> 'The ethical demand is a demand to take responsibility for how your chosen acts and practices affect the lives of your fellow human beings. Research practices can be liberating and increase people's capacity to influence their own environments and implement solutions to their own, experienced problems, or it can confirm stereotypes and constricting images of people, and so render people less able to change their environments.' (Hilsen 2006, p. 28)

Because research *can* make a difference in people's lives, responsibility is an unavoidable issue.

An ethical code is something completely different. Loewenthal (2003) considers an ethical code even as a contradiction in terms, if this code precedes the other for whom it is meant to be intended. Can we stop research 'from reverting to technique-oriented mechanism of professional vested interests and, instead, find a better way for us all to put the other first?' (Loewenthal 2003, p. 367). How can we put the other first? 'Instead of being primarily concerned with systems of power and knowledge, we should be more concerned with justice on a case by case basis' (Loewenthal 2003, p. 374). Also according to Zembylas (2005, p. 149), there are no concrete rules or guidelines to be found in the ethics of Levinas concerning the responsibility to the other. This means that one cannot know for sure whether he/she is responding in the 'correct' way. We have to dare to embrace vulnerability: 'Taking responsibility for the other is a question of attitude, of 'guts', which defies any attempt to plan and control it' (Ortega 2004, p. 279).

Research as response is not about acquiring knowledge or something that already existed, but it is about responding to a question. The relationship between researcher and respondent is a responsibility for someone or somebody that we do not know and that we cannot know. In that case the goal of research is not to describe, copy or reproduce what already exists. The goal of research is to answer to what is unknown and different, what is challenging, irritating and even disturbing. The first step in a research relationship is to accept the respondent in his/her concrete reality of his/her tradition, culture and context. It is about acknowledging that the respondent is

'somebody', who is appreciated for his/her dignity as a person, not just as a source of data. The researcher accepts the respondent as somebody with whom it is necessary to build up a moral relationship. By being present in the lives of our respondents as someone they can trust, the respondents can experience understanding, affection and respect. For the researcher, this is about developing empathy, solidarity, dialogue and the ability to listen and be attentive to the other.

It also implies the ability to analyse one's own research environment. In our research, we engaged in a close collaboration with practitioners of local Flemish community services in the west of Flanders. During that research we were wondering about the issue of access to the research findings. Inspired by Lincoln (1995, 1998), we constructed the knowledge about every single aspect of our research topic in close collaboration with the practitioners. On several occasions we also sought feedback of the people in poverty who are involved in the community services as volunteers or employees. Since the knowledge was jointly constructed, we also found it should be shared democratically. Our aim was to use the research findings to the benefit of those that have the least power and resources: the poor, the excluded, the marginalised and the silenced. In our research the learning of the practitioners was equally important to the learning of the researcher. Both the people in poverty and practitioners were closely involved in the research design, collection, analysis and reporting of data. We created an intense inquiry space in which practitioners could carefully examine their practice and change their actions as a result (Reason 2003). In the first phase of the research we also constructed a think tank together with only people in poverty (no practitioners were involved on this occasion), where the research goals and questions were jointly constructed. We did so, because practitioners and people in poverty in their own way were frustrated by previous experiences of activation policies and practices that had a strong economic bias. In response to this, we tried to acknowledge both practitioners and people in poverty in their dignity and not simply treat them as a source of data. Following Loewenthal (2003) we wanted to avoid a type of research that reduces the respondents to the role of a supporting cast in a drama set-up to preserve the researcher's privilege.

Research as Compassion: Vulnerability and Protest

Considering the above, research as response involves exposure and vulnerability. The relation between researcher and respondents is not limited to a knowledge relationship. It is also a relation of ethical responsibility. In the case of research on poverty (whether it be with practitioners or with people in poverty themselves), research can take the form of protest on behalf of, and together with, those whose dignity is wrongfully lost. This is close to Levinas' description of compassion. Compassion is a feeling of solidarity with the suffering of the other. The starting point of ethics is according to Ortega and Minguez (2001, pp. 162–163) 'the experience of suffering as an affront to dignity, something which *should not be*'. This does not call for understanding. It calls for compassion.

Compassion implies a political engagement to help and liberate. Compassion is about working to transform the unjust structures that cause suffering, dependency and alienation. Compassion is not the same as a passive feeling of sympathy as a non-involved outsider. It is not an empty feeling that leaves us uninterested to the causes of the suffering. In this sense, the challenge for our society today is to acknowledge the dignity of every human being. Research as compassion does not only lead to a better understanding of knowledge about the Other, but more importantly it leads to taking responsibility for the situation of the Other. Research starts from the right to a life in dignity. Research starts from the confrontation with injustice. The only option then is protest. Research can be a political engagement, it can be a criticism of situations and actions which degrade and offend human beings. This asks for research that accepts one's own responsibility for the Other and one's responsibility for repairing his/her dignity. This way research can be ethical and political.

Ethical research is confrontational. It often is an 'interruption' both for the researcher and the respondents. It is a moment of exposure and vulnerability. Both the researcher and the researched are expected to first answer the question: 'where are you?' This question can be understood in a fundamental way as a research question. A second responsibility concerns the question 'What do you think about this?' or 'What is your opinion?' This is a difficult question, which can interrupt and disturb, but it also has the potential 'to call someone into being as a unique, singular individual' (Biesta 2006, p. 150). Seen in this way, research becomes a process of asking difficult questions. Such research is not without risk. Research as a questioning that unsettles the obvious always implies a form of 'violence', because there is no certainty or knowledge about the answer or outcome of this questioning. In this way also research is a form of 'violence' asking difficult questions and creating difficult encounters. Researchers always have an impact on the lives of the respondents and this impact can be transforming and disruptive.

Especially in the context of working with people in poverty, we have to keep in mind that, empirically speaking, the research relationship will always remain an unequal relationship. The researcher most likely has a higher educational degree, a better pay cheque and access to valuable means and is embedded in a more powerful network. However, this 'empirical inequality' does not necessarily have to be problematic in the research relationship. What people in poverty do experience as negative is a distant relation where the researcher stresses this unequality by keeping or making people dependent. There is a need for equivalency, without denying or ignoring the difference in power and position. There is no necessary contradiction between the status difference of the research partners and the point of departure of a respectful and equal relationship. Taking such a democratic stance opens up positive possibilities for change and emancipation for the people in poverty, by broadening their options for action.

Research often encounters many popular prejudices. These prejudices made the presentation of our (preliminary) research results to practitioners, policymakers and people in poverty a challenging activity. Especially policymakers were expecting 'objective' numbers, graphics, representative models and efficient instruments.

Some did not agree with the described conflicting discourses. The researcher was critically questioned and needed to literally defend her chosen interpretative methodology and demonstrate the scientific value of this kind of research to non-methodologists. This not only needed 'translation' of specific terms in understandable language. It also required the courage and skill to engage into a constructive dialogue. In these dialogues a challenge was not to insult or alienate people with the argument that discussing their doubts about the validity of research conclusions is 'too difficult for non-researchers'.

In our research we started from the *commitment* to closely involve the practitioners in every research phase. Everything was systematically discussed during round table discussions in an ongoing process of analysis. As Greenwood (2002, p. 121) stated: 'Social engagement from a campus office or university library study is generally not feasible. And social engagement means having one's time placed at the disposal of extramural stakeholders who are engaged in social processes that do not occur in synchrony with the academic calendar'. We also experienced this tension throughout the whole research process, which asked for a considerate amount of *discipline* to cope with this in comparison with some other researchers who remain within the boundaries of a campus-bound university life. Especially the decision to do manual labour while observing in the phase of data collection proved to be an exercise in self-discipline since the researcher struggled with a painful chronic knee infection and several other health problems.

Ph.D. Research as Response: Data Collection

When looking back to our research, we asked ourselves if we could trace some elements of 'research as response' since it is not self-evident to include the voices of practitioners and especially of people in poverty in research. While the people in poverty were closely involved in a think tank to guide the formulation of research aims and questions; the practitioners were closely involved as co-researchers in every research phase. Inspired by Pols (2005), we chose not to do interviews with people in poverty (both volunteers and employees in the community services). The interview situation presupposes that the interviewee is able and willing to express his/her situation in language. People in poverty often are reluctant to talk about their lives, their relatives and their job or unemployment. This reluctance can be explained by their experiences with 'interviews' with organisations whose declared aim is to offer support, but who may play a surveillance role when people in poverty are concerned. During our research we heard several stories telling about such experiences with employment agencies or with child care institutions. An interview about 'being active' and 'work experiences' might remind them of those feared interviews at VDAB (Flemish Mentoring and Training Agency for Job-seekers) or RVA (Belgian Employment Agency). These agencies check the 'employability and flexibility' of the unemployed. We did not wish to evoke these negative connotations and the associated feelings of distrust.

Another reason for not working with interviews was the normative power of the standard Dutch language, particularly in a region where the local dialect is still very dominant. In such case, some people in poverty would start doubting whether they were expressing things 'correctly' or would be embarrassed to 'use their own words' or colloquial language.

Together with the practitioners we searched for a suitable method to also include people in poverty in the process of data collection. Pols (2005) again inspired us, when observing and describing everyday practices through participatory observation. In this way, people in poverty did not have to adapt to the requirements and presuppositions inherent in an (uncomfortable) interview situation. In addition, this also enabled us to include (to a certain degree) people in poverty who were unable to express themselves 'correctly' in language. 'Everybody has a practice, even though not everyone can make verbal representations of it' (Pols 2005, p. 215).

Unlike Pols, we did not opt for observation, but for participatory observation. This means that the researcher got a hands-on experience of what it is like to work in a community service in everyday activities. The researcher cleaned toilets, helped to renovate a youth centre, maintained green spaces in a disadvantaged neighbourhood…. The researcher spent at least 2 days observing each of the six community services. The frequency, duration and type of activities depended on the community services themselves. The researcher told participants that she wanted to do 'nothing special' but merely wanted to participate in everyday activities, as an ordinary volunteer helping for a few days. An advantage was that the researcher could notice things that might not have been revealed in interviews, because they are 'obvious' to participants, or a matter of routine. This also entailed a learning opportunity for the community services involved. For a researcher, such almost unconscious routines may become visible, because she is not fully 'immersed' in these routines and because she is analysing cases where routines differ.

Perhaps even more importantly, participatory observation allowed the researcher to actually demonstrate people that she considered their activities relevant and interesting. She did not just tell them that she respected and appreciated their work. She could also put her words into practice. Participatory observation allowed her to show that she did not consider their work 'inferior' or 'dirty', for instance, by getting down on her knees to scrub an elderly couple's toilet. Obviously, in this way the researcher's participation affected and changed the situations under investigation. At one occasion, the researcher accompanied a woman, who cleaned a senior citizen's flat every week in 2 h. The researcher actively collaborated in this activity. This changed the researched situation in the sense that there was more time available than necessary for cleaning the flat with two persons. It was interesting to see how the cleaning lady coped with this excess of time. She did not diminish her intensive work rhythm. Instead she took on additional jobs like putting a nail in the wall while telling she was happy with the extra time so she could do extra work because she wanted the senior citizen to live in a clean and comfortable flat.

The participatory observation was accompanied by 'informal conversations', without using neither pen and paper nor a tape recorder. The researcher waited for people in poverty to start talking to her. While connecting to what people

spontaneously told her, she got a better insight in what topics were important to them. 'Dialogue' is a better word for this than 'interrogation'. The researcher also had a few general ice-breaking questions when necessary. These were open, inviting questions such as the following: 'How are things today? What do you do around here? How did you join this community service? What do you think about this community service?' If people made vague or general statements, she asked for a concrete example. According to Ellis and Berger (2003, p. 161), this dialogue can be compared to 'a sea swell of meaning making in which researchers connect their own experiences to those of others and provide stories that open up conversations about how we live and cope'. Patton (1980) calls this an informal conversation interview, where questions emerge from the immediate context and are asked in the natural course of things. Another advantage is that the questions emerged from participatory observations and were therefore directly relevant both for the researcher and for the participants. All conversations can be linked to specific individuals, activities and circumstances.

We decided not to conduct 'formal interviews', avoiding to suggest through the questionnaires what we assumed to be important, while we wanted to give the people in poverty and the practitioners in community services the opportunity to decide what they wished to talk about. Sometimes, it took quite long before a conversation started. For instance, the researcher had to spend a lot of time sanding wood before people made eye contact and started telling what the community service meant to them. Above all, it took commitment, discipline, motivation, effort and patience to collect these data.

Workshops and study days for practitioners and policymakers played a major role throughout the whole research process. However, it proved not so easy to find time for this, given the increasing pressure in the academic world to concentrate on publishing papers in highly ranked international academic journals, preferably in English. Articles in Dutch-language or practice-oriented journals have limited value in the competitive academic environment. Giving lectures and organising workshops for practitioners and local policymakers or contributing to documentaries aimed at a wider audience is not a priority. Thus, the gap between the university and society is widened rather than bridged. We endorse Jaspers et al. (2007) criticism of this evolution. The results of research cannot be measured solely on the basis of citation indexes and remain invisible in a model that wants to measure quality in numbers. The emphasis on the number of publications leaves little time for slow and painstaking knowledge gathering or for reflection about society (Jaspers et al. 2007). Social scientists sometimes have to choose between being 'useful' rather than being intellectually 'important' or academically successful (Greenwood 2002, p. 121).

Finally, *patience* was not just a luxury, but a necessity. Understanding and trust with practitioners and especially with people in poverty unfolds through time. We agree with Henderson (2005, p. 82) on the importance of listening. We needed to learn to listen, to witness suffering, allowing other stakeholders to set the pace of the research process. We recognise the statement of Henderson (2005, p. 88): 'We learned to sit with discomfort, including our own.'

Ph.D. Research as Response: Data Analysis and Reporting

The analysis of the collected data was done in close collaboration with the practitioners. The researcher systematically discussed her descriptions at round table meetings with the practitioners in an ongoing process of analysis. The practitioners were invited to give feedback, not only on the data collected so far but also on the theoretical and methodological frameworks used. Were these recognisable, usable and understandable for them? Together we questioned the meanings and relevance of their daily practices and discourses. In this way the practitioners learned to look at and talk about their practice in new and different ways. Together we searched how to engage their personal and collective capabilities for working on their problems and frustrations.

People in poverty from the six community services were invited at one occasion to give feedback to preliminary analyses. The practitioners and the researcher as a team explained the preliminary conclusions and their impact on the community services. People in poverty were very keen to give their opinion – not only on the results but also on the actions that should be undertaken in the near future on the basis of these results. A returning suggestion was to visualise the results in a sort of documentary 'so that even policymakers could be enabled to understand the complexity of the combat of poverty in community services'. This and all other questions and remarks were thoroughly taken into account in the follow-up analysis and the reporting afterwards. The researchers were careful to honestly represent in their writing the ethical and participatory process of collaborative knowledge creation in which they engaged. Just like action researchers, responsive researchers cannot separate the research process from the findings 'precisely because of the ongoing dialogue between theorization, action, and re-theorization' (Greenwood 2002, pp. 132–133).

During the research process the practitioners engaged in a learning process and took several actions to promote their alternative activation strategy. At one occasion, the research results were translated in the documentary 'Grensland'. To realise this, several partners were brought together: Samenlevingsopbouw West-Vlaanderen and Een Andere Wereld Films. With this documentary, the community services presented a critique on the dominant economic activation discourse. The targets of the practitioners for this documentary were ambitious: They wanted to break prejudices against people in poverty and build understanding and solidarity. As an alternative to the dominant employability-oriented discourse, they decided to foster a discourse of proximity, dialogue and shared responsibility. They also wanted to explain the difference between poverty and unemployment. In line with this, it is important to note that unemployment is only one of many characteristics of poverty. We agree with De Boyser (2004) that a narrow focus on economic activation may miss the mark, certainly when unemployment is only one of the many problems in a tangled web of poverty and exclusion. A job may offer protection against income poverty, but it does not automatically lift people out of poverty. Unless attention is paid to care, emotional well-being and a support network, finding a job does not guarantee progress in life. Economic activation may help combat

unemployment but is insufficient to address the much more complex issue of poverty and exclusion. People in poverty are disproportionally more likely to have jobs involving a higher risk of depression: 'jobs that require little training or experience and that offer little remuneration, job security and control over one's own work' (De Boyser 2004, pp. 69–70).

All these experiences with practitioners, with people in poverty and last but not least with policymakers held a huge learning potential for the researchers, resulting in 'a critical stance regarding the inadequacies of our pet theories and an openness to counter-interpretations' (Lather 1986, p. 76). This dialogue between theory development and practice capable of disconfirming or altering our conclusions asks for an open-ended research, which is difficult – but not impossible – to plan beforehand. We agree with Greenwood (2002, p. 125) that 'the only meaningful way to theorize is through successive cycles of combined reflection and action, the action feeding back to revise the reflection in ongoing cycles'. In 'research as response' we also recognise the importance of counterintuitive thinking, questioning of definitions and premises and the attempt to subject our favourite interpretations to harsh critiques by several stakeholders with different points of view.

At this point it is relevant to call attention to the spectrum of ideas about citizenship described by Westheimer and Kahne (2004). They describe three kinds of ideas about what good citizenship is and what good citizens do. We claim these conceptions of citizenship are also embodied by researchers worldwide. These conceptions reflect no arbitrary choices or methodological limitations, but are political choices with political consequences (Westheimer and Kahne 2004). A researcher can take the stance of a *personally responsible citizen* as a citizen who, for example, provides food to a food drive or a soup kitchen. In this restricted conception, citizens and researchers have to be honest, responsible and law abiding. We can relate this to the rational community (Lingis) we mentioned above. Good citizens have to work, pay taxes and obey laws. A researcher could also take the second stance of a *participatory citizen*, or someone who helps to organise a soup kitchen. In this conception a good citizen is an active member of community organisations. This involves organising community efforts to care for those in need. The core assumption is that citizens (and researchers) should actively participate within established systems and community structures. Finally, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) describe a third conception of citizenship. The *justice-oriented citizen* questions why a soup kitchen is needed. He/she explores why people are hungry and tries to act to tackle root causes. This citizen or researcher critically assesses social, political and economic structures to see beyond surface causes and to address areas of injustice. The assumption here is that good citizens (and researchers) must question and change established systems and structures.

In this Ph.D. research all three kinds of citizenship were enacted. The researcher volunteered during the research in different activities organised by the neighbourhood services, as a personally responsible citizen/researcher. More importantly, the researcher contributed to the exploration and development of new ways of employment and participation for people in poverty. This is in line with a position as a participatory citizen/researcher. But the essence of the reflexive stance for the

researcher was the position as a justice-oriented citizen/researcher. This third position definitely coincides with the concept of 'research as response'. Together with practitioners and people in poverty, the researcher questioned the responsibility of practitioners and policymakers in the context of the economic activation of people in poverty. The third position as *justice-oriented citizen* and the stance of *research as response* both start from responsibility for the other. These practices can both be liberating and increase people's capacity to influence their context. Both are aimed at transforming unjust structures that cause suffering and alienation. Most striking, both forms of questioning can offer no certainty or knowledge about their open-ended outcome.

Further Questions and Responses

We started these methodological reflections with the question whether 'research as response' can inspire a respectful design for research with practitioners and with people in poverty. We now can conclude that 'learning as response' is relevant as an inspiring notion to give direction to the research methodology, especially when the research has democratic ambitions. In this sense, it shares many characteristics with the well-documented tradition of action research. However, some questions remain. How can researchers cope with the ongoing unpredictability of the learning/research process? How can they cope with the discomfort, with the messy character and with the slow and painstaking gathering of knowledge in this type of learning and research?

In order to deal with these questions, the researcher will not only have to follow the methodological guidelines, he/she inevitably will have to exceed them. Special efforts are needed to create a space for 'research as response' to occur, even though it is fairly impossible to instrumentalise this process. Here the responsive researcher has to be prepared to be vulnerable and ask all participants involved whether the frameworks used are recognisable and useful for them. Accepting and even embracing discomfort and ambiguity is an inevitable attitude in this case. This kind of open-ended research is difficult, but not impossible to execute. At first glance, participatory observation seems to be an instrument worth further exploring. Like this, research as response holds the promise of opening possibilities for democratic change and for fighting unjust structures. We do not need to apologise for our democratic and responsive stance; we can defend it as a legitimate way of 'catalytic validity' (Lather 1986).

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Chapter 8
Action Research and Democracy

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Introduction

This chapter explores the relationship between action research and learning democracy. Action research is often defined as emancipatory research, since it implies research in collaboration with practitioners and clients rather than research *about* them or *for* them. The goal of action research is the co-construction of knowledge (Gredig and Marsh 2010; Pease 2010). In that vein, generating knowledge is seen not only as a core task and dedication of researchers, but essentially entails a pluralistic concern (Nielsen and Nielsen 2006). Action research is often applied in the field of education and social work, since it is argued that action research enables a more democratic and socially just society. The appraisal of existing situations as inhumane and/or inadequate in the light of a democratic society often serves as the starting point for action research. Historically, action research is rooted in social sciences that attempt to pursue a more humane and democratic society. In Anglo-Saxon contexts, Kurt Lewin is perceived as the spiritual father of action research. Other prominent perspectives imply the pragmatic philosophy of John Dewey, the interactionism as developed by George Herbert Mead, Jacob Levy Moreno's group work and John Collier's work as Commissioner of Indian Affairs (Feldman 1994). In the German-speaking countries, reference is primarily made to the impact of Critical Theory, mainly inspired by the work of Jurgen Habermas. In this approach, action research represents the construction of 'critical research communities' based on the commitment to respond to a jointly

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encountered problem. From a more radical perspective, action research has the potential to create more space to stimulate a broader public debate and entails an interrelation between action research and broader social movements (Kemmis 2001). Together with Critical Theory, Critical Pedagogy – particularly with reference to the work of Paulo Freire (1972) and Oskar Negt (1975) – is an important source of inspiration. In this respect, Critical Pedagogy primarily focuses on questioning existing realities and situations of marginalised groups in society. The relationship between the researcher and the research subject is an essential point of interest in this approach: this relationship should be seen as a subject-subject relationship in which the various actors position themselves towards each other in a process of mutual encounter and in which various interpretations of the realities and situations in question become the subject of research and reflection. The point of departure in this approach to research is that society can be understood as the result of human actions and can also be changed by human actions. Action research can therefore be seen as a form of *cultural action*, meaning breaking through the norms that are firmly established in our culture, and as a form of *social learning*, that is, the acquisition of 'sociological imagination', which allows us to link one's own reality with the political (Nielsen and Nielsen 2006).

In the light of the variety of the above mentioned theoretical sources of inspiration, action research currently 'includes a whole range of approaches and practices, each grounded in different traditions in different philosophical and psychological assumptions, pursuing different political commitments' (Reason and Bradbury 2001, p. XXIV). The ways in which much importance is given to action research varies (Feldman 1994; Altrichter and Gstettner 1993), and the productivity of the research often depends on the way in which the co-researchers can develop reflexive potential to reconsider their concrete institutional context critically, realising the 'communicative space' required for the research (Wicks and Reason 2009). In the field of education and social work in Flanders, action research has gained prominence since the late 1970s.

In what follows, we focus on the possible contribution of action research to learning democracy. We will discuss our own experiences and insights acquired from two action research projects that were set up within the youth welfare sector in Flanders (the Flemish speaking part of Belgium). The first study concerned the implementation of educational assistance in youth welfare, commissioned by the government to avoid more intrusive and more expensive interventions by developing a good and transferrable form of ambulatory assistance. The second study involved research into the reorganisation of the youth welfare sector, posing the question of how the various forms of care supply could be better harmonised in order to create a more demand-driven type of care. In this chapter, we throw light on the five basic elements that we have identified in an apt definition of action research, being developed during these studies: *action research is (1) a way of social interaction (2) in response to a problematic situation (3) in order to change the situation (4) in collaboration with the people involved, (5) while striving for the development of theory* (Bouverne-De Bie and Verhellen 1995; Roose and De Bie 2003; Roose and De Bie 2009).

Action Research: Research as a Way of Social Interaction…

The point of departure of our approach to action research, which is mainly inspired by Freire, is that social realities have been constructed and created by people and are therefore also changeable. The basis of society and the humanity within this society is therefore perceived as intersubjective interactions. Research can also be seen as being part of these interactions rather than a neutral activity (D'Cruz and Jones 2004). This point of departure implies that knowledge cannot be in conformity to an existing order, but that knowledge is considered as socially constructed and must be considered with respect to the question of intersubjectivity in the social order (Schuyt 1972), referring to the different points of view from which a situation can be studied. The relationship between action research and democracy is also part of this viewpoint: does the research contribute to the confirmation of the social order or to social change? And, if it concerns change: is this change supported by the researcher, who, in the name of science, proposes a 'new order', or does the research contribute to increasing the 'quality of interaction', that is, the possibility to deal with competitive points of view and to pursue a greater equality of possibilities to act? This insight is in line with the terminology provided by Biesta (2011a), who addresses the question of whether the research contributes to a *socialisation approach* or to a *subjectification approach* to the democratic quality of society.

The point of departure of action research, perceived as a form of social interaction, has consequences for the approach to knowledge, which is viewed as historically construed, and in which everyday life experiences, as well as memories and future expectations, play a role (Negt 1975). Considering knowledge as socially constructed implies that concrete insight needs to be acquired in the structure of meaning of actions in particular settings. In our approach, action research therefore should be approached as *interpretative* research, in the sense that the researcher does not use an explicit (and previously conceived) observation or coding schedule for the collection, analysis and interpretation of data. In that vein, interpretative research – including action research – is closely related to a diversity of phenomenological approaches, such as symbolic interactionism (Schuyt 1972; Bogdan and Biklen 1998), cultural-historical approaches with an emphasis on the study of ordinary, everyday life, such as ethnomethodology and ethnography (Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Angrosino 2008*)*, and critical approaches like social environment research (Grunwald and Thiersch 2009). In these approaches, the core research subject is everyday language and life experiences, and the life experiences of actors involved in the research process are also symbolic references to how they view social realities as well as social relationships in these realities. In that sense, experience is not only sensorial experience yet concerns an assessment of the socially constructed realities at stake that can only be established through the use of symbols that people have learned to use in social interactions and relationships. Experience is perceived as the account that is constructed by people while being inspired by what happens in their lives (Schuyt 1972, p. 42). In other words, a reality is not unilaterally determined by 'facts', but is construed by researching events as the subject of research and knowledge (Glastra van Loon 1970, 1980).

In the action research that we conducted in the youth welfare sector, respectively the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) were essential reference points. The research was therefore aimed towards the demand for equality in possibilities to lead a dignified human existence. Our research also devoted much attention to the historical and social analysis of these human rights frameworks, as well as to the examination of the meaning attributed to the UDHR and the CRC in everyday practices. The distinction made by Biesta (2011a) between a socialisation and a subjectification approach can be identified in our research, particularly in the conclusion of the second action research project in which we reveal that both the UDHR and the CRC are interpreted in very different ways, with a legal interpretation at one end of the spectrum and a sociopolitical interpretation at the other end (Roose and De Bie 2007). In a legal interpretation, rights are used as an *end of dialogue*: the solution to concrete problems is embodied in the implementation of the law. In this approach, a political and social conception of citizenship are placed one above the other: active citizenship, understood as a sense of public responsibility, also forms a condition for political citizenship. In a sociopolitical interpretation, rights, on the contrary, serve as a *starting point to dialogue* (McGillivray 1994). In terms of youth welfare, this interpretation implies the acknowledgment of the co-actorship of children and parents in the creation of their situation (Roose and Bouverne-De Bie 2007). In this approach, citizenship is not translated as an individual status, but rather as a practice to be realised through various activities and social relationships; a *citizenship-as-practice* (Lawy and Biesta 2006). In case of our research in youth welfare, this citizenship-as-practice perspective meant that in our research a lot of attention was paid to, on the one hand, the way we approached children and, on the other hand, the search for defining quality criteria for care in dialogue with parents and children.

The children's rights approach was a central point of interest in the first study of youth welfare work, starting from the demand to improve the quality of youth educational assistance provided under the Belgian Youth Protection Act. The research was conducted within a particular region; the various actors of that region involved in the execution of the youth protection law were brought together in a 'steering group'. This steering group provided a communicative space in which a number of specific cases of children, being considered by the juvenile court and placed out of the parental home, were discussed. In search of the pedagogical concept of youth protection, the children's rights approach was explored in this study (Verhellen 1978). Exploring this perspective led to criticisms on the result-oriented and heavily institutionalised approach of education in youth protection, which is a criticism that goes back to Reform Pedagogy (Vanobbergen 2003). Yet this perspective also provided the insight that youth protection cannot be seen exclusively as a way to deal with social problems, but that these problems are also created through the ways in which they are defined and approached. More attention for children's competence and agency, and to their entitlement to make meaning of their own situation, was seen as an essential component of a contemporary approach to problems. As the starting point of a broader series of studies

concerning the rights of the child, this action research project was very inspiring for the development of the children's rights movements in Flanders (Verhellen 1979). In the second and more recent study (Roose 2006), an analysis of the meaning of these children's rights movements was used to analyse the concrete situation of children and parents. The tension between a legal and sociopolitical interpretation raised the question which conditions are required so children's rights would contribute to greater equality in possibilities to act for children. This question led to the development of quality criteria for care services, which were included in the subsequent research as 'sensitising concepts' (Blumer 1954) for the analysis. This happened in collaboration with social services in the youth welfare sector, to figure out what these criteria could contain for the supply of services and how the realisation of quality could affect the situation of parents and children. This study was also supported by a steering group in which the various actors were brought together to create a communicative space.

… in Response to a Problematic Situation

Action research begins from concrete questions that are emerging from the social field wherein practices evolve. In the research projects that are discussed in this chapter, these issues entailed a demand for change in the youth welfare sector. In the first study, the question concerned the improvement of quality in offering educational support. The practical problem posed was that, while contemporary approaches to educational support do exist, they were not realised in youth care practices. The second study concerned the demand to explore and establish possible scenarios with actors involved in youth welfare to support them in the reorganisation of the sector, which had been pushed forward by the government. In both studies, this practical demand provoked the research. However, this practical question was not dealt with in an easy and linear way. In our research as well as in research mentioned in the body of action research literature, the first phase of action research is often to *stop*. As Wadsworth (1998, p. 3) stated, 'we do not begin to inquire until we actually suspend our current action because of the raising of the question'. Emancipatory action research runs counter to the 'illusion of taking action' (Senge, in Mensink 2005, p. 30), since action researchers first attempt to make an in-depth problem analysis rather than seeking to solve any problem you are confronted with directly.

In our research, this meant that the given problem was analysed in its historical context. The first study was therefore initiated based on a historical analysis of the image of the child, which was rooted in youth welfare; the second study was initiated based on a historical analysis of youth welfare and the children's rights movement. During the first study, this analysis was still largely done from the point of view of the researcher, yet during the second study, the researcher coupled the historical analysis to a study done by the actors involved in youth welfare themselves from the perspective of their own experience. The findings of this study were

presented to, and discussed with, the steering group. In both studies, the findings were also brought to the steering groups at regular intervals for a larger forum of researchers and practitioners, through study days and workshops. In our point of view, these historical analyses constituted an important basis to enact the action research projects: it allows the actors involved to expose and question their taken-for-granted daily practices. The historical research approach therefore offers a 'suspension' of daily practices (Masschelein 2012), but also provides a 'rear-view mirror' to reflect on newly assumed objectives or working styles. This embodies a dialectical approach to research rather than research evolving from a spectator view (Kemmis and McTaggart 2000), in which 'the individual and the social, and the objective and the subjective, are perceived as related aspects of human life and practice, to be understood dialectically – that is, as mutually opposed (and often contradictory) but mutually necessary aspects of human, social and historical reality in which each aspect helps us constitute the other' (Kemmis and McTaggart 2000, p. 578). Hence, it is important to frame the research problem in its social and historical context, since 'it is necessary to understand practice as enacted by individuals who act in the context of history and in ways constituted by a vast historical web of social interaction among people' (ibid.)

Making up a historical analysis is not an easy task to fulfil because of the risk to elaborate the problem analysis as a self-referential issue. Complex situations in the first place need a political answer, but can easily be translated into problems that, supposedly, require a methodical answer (Roose et al. 2012). The critique on a methodical approach is that it is technical instead of relational (Parton 2000). However, a relational approach also holds a risk of self-referentiality. For instance, a concept such as Constructive Social Work (Parton and O'Byrne 2000) addresses the co-construction of problems and solutions. However, this construction remains embedded in the logic that there is a problem for research, or for social work, to resolve. In that light, action research can also become self-referential when it limits itself to reflexivity about the problem definitions at hand, instead of looking at what might be left out of the picture. Or as Trinder (2000, p. 237) argues, action research requires 'a greater degree of reflexivity among researchers, reviewers and practitioners to think about assumptions about the world which are taken for granted and what questions and answers are not addressed or precluded by particular pieces of research or particular research designs'.

In that vein, we argue that making a historical analysis is an important dimension in action research because it allows the development of 'sociological imagination' (Mills 1959), necessary to question taken-for-granted practices. This questioning is needed to connect the diversity of the interpretations of the same situation, and the contradictions in these interpretations, to the practical demand for change. The practical demand for change is often based on a means-end relationship, in which education, social work and/or a better method of social intervention is perceived as a means to achieve the intended goal, in this case better youth welfare as a means to greater equality in the development opportunities for children. The means-end relationship decontextualises research and practice, decoupling these activities and analyses from the contexts of the parents and children involved. Therefore, a critical approach

therefore does not rule out that an imbalance of power will be established between those 'who know' and those 'who don't know' (Vanobbergen 2003, p. 177). From historical analyses, the impossibility of both critical research and critical education may become clear: unforeseen and unpredictable outcomes will also have to be taken into account, and the intentions that are initially brought forward in the human interaction seldom materialise as such. The only possible attitude therefore does not lie in the awareness of a programme, nor in giving the actors insight into their situation, but in the realisation that the question as to how the future will look or should look like cannot fundamentally be answered (Biesta 2011b). It is precisely in the awareness of that lack of knowledge that space exists for the opportunity to dialogue and the possibility for emancipation of obvious assumptions.

… in Order to Change the Situation

The aforementioned shows that the desired 'change' in our approach to action research cannot be seen as an *innovation strategy*. In our point of view, action research implies that the desired change happens by taking the interpretations of actors seriously, based on the idea that people's interpretations are not 'what they are' or 'real facts', but are themselves the outcome of sociohistorical processes. Hence, the question always remains whether the desires of people are also desirable from a democratic viewpoint (Biesta 2011a). From a perspective of democracy as an ongoing experiment, learning democracy cannot be seen as the achievement of a 'Bildungsideal' (Masschelein 1991) or a state of emancipation which has to be achieved. Learning is seen as a matter of uncertainty and as a matter of learning to deal with the fear that goes with this uncertainty (Imelman, in Rang 1988).

In other words, 'change' in action research may be considered as 'problematising' the situation, through the realisation of a 'communicative' or 'open space' in which practices can be questioned with respect to their underlying assumptions and how they intervene in everyday life experiences. The continuous feedback of information is therefore an essential point in emancipatory action research, that is, research that allows the actors involved to develop new definitions of existing realities. The interaction between 'research' (of the existing) and 'action' (of the awareness of the possible other definitions) raises the question about the position of the researcher. The researcher has to make the action possible and can, more particularly, facilitate the dialogue between the actors, introduce knowledge that prompts the actors to reflect on their actions and develop new theoretical concepts that result from the newly initiated dialogue, which may contribute to a better understanding of the realities at stake.

Facilitating the dialogue, implying the creation of a communicative space, was in our research translated into setting up a steering group. On the one hand, the researcher supported this steering group by taking the practical question, that was the starting point of the research, seriously and exploring this together with the people involved. Moreover, the underlying points of departure and expectations were

analysed. On the other hand, the researcher also paid attention to the action component in the research, that being the heightening of the variety of ways in which the situation was problematised. These two tasks can be seen as a combination of both exploring the problem definition at stake, as well as a distancing from it (Bouverne-De Bie and Verhellen 1995). In order to make this combination possible, we separated these roles in our research involvement. These two tasks were undertaken by two separate researchers that kept in close contact with each other. An essential element also implied the agreement with the actors involved that the research ventures would be directed by one of the researchers, in this case the researcher that had the task to distance the core perspective produced by the research from the problem definition at stake. In that light, an attempt was made to avoid the pitfall of implementing an instrumental approach.

The researcher contributes to the production of scientific and everyday knowledge which appeals people to give accountability for their actions and its impact on other people involved (Masschelein 1998). Instead of the realisation of an objective, the point of departure therefore implies that the ways in which actions influence the concrete situation of the people involved, and the relationships between those people, are explored. During the first study on youth welfare, the question of the accountability for increasing government intervention in the situation of parents and children – certainly also supported by youth welfare – came into focus (Verhellen 1978). In the second study, the accountability question was addressed in a concrete research procedure, in which the existing youth welfare services were analysed in various steps, ranging from a very broad initial analysis and thematic workshops introducing the clients' perspective to the discussions of concrete case histories. This research procedure enabled us to explore the accountability question, as an experience that widens the minds of the people involved and that incited change (Roose 2006). Nevertheless, we figured out that the more specific the accountability question became, the more difficult it became for the actors to participate in the steering group. Some actors quit, and other actors indicated that they got caught in the tension between the emerging theoretical perspective and the pragmatism of their everyday practices, including the fear of opposing institutionalised procedures and funding conditions. For the researchers, the research became an experience that broadened their idea of action research, in a sense that the research team needed to question possible boundaries of their approach to action research. Ultimately, the research was finished. In the end, a conference was organised to raise the acquired insights, during which the research findings were presented and framed in a broader theoretical perspective. Notably, immediately after the completion of the research, a number of actors requested further support from the researchers. This request was also granted.

In our point of view, the researcher's aim is to contribute to new theoretical insights about the problems involved and about action research as a research approach. The realisation of action research projects proves to be a difficult task, as action research evolves into 'that delicate place where the life-world meets the system. The practices of opening communicative space are therefore necessarily paradoxical and contradictory; the facilitator often needs to hold together qualities

that are usually in opposition' (Wicks and Reason 2009, p. 258). The action research projects that we carried out in youth welfare work really conveyed to us, as researchers, an awareness of the possibilities of action research in the realisation of democratic care practices, but also an awareness that it is necessary to cherish only very modest ambitions to embrace this democratic potential (Roose 2006). With reference to action research, the expectations about realising its emancipatory potential are often very high (Boog 2001). The key question, however, is what is meant by emancipation? If emancipation is understood as individual or organisational 'empowerment', this implies a notion of power as an unequal good that has to be shared more equally (Dahlberg and Moss 2005). This notion of power, in addition to the distinction between 'having power' and 'powerlessness', brings other dichotomies with it as well, such as the one between worker and client, scientific knowledge versus experiential knowledge, and researchers versus research subjects. The question, nevertheless, is whether emancipation should be seen as empowerment, and whether action research needs such endeavours (Masschelein 1991). The possible contribution of action research to emancipation and learning democracy should, in our opinion, be seen as both more modest and possibly more fundamental; it is about 'the slow process of questioning of existing realities and the courage to take a critical look at our own role in its perpetuation' (Roose 2006, p. 190).

… in Collaboration with the People Involved

The relationship between researchers and research subjects is one of the most crucial issues in action research (Boog et al. 1998). It is an interactive relationship in which the participants in the research are not seen as objects of the research, but as subjects and co-researchers. The research method is characterised by double hermeneutics (Tromp 2004) in which the researcher interprets the constructed reality, yet at the same time is dependent on the interpretations of the actors involved in that reality. At the same time, these interpretations influence each other (Röling 1995).

The collaboration with the people involved is the ultimate criterion in action research with respect to the question of whether action research can fulfil its emancipatory aspirations. More specifically, the question is how the connection can be made between research and democratising processes or, in other words, whether action research can be transformed into an innovation strategy and/or research method or can be seen as a paradigmatic approach. In line with the ideas of Habermas, Moser (1975) perceived action research as an alternative research paradigm, referring to a 'participant perspective' and an 'observer perspective' as both essential characteristics of action research. He argued that action research must contribute to the development of theory in which both perspectives are connected to each other. For Moser (1975), the collaboration with the people involved has not primarily an ethical, but especially an *epistemological* meaning (Bouverne-De Bie and Verhellen 1995). This perspective implies that there is an awareness that knowledge does not lead to power, but that it is an attribute of power. In that sense,

collaboration with the people involved is a way to exert the power of the researcher and to orient the process of knowledge construction towards the development of a public debate. In this light, the collaboration with the people involved can be viewed as a condition for the public nature of research. Following Habermas, the public nature of research is understood, on the one hand, as the public debate of social issues and, on the other hand, the guarantee of the public nature of this debate by law as a result of formal democratic procedures (e.g. Tinnevelt 2010). In that light, action research needs to be independent research. Especially in the second research project, this independent character of the research was an important point of attention. The research was made possible in the framework of a Ph.D. project, financed by the university.

One important question remains, that is to say; who are the people involved? In the action research projects that are the subject of discussion here, we also applied the basic premise that the people who had the opportunity to be involved were 'all actors involved in the situation'. In the implementation of the research projects, our investigations turned out that it was dependent of people who wanted to contribute to the action research. Action research in the field of educational and social work practices often evolves as research with practitioners, while the people whose situation needs to be improved as a result of the research, as well as the people who determine the institutional problem definitions that are at stake in the research, often stay out of the picture. Nonetheless, the perspectives of children and parents were included in our research on youth welfare by means of identifying and inserting a number of discussion points in separate sub-studies, and these findings were brought into the steering group discussions (Roose 2006). The issue of the institutional problem definitions was included in our research through the emphasis on the independence of the researcher, which was guaranteed by means of the agreement with the practitioners involved that the findings of the research would result in the Ph.D. dissertation of one of the researchers involved.

Nevertheless, the question of who should be involved in defining the scope of action research is often disregarded and remains paradoxical. In our research, for example, the identification of the questions that initiated the research as well as the creation of a 'communicative space' remained a joint responsibility of the researchers and practitioners involved. Paradoxically, however, this confirms the expectation that the research will offer a 'solution' for social problems that are emerging from the practices involved. The name 'participatory action research' (Cammarota and Romero 2011; Foster-Fishman et al. 2010; Wong et al. 2010) is also paradoxical. The approaches that have been brought forward under this name largely remain solution-focused and directed by presupposed, utopian-formulated objectives that are external to (the analysis of) the situation. Starting from these objectives, the use of action research therefore continues to exist primarily due to the demand for the solution-focused and utopian improvement of practices more than from the demand for a joint democratisation of existing practices.

A lifeworld orientation perspective (Grunwald and Thiersch 2009) possibly offers a different point of departure, as this approach can engender the perspectives and everyday participation of the people whose situation needs to be improved and

allows us to analyse this participation in relation to the wider social, physical, economic, cultural, political and spatial environment including the ways in which this wider context limits or enhances their opportunities to participation (Hill et al. 2004; James et al. 1998; Wyness 2000; Biesta 2011a, b).

… Striving for the Development of Theory

Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) describe action research as 'low tech' research, in which methodological and technical rigidity are partly sacrificed in favour of the surplus of the research actions for the concrete situations and the question whether the research is meaningful in light of the problem at hand. They argue that 'it sacrifices methodological sophistication in order to generate timely evidence that can be used and further developed in a real-time process of transformation' (Kemmis and McTaggart 2000, p. 591). They state that theoretical development is not only recognised by a good methodology, but rather through its epistemology:

> 'research cannot be regarded as self-justifying, or justified solely by reference to internal criteria (for example, methodological criteria); research is also a social practice, to be evaluated against criteria of the kind we have listed as the aims of action research – that is, in terms of the extent to which it contributes to confronting and overcoming irrationality, injustice, alienation and suffering, both in the research setting and more generally in terms of its broader consequences' (Kemmis and McTaggart 2000, p. 593).

The demand for the development of theory in action research implies that researchers have to determine their point of view concerning the question to which knowledge the research should lead and whether problem solving and practice improvement (referring to the technical aspect of action research) and the analysis, along with the people involved, contributes to an awareness of human dignity and social justice (referring to the critical and emancipatory aspect of action research). We follow Habermas (1981), who pointed to the importance of language in this analytical connection as the central symbol system in social interaction. From his point of view, language enables us to make the connection between a technical knowledge interest, focused on the management of social problems, and a communicative knowledge interest in which the existing reality is opened up based on the principle of intersubjective comprehensibility. From the perspective of both speakers and listeners, language points to something like this in the 'objective world' (as the totality of whatever is the case), as well as to something in the 'social world' (as the totality of legitimate interpersonal relationships), as well as to something in the subjective world of the speaker (as the totality of the manifestable subjective experiences to which he/she has privileged access). The same network can also be analysed from the perspective of the social environment or the background of the shared assumptions and procedures in which each piece of communication is embedded from the beginning. From this perspective, language fulfils the function of both cultural reproduction (or keeping traditions alive) and social integration (or coordination of the plans of various individuals in social

interaction), and the function of socialisation (or the cultural interpretation of needs) (Habermas 1981, pp. 7–8). According to Habermas (1981, p. 9),

> 'people who participate in communication processes (such as the researchers) must assume a performative attitude. This attitude makes it possible to alternate between third person, or objectifying positions, second person or conformative positions, and first person or expressive positions. The performative attitude allows a mutual orientation to validity claims (such as truth, normative correctness and sincerity), which are made with the expectation of a "yes" and "no" response (or a request to provide more reasons) on the side of the listener. These claims are made with the intention of them being critically assessed, so that an intersubjective recognition of a particular claim can serve as the basis for a rationally motivated consensus. At the same time, the speaker and the listener become involved in those functions that fulfil the communication processes in the reproduction of the social environment that they share, by assuming a performative attitude' (Habermas 1981, p. 9).

People are therefore approached in their capacity to learn, to ensure that a society ultimately learns to solve the problems that affect it, in a way that corresponds to an awareness of human dignity and social justice.

As we mentioned before, in action research this 'performative attitude' primarily leads to analysing the initial question that is emerging from practice from a historical perspective in order to connect it with a broader frame of reference, which implies in our research the UDHR and the CRC. The division of the role of the researcher must also be seen in this light, as well as the regular feedback of findings from the researchers to a broader forum of actors. However, in our research, the participation component still received insufficient attention, in light of the 'performative attitude' that is assumed by Habermas. Research that evolves as a democratic practice, after all, not only requires a connection between the 'objective' and 'social' worlds; it also requires a connection with the subjective world. From that point of view, the perspective of children and parents themselves remains an important 'black box': their perspectives were only brought in indirectly by the analysis of the researchers.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed a number of points of interest in the relationship between action research and learning democracy, based on our own experiences with action research. Action research can contribute to learning democracy when it evolves as a democratic practice. The core of this practice is the collaboration with those involved. This collaboration is inspired by a practical question that emerges from practices, that is analysed against the background of its meaning for the way in which it intervenes in people's specific situations and driven by the question whether it contributes to a greater realisation of humanity and social justice. The desired change in action research is therefore not initially intended as a solution for a specific problem, but as increasing the level of doubt about the interpretations of, and actions on, realities and situations. Casting doubt on existing

realities and situations, therefore, requires that a variety of possible interpretations of the situations at stake are challenged. Supporting this communicative space, as well as the researcher's engagement to conduct the study, assumes a performative attitude so that the objective reality is also linked to the intersubjective reality and the social environment of the actors involved.

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Chapter 9
Educational Research on Community Building Practices: From Evaluation to Witnessing

Peter Reyskens and Joke Vandenabeele

Introduction

In this chapter, we focus on educational research of community building practices. Community building practices entail a wide range of organised practices that address the issue of living together with differences in more or less direct way. Examples are community arts (Clover 2006), neighbourhood programmes (Millar and Kilpatrick 2005), dialogue groups (Rossing and Glowacki-Dudka 2001), community walks (Biesta and Cowell 2012), civic participation (Harinen 2006) or activities of social movements (Pink 2008). During our study of educational research literature on such practices, we discovered that educational researchers propose different answers to the challenge of living together with differences and thereby use different definitions of community. These definitions of community have an influence on the expectations, role and outcomes of educational research. In this chapter we question some of the definitions of community, and we develop a new understanding of educational research on community building practices addressing the issue of living together with differences.

The necessity for a new understanding of educational research on community building practices comes from our own attempt to research a concrete practice in Brussels: the Zinneke Parade. Zinneke Parade is a biannual artistic parade, built by voluntary participants and artist in about 20 groups (Zinneke vzw 2011). Each of those groups is composed of participants from different backgrounds. One group, for example, counted children from a day-care centre, adults from a French-speaking cultural centre, migrants participating in a literacy course and EU civil servants recruited at the EU institutions in Brussels. Another group counted youngsters from a youth house, people in poverty recruited in a social restaurant and asylum seekers

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living in a federal state centre for asylum seekers. The groups do not only parade together, they prepare the parade in all its aspects in numerous workshops guided by artists. Participants work together to build wagons, to design and fabricate costumes, to decide on storylines and dances and to rehearse movements and scenes.

In this chapter we present our search for a concept of educational research for investigating Zinneke Parade. Our text is organised in five parts. In the first part, we discuss educational research that understands the issue of living with differences as a challenge to (re)build community. Educational research in this line is conceptualised as the search for effective practices, that is, practices that effectively deal with differences by producing a common way of living together defined as a good community. In the subsequent part we give a number of critiques to the idea that educational research can be conceptualised as an evaluation of what works to build a good community. In the third part we then redefine educational research on practices like Zinneke Parade as a form of witnessing in which the experience of community is put at stake. The approaches of community we explore in this part are not focussing on solving differences within society, but present community as an experience of togetherness and difference at the same time. We connect this rethinking of community in the subsequent part with an existential-ethical research tradition in the field of education and give an example of how we observed the preparations of the Zinneke Parade. In the last part of the text, we will argue that this kind of educational research has to do with a concern for a democratic understanding of citizenship and develops an educational understanding of community building.

Building a Good Community

Educational research on community building practices is often conceptualised as the search for practices that effectively produce a good way of living together, defined as a good community. The concern for building a good community seems to be valid in a time where we are confronted with difficulties between social and cultural groups, and is in line with policy concerns to find answers for concrete problems, like safety or segregation. We found two important traditions (sometimes conflated) in educational research that studies practices as means to build a good community: the social cohesion traditions and the critical tradition. The differences between these traditions result from a different definition of what a good community means. Building a social cohesive society is nowadays the dominant tradition. This tradition aims to realise a community that is closely integrated, that is productive and that has no internal conflicts. Kearns and Forrest (2000, p. 996) claim that the kernel of this concept of community is 'that a cohesive society 'hangs together'; all the component parts somehow fit in and contribute to society's collective project and well-being; and conflict between societal goals and groups, and disruptive behaviours, are largely absent or minimal'.

Community building in this tradition is seen as an investment in a particular kind of social relations, where all, no matter how different, share the same basic values

and seek to agree on future projects. Relations should be mutual and supportive, and individuals should identify with and be responsible for their community. The investment in social relations is expected to yield future revenues. Jenson and Saint-Martin (2003, p. 83, emph. in original) argue: 'In this discourse, it is acceptable for the state to spend generously when, and only when, it is behaving like a good business would, seeking to increase the promise of *future* profits'. The kind of future revenues social cohesion promises seems now more and more related to economic objectives. According to Jenson and Saint-Martin (2003), a loss of social cohesion is nowadays considered dangerous for economic competiveness. One consequence is that investments in social cohesion must pay off. Investments, for example, in social and cultural organisations that are instructed to promote community, must be used effectively, and the goal to be reached is clear from the outset.

An example of empirical research of community building practices in line with this tradition is offered by Millar and Kilpatrick (2005), who investigate a children's activities programme, a study programme in literacy and life skills and computer classes for single parents. What matters in the positive evaluation of the projects is that communities develop the skills to be responsible for their own outcomes, that people have the capacity to compete and are willing to identify with their communities. Identification with others hangs together with the willingness to develop and use capacities for the benefit of the community in a competitive world. Millar and Kilpatrick (2005) show a strong concern for facilitating re-engagement with learning. Learning is thereby seen as an individual acquisition process of knowledge, skills and attitudes to be competitive. Individuals have their own deficiencies or learning needs and their own learning trajectories. Learning does however not only bring individual benefits, but is deemed useful for the wider community, or as Hodgson (2009, p. 69) concludes: 'Investment in learning not only contributes to self-actualization but at the same time delivers competencies that enable people to operate in their labour environment and in society as a whole'.

In opposition to the dominant social cohesion tradition, there are researchers who work from a critical perspective and who define community as empowerment from oppressive social structures, social divisions and inequalities in the name of justice and freedom (Biesta 2010). Community, in this tradition, is appealed to as means of resistance and critique against oppressive structures, which are nowadays often linked to the worldwide impact of neoliberalism and economic globalisation (Clover 2006). The concern of community building, here, is thus not individual adaptation, but 'working for social justice through empowering disadvantaged, excluded and oppressed communities to take more control over the conditions of their lives' (Butcher et al. 2007, p. 17). Community building practices have to develop spaces of resistance and critique in which people empower themselves and develop their own vision about a more desirable world. Community building implies that people express their view and experiences and realise changes in their circumstances. This implies that community workers identify with oppressed groups and not with the dominant power structures (Rose 1997).

An example of empirical research in line with the critical tradition is a study of group dialogues by Rossing and Glowacki-Dudka (2001). They start from an approach

of dialogue as space for community building: 'the view of dialogue as a means of empowering groups that feel oppressed or marginalized by the dominant society to take social action to change conditions that constrain them' (Rossing and Glowacki-Dudka 2001, p. 741). The space opened by the dialogue form is a space for persons with different backgrounds to meet and share stories. The listening and narrating bring forth new insights about the condition of the community. Rossing and Glowacki-Dudka (2001, p. 739) conclude that community building in dialogue groups contributes to a just community that does not silence marginal voices and enhances solidarity against oppression: 'Findings from a small-scale evaluation of a three-year series of dialogues seem to lend support to theoretical suppositions. (…) Listening to stories of others does yield new insights and a sense of human connection or community'.

Despite their different definition of the good community, the social cohesion and the critical tradition both value learning as means to produce community. While learning is an individual acquisition process to overcome deficiencies in the social cohesion tradition, learning is often seen as a communal process in the critical tradition (Biesta 2005). Community is necessary for empowerment in this tradition, which entails that community is seen as a means to an end. Fendler (2006), who analysed US literature, argues that also in this tradition 'target groups' are defined as lacking community and as deficient by researchers. Despite the explicit purpose of empowerment, this tradition also starts from defining target groups as deficient. Fendler (2006, p. 313) argues that 'some groups are positioned as deficient and in need of remediation, and other groups are seen as normal and acceptable as is', which is 'an example of deficit-model thinking in which those who are excluded from the community are regarded as lacking, in need of assistance, or deserving of support from those more fortunate'. Both traditions, despite their different definition of the good community, define those who lack community as deficient and as excluded. This hangs together with a particular conception of educational research.

Research as Evaluation

In both traditions, the cohesive and the critical, the use of a normative definition of the good community leads to a conception of educational research as evaluation of effectiveness. Two previous studies on Zinneke Parade follow this logic. Christiaen (2001) researched the parade and its preparation in the year 2000. She conceives her research as an 'evaluation of the social impact of the Zinneke Parade' (Christiaen 2001, p. 32, own translation). Social impact is described in the language of the critical tradition in this study: as bringing people closer together, as sociocultural emancipation and participation of citizens and as fight against social exclusions and poverty. Christiaen (2001) uses a combination of research methods in her explorative study: in-depth interviews, telephone questionnaire, media coverage, observation and video recording. The aim of these methods is to find out what the effects of the parade and its preparations are. These effects are studied on the level of

individuals, organisations and groups, on the short and long term and on the social and cultural level. Christiaen (2001) concludes that Zinneke Parade has a positive social impact on participants, participating organisations and spectators and mentions a number of challenges for the long-term success of the project, like the lack of continuity or the unclear role of artists.

Evaluative questions of the same type are asked by Costanzo (2012) in an ongoing PhD research on the 2010 parade. In his study, Costanzo (2012) aims to know how being part of a cultural initiative like Zinneke Parade might 'impact the integration of immigrants and foster broader community cohesion'. More in detail, Zinneke Parade is expected to foster 'a sense of belonging, a changed/emerging/new identity (or identities), or provide for social or economic benefits among its participants' (Costanzo 2012). This research used a short questionnaire for spectators, participants and organisers during the parade, a detailed follow-up questionnaire and in-depth interviews with numerous stakeholders. It is clear that this research aims to evaluate whether Zinneke Parade contributes to the building of a particular definition of community. This research uses the language of the social cohesion tradition in which people must belong to the community, must identify with the community and in which community gives social and economic benefits.

This way of doing educational research of community building practices – research as evaluation of what works to build a good community – is often appreciated by policy makers and practitioners who aim to find solutions for concrete problems in their neighbourhood or city. It is however based on two assumptions that are increasingly challenged in theoretical debates: the assumption that researchers know what the good community is and the assumption that practices are an instrument to build such a community through learning. Young (1986) has written an influential critique on the assumptions and implications of the ideal of community. Her critique addresses researchers from the critical tradition who appeal to community as alternative for oppression and exploitation. Young (1986, p. 3) claims that the ideal of community represents an ideal of living together as a whole or unity. This always depends on a distinction of what is included, good and shared from what is excluded, not desired and separated: 'Any definition or category creates an inside/outside distinction, and the logic of identity seeks to keep those borders firmly drawn'. The ideal of community denies differences, because it is assumed that we all understand each other and can belong to the same social wholeness. This is however no longer the case, as we live with the presence of so many differences (Bauman 2001).

Another critique on the assumption that researchers can know what the good community is comes from Esposito (2010). According to Esposito (2010, p. 2), community is reduced to a kind of object when it is postulated as a normative ideal: 'The truth is that these conceptions are united by the ignored assumption that community is "a property" belonging to the subjects that join them together: an attribute, a definition, a predicate that qualifies them as belonging to the same totality, or as a "substance" produced by their union'. For Esposito (2010), community is something we cannot know in advance, know as an abstract ideal. When we reduce community to a property within one or other philosophical or political discourse, we

actually distort what we try to name. Esposito (2010) argues that nothing is more urgent than rethinking community. All kinds of normative definitions and programmatic notions stay within the framework of classical notions, as they keep thinking community as a vast entity that we can lose or recreate.

The second assumption is that practices should build a good community through learning. It is assumed that certain practices will lead to certain desired outcomes, which means that practices are seen as interventions or treatments for a malfunctioning community in which the problems and outcomes are already clear (Biesta 2007). In the social cohesion tradition, individuals should learn the knowledge, skills and attitudes to be a good citizen. The learning that is involved in the formation of citizens can be understood as socialisation into a well-defined position in the community. It is clear what it means to be a good citizen and individuals need to adapt to fit in. In the critical tradition, individuals need interventions form the outside to be emancipated and to overcome their oppression. The analysis of what oppressive structures are and the interventions and outcomes that are based on this analysis can be defined in a closed and definite sense. This ultimately also entails socialisation or adaptation to a known ideal and rational community (Ellsworth 1989).

The learning that is involved in both traditions has to do with 'the many ways in which, through education, we become members of and part of particular social, cultural and political "orders"' (Biesta 2009a). Socialisation has to do with inserting individuals into already known positions in the community, and this does not respect differences between people and varied possibilities to deal with the issue of living together. Biesta (2011) relates socialisation to communities of sameness. This stands in contrast with communities of difference and a democratic understanding of citizenship and civic learning. A democratic understanding of citizenship and civic learning is based on the presence of difference and allows citizens to appear in positions that are not already known in advance. Our question is how we can conceive educational research of community building practices in which we can bring forward this democratic understanding of citizenship and thereby be stimulated to rethink community as focus of educational research.

During our first exploration of Zinneke Parade, we felt that the outcomes of the project were not already clear from the start. Of course, there were concrete goals in the request for subsidies, like improving encounter, social contacts and personal growth. These goals were however very general and did not offer much insight on the concrete ways in which people relate. We noticed that the workshops and rehearsals in which people with different backgrounds started to work together were quite experimental. The learning that would take place by mixing social and cultural groups and by working towards a parade performance was, to a large extent, unforeseeable (Ruitenberg 2010). It was not already clear what kind of community would take shape during the project. We thus needed to develop a conception of educational research on community building practices that would be able to put the definition of community itself at stake and that would be able to address the question what it means today, in this concrete practice, to be in community and to deal with differences. In the next parts of the text we develop such a conception of educational research, starting from a different approach of the notion community.

Putting Community at Stake

During our exploration of educational research literature on community building, we found inspiring references to the work of post-structural philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy (Rose 1997; Brent 2004; Panelli and Welch 2005). Nancy (1991, 2003) indeed starts from a critique of the idea that we can know what a good community is and that we can build community through interventions or work. Taking a normative stance on community and then working towards it is no longer possible, nor desirable for Nancy (1991). It is no longer possible because of globalisation, which unsettles stable communities, and it is no longer desirable because it has become clear that modelling humans according to a plan is a form of oppression. Community as unity and as producible has been torn apart over the last century (Nancy 2003). It has become clear that community realising itself as work always leads towards exclusions and injustice. This does not only hold for extreme versions of totalitarianism, it is also true for democratic regimes. Even when democratic regimes try to produce an ideal community, defined as social cohesion or empowerment, this is a form of oppression.

This does not at all imply we have to stop thinking about what community or togetherness means. For Nancy (1991, 2003) it has become clear that community must be rethought, not as property, not as essence that can be known and built. Community must be rethought as our condition of existence. Nancy thinks community as our condition: the fact that we exist with each other and that this existence with others is without ground. Community or being with others is experienced before and beyond any idea and any project. It is not something we know like a concept or theory. Community is what happens to us when we are close to but different from others. It is an experience that is always coming from the outside. It is an experience that leaves its mark on us, that matters without becoming a clear foundation. The reason why Nancy keeps thinking community, instead of abandoning the notion altogether, is that we always exist with others and that this existence with others makes an appeal on us. It concerns us without being an object of knowledge. Community is not a choice, it is our condition of existence that cannot be built or defined, but permeates us in all our actions and situations.

The rethinking of community as a longing rather than a belonging (Brent 2004), and as an experience rather than an object of knowledge (Panelli and Welch 2005), seems promising for community building research. When community is something that always happens and that is in the first place an experience, research on community building practices is actually research about what it means to be in community today. EU expats, local inhabitants and migrants from a literacy course brought together to prepare a parade in Brussels have to establish ways of dealing with each other in these concrete activities. The experience of community happens time and again in concrete practices like Zinneke Parade. Research about what it means to be in community and to deal with differences needs to pay attention to what happens in concrete practices, and this is not an evaluation based on normative definitions of community. Some of the writings of Nancy (2002) can

give an idea of how educational research that does not start from an already known definition of community may look like.

Devisch (2002, p. 385) argues that Nancy's work is 'a witnessing of the world 'as such': that is to say, the world here and now in which we are living in common'. What Nancy does in a number of his works is giving enumerations and descriptions of concrete things in such a way that they challenge our thinking of community. Nancy looks at concrete scenes of togetherness in such a way that they have authority, that they inspire us to think about community in a different way (Devisch 2002). The next fragment is an example of Nancy's witnessing of Los Angeles. Nancy (2002, pp. 72–73, our translation) enumerates a number of concrete scenes in such a way that it expresses our condition of community taking place in the city.

> Whether she wants it or not, the city mingles and mixes everything, while she divides and dissolves at the same time. You associate with each other, you hit each other, you touch each other, you lose sight of each other: all that in one course of action. We stand close to each other, shoulder to shoulder, in the subway or on the escalator, bumper to bumper, an even live at night window to window on both sides of the street. (…) It is about closeness: that is not a bond or a connection, but a whole room placed next to each other, exchanges sketched only in faint outlines. Friction and rubbing, light or rough, on the sill or on the street, in the cinema or on the tram. Our fellow is close without being near, far away but within reach or earshot. Between us an exchange of weak flickering signals takes place, an imperceptible and accidental correspondence.

What happens in this fragment is not judging whether the city of Los Angeles brings forth a good community. What happens is a 'witnessing' of the city (Devisch 2002) and a speaking of the city in such a way that it does not lead to new exclusionary definitions, but has relevance for our thinking of togetherness in the city. This is described by Devisch (2002, p. 391) as 'ontological affirmation of the evident, the quotidian, and the praxis of our existence'. Nancy describes the most ordinary and evident aspects of city life in such a way that it presents an experience. Our way of looking at and thinking about cities is at stake in the description of concrete observations. Educational research can also be conceptualised as a witnessing of community building practices, in which attention is given to the ordinary and concrete in such a way that concepts of community are challenged and unforeseeable ways of being together are presented.

Existential-Ethical Research

This kind of research can be called existential-ethical research, in the words of Simons and Masschelein (in press). They distinguish such existential-ethical educational research from knowledge-oriented/based research, which is still dominant today. A knowledge-oriented/based way of doing research aims to develop valid knowledge. Evaluations of practices based on validated methods and leading to knowledge about what works to build community belong to this tradition. In an existential-ethical-oriented way of doing research, on the other hand, the researcher

works upon his/her relation to the present. The main concern is the present situation of which the researcher is a part. This present – in our case the present situation of togetherness during the Zinneke project – is not an object for developing valid knowledge: 'The present, instead, is what is experienced when we are attentive or when we are 'present in the present' (Foucault 1997/1984). Hence, the present is what is 'actual for us today' (Simons and Masschelein in press). What is necessary in this existential-ethical way of doing research, according to Masschelein (2010), is not a new and certain methodology but becoming attentive. It is about paying attention to the present, to the concreteness of the situation at hand. In our own research of Zinneke Parade, we did not use questionnaires or interviews. Our aim was not to measure the effect of the project on individual participants or groups. We focussed on the concrete way in which togetherness took form during the workshops and the parade and we used observations.

The difficulty with observations and with becoming attentive is that it asks us to stop looking at the present situation with all kinds of normative and conceptual frameworks. Becoming attentive demands the suspension of judgement and requires discipline to stay with the present situation, to stay with what one perceives (Masschelein 2010). In order to make us 'present in the present' or to stay focussed on what there was to see, rather than our ideas and judgements of how community building should look like, we developed a specific protocol. We followed individual participants during 30 min and wrote down all their activities and movements, no matter what they did and no matter what activity at hand. The selection of an individual was based on chance as well as the moment of observation. The arbitrariness of the protocol and the intensity of the observation task served to suspend our judgement and to force us to focus on what was happening in its physical and bodily concreteness. The protocol made us look at activities in a way that would never be possible with an observation scheme or conceptual framework. We paid attention to all kinds of evident and quotidian activities, from picking up clothes for the parade to gluing objects on heads and repetitively rehearsing parade movements. At one instance, for example, we followed a participant – we knew he was an asylum seeker – during a rehearsal:

> He stands still and waits. He looks at two other participants rehearsing their movements. He coughs and looks with an amused face. He sits down, while looking, and leans against the heating on the wall. His arms are crossed and lean on his knees. He stares and seems to be dreaming. He does not move when a number of other participants go to the centre of the room and rehearse their movements for the parade. Sometimes he laughs, when looking at the other participants, sometimes he moves his body a little. He follows a conversation, without saying anything. He stares and sits down for minutes. He is calm, he looks at the rehearsing participants, the face moves along with the movements of the participants. (Group A Travers, 17 April 2010, 16h08)

What we observed as a result of the protocol was the waiting of a participant during 30 min. Jotting down particular details of the (in)activity of waiting, like the sitting down with crossed arms, or the small movements of the face while looking at others, brings something under the attention. Waiting is an eminent way of relating to others. During the activity of waiting, our participant followed other people's

actions and conversations. He was there, ready if someone would ask something or call upon him. Waiting shows connection and disconnection at the same time. It shows connection, the eyes follow other people's movements. The face smiles when something funny happens. It shows disconnection, the sitting on the side of the room, the separation from other bodies rehearsing their movements. The observation of waiting during the preparation of the Zinneke Parade brings a concrete way of relating in the spotlight. A way of relating that may seem irrelevant from a social cohesion or a critical perspective.

Waiting may seem irrelevant from a social cohesion perspective, because it does not result in new competences to deal with others and to take a future position in the community. Waiting may seem irrelevant from a critical perspective, because it does not result in awareness of oppression and inequalities and in changes in the circumstances of the asylum seeker. The waiting of the asylum seeker shows however that he is already dealing with others and that he is already a part of the community. He is already present in his waiting. The focus on his waiting makes something visible about what it means today to be in community and to deal with others. The observation may, if one is willing to take it serious, challenge how we think about community. Waiting brings something unforeseen into presence. Taking this seriously and letting our thinking of community be challenged by the concrete observation of an asylum seeker, who is waiting, puts accepted definitions of community at stake and brings the attention to activities that seemed irrelevant before.

The same kind of rethinking happens in Nancy's observation of the city as a place of passage. For Nancy (2002), the city is friction and rubbing, standing close but separated, touching and losing sight of each other. Starting from his observations, Nancy (2002) starts to speak about the meaning of city. The city is no longer a community, no longer a place with a specific identity and filled with people who would share this identity. The city is just a place. It is a place for activities and a place that mixes people and activities, traditions and trajectories without becoming a unity. Nancy (2002) starts from the concreteness of observations, to ask questions about what it means to be in a city, to be a city. Educational research of community building, which can no longer start from established definitions of community, takes the same step. Starting from concrete observations and focussing on activities like the waiting of a participant, research questions the sense of being in community today. The educational researcher can take the waiting of a participant seriously. Speaking about community as the (in)activity of waiting for others who are busy troubles established definitions of the good community and troubles the idea that individuals need to learn before they can become a member of the community.

Community and/or Democracy

One of the words Nancy (1991) uses to describe the experience of community is the word inoperative. The formula *inoperative community* indicates that the experience of community is something that undoes or unworks all kinds of normative

definitions of community. The experience of being with others is something that crosses through all kinds of programmatic definitions that lead to building communities as a project. This does however not lead to new definitions for Nancy (1991, p. 31) because the experience of community is an experience of finitude, of the fact that community is our condition and not something we define and make: 'This is why community cannot arise from the domain of work. One does not produce it, one experiences or one is constituted by it as the experience of finitude'. The experience that an asylum seeker waits and thereby relates to others, troubles all kind of programmes that want this asylum seeker to *learn* before he can be considered to be a member of the community. Existential-ethical research of community building practices troubles such normative approach and can be understood as inoperative research. It is research that does not lead to knowledge about how to build community in line with some normative ideal. It is research that on the contrary interrupts such normative endeavours in the name of concrete experiences of being with others.

Existential-ethical research therefore tries to speak in a different way about living together with differences. It tries to speak in a different way about practices like Zinneke Parade. It does not provide new definitions or conclusions about what works, but speaks about experiences that matter to the researcher. We do not want to defend the Zinneke Parade as something that works, like previous research by Christiaen (2001) and Costanzo (2012). We want to speak about Zinneke Parade and its workshops as a place where community is experienced in the activities, materialities and relations at hand. We want to speak about experiences that matter, but do not lead to closed and definite answers on the issue of living together. Latour (2005) distinguishes two different ways of relating to things. Matters of fact are clearly definable objects that can be measured and verified in knowledge-oriented/based research. Matters of concern on the other hand are those things that arouse our interest and our worry. Making community into a matter of concern has to do with interrupting established and particular definitions of community. It is a form of presenting or speaking that has to do with letting oneself and one's own thinking be challenged by what there is to see in concrete practices (Cornelissen and Masschelein 2010).

Such research that troubles definitions of community manifests a concern for democratic citizenship. Biesta (2011, p. 2) argues that democratic citizenship 'is not simply an existing identity that individuals just need to adopt, but is an ongoing process that is fundamentally open towards the future'. Democratic citizenship is not related to a socialisation conception of civic learning, which is about inserting individuals into already known positions. Democratic citizenship is related to a subjectification conception of civic learning. Subjectification happens in moments where the existing order of the community is broken and where unforeseen ways of being and acting come into presence. The waiting of a participant is an interruption of the order, in which the participant is supposed to learn to be a part of a future community. Subjectification has to do with the appearance of something new: 'Subjectification is about the appearance – the "coming into presence," (…) – of a way of being that has no place and no part in the existing order of things' (Biesta

2011, p. 95). Existential-ethical research tries to become attentive for something unforeseen. The arbitrariness of the protocol we used for observing the workshops of the Zinneke Parade served as an interruption of judgements and normative frameworks. It served in other words as an interruption of the order of visibility or an interruption of what is important to be seen according to established definitions of the good community.

The focus is on concrete and material relations that are taking place and that are unforeseen. The focus on a relational understanding of community helps to develop an educational approach to community building. Such educational approach is not about individual learning (Biesta 2005), but about relations taking place in practice. It is about responding to concrete others in concrete situations without ground or foundation (Nancy 1991). Relating to others in the preparation process of a parade is an open process in which people act and deal with each other without ground and without certainty of how the relations between participants and groups will evolve. Participants and researchers do not foresee what connections and disconnections will take place. Zinneke Parade installs a practice that is experimental with regards to the issue of living with differences (Biesta 2011). The educational moment is the moment in which people respond to each other and build relations in concrete activities like rehearsing, waiting, fabricating, talking or preparing food. The concrete connections and disconnections like waiting are an experience of community that have educational force. It is in such moments that community takes place time and again.

We described the observations of concrete activities as witnessing. Witnessing the waiting of a participant is not only about crossing through existing definitions of the good community. It is also about presenting something unforeseen. Witnessing has to do with affirming what has been seen; it is an affirmation of what is not important or excluded (Biesta 2009b). This means that ultimately, existential-ethical research manifests a concern for democratic communities in which not everything is already visible and defined. The kind of subjectification that is taking place in the Zinneke Parade can be defined as an experience of being able to deal with differences (Simons and Masschelein 2010). It is the experience that everyone is able to relate to others, which is visible in the concrete setting of the workshops. There is no preparatory learning process. People enter the workshops and respond to others. It is on the level of the relationality – which is understood as connection and disconnection at the same time (Nancy 1991) – that education is situated as the coming into presence of ways of being together that are unforeseen. The subjectification taking place in the workshops of the Zinneke Parade has to do with democratic citizenship and democratic relations, in which not everything is already clear and already defined. It is not about politics in the sense of deliberation and dissensus about issues of common concern. Zinneke Parade touches another register of democratic relations, the everyday, concrete relations taking place in the activities related to making a parade in Brussels with people who are and remain different. This is probably the biggest surprise of Zinneke Parade, the fact that so many participants spent hours of time on making costumes and objects, on inventing rhythms and rehearsing movements and on waiting for others and looking at others.

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Part III
Research

Chapter 10
When the Wrong People Speak: On Bullying as a Political Problem for Democratisation in Schools

Carl Anders Säfström

Introduction

A central starting point for this chapter is what Biesta (2011) has formulated in his book 'Learning Democracy in School and Society' as 'learning democracy'. Not only was this the name of a project I directed in Sweden a couple of years ago and which was inspired by one of our many conversations over the years but also the term learning democracy tends to signify a certain outlook on democracy, education, learning and citizenship that I very much share with Biesta. Biesta formulates this view as an attention to 'the ways in which they [we] learn and enact their [our] democratic citizenship' (Biesta 2011, p. 2). The ways in which Biesta conceives of citizenship, then, are as straightforward as it is distinct and unique since it is open to the consideration of citizenship as related to how people actually are living their lives in school and society rather than being tied only to the formal conditions of their lives. In Biesta's words, it shifts our attention away from the predominant 'socialisation conception of civic learning and citizenship education' to what I in accordance with Biesta consider to be a more fruitful conception 'the subjectification conception of civic learning and citizenship education' (Biesta 2011, p. 2). It is more fruitful because such a conception re-politicises citizenship, something which is in urgent need of doing.

In the following, then, I will discuss a particular aspect of subjectification as it takes shape within schools. Drawing on the work of political philosopher Jacques Rancière, I will discuss the possibility of equality, democracy and emancipation in schools. I want to discuss these matters against the backdrop of bullying, since bullying is an extreme form of inequality, as well as being violent and destructive. The impetus for this discussion comes from the stories about bullying told by youths

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interviewed within the context of the research project 'Learning Democracy' (Ekerwald and Säfström 2012). Moreover, more often than not, bullying is taken to be alien to schooling as something wrong. I will indeed in what follows also understand bullying as wrong, not as a commonsensical 'moral' wrong, but as a wrong inscribed within the normality of a social order of inequality, which is also the order of schooling. Against this order, or as a break with it, I stress the possibility of education and emancipation as possible when the 'wrong people' speak, the people who already assume equality. In the first section, I make a distinction between society as a particular order of inequality and equality as something that always can be assumed between people. I also give an empirical example of a situation of equality in teaching. In the second section, I establish the distinction between education and schooling, arguing that schooling is an expression of inequality whereas education is about emancipation. In the subsequent sections, I explore the foundation of inequality in schooling through the idea of superior and inferior intelligence and show how the implied inequality becomes expressed in absolute terms in bullying. In a final section, I emphasise what happens when the wrong people speak, that is, when the taken-for-granted inequalities are challenged by claims of equality. Bullying, as I understand it, is a political act of reproducing an order of absolute inequality. In order for democracy at all to be possible in schools, inequality has to be challenged in every instance of its appearance.

Equality Needs No Foregrounding

Rancière (1999b) claims that the social is to be understood as always already organised, administered and unequally constructed in what he refers to as the police order. This order can be better or worse but can never in itself be an expression of equality without limits (as in utopian models of political thought). Society is a fiction, one based on inequality. Society cannot *be* equal.

> We aren't saying that the citizen is the ideal man, the inhabitant of an egalitarian political heaven that masks the reality of the inequality between concrete individuals. We are saying the opposite: that there is no equality except between men, that is to say, between individuals who regard each other only as reasonable beings. The citizen, on the contrary, the inhabitant of the political fiction, is man fallen into the land of inequality. (Rancière 1999a, p. 90)

Rather, what can be equal are men and women of flesh and blood, or more specifically, equality is a particular quality of a relationship between those who have discovered that equality needs no foregrounding. This equality is, for Rancière, an assumption we must start with, not to ground it in any other way than to live it. It is verified, never made, and is aesthetical in character since when equality is verified in a social situation of inequality, it reorganises, like art, the very condition of sense perception.

Let me take an example most teachers can relate to: Charlotte refuses to participate during maths class. Adrian, her teacher, is concerned and talks to Charlotte

whenever he sees her in the corridor, but not about maths but about whatever is contextually appropriate at the time he meets her. He talks to her as a person not to the student she ought to be in the school order. In other words he speaks from an interest outside the more narrowly defined role of a teacher, from what is unmistakably him and no one else. And he listens to Charlotte and no one else. One day later Charlotte enters into the class; Adrian notices her but makes no extra fuss, just gently introduces her along with the rest of the class to the task ahead. Charlotte is eventually able to finish the course with good grades in maths. When asked what happened, Adrian says that he needed to build confidence and he needed to show that he had a wider human interest in the success of Charlotte beyond the more instrumental aim of getting her into the class. And when asked by the researcher (Frelin 2010), Adrian says that he acted in a way that was not directly connected to thinking, reflection, but 'under the surface of consciousness'.

So how do I understand this example as a political act of subjectification rather than as a psychological act of 'manipulation'? When Adrian was building confidence, he had to show Charlotte that his interest was not only in her doing math but in the capacity of speaking. He had to show her that he was able to speak in ways that come from him and no one else and that he both expected and verified that Charlotte can indeed speak from herself and no one else. Once the verification of the ability to speak is established, equality is asserted in a situation of inequality. Adrian still knows more about maths than Charlotte, but that is what is given in the already established order of the school. What shifts is how Charlotte is perceived, from one who has no voice in the established order of things to a speaking being among other speaking beings. It is also interesting, even if not decisive, that Adrian describes his teaching as being located just under the surface of consciousness, at the level of the sensible, at the level of art and politics. What is important is that the police order of the school as such is not overturned, but what seems to be established is what can be called intellectual emancipation. That is, when Charlotte speaks beyond the established role as a student who cannot do math, she breaks the inequality of being included in the school order as excluded (from the ability of doing math) in a way that moves her from a maker of noise to a maker of discourse. Charlotte is perceived by the teacher as a speaking being; Adrian does not make her speak but verifies that she is speaking already, and what he is able to do is to shift the condition for what is commonly perceptible in the given order of the school so as to make it possible to see what was not seen before: the equality of Charlotte as a speaking being beyond the particular police order of the school. And that that equality has nothing to do with how much math you know.

Verifying equality, as I understand it, is a form of living or rather living in a form of action based on an assumption of equality. It is also a form, if not *the* form of action, in which teaching can take place. It is a form of action in which the learner is not forced to subordinate herself or himself to the teacher but is instead verified at the very outset as equal in a situation of inequality. It is not epistemological equality/sameness however. The teacher knows more about many things, even if not all things. But what is verified at the outset is the ability to speak in ways that bring new meaning to the world, to speak from what unmistakably comes from the

subject. Speech can bring new meaning to the world because it is based in the poetic condition of all language, and it is also precisely because of this that speech differs from rhetoric. Rhetoric is speech reduced to mastering someone else. Speech instead comes from or is made possible because of the assumption of equality.

Such equality without ground, Rancière (2007a, b) claims, is a product of the language we live. It is expressed in the poetic condition (contingent) of all spoken language. If that is the case, then the poetic life of equal men and women is in direct conflict with any police order, better or worse. At the same time, it is only through such conflict that the order can be anything else than itself, through which, in this moment, it can be creatively changed.

The police order, though, not only determines a place for each and everyone but also gives that place both meaning and perception. That is, if not already understood as part of the police order, a singular being is not just excluded but is *unintelligible* from the vantage point of the system; it is made invisible; it cannot be perceived. From this it follows that if bullying, as an example, is perceived as something alien to the function of the police order it cannot be perceived, the one bullied is fundamentally unintelligible. Bullying is made invisible and non-perceptible. It does not belong to what can be seen or understood. Therefore bullying can go on unnoticed also in schools that understand themselves as good schools with good teachers (Ekerwald and Säfström 2012). In Sweden there are 1.5 % of the students in primary school that are severely bullied and bullied right through their school years, and some of those cases, in our material, come from so-called good schools. With good we mean that those schools in the eye of the public are the 'right' schools to choose for success in life but also that those schools understand themselves as fair, democratic and fostering for equality and solidarity, giving the conditions for a good Swedish way of life. So how is it that bullying can go on unseen also in those types of schools in which teachers see themselves as professional teachers doing something profoundly necessary for a democratic society: educating the Swedish democratic citizen?

Schooling Inequality

One obvious precondition for bullying to take place seems to be a high degree of inequality. The one bullied is treated like no one else in the group. He or she stands at the lower end of a hierarchical order. Maybe it is even the case that the one bullied does not even exist within the hierarchy itself but rather outside of it. A common way of trying to find out the norms and rules of a social group is to try to find it borders by exceeding them. The bullied is in a way a position outside the borders that are excluded from the norms and rules defining the inside of the group. The bullied one is then the other of the hierarchical order, the one that makes the order look like an order, a community of a particular kind. He or she stands outside the norms and rules that define the inside of the community. But since no living being in an absolute way can be said to be standing outside society,

it means that the bullied one is included in the order of the community as excluded. He or she lives in society, not outside of it, but their function in this society is to be excluded. Such a position is indeed a consequence of an unequal society, of a certain police order (Rancière 1999b).

If the task of schooling is to be to bring new generations into the existing social order, then it becomes reduced to inculcating individuals into this already existing inequality. Therefore it is important to make a distinction between what 'education' might be and what schooling is, the latter bound to inculcate, subordinate and pacify the individual into living in any given police order, any given society as a socialised citizen. Of course we must learn how to live in the society we are living in. But a society is not a thing but formed by the image of human beings who create different types of communities (Castoriadis 1995). And if the function of schooling, as a social institution, is to inculcate individuals into an already existing order, then the task of education is to change this order. To change existing orders has been the task for education at least since the Enlightenment. That is, education is a way through which individuals or groups win their freedom (Biesta and Säfström 2012). If we are indeed currently reducing education only to be increasing institutional schooling, we found ourselves immediately in trouble. Not only because we then need to hold a position that seems to go counter to Enlightenment ideals of freeing the individual from the chains of ignorance but also that we then seem to be forced to conclude that the only thing that can take place in schools is a slotting of people into an existing order of inequality, which is simply false. We know that going to school can be liberating for many people, even though it also can be harmful for others (Frelin 2010; Ekerwald and Säfström 2012).

So in the following, I am going to dig deeper into how it is possible that schools seem to produce bullying as a normal outcome of its way of functioning – normal, even though not acceptable. What will be scrutinised in particular is what I will call 'the myth of schooling'. It is a myth which makes possible an understanding of the major task of schooling as a form of fitting students into an already unequal society, which turns, in my view, bullying into a necessary component of schooling as such. And since schooling is an institution through which society reproduces itself, school and society reflect each other.

Absolute Inequality

It would not be difficult for anyone to claim that most if not all societies we live in are built on an unequal distribution of money, power and status. Inequality can be described in terms of patriarchy or class, or ethnic divisions and more. It can even be claimed that the very way in which societies organise themselves is always expressions of inequality (Rancière 1999a, b). When it comes to schooling, a critical response to an unequal society seems to be of two types. Either the critique focuses on the way in which inequality is reproduced in the present or on the possible equality to be had in the future. The problem with both positions is that they

take inequality as a given either by pointing to its reproduction or by accepting inequality as a starting point for what needs to be overcome. But in order for us to at all be able to talk about equality, we have to take it as a starting point. Equality can only be verified. Reproduction theories reproduce inequality by taking it as given, as do normative theories of equality claiming that we need to move toward equality somewhere down the line. Equality, to be at all intelligible, needs to come first, as an assumption to be verified (Rancière 1999b).

An expression of inequality is what I will call 'the myth of schooling' with its reduction of education to subordination under the given order. In its mildest form, the myth consists of the idea that the student is not yet equal with others but that she or he can become so through different socialisation processes within the school and her or his successive development and maturing. It is the idea that the students not yet are democratic citizens but that they will become one through gaining school knowledge through which they become authorised to take part in the common business of society. He or she only first needs to get the society explained. A problem with this, as Rancière (1999a) points out, is that within the structure of explanation itself lies a preconception that the student cannot find it out for himself or herself. The explanations as such take for granted the subordination and passivity of the student.

In order for such a subordination to work, we need first to divide the world into two, or to be more precise when it comes to schooling, we need to divide intelligence in two. And here I follow Jacques Rancière's (1999a) argument as I read it. The myth of schooling takes as a starting point that there exists a superior and an inferior intelligence. The inferior intelligence registers the world by chance and interprets its surrounding world mechanically in relation to its desires. The superior intelligence, on the other hand, knows things through reasoning and moves from the simple to the complex, from the part to the whole. It is a superior intelligence allowing the teacher to transmit knowledge through connecting, within the structure of the explanation, his or her superior intelligence with the inferior intelligence of the student. It is also such a relation that enables the teacher to control whether the student has learnt something. The act of explanation establishes inescapable inequality. How far one should go in the explanation is entirely decided by the one explaining. The teacher becomes a master always and forever beyond the horizon of the students' capabilities. So what is established is an inequality that simply cannot be overcome, an absolute inequality between superior and inferior 'intelligence'.

A society of inequality is thereby reproduced by schooling and by comparisons between persons and groups through tests and grades. The main function of those grades and tests is to establish superiority and inferiority from the vantage point of the absolute inequality of the master. In other words, the way in which someone can be superior is to be the same as the master, to take such a position, and tests then become an exact measure on the distance from such a position (Säfström 2002). Rancière (1999a) calls this 'stultification'. The student needs not only declare himself or herself as ignorant of the subject unless the master explains how things hang together. Rancière says that such stultification is codified by schooling and other social institutions (and their experts) and is consolidated in our brains by those

experts who explain the world for us. What thereby is 'taken' from us is our will to know, our own attention and work. The will that is charging itself with maintaining the game of inequality has not stopped to use its intelligence, says Rancière, but their intelligence is based on a profound diversion of attention. It is a profound diversion from recognising the equality of all men and women and involves a disciplining of oneself to see only that which verifies superiority in order to be able to overlook the intelligence of the other. Rancière (1999a) says:

> The universe of social irrationality is made up of wills served by intelligences. But each of these wills charges itself with destroying another will by preventing another intelligence from seeing. (p. 82)

Or in other words, the myth of schooling hinders people from seeing their intelligence as equal with everyone else.

In order to be absolutely clear on this point, what Rancière calls the equality of intelligence is an assumption that cannot be proved. It is an assumption in order to understand what happens when we do the opposite, that is, when we start with what Rancière calls the perverted will and assume their superior intelligences rule over inferior ones.

Bullying can now be understood as an obvious expression of such a perverted will, which diverts attention from the equality of all men and women. Bullying is to be understood as an expression of what I call 'the myth of schooling' and as such the very confirmation of the inequality of society. As such bullying is not alien to the normality of schooling, even if it is claimed unacceptable. Bullying is rather, in the final analyses, the very expression of an irrational normality of the school. It is irrational since the myth of schooling establishes a timeline in which the fully explained society is supposed to take place in a distant future. With such a logic, it is not only possible to have a final explanation of society somewhere down the line, it also means that we cannot live in the here and now of the school and 'society' at the same time. But it is also irrational because the society that is anticipated becomes an abstract, dispersed conception that always will be in the hands of the master. The bully, as I understand it, thereby becomes an expression of the absolute but irrational explanatory 'master', the one who sets the norms and the rules in such a way as to hinder us from seeing the equality of all men and women. The bully is a master in ignoring the intelligence of the other and in attempting to destroy his or her will.

The Order of Society and Common Sense

I want to repeat, at this point, the sharp distinction between schooling (as the process of reproducing an unequal society) and education. In education it is possible to claim equality and it is here that equality can take shape. To claim equality in a situation of inequality is an event in which emancipation can take place. Education is therefore also a place for democracy. Democracy, or rather democratisation, is a process between people who choose to act together, a particular way of organising

a life together with others. For Rancière, democracy is not something we have but what can happen under certain conditions. Democracy, like politics, can only take place when the idea of a natural unity in one (unequal) society is divided, that is, when the idea of a natural inequality within a natural whole is fundamentally divided between those who have access to power and wealth and those who have not, when the division is shown not to be a natural inequality based on 'intelligence' and explained, but an expression of a fundamental domination of the rich over the poor. Most importantly, this means that when the ones who are dominated speak as if they were equal, the domination breaks apart. The very way in which the breaking up of domination takes place defines the content of that instant of democracy.

Democracy takes place sporadically in schools in the very moment in which the order of inequality is confronted by claims of equality. This means that education cannot teach democracy in this particular sense, but education is internally related to democracy that is its very soul. That is, as long as education is about freeing the intellect, then it is about claiming equality with everyone else. It is a claim to be able to speak, even in situations depriving one of that right, and maybe particularly in those situations. But what has been said also means that neither democracy nor education, in this sense, is already part of 'common sense' but a break with it, particularly since common sense tends to be based on unequal society as the normal natural state of things. Therefore, education, like democracy, is not primarily about increasing common sense but about changing it. In the next section, I will draw an even sharper distinction between schooling as it is formed through the 'myth of schooling' and education as emancipation and relate it to the analysis of bullying.

The Bully as the Guard of Absolute Inequality

That education easily gets reduced to schooling becomes clear if we consider the paradoxical impossibility of being 'too much' within such a discourse. The empirical research, upon which this chapter is based, reveals that students experience their identities as 'fixed' in schools (Edling 2009; Grannäs 2011). In other words, the students could be 'nothing' that was not already meaningful within the existing order, defining also set relations between different 'identities'. This order of set identities is the police order of the school. The whole idea with the police order in Rancière's (1999b) terms is that it is no surprise to anyone within it. The police order is known, administered and organised on the level of the sensible (Rancière 2007a); it is an overarching representation of the whole population in which each and everyone has his or her place and his or her identity connected to this place. It is the order that makes it possible for us to experience that we self-evidently live in a society of a particular kind, as if it always has been the case. It is the very basis from which we understand particular events and give them meaning. To be socialised through schooling means to be confirmed in that which already is recognisable as an identity. No more or less can then take place in schooling, which does not confirm already given identities, nothing sticks out, nothing is added and there is no surplus.

If there is a surplus, something that sticks out, socialisation has failed: it is not completed but has gone wrong. From this also follows that schooling is needed indefinitely, as lifelong learning, since there is so much that needs to be fixed and corrected, so many deficits that need to be attended to in order to (re)create the perfect identity for the school.

The bully can now, in accordance with the above analyses, be said to guard the borders of the normal. He or she is a product for a particular police order, brutal and violent in his or her defence of absolute inequality. The one bullied becomes something like the waste of the social order (Bauman 2004). He or she becomes a 'nothing' and is not known within the normality of the social order. The one bullied becomes an absurdity in relation to the conception of the normal school. Within the myth of schooling, it seems to be impossible to perceive or see someone bullied (as absolute unequal) since he or she is 'nothing' within the myth ordering the school. The one bullied can by definition not exist within schooling or even be included as excluded. Bullying is, in other words, the very consequence of the myth of schooling. The violent act confirms absolute inequality, and stultification works in order to safeguard that the explanation of society by the master cannot be questioned. The myth of schooling is in all matters essentially an indivisible whole. To recognise the bullied as someone else than bullied breaks with this wholeness, with this particular order. And it is also in the break that it is possible to point to the wrong, which has kept inequality in place. It is also here that we can see that bullying is not primarily a psychological phenomena but a political one. To claim equality in such an event by pointing to the wrong through which bullying can continue is to demand education, emancipation and democracy. It is to confront the inequality of the police order with equality. In order to fight bullying, it is not enough to do so by making corrections within the myth of schooling. It can only take place by confronting this myth with claims of equality. I do not believe it is possible to create an absolute equally school, but it is always possible to claim equality. It is human beings that can be equal, not the social order. So when individuals claim equality in a way that attaches itself to and confronts an inequality bigger than the individual, the conditions for the order in place change: 'I am equal with you and everyone else! I speak'. Such a claim is bigger than the individual since it claims the ability for all to speak from an insight of the equality of intelligence and in a situation of absolute inequality. Such a break is also a break with common sense as it is ordered through the myth of schooling. It changes the police order even though it does not dissolve it. There are always better or worse police orders, which give different conditions for claiming equality. Democracy is, in line with Rancière, the possibility to confront the police order with its claim of being a natural order for the individual to adjust to. Democracy happens in schools in the moment in which the inequality of the police order is confronted with claims of equality. When the bullied speaks as if he or she has the same right to be included rather than excluded, he or she speaks about a confrontation bigger than her own dilemma. When the bullied confronts the wrong of the myth of schooling by claiming equality, he or she is acting politically and if perceived as such can change the order of the school to something better. Better in this case means an order in which claims of equality are perceived as such, as a claim of

the ability to speak. To break with bullying as a normal condition for schooling is to break with the schooling order of inequality and the master explicator as a model for schools.

When the Wrong People Speak

My aim with this chapter has not been to suggest yet another programme against bullying but to contribute with a way of perceiving and seeing bullying as a problem for democracy and for politics. Bullying is a wrong within the myth of schooling and not only a problem for the individual. I say that while recognising the suffering endorsed by individual students. However I also want to point to the wrong that is bigger than the school insofar as it is a wrong inherent to a social order of inequality. It is an inequality that only can be overcome by humans who verify equality, and such verification is always a possibility, no matter how policed the order is. When equality indeed is claimed, not only politics and democracy take place but education does through emancipation.

Equality, as I understand it, is not sameness. Equality is rather to be understood against the backdrop of recognising difference, that I am not you. And this existential difference cannot be taken to justify stopping someone else from speaking. In one way, what I am suggesting is simple but also difficult. It is simple because what it requires is to meet someone who is not the same as me, to accept that I am not you, to accept difference and to hear the other also when he or she is not just confirming the expected. At the same time, it is hard, because it requires that we can find discourse in what essentially is understood as noise, as beyond what we normally make sense of. It demands of us to see beyond what we think we see. It demands attention in the strongest sense of that word. It also demands of us a will to see beyond the normal order of things and to strive for emancipation rather than destroying the will of another person.

To see inequality, then, means that one already has to assume equality, and by that assumption, one is already unintelligible within the police order. That means that if one sees what is not to be seen within the police order itself, it means that one is already part of another community of men and women who assume equality (like Adrian and Charlotte above). Also, seeing thereby becomes an act through which one attaches oneself to the fundamental wrong of a divided society. In other words, one belongs to 'the wrong people' whenever equality is verified.

The claim of equality is not a claim to exist: it is a claim to be perceived. It is an act of subjectification that not only concerns learning about citizenship, but actually is about performing it (Biesta 2011). It is therefore also a break with epistemology, which connects certain meanings to perception, that is, what is confronted by the verification of equality is that which makes certain people audible, perceptible and understandable. Therefore bringing more democracy to the school is not possible by learning more about democracy within the existing police order but only by confronting the sense on which the existing police order is based. Such confrontation

happens when 'the wrong people' speak as if they have the right to do so, even in situations depriving them of that right. Speaking as the wrong people is not easy, even risky both individually and socially, but it is also only through such speech that democracy can happen and indeed does happen in schools.

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Chapter 11
Democratic Experimentation in Early Childhood Education

Michel Vandenbroeck and Jan Peeters

The Consensus on Early Childhood and Equality

Over the last decade or so, there seems to be an overwhelming consensus that (a) early childhood education matters for the developmental outcomes of children, (b) that this is most salient for children 'at risk' for underachieving in the educational system in later years (i.e. children living in poverty and children from ethnic minorities), (c) that this is only the case when early childhood education is of high quality and (d) that the early years workforce is one of the most salient predictors of this quality. In a first section, we will briefly illustrate the consensus in the academia as well as in policy on these four claims. Then, we will more critically try to uncover aspects that remain undiscussed and argue why this consensus constitutes a social order that instrumentalises children as well as parents and professionals and may be counterproductive for democratic experimentation. We subsequently illustrate this critique by drawing on studies on the professionalisation of childcare workers in the municipality of Ghent, as these may indicate some possible ways forward. Or probably it is better to speak about side roads rather than ways forward as it remains unpredictable where these roads are leading to.

There is overwhelming evidence of the long-term beneficial effects of early childhood education on the cognitive and social competences of children later in life. This international consensus is largely inspired by studies on outcomes on the use of early childhood education in the USA. Poor and/or ethnic minority children who were enrolled in programmes such as Abecedarian, Perry Preschool and High/Scope have been followed during many years, and the costs of these programmes are compared to the alleged long-term benefits (Barnett and Masse 2007; Nores and Barnett 2010). The findings of these studies have been combined with findings from

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neuroscience, to explain *why* the early years are so important for later developmental outcomes and subsequently translated into policy recommendations to invest in early childhood education, promising high returns on investments (Heckman 2006; Shonkoff and Phillips 2000; Shonkoff 2011). More recently, this vein of mainstream research has also been exported outside of the USA. One salient example is the much discussed recent Lancet series on child development, a meta-study of 42 efficacy or effectiveness studies and programme assessments of early childhood education programmes in low- and middle-income countries (Engle et al. 2011). The Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) study, conducted in England, and its Northern Irish counterpart (EPPNI) are probably the most cited European studies in this vain, equally concluding that high-quality early-year programmes have positive effects on educational achievements later in life (Hanna et al. 2006; Sylva et al. 2004). A recent meta-analysis of a variety of European effectiveness studies confirms this consensus (Burger 2010). Of course, there are studies that contradict the univocal success story: some population studies in the Netherlands (e.g. Driessen 2004) and France (Caille 2001), for instance, yield inconsistent findings and large-scale effectiveness studies of the implementation of High/Scope-like programmes in the Netherlands also yield inconsistent and unsustainable results (e.g. Veen et al. 2000). Yet, these studies do not question the overall consensus. Rather, they confirm the findings that quality matters, as the lack of positive results is attributed to the inconsistent quality of provisions in the targeted geographical areas (Driessen 2004).

Most studies concur in stating that the beneficial effects are more salient for children from disadvantaged backgrounds and implicitly suggest prioritising investments to these groups at risk for later school dropout. The policy priorities are symbolised by the famous Heckman curve, showing that 'return to human capital investment in disadvantaged children' is at its peak in preschool years (Heckman 2006). The researchers explicitly advocate that policy and practice should be moulded by their findings (e.g. Shonkoff 2011) and they can enjoy the pleasure of knowing that this is exactly what seems to happen. All major international organisations have referred to these studies to advocate for investments in early childhood education as one of the major instruments to 'level the playing field', that is, to combat poverty, including the World Bank (Alderman 2011; Penn 2002), UNESCO (2010), Unicef (Unicef Innocenti Research Centre 2008) and the EU (European Commission 2011). The latest OECD report on early childhood education starts by stating:

> There is a growing body of evidence that children starting strong in their learning and well-being will have better outcomes when they grow older. Such evidence has driven policy makers to design an early intervention and re-think their education spending patterns to gain "value for money". (OECD 2012, p. 3)

The consensus on the 'human capital investment paradigm' has obviously also dripped down to national policy makers in various European countries, who agree to frame early childhood education as a means of realising equal life chances by preparing school success in the compulsory school age. The human capital paradigm is explicitly mentioned in policy texts in the UK, France and Flanders as well as in other countries.

The Tyranny of Consensus

In this apparent consensus, it may be wise to remember the words of Michel Foucault:

> Je ne cherche pas à dire que tout est mauvais, mais que tout est dangereux, ce qui n'est pas exactement la même chose que ce qui est mauvais. Si tout est dangereux, alors nous avons toujours quelque chose à faire.[1] (Foucault 1983, p. 1205)

Indeed, the renewed focus on early childhood education in the realm of a concern for equal opportunities is not bad. Yet, the consensus may be worrying, as there is no place for democracy in contexts of consensus. And consensus, understood as the absence of politics (Mouffe 2005), is precisely what is at stake. This is quite obvious in the rationale of the World Bank for investing in early childhood education, as it 'is embraced across the political spectrum, as a matter of fairness for the left and as a matter of personal effort for the right' (Paes de Barros et al. 2009, p. xvii). The idea is clearly to present early childhood education as an a-political environment, that is, 'not about government raising children (…). It is not about liberals versus conservatives. This is about wise investors who defy ideological labels' (Eming Young 2007, p. 31). What is particularly worrying in this consensus is that it (a) disables public discussions on what participation of parents may mean (silencing parents), (b) pretends that the social and societal meaning of early childhood education is beyond debate and therefore disables the public discussion on the very meaning of education, (c) consequently avoids any discussion on what quality may be, silencing the voices of parents, children and practitioners in decisions made about their lives and (d) propagates a technocratic vision of what professionalism is that entails a narrow concept of professionalisation as the accumulation of knowledge, skills and dispositions, ignoring the potential that professionals in the public sphere of education can play in what Biesta (2011) calls 'learning through citizenship'. We will shortly elaborate on this critique, before exploring alternative practices.

Instrumentalised Parents

A typical example of the tendency to 'scientific consensus' is the evolution that can be noted in the OECD Starting Strong reports with regard to the participation of parents. While there is since long a consensus on the importance of parent involvement, the vocabulary in which this is framed substantially changed over the last few years. The 2006 edition extensively advocated for broad curricula, providing generic frameworks that needed to be locally elaborated in dialogue with parents and local communities. The 2006 edition also advocated for 'emerging curricula', meaning

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[1] My aim is not to say that everything is bad, but rather that everything is dangerous, which is not quite the same. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do (translation by us).

open-ended curricula, that would not impose specific outcomes to be reached by children, let alone implement predefined programmes, but rather take advantage of what children and parents live in daily situations (OECD 2006). In contrast, the subtitle of the last edition of the OECD Starting Strong Report, published in 2012, is eloquent for the shift in thinking: 'A quality toolbox for early childhood education and care' (OECD 2012). While it still bears some vague memories of the previous report, advocating for parent and community involvement, the tone has substantially changed. In the 2006 report, parents and communities were important for democratic reasons, as bearer of voices that need to be heard when deciding about public education. In the 2012 edition, they are highly instrumentalised.

> Parental and community engagement is increasingly seen as an important policy lever to enhance healthy child development and learning. (…) Parental engagement – especially in ensuring high-quality children's learning at home and communicating with ECEC staff – is strongly associated with children's later academic success, high school completion, socio-emotional development and adaptation in society. (OECD 2012, p. 12)

The quotation illustrates much of the problems with the present consensual thinking. The reason to involve parents is the correlation between their involvement and developmental outcomes, as described by science, and since it belongs to the scientific output, it is beyond reasonable doubt and cannot be questioned. Parents are not involved out of a democratic concern to hear a plurality of voices, but paradoxically – through the predefined involvement – the plurality is silenced. It is indeed early childhood education (or the scientists having this sector as their core business) that defines unilaterally *what* parent engagement is and *how* it needs to be expressed. As a consequence, parents are reduced to be the spectators of the debate on what their alleged 'problem' is. It is evident that the consequence of this approach is that some parents will be constructed as 'good citizens', while others are constructed as 'in need of support to enhance participation'. Parents are attributed with a series of duties (ensure a high-quality home environment), rather than entitlements, and in so doing a concept of the 'good enough' parent is constructed, independent of the material, social and cultural context in which the family lives, that inevitably will have inclusive and exclusive effects. In short, one could summarise this concept of parental and community engagement as an instrument for the *socialisation* of children, meaning, the insertion in the social order: the preparation of future citizenship in a meritocratic and highly competitive society, in which parents are constructed as individual entrepreneurs (Masschelein and Simons 2002) who are expected to make the right choices and right investments in the human capital of their child.

Instrumentalised ECEC

What the desired outcomes or the very meaning of early childhood education may be is absent from the debate, as this is predefined by science. It seems to be unquestionable that the meaning of ECEC resides in preparing children for compulsory school. Just as compulsory school is narrowed down to a labour market instrument.

The consequence is that the meaning of ECEC resides outside ECEC, as it is predominantly a preparation for *later*. Another consequence is that the meaning is predominantly framed in economic terms, rather than in pedagogical, let alone in political terms. There is little place to discuss what might be democratic (or what might be a democratic deficit) in ECEC when its meaning resides primarily in the expected effects on the labour market. It needs to be noticed that narrowing down ECEC as a preparation for compulsory schooling is highly problematic and internationally contested (Moss forthcoming). One can indeed argue that ECEC is first and foremost a place of democratic practice (Moss 2007) or that it is a space of cultural production (Rinaldi 2005). But what is important to stress here is that the alleged consensus on its meaning not only instrumentalises ECEC but also silences children, parents and professionals in the debate on what ECEC should be about.

Instrumentalised Quality

As a result, children, parents or professionals are denied access to the debates on what constitutes quality. As said earlier, the consensus in academia and policy is that early childhood matters but only if it is of high quality. In the dominant vein of research, quality is de facto predefined as what is measured by quality rating scales, such as ITERS and ECERS (Harms et al. 1998, 2003). As a consequence, what constitutes quality is defined without consulting professionals, parents or children who are concerned by the study. Yet, cross-cultural studies clearly show how conceptions of quality (regarding structural quality aspects, such as adult-child ratio, as well as more pedagogical aspects regarding interactions) might change according to cultural and historical contexts (Tobin et al. 2009). We might, for instance, substantially differ in how we deal with the inevitable tensions between educational aims of autonomy and solidarity (or individual development versus social cohesion). We might also substantially differ on the political meaning (e.g. policy to enhance female labour participation, a policy for distributional justice, a structural policy for all families or a targeted approach for the education of children living in families 'at risk'). It is clear that what constitutes quality will substantially differ according to one's opinions on what ECEC is for. By predefining quality (in order to make it measurable), a democratic deficit is installed as the discussion on its meaning is made redundant. In so doing, the consensus on the human capital paradigm functions as a tyranny, or 'the dictatorship of no alternatives' (Ungerer in Moss and Fielding 2010). As Biesta (2007) suggests, this leads to a technocratic model in which the only relevant research questions are about effectiveness, forgetting that what counts as effective crucially depends on judgements about what is desirable. The problem is that the choices (of what is desirable) remain implicit, uncontested and presented as evident, rather than as a choice amidst other possibilities. Biesta adds that this severely limits the opportunities for educational practitioners to make judgements about what is desirable in ways that are sensitive to and relevant for their own contextualised settings.

Instrumentalised Professionals

The dominant focus on human capital investments indeed seriously impacts on the conceptualisation of professionalism. Many scholars have empirically demonstrated the relations between higher qualifications (i.e. at bachelor's levels) and quality indicators, as well as outcomes for children (Clarke-Stewart et al. 2002; Early 2007; Fukkink and Lont 2007; Sylva et al. 2004). Some scholars have added that a lack of pre-service training can be compensated by in-service training, provided it is of sufficient intensity and length (Fukkink and Lont 2007; Jaegher et al. 2000; Pianta et al. 2008). Despite the consensus on the importance of training of the early years workforce, there is very little research on the content and format of this training. The latest OECD report (2012, pp. 145–146) summarises what is considered to be the mainstream understanding of the content of this professionalism.

> Qualifications can matter in terms of which skill sets and what knowledge are recognised as important for working with children. The skills and staff traits that research identifies as important in facilitating high-quality services and outcomes are: good understanding of child development and learning; ability to develop children's perspectives; ability to praise, comfort, question and be responsive to children; leadership skills, problem solving and development of targeted lesson plans; good vocabulary and ability to elicit children's ideas.

Professionalisation, in this vein, is considered to be a list of competences – knowledge, skills and dispositions – that the individual professional needs to achieve, in order to reach the desired, yet undiscussed, outcomes in children. Again, it is striking that most countries tend to ignore what competencies may be necessary in order to negotiate with diverse stakeholders about what the desired outcomes might be. A recent survey among experts in 15 EU countries about professional and training competence profiles reveals that very little, if any, attention is devoted to discussing the meaning of early childhood education with parents, nor about the relation between early childhood services and the broader community (Urban et al. 2011). As a consequence of the technical notion of individual skills, the responsibility of the quality rests on the shoulders of the educators, who are supposed to invest in their lifelong learning. In sum, the tendency to consider desired outcomes in children as individual assets (in line with the meritocratic society) and to construct parents as entrepreneurs of their own life and of the life of their child is also to be found in the construction of the ideal professional. This is clearly illustrated in the survey we mentioned above, where it reveals that in many countries, the qualified teacher is assisted by unqualified assistants, who very often take up the caring roles, reducing the teachers' function to a very narrow concept of 'learning' as intrinsically different from 'caring' (Van Laere et al. 2012). In so doing, the professional is reduced to a technocratic function, expected to deliver a child that is predefined, by applying 'effective' curricula and programmes that are developed and evaluated by scientists. Obviously, that predefined child is as much as possible an average child, meaning that the child that differs from this norm needs compensation programmes to bring it as soon as possible to an alleged normalcy. In contrast, reality is increasingly complex and *dis-normal*.

To give but a few examples, the number of children in poverty has doubled over the last decade in Flanders, and while birth rates are expected to remain almost equal in the next decade (Kind en Gezin 2011), it is also expected that the number of children will increase with 30+ % in the most densely populated and poorest areas of Brussels, with the highest percentages of immigrant families (Humblet 2010). Equally, the OECD expects a rapidly growing diversification of families, amongst others through the increase in single parent families (OECD 2011). In short, the average child is dead. However, this crucial issue is often reduced to the acknowledgement that professionals will have to acquire an additional set of skills, related to intercultural approaches, approaches to second languages and language acquisition, and working with children at risk (Eurydice 2009, quoted in OECD 2012).

A Depoliticised Education

The outcomes, which are defined for children (and that define the very meaning of early childhood education), tend to make the educational work controllable (with efficiency and effectiveness as the major buzzwords) and predictable. In continuation with that concern, also the professional is trained to control, to monitor and to predict. The instrumentalisation entailed by the human capital paradigm constructs what is 'a good child', an average child that benefits from ECEC and is pleased to further invest in its education. It also constructs the 'good parent', the parent who participates in ECEC in ways that the early childhood centre recognises as a correct way to participate (e.g. attend meetings, listen carefully at meetings and ask interesting questions, interesting being defined as questions that illustrate the parents' interest in ECEC, but do not challenge the pedagogical expertise of the educator). And it constructs what is a 'good practitioner', the one who knows about child development and the stimulation of different domains of development and the one who knows about the curriculum and has the skills and dispositions to adequately perform what is outlined in the curriculum. In other words, this 'good child', 'good parent' and 'good professional' can be considered as variations on the 'good citizen', meaning 'the one that goes with the flow' (Biesta 2011). It leaves little place for the odd, the strange, the unfamiliar, the unexpected, and the one who challenges us by asking the unexpected question, in short, the one who is 'out of order' (Biesta 2011). Consequently, accepting the dominant consensus on ECEC would mean defining children, parents and professionals in their social identity, meaning in their *becoming* instruments to realise goals that are decided without them. As Biesta (2011) explained, we need to distinguish this social identity from the political identity that has to do with the participation in collective decision-making. Accepting the consensus on ECEC, as a consequence, would imply a profound depoliticising of the education and present a democratic deficit. Let us look at two concrete observations from daily practice to illustrate another possibility.

In the context of a project on diversity in early childhood education in Brussels, mothers were interviewed by centre managers about their experiences with the child care centre. One immigrant mother of African descent explains how the number of little bicycles in the centre amazes her. She says this is wonderful, since each child can ride the bicycle whenever he wants, without having to take turns. And then she asks: 'But how do you do to teach children how to share?'

By asking this question, the mother points at the essence of what Mouffe (2000) calls the democratic paradox between freedom and equality, painfully unveiling that it is not possible to reach consensus over such matters. This is also at the core of Sen's argument on the impossibility of having a rational consensus of what constitutes fairness or justice (Sen 2009).

A municipal day care centre started with a project on the inclusion of children with a disability. The centre is divided into two groups: one for babies and one for toddlers. Since the foundation of the centre, many years ago, it is considered 'normal' that children change from the baby to the toddler group when they start to walk and the spaces are also designed as such. Due to the inclusion project, there is a baby with a motor impairment who will probably never walk. However, his mother asks the staff to let him go to the toddler group together with some of his friends. The question of the mother is the subject of long and heated debates in the team. The outcome of this negotiation is eventually that the centre decides to change the organisation of the groups and not to distinguish babies from toddlers, but rather to have two mixed-age groups.

The arrival of the child with a motor impairment, together with the question of his mother can be considered as an 'interruption of the existing order' (Biesta 2011). It is, as Biesta explains, not a claim to identify the child with his walking peers, since he will probably never walk. It is rather a claim of a new identity, leading to a reconfiguration of the existing order. It is therefore an example of the possibility of *subjectification*. Let us now look at some of the conditions that allow these 'interruption' or potential moments of democratic experimentalism (or repoliticising for that matter) to occur.

There Are Alternatives

In different regions in Europe and beyond, alternative views on early childhood have been explored, albeit that they are mostly published off the beaten tracks (often meaning in other languages than English). Well-known examples are the policies of the major municipalities of Tuscany and Emilia Romagna in Italy. They typically share a tradition of considering early childhood education as a public good and therefore to be negotiated with parents, professionals and policy makers in public fora. Professionalism is not considered as an achievement of individuals, but as a quality of the system, that includes not only individual practitioners but also their relationships within the team and across teams (*collegialità*) and with other stakeholders. The deeply embedded conviction of education as a public good is closely related to the work of pedagogues such as Bruno Chiari and Lori Malaguzzi who were actively involved as partisans in the opposition against the

fascist regime (Lazzari 2011). One of the diverse ways, in which the democratic debates about the meaning of early childhood education are put into practice, is the use of documentation. Practitioners not only document the learning of the children (as well as other activities and the life of the early childhood centre itself) but also discuss this documentation with peers and parents, both within and across centres as a means to explore the meaning making of different stakeholders and to place the discussion on the meaning of ECEC in the public sphere (Dahlberg and Moss 2005; Picchio et al. 2012; Rinaldi 2005).

Recently, the European Commission, DG Education and Culture commissioned a study on competence requirements for the early years workforce in the European Union (Urban et al. 2011). In the framework of this *CoRe* study, a case study was conducted in municipal day-care centres in Ghent to explore the voices of practitioners on these issues. The reason for this, being that Ghent is often cited as an example of high quality (e.g. OECD 2006), despite low levels of formal qualifications for the staff, thanks to a long history of in-service pedagogical support. In the context of this case study, pedagogical coordinators, but especially practitioners – both experienced and newcomers – were interviewed about their professional practices, using of a life history (or biographic) approach. The analysis of their narratives goes beyond the scope of this chapter (see www.vbjk.be for a full report). Rather we focus on two important hinge moments (or moments of interruption) in the history of professionalisation that we consider as bearing the potential of democratic experimentalism.

A first moment of interruption goes back as early as the late 1970s and early 1980s. In these days, childcare was predominantly seen as the care of children in the (allegedly regrettable) absence of their parents, and the main concern was on hygiene. Childcare centres were regulated along very strict hygienist rules, meaning that parents were not allowed to enter the playrooms, children were bathed daily and every contact between inside and outside was to be avoided (Mozère 1992; Vandenbroeck 2009). The task of the professional was to follow the guidelines in a strict hierarchical system, with the head nurse on top and the practitioner as a technological aid, executing the protocol. It was forbidden to them to talk with parents, and there evidently was no such thing as a team meeting. A large-scale study, conducted by OMEP clearly documented this approach and severely condemned the practice in childcare as unfriendly and psychologically and pedagogically deplorable (Peeters 1993).

As a result, the faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of Ghent University set up an action research project, inspired by social constructivism, by the notion of the 'teacher as researcher' (Stenhouse 1975) and the Freirian notion of 'cultural action'. Some of the guiding principles included avoiding the hierarchical dichotomy between researchers (as pedagogical counsellors) and practitioners, involving practitioners in debates on their everyday work and documenting their experiences (Peeters 2008). The task of the researchers as pedagogical counsellors consisted of instigating a mutual dialogue across the centres and encouraging the professionals' ongoing reflection on their practices and their beliefs. When looking back upon their career, practitioners explain that this was the first time their voice was heard, and it was not easy for them to speak, as they were trained to execute the

hygienic protocols, rather than to reflect on education. But when confronted with observations of their practice some decades ago, they feel both ashamed of how they behaved with the children and proud of how practice changed thanks to them.

According to the testimonies of the experienced practitioners, a second 'turn' occurred in the early 2000s, when the Pedagogical Guidance Centre started to initiate projects on respect for diversity. The essence of the change was that parents were listened to. This can be illustrated by an example. In most day-care centres, it was common practice to install a transition period in which parents were welcomed before their child was received in the centre. During this transition, parents were explained how things went in the centre, sleeping and eating habits and the like. They were also invited to comment on this usual practice. However, with an increasing number of children from ethnic minority families, practitioners were more often confronted with different family cultures (e.g. eating habits, different sleeping rituals), and these were often not expressed in the transition period, as parents felt insecure to contradict the usual order of things in the centre. By not speaking, one could say that they were eloquent in illustrating the inevitable unequal power relations between newly arriving parents and experienced practitioners (Spivak 1988). Therefore, in the new diversity projects, practitioners experimented in turning the order of things upside down. Before even showing the centre to the parents or explaining them 'this is how we do', they asked parents to show them *their* ways of doing things and explain their worries and concerns, hopes and expectations. It turned out that installing some form of reciprocity in the transition period, not only facilitated the mutual adaptation but also favoured a better relation with the parents afterwards, and this is not only for immigrant parents but for all parents (Vandenbroeck et al. 2009). In sum, the projects on diversity made it obvious that it was not possible to have a welcoming approach towards children, without also having a welcoming approach towards parents. Moreover, language barriers encouraged practitioners to better document their practices in various ways. In the recent case study, practitioners said that opening the doors for parents, beyond mere technical conversations (e.g. about how the child had slept or eaten today), was probably the most significant shift in their careers.

The practitioners became more sensible to what parents wished to communicate, to their concerns, their worries and expectations. Pedagogical counsellors, in turn, saw the relations with parents as an important and ongoing source of professionalisation. One counsellor put it this way: 'It takes a long time before younger colleagues can recognise the signals parents give. Some young practitioners are able to construct a real relationship with parents, and they most often have experience in youth work. These competences are not learned at school, but are learnt by doing, in working with parents'.

The reason why this is not obvious, according to the practitioners, is because this attitude requires a flexibility of the practitioner in thinking and doing, meaning that one has to be ready to question what one always has considered as best practice and to embrace uncertainty and unpredictability. As one practitioner put it: 'Before these projects, every day looked the same. When I left my house in the morning to go to the crèche, I knew exactly what would happen and when it would happen.

Today, nothing is sure anymore. And this is much more interesting. Uncertainty about what the day will bring is attractive. Because you do not know in advance what you have to do, the job becomes exciting'. This flexible approach can at times be difficult for younger, less experienced childcare workers.

One of the goals of the case study was to also analyse critical success factors enabling the emergence of these practices. The findings suggest that a critical factor was the pedagogical support being sustained over long periods of time and developed by specialised staff. Another critical factor was the teams of practitioners having the ownership of the change, that is, being the actors of change, rather than external advisors. According to the practitioners, it was important for them to do so with a shared system of ethical values (based on the UN convention on the rights of the child) underpinning the work with parents, children and neighbourhoods. The practitioners stressed that essential in their common culture was a strong commitment towards each child and each parent and the conviction that the educator *can* make a difference for children and adults who live in difficult situations.

Discussion

We analysed the dominant discourse on the societal function of ECEC (the human capital paradigm) in the present meritocratic society. Our analysis suggests that the human capital paradigm entails a focus on socialisation of children, conceptualised as adaptation to the social order, favouring the autonomous, entrepreneurial citizen, ready for lifelong learning as well as lifelong competition. This construction of childhood is paralleled with a construction of adults as entrepreneurial beings as well as a focus on the socialisation of professionals into a technical-oriented profession. The consensual thinking, in other words, leads to silencing the voices of parents, children and educators. Yet, other constructions are possible as is shown in different parts of the world.

The story of practitioners who explore different pathways in their work, confirms Biesta's claim that plurality and difference are preconditions for democratic citizenship, rather than sameness. It is the odd and the strange that have the potential of making the familiar unusual, or to cause an interruption in the normal flow of things. But we also learn that this is not what automatically happens in the encounter with the other. It is therefore important to avoid the pitfall of making the other into the same (Dahlberg and Moss 2005). It is also not a matter of making some new consensus, a renewed 'one size fits all'. Therefore it is important not to consider the strange as a problem for stability, but rather to welcome the strange as stability is the problem. In the case of the municipal day-care centres in Ghent, the work of the practitioners was not a work of individual outcasts. It was on the contrary supported by the municipal pedagogical guidance centre and by a clear mission statement of the municipality advocating for respect for diversity. The 'choice' for democracy in practice and its underlying values of equality and freedom started with localised experiments in one or two centres with committed practitioners but grew into a

public policy. This is equally the case in many Northern Italian cities, where considering education as a *public* good and therefore a responsibility of the community inevitably entails the conception of *public* authorities as responsible for safeguarding these values. Biesta (2011) explains that politics and democracy emerge when private wants are transformed into public issues. His distinction between private and public does not entail a conceptualisation of public as belonging to the sphere of governments or formal politics. Our experience in early childhood education, however, strengthens the conviction that in educational matters the notion of public as a place where education can be deeply discussed is most often paired with the notion of education as a public good including belonging to the responsibility of also public authorities. Indeed, as Moss (2009) explains, democratic experimentalism in early childhood education does not flourish in marketised environments.

Biesta (2011), recalling Rancière, conceptualises democratic moments as allowing the interruption of a particular social or political order, making visible what had no business being seen. This is probably one of the most important lessons we can learn from the pedagogy in Reggio Emilia, Pistoia, Bologna and many other Italian cities. It is that the careful documentation of daily practice is one of the most salient conditions to bring the discussions on education into the public. Educators there spend much time and energy in documenting their practice, as well as the learning of children. The pedagogical documentation serves as a memory of the institution but also as the start of discussions with children, parents and practitioners from other institutions about the meaning of education (Musatti 2012; Picchio et al. 2012; Rinaldi 2005). It is, when carefully done, probably one of the most powerful ways to challenge the hegemony of the human capital paradigm, since it 'makes heard a discourse where once there was only place for noise' (Rancière 2003, quoted in Biesta 2011). It is through the documentation and the subsequent discussions that dissensus is installed and the social order can be challenged. As Biesta rightly states, it is indeed in the action (and the reflection upon that action) that the professionalisation of the practitioners take place, as a form of learning from citizenship, rather than learning for citizenship.

This brings us to a final thought on what these experiences can tell us about the conceptualisation of citizenship. Biesta argues that citizenship is related to disidentification, rather than identification, as identification would mean a way of adapting to the social order. We have shown some examples of this disidentification, such as was the case with the mother of the toddler who crawls rather than walks or the African mother who is concerned about sharing, rather than just individual freedom. We explored the process of new-coming parents challenging the social order of daycare centres and in so doing expressing citizenship also elsewhere (Vandenbroeck et al. 2009). It needs to be noticed that this can only happen in contexts where the professional manages to install reciprocity in what is fundamentally an unequal and asymmetrical relation. It is when this reciprocity is installed that the new-coming parent can feel that he *belongs* to the institution. It is the feeling of belonging and identification that allows for the disidentification. One can therefore question if identification and disidentification need to be opposing concepts.

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Chapter 12
Disturbing Pedagogies in Special Youth Care

Karel De Vos

Aporias

H., a 16-year-old boy, was sent to a diagnostic centre by the juvenile court, after a stay in a closed facility for juvenile offenders. He had been placed in the closed facility after some violent incidents in which he was involved. These incidents occurred in an open pedagogical institution. Due to intra-familial violence, the judge had placed him in this open institution. Here, he refused to go to school, used drugs and was involved in petty crime. His parents had financial problems and were involved in an ongoing divorce procedure. The judge ordered the diagnostic centre to provide advice for the further treatment of H. H. longed to go back home. His parents responded to this desire in an ambiguous way: at one point they would agree, at another they would object vehemently. The juvenile court was opposed to H. returning home anyway because of the lack of pedagogic skills of the parents, which was the argument in support of the boy's initial placement in the open institution, besides the actual precarious familial situation.

His stay in the diagnostic centre was characterised by the emergence of two acute problems: the discovery of a brain injury that needed care without delay and the acknowledgment that he suffered from a severe drug addiction. The treatment of his brain injury would consist of several surgical interventions. An omission of the surgical treatment could lead to death, while the treatment itself carried the risk of causing disability. By the end of the diagnostic period, it appeared that the parents' divorce procedure had the purpose of confusing the bailiffs, as a strategy to cope with poverty. In fact the parents remained living together and taking care of daily life of the family members. The advice of the diagnostic centre focused on the treatment of the brain injury and the drug addiction of H. The realisation of this advice evolved towards a non-event.

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One dead-end emerged in the criteria for admission to the surgical treatment and in those for admission to treatment of addictions. For the hospital H. needed to be clean before the surgery, and for admission to the drug centre, he had to be cured from his brain infliction. A second dead-end emerged while searching for a stable place for H. to reside. The juvenile court excluded home, the residential institutions for Special Youth Care regarded his condition and his behaviour as counter-indications for admission, and his parents maintained their ambiguous position, while a stable environment was regarded as a necessity for a safe recovery from surgery. A third dead-end emerged in the division of responsibilities between H., his parents and public care. At the end of the day, nobody seemed to be willing to bear the risks involved in an engagement with H.

It is not the sensational aspect of this case that makes it exemplary for the aporias that emerge in social work practices in Special Youth Care in Flanders. The case of H. expresses the pedagogical logic of Special Youth Care that becomes tangible in the mentioned aporias of the case. This pedagogical logic connects several components. The interventions towards H. have as a starting point the pedagogical situation at H.'s home. The decoding that grounds the intervention points at the defective pedagogical environment as the cause for the integration problems that H. poses. Even the discovery of the brain injury is problematised in a pedagogical dimension: the parents did not look well after their son and still do not want to look after him, seen the ambiguity of their position towards his desire to come home. The next component that is connected to this logic concerns the insertion of pedagogical environments: open residential care, closed facility and diagnostic centre. This insertion is regarded as pedagogical. Failures are understood as due to the defective motivation of H. Aggression and drug abuse are initially decoded as signs of unwillingness of the boy to be helped, and that he does not fit the target group to which the pedagogical regime is oriented. And finally there is the threat of complete failure of the diagnostic intervention. At the end of the day, there is no engagement with H.'s situation.

The hierarchisation and division of responsibilities between the private and the public sphere are an element of the pedagogical logic of Special Youth Care. Responsibilities are taken in the public sphere after the 'failure' of the private (parental) responsibilities, but only under conditions that are expressed in advance, in terms of motivation and of belonging to predefined target groups.

Fragmentation

The logic that is manifested lends itself to a Beckian analysis of 'expertness' (Beck et al. 1994). The expert stands for risk control, implying the incapacity of the non-expert. Seen from this angle, the expert in pedagogy controls the risk that persons could become problematic for society because of their education. To control this problem, it is divided into partial problems. Each division corresponds to an expertise. Achterhuis (1979) pointed out this mechanism in the development of

professional identities in care. He understood this development simultaneously as a response to the marketification of care and as a contribution to this marketification.

Defenders of the marketification of care argue that this guarantees the self-determinacy of the citizen in situations where he needs care. The position of the government changes from organiser of care to organiser of the market of care, in which the quality of the products (expertise) is guaranteed and the freedom of choice of the citizen is protected as a capital value. The citizen who turns to this care, on the basis of his freedom of choice, submits to a promise of improvement: after the intervention of the expert, he will be better off; his socialisation will improve. Paradoxically, the citizen appears in this conception of autonomy and freedom of choice as a passive being: once he has made his choice, he becomes the object of interventions that lead to improvement. Professional risk control anticipates this improvement. This approach contains a strong negation of the dynamics of care relations and is based on an ideal of autonomy to which not a single human being can correspond (Nussbaum 2006).

Mol (2005) demonstrates that the choice for a specific lancing device by patients suffering from diabetes is not made as a rational abstract consideration by the patient on his own but is embedded in the interactions between patient and caregiver. Transformations of the life conditions and of the changes in experiencing the disease occur as bricolage, as trial and error, as word and counterword and not as an application of a medical treatment to which patients submit themselves.

Taking care appears in Mol's analysis of this care practice as learning to take care in an interdependent relation between patient and caregiver; both are equal in relation to the unknown of good care, because good care only takes shape in its enactment.

Pols (2004) argues that statutory legal regulations, based on the freedom of choice and autonomy of the patient, can lead to the effect that patients become non-citizens or lesser citizens. Her research on the washing regimes of chronic psychiatric patients leads to the conclusion that the reference to their autonomy can end in neglect, when washing is regarded as an untouchable expression of their free choice. This in turn can lead to a dismissal of caregivers in case they take on their own the initiative to wash the patient, for example, when the smell becomes hardly bearable. A variation of this approach of the principle of individual autonomy leads to disciplining practices. Patients are entered into programmes to learn how to wash themselves, because washing oneself is considered a condition of citizenship. Pols notes in her research the possibility to read the value of self-determinacy in washing practices in a different way. Regimes that allow the decision to wash or not to wash are forged in the interaction between caregiver and patient, in which the patient and the caregiver take an active role, based on an understanding of self-determinacy as a relational happening, and not as an essential characteristic of humans.

Enacting care relations in this way lead to an understanding of citizenship as a relational concept. This approach comes close to the approach of democratic citizenship as an 'ongoing experiment' (Biesta 2011b). The experimental dimension of the care relation becomes in this view a characteristic of the care relation.

The ideal of autonomy, as it is expressed in statutory law, carries criteria for exclusion. Nussbaum (2006) relates this to the way in which the human being is

formulated in law and more specifically according to human rights, wherein statutory legal regulations are embedded. She argues that the subject of law appears as an ideal construction; the free will and rationality are the sole guides to relate to others with the purpose of realising mutual advantages. The normativity of this ideal construction is so pervasive that nobody can respond to it.

This causes a tremendous tension in the project of human rights, because this project aims at the protection and development of the human person, while it is grounded on a view of man (Broekman 1991) that produces simultaneously criteria for exclusion. To deal with this tension demands that the human rights project is read in such a way that interdependency and dependency stay within the reach of the understanding of human rights. The logic of risk control is persistent in the care system of Special Youth Care. Failure in this logic is a question of performance (Lyotard 1979). Failure means a lack of efficiency and effectivity.

The explanation of failures in the logic of risk control is obvious: clients do not belong to the target group of offered care, or the professionals apply their methods in an unrightful way, or clients lack motivation to cooperate. In the development of Youth Care in Flanders, it is remarkable that there is a consciousness of the mentioned aporias, while the solution for these problems is supposed to be found in a further refinement of the logic of risk control, what leads in turn to a further fragmentation of care.

An example is the approach to 'bottleneck cases', in a regulation by the Flemish Government as part of Integral Youth Care. This regulation acknowledges that the organisation of Youth Care can lead to dead-ends in individual cases. Under certain conditions, such cases can gain the status of 'bottleneck cases'. A bottleneck case is in the regulation defined by the assumption that regular care does not provide the appropriate combinations of expertise, to be able to respond to the problems of the client, which are understood as a combination of problems. In the case of H., this analysis would lead to the constatation that care does not provide the right combination to treat simultaneously his brain injury, his addiction and eventually his behavioural disorders. The solution for this problem consists in providing the right combination of expertise as a complement to the regular offer of care (De Vos 2010).

Care providers can develop proposals for this combination, while the financial compensations for these proposals are negotiable. Fragmentation of care in increasingly refined parts, corresponding to different expertise, leads to a system that is characterised by fragmentation and evaporation of responsibilities, while many experts are doing their best to be efficient and effective in their domain.

Bauman calls this 'adiaphorisation' (Bauman 2006). Responsibilities are shattered until they become anonymous, a characteristic of 'the system'. Arendt's treatment of the Eichmann case (Arendt 1963) provides an extreme example of evaporation of responsibilities in a bureaucratic system that is conceived as the sum of partial responsibilities. In the terms of the Nazi bureaucracy, Eichmann could never be held responsible for the extermination of Jews, because he was only responsible for solving logistic problems that occurred in the transport of Jews from point a to point b.

The bureaucratisation of pedagogies and of pedagogical interventions, as an implication of the logic of risk control, ends up in a pedagogical paradox. The logic

of risk control leads to factual disengagements: problems are organised away (Roose 2006). This affects the basic conditions for shaping pedagogical relations. They consist in assuming an engagement with the other, which contains the risk that things do not turn out as foreseen (Papastephanou 2006). The pedagogical relation as seen from the angle of risk control is not regarded as 'responsivity' (Smeyers 2008) to what occurs in reality, but as the application of prescriptions, based on probability, not on reality.

In H.'s case there was forged an exit out of this aporia by shifting the focus of the intervention to the question who, in reality, could be found prepared to engage with H. and to maintain a relation with him, knowing that the 'solution' to his problem was not given. Finally, an institution was found to accept him. Their engagement was accompanied by the support of the diagnostic centre in adapting the regime of the accepting institution, in order to be able to work with H. This engagement was also accompanied by a negotiation with the authorities to accept that the support of H. would not be validated in terms of efficiency and efficacy. This means that a reconnection with the basic conditions for shaping a pedagogical relation becomes a disturbance of the pedagogical logic of Special Youth Care.

The Pedagogical Logic of Special Youth Care

Critics of the postmodern life condition like Lyotard, Beck and Bauman have undoubtedly developed concepts that are helpful to understand the emergence of aporias in social work practices in Special Youth Care. Nevertheless, the ground from which these aporias arise stays out of reach in this approach. The aporias are grounded in the problem definition upon which Special Youth Care relies, and in the way the relation between private and public responsibilities is articulated in this problem definition.

The initial question in the case of H. is what mechanism lies at the bottom of the connection of the problems (behaviour, drug abuse, small criminality, etc.) that he poses with the way in which he was raised. And at the end of the intervention of the diagnostic centre, the aporia raises the questions how the conditionality to deploy public means is constructed and how it relates to private responsibilities. Historical research of Special Youth Care clarifies these questions. Historical research of the foundations of Special Youth Care makes it appear as a system that is characterised by ambiguity: it is an intervention system that carries the ambition to be a resource (De Vos et al. 2012). This ambiguity is built in the connection of the child at risk with the child as a risk: the system aims simultaneously at the protection of the child and at the protection of society.

This connection has been developed in the theory of Social Defence (Prins 1910; Tulkens 1993), which postulates a causal relation between the child at risk and the child as a risk. The child as a risk becomes a criminal and grows into an offending and dangerous grown-up, due to neglect in childhood. 'Et il faut remarquer que tous ces défectueux sont ou ont été un jour des enfants défectueux' (Prins 1910, p. 146).

'And it must be noticed that all these defective people are actually or have once been defective children' (own translation).

The theory of Social Defence expresses a social problem construction that has been developed in the interplay between criminal courts, philanthropy and science (Tulkens 1993; Tulkens and Morau 2000). In this construction poverty and impoverishment are simultaneously recognised as a social problem and transformed into a pedagogical problem (Bouverne-De Bie 1991). This legitimises in a paradoxical way interventions from the public sphere into the private sphere of child-rearing: the child as a future citizen is protected against neglect, as a strategy to protect the social order against the danger (originally conceived as recidivism) that this same future citizen poses in case he is abandoned to 'moral neglect'.

The pedagogical logic of Special Youth Care is designed in the theory of Social Defence and embedded in the first Belgian law on Child Protection in 1912. The following reforms of this system maintain its pedagogical logic until today. In the theory of Social Defence, private child-rearing appears as the explanation for problems of integration. This legitimises pedagogy as the object of government intervention, while the interventions are regarded as pedagogical themselves. This pedagogic intervening is regarded as a response to the level of dangerousness and unimprovability of persons. The response is delivered under the form of regimes to which persons are submitted and that aim at the improvement of these persons. This is grounded on scientific classifications of states of dangerousness, ordered as a hierarchy.

The residue of the degenerated, those who are not improvable, is positioned at the lowest level of this hierarchical order. But even for them, the convenient regimes will be developed: 'Et ce sera l'honneur de la pédagogie moderne de l'avoir tenté d'avoir cherché à réveiller l'activité réduite des pauvres d'esprit, d'avoir songé à l'utiliser comme l'industrie moderne utilise ses déchets' (Prins 1910, p. 163). 'And it will be the honour of modern pedagogy to have tried to wake the reduced activity of the poor minded, to have thought to use it in the same way as modern industry uses its waste'(own translation).

The pedagogical nature of the interventions works simultaneously in a preventive and in a curative way: it prevents and cures derailments. 'Pour etre efficace, l'intervention doit s'exercer dès l'enfance' (Prins 1910, pp. 148–149). 'To be efficacious, the intervention has to be executed from early childhood' (own translation). Donzelot (1984) understands this strange transformation of a social problem into a pedagogical problem as a strategy originated in the public sphere to cope with an unsolvable political conflict. This transformation enables interventions in the private sphere, with the purpose of delaying the realisation of social justice, and to insert in this delay a promise of improvement.

In relation to the desire for social justice, the social has something very paradoxical: in the delay of realising social justice, the social maintains an idea of social justice, but by depolitising the social problem, the social is susceptible to oblivion; the notions of social justice in the social tend to be forgotten. The depolitisation and the forgetting of a reference to social justice find a place on the base of a redefinition of the collective social problem into a private problem of child-rearing.

H.'s case demonstrates that this collective dimension stays out of reach of the intervention because of the reduction of his problems to individual child-rearing problems. These pedagogical problems are not investigated in relation to the concrete life conditions of the family nor starting from the question of how these life conditions can be understood from a perspective of realising social justice. It is just at the end of the intervention that the suspicion arises that the relational and pedagogical problems of the family fit a strategy of the family to cope with poverty. How to understand such strategies, and what an intervention in this case could contribute, was not a subject in the activity of the diagnostic centre.

Characteristic of the promise of improvement is the anticipation of integrated citizenship that becomes visible. The instrument to reach this aim is provided by pedagogy. This instrumental approach of child-rearing, education and pedagogy has been maintained during the past century in which Special Youth Care has been developed. The pedagogy of Special Youth Care translates this promise of improvement in an orientation on a result that is regarded as known beforehand: the realisation of integrated citizenship. The design of 'future citizenship' has changed in the course of the history of Special Youth Care in Flanders.

Those changes in anticipations of citizenship can be ordained in a sequence of periods with a characteristic orientation (Bradt and Bouverne-De Bie 2009). Under the law of 1912, the pedagogy of Child Protection was a 'rehabilitative' pedagogy, an adjustment to bourgeois standards seen as civilisation of youngsters and parents, as a condition for integration in the societal order. This orientation changed with the Youth Protection law of 1965. The rehabilitative model is left behind, by accentuating participation and later 'emancipation'. Participation and emancipation become normative and conditions to access resources and to insertion in the societal order.

From the mid-1980s the orientation of the pedagogy of Special Youth Care focused on responsibilisation. Responsibilisation in the context of organised help focuses on the capacity to make the right choices in a responsible way. In the context of societal reactions to juvenile delinquency, responsibilisation means individual liability for infractions. This development of the pedagogy of Special Youth Care ends in a pedagogical design that anticipates the citizen as the entrepreneur of his own existence.

Special Youth Care as a Resource

During the past century, Special Youth Care was not able to free itself from postulating the causal relation between the child at risk and the child as a risk. On the contrary, this assumption has been reaffirmed in the postmodern approach of child-rearing and pedagogy as risk control. The development of Special Youth Care as a societal resource is characterised by a differentiation in the institutionalisation of reactions to unwellness of children and reactions to juvenile delinquency. This differentiation marks the ambition to humanise Special Youth Care by accentuating

its characteristic as a resource, in opposition to the understanding of the system as one of social control.

The introduction of the International Children's Rights Convention (1989) as a reference for the further development of Special Youth Care is meaningful in this context. The differentiation between the public reaction towards unwellness of children and towards juvenile delinquency has been developed as an accentuation of the difference between voluntary aborded help and imposed measures. The system under the law of 1912 focused on coercive interventions, imposed by the Children's Judge. In the shade of this system, there developed some practices, based on voluntary cooperation, as an initiative of the prosecutors. Voluntary, philanthropic assistance with child-rearing became a condition not to prosecute. Coercive interventions imposed by the Children's Judge were thus avoided. This hidden system of voluntary cooperation was made official in the law of 1965. Social protection was established, alongside justitial protection, with its own institution (Committee for the Protection of Youth) side by side the Youth Court.

Nevertheless, this evolution did not remove the conditionality of voluntary help. The Committees kept the official competence to appeal to the Juvenile Judge in case the client would not respond properly to the proposed help. With the installation of Special Youth Care in 1990, there was taken a further step in the evolution towards the autonomy of voluntary help, by imposing strict conditions on the possibilities of transition from the voluntary system to the system of coercion. The integration of Special Youth Care in Integral Youth Help that started in 2000 complemented the introduction of the right of assistance, based on the freedom of choice by youngsters. This was a framework for the further development of Special Youth Care as a resource.

It is remarkable that the evolution that consists of undoing the conditionality of voluntary help in its relation to coercion omitted to take a distance from the assumption that integration problems are caused by deficiencies in child-rearing, 'behind the front door' (Winter 2011). This becomes clear in the conditions for activating Special Youth Care as a resource, even in case the activation is based on voluntary cooperation or on the demand of children and parents. The conditions are that those who turn to Special Youth Care submit themselves to the assumption that their appeal concerns a pedagogical problem that can be solved by cooperating with methods designed externally to the concrete situation that gave rise to this appeal.

This conditionality was formulated at first by Gerda Debock in her comments on the Child Protection law of 1912 and the Juvenile Protection law of 1965 (Debock 1965). She formulates this conditionality as 'premium for infractions'. Only for those regarded as delinquent or pre-delinquent under the law of 1912, or as a 'child in danger' under the law of 1965, was the help or assistance foreseen by these systems made available, shaped as interventions in the private child-rearing situations. This logic is maintained today in Special Youth Care and in Integral Youth Help and is exported to the approach of any phenomenon that can be regarded as an integration problem of children and that is decoded as a pedagogical problem by the instances mandated to produce this kind of understanding.

If an intervention should be understood as a resource (a premium), it asks from the involved clients that they regard their problems as pedagogical that can be solved in the way this is organised in the institutions developed for this cause, with methods that are based on this assumption. Those are the conditions for shaping 'the promise for improvement' in Special Youth Care.

Despite the changes in pedagogical orientation, there is a remarkable continuity in the evolutions of Special Youth Care. The promise of improvement keeps anticipating the realisation of a known citizenship for the future, according to a design of citizenship that affirms the societal order viewed in this design. Evolution has been accompanied by the development of juvenile law *sui generis*. This law has been used as an instrument to legitimise interventions in the private sphere. Originally, this juvenile law developed on the basis of legal changes in parental authority, that were operated simultaneously with the introduction in law of the principal incapacity for children to be held accountable for infractions, on the basis of personal guilt, as was the case under criminal law. This made it possible to conceive of the interventions not as punishment but as pedagogical measures.

The development of new law (*sui generis*) and the use of it as an instrument added to the construction of the child as a not-yet-citizen (Verhellen 1996). Nevertheless, the ratification of the International Convention on Children's Rights inserts a framework in the existing legal order to approach the child no longer as a not-yet-citizen but as a full citizen. In addition to this, the social fundamental rights become a point of reference for the further development of Special Youth Care: the right of societal support is being built as a right for every citizen, in reference to 'human dignity'.

This evolution carries the invitation to explore how social work practices can contribute to the awareness of human dignity in the concrete circumstances of their activity.

In Youth Care this opens a point of reference for the development of possibilities for clients as well as professionals to dis-identify (Biesta 2011b) with the objectivations present in the logic of Special Youth Care. Unfortunately, we need to conclude that this possibility is not exploited and even that the reference to the International Convention on Children's Rights leads to a reaffirmation of the pedagogical logic of Special Youth Care. In Youth Care this becomes visible in the legal statutory regulation, built on the principle of self-determinacy of children, that has been reduced to freedom of choice and responsibility for the choices made. This approach of self-determinacy is developed at the expense of an exploration of the idea of 'human dignity' (De Blois 1998).

The idea of 'human dignity' has a reach that allows for the acknowledgement of real interdependencies and dependencies as a base for 'choosing' (Mol 2005) and 'self-determinacy' (Pols 2004). This is because choosing and self-determinacy appear to be embedded in interactive processes that can lead to the transformation of private issues into public concerns (Biesta 2011a). The reduction of self-determinacy to freedom of choice leads to criteria of exclusion: the capacity to make choices autonomously and to be held liable for the choices made becomes a condition of citizenship. This reading of fundamental rights joins the dominant legalistic

and positivist lecture of social fundamental rights, reducing them to individualistic claims (Raes and Coene 2009).

A comparable legalistic and positivist reading of article 18 of the International Convention on Children's Rights, in which parents are regarded as first responsible for the upbringing of their children, reaffirms the conditionality of Special Youth Care. According to this reading, Special Youth Care can only be activated after the failure of parental responsibility has become obvious. This implies a reaffirmation of the hierarchisation of responsibilities in pedagogical matters. The reaffirmation of the hierarchisation of responsibilities contains the reaffirmation of the pedagogical logic of Special Youth Care: problems of integration are created behind the front door. This provides a legitimation of pedagogical interventions behind the front door, using pre-established methods and under pre-established conditions. Citizenship comes afterwards.

Social Work as a Co-constructor of the Pedagogical Logic in Special Youth Care

Social work has contributed substantially to the development and reaffirmations of the pedagogical logic of Special Youth Care. The expansion of the reach of this logic, and the widening of what is considered disintegration, is simply unthinkable without the contributions of social work practices. Discontentment, indignation about the effects of interventions, compassion with clients and notions of justice have contributed to the movements that led to reforms of the system.

The indignation of philanthropists about the concrete detention conditions where young offenders found themselves in the nineteenth century played an important part in the creation of the 1912 Child Protection law. The introduction of the principle of guilt incompetence for children in the legal order fitted into a strategy to keep children out of prison. The development of pedagogical assistance by the prosecutors, as a hidden practice, and later made official under the law of 1965, was a reaction against the negative effects of placements and deprivations of parental authority. The pleas for emancipation as an aim for pedagogy are a reaction to the patronising practices under the law of 1965. The pleas for emancipation have contributed to unravel the reaction towards delinquency from the reaction towards unwellness and have contributed to the responsibilisation of youngsters.

With the unravelling of the reaction on unwellness from the reaction on juvenile delinquency, social work has withdrawn from the debates and research about the meaning of delinquency among youngsters. This withdrawal has contributed to the reintroduction of individual guilt and liability as a basis for decontextualised and responsibilisation reactions to juvenile delinquency (Bradt and Bouverne-De Bie 2009). In the debates about shaping the right to assistance, the voice of social work is becoming mute. This muteness is not due to the fact that social work is not part of these debates, but rather that social work omits to speak in reference to the daily experiences of aporias that emerge in practices.

This points to the difficulty that social work practices experience, to speak in a language that allows them to express the singularity of social work practices (Biesta 2006). The exit from the aporia in H.'s case was formulated in the diagnostic report, as a deduction from an indication based on an objectivation of his problems. This formulation obscured the conscious distance that was taken from an ideal approach (indication on the basis of an objectifying diagnosis), in persons who were prepared to stay responsive in their engagement without preformulated conditions.

The result of this shift in focus was presented in the final report as the result of the application of the logic of the system, in the vocabulary of the system. This muteness illustrates the aporetic situation of social work practices as interlocutors in the public scene of the formal democratic order. If they refer to their daily experience with dead-ends and to the ways out they can find, social work practices take the risk of losing their legitimacy, because this legitimacy is constructed as efficient and effective.

The difference between the presentation of matters and the practices that hide under these presentations not only points to a strategy of survival. Besides that, it is a strategy which protects the discretionary space of social work (Lipsky 2010), enabling the forthcoming practices that deviate from the recognition conditions and quality norms, to which they are submitted. The effect of this strategy is unfortunately that these practices risk losing public relevance, because social work does not refer to the public scenery of the experience it builds in singularising policies and to the learning processes that are involved in this activity.

What is developed risks escaping from the possibilities of reflection from different perspectives, while the importance of public reflection is evident, because the development of hidden practices often starts from the acknowledgement of injustice towards children and parents as a result of the way Special Youth Care is being shaped as a resource. The legitimation of social work practices in the vocabulary and pedagogical logic of Special Youth Care maintains the illusion that the aporias, which emerge in daily practice, are solvable within this logic.

Disturbing the Pedagogical Order of Special Youth Care

The institutionalisation of the pedagogical logic of Special Youth Care leads to the installation of a pedagogical order that is paradoxically unpedagogical. The conditionality of the system leads to factual disengagements; it supposes the submission of clients to the objectivations to which the activation of Special Youth Care is connected, and it supposes that clients cooperate with methods that are designed externally from their concrete life situation. The expectance is that it leads to an improved citizenship, after the intervention, as a result of intended socialisation.

Those conditions exclude beforehand that children and parents contribute actively to the problem definition, upon which Special Youth Care is based, and that they cooperate actively in the shaping of assistance, because these shapes are predefined. Pedagogic action starts from the acknowledgement that children and

grown-ups share a reality that they co-construct without possibility of positioning themselves outside this reality and with a high degree of unpredictability. This requires the support of children in assimilating the culture in which they grow up (Mollenhauer 1986) and supposes that they have enough space for critical distance as well as for the development of a conscience of co-responsibility for their concrete life situation.

The pedagogical logic of Special Youth Care hinders the development of this conscience as a subjectified conscience, because in its logic, the space for reflection is connected to an instrumental approach of pedagogy as well as of social work. Both are regarded as methods that lead to a future improvement. The order that is installed in this logic can be disturbed by social work practices for so far they succeed in developing settings that refer to the basic conditions for the development of pedagogical relations: unconditional engagement with the simultaneous invitation to contribute to the shaping of this engagement as an active subject.

Referring to these basic conditions would have led, in the case of H., to the reconstruction of the history of the intervention of Special Youth Care, within the diagnostic process. The reconstruction would have allowed the parents and H. to develop a conscious relation towards the attributions that were at the basis of the interventions. This would have enabled connecting the intervention to the question concerning what way an appeal to collective means could contribute to a consciousness of human dignity and to the question what engagements and support would be needed. This invitation is to be understood as an invitation to free H. and his parents from the position of submissiveness to the attributions and objectifications characteristic of Special Youth Care. As already mentioned, this dimension stayed out of reach in the case of H.

The dynamics that lead to the development of such settings are not rational. Much time can pass before occasional and partial experiences of injustice and loss of respect for the dignity of children, adults and professionals alike are transformed into conscious reorientations of social work practices. Reflection on these experiences demands in the social work organisations time and space to share these experiences and eventually to transform them into reorientations. In reorienting social work practices, a democratisation of Special Youth Care can take place that is enacted in the here and now of the practice. It is obvious that this can lead to surprises and that the outcome of the reorientations is unpredictable. The settings that carry this form of democratisation must be strong enough to bear the unpredictability of the outcome. The anticipation that they carry is an anticipation of possibilities, not of a certain outcome. In terms of citizenship, citizenship can be expressed in an unexpected way.

Vulnerability

Such reorientations make social work practices as vulnerable as any pedagogical practice. The vulnerability is manifested in several dimensions: in the difficulty to make those practices accountable, in the acknowledgement of the interdependence between clients

and professionals, in the acknowledgement that human communication is never complete and always unfinished and in the conscience that the course of time cannot be reduced to linear progress. The unpredictability that is inherent to these reorientations makes them hardly accountable because they suppose a distance from accountability in terms of efficiency and effectivity, understood as reaching predefined targets with as little means as possible. The unpredictability concerns not only the outcome of the practices but also their actual course in real time.

The interdependence between clients and professionals, grounded in the invitation to relate to one another and to question the appeal to collective means, demands from the professionals that they give up control over the outcome of the activity and that they renounce the hierarchisation that is inherent to the construction of the 'expert'. As a consequence, the communicative ground of the interactions between professionals and clients becomes fragile. Clients as well as professionals are confronted in these reorientations with the limitedness and insecurity of mutual attributions and typifications and with the groundlessness of the idea that meanings are always shared even if the same words are used. It demands from the professional restraint and acceptance of the fact that the range of meaning in speech and action by clients often escapes from the attributions used to encounter clients.

One evening, H. made a flame thrower with a lighter and hairspray, and he used it against an educator in the diagnostic centre. After the authoritative reaction of the director of the centre, he handed in his weapon. In the course of the incident, he expressed an ambiguous position: on the one hand, he understood that this behaviour was extremely dangerous and must not be repeated, and on the other hand, he kept repeating that the director and the educators were so stupid because they did not understand the joke. This confronted the professionals with the task of dwelling on their spontaneous responses to understanding the incident as an intentional terror attack that would lead to the immediate removal of H. from the centre and to accept that none of the professionals were at that time able to grasp the meaning of the sequence and the boy's utterings. This acceptance of uncertainty and of misunderstanding made it possible to continue working with H.

Today's challenge for social work practices in Special Youth Care not only consists in developing settings that shape the described reorientations as 'ongoing experiments' but equally uncovers these experiences and learning processes. In this way they can become the object of public concern, acknowledging their vulnerability as a necessary condition to give the consciousness of human dignity a concrete, practical meaning.

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Chapter 13
Theorising Underlying Notions of Citizenship in the Dynamics of Learning in Public Policy Units

Griet Roets and Rudi Roose

Introduction

Currently there is an increasing interest among politicians and policymakers in the question of democratic citizenship and political participation, which can be seen as 'responding both to an alleged crisis in society and to an alleged crisis in democracy' (Biesta 2011a, p. 1). In this chapter, we focus on the current emphasis of social policymakers in Flanders (the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium) on the issue of the (user) participation of people with experience of poverty. This emphasis on the participation of people in poverty as service users is in line with international developments, where practitioners of social policy have shown an interest in putting people with experience of poverty into participatory positions in order to implement antipoverty policies and to pursue a more democratic society (Cruikshank 1999; Beresford 2002; Lister 2004; Krumer-Nevo 2005, 2008).

It is argued, however, that the participation of service users, such as people with experience of poverty, in social policymaking is a crucial and yet a deeply problematic process (see Cook 2002; Simmons and Birchall 2005; Beresford 2010; Simmons 2011). In addition, it has been argued that there is a lack of empirical research which would allow us to discuss the potential risks and challenges of the actual procedures and practices of implementing user participation (Krumer-Nevo and Barak 2006). In that light, we discuss research concerning a recent federal pilot project in Belgium in which service users with experience of poverty were employed, as requested by the Federal Public Service for Social Integration (POD MI), to bridge the existing gap between people in poverty and those working in the administration of federal public policy units (POD MI 2006). This 'gap' was seen

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in the lack of responsiveness of social administrators to service users who were poor (Demeyer and Réa 2008). In response to this failure to provide responsive public services, users with experience of poverty were trained as experts and employed as interpreters of the poverty problem in the administration of these public policy units (Casman et al. 2010).

In what follows, we first chart the conceptual debate on poverty, citizenship, participation and civic learning. Second, we throw light on recent developments in Belgium. Third, in the light of the ambiguous practices of user participation in public policy units in Belgium, we discuss the dynamics of learning found in those public policy units and underlying notions of citizenship.

Poverty, Citizenship, Participation and Civic Learning

It has been observed that conceptualisations of poverty and antipoverty policymaking are closely interrelated. Lister (2004, p. 12) indicates that 'how we define poverty is critical to political, policy and academic debates; it is bound up with explanations and has implications for solutions'. As Veit-Wilson (2000) observes, the ways in which poverty, antipoverty policymaking and social justice are defined and pursued are influenced by the prevailing welfare state regime, and the issue of citizenship has been essential in this. Antipoverty policymaking has been linked to wider concerns about citizenship and democracy, by referring to the nexus of the lack of citizenship, voice and power of people in poverty (Mehta 2008). Lister (2004) asserts that the realisation of the citizenship of people in poverty should be perceived as vital to human dignity in order 'to address economic and social inequalities' (Lister 1997, p. 17).

In *reality* our societies are often characterised by the dynamics of social exclusion and marginalisation (Kabeer 2005). The experience of people in poverty of not being recognised as citizens is frequently identified and refers to the discrepancy between their formal citizenship (embodied as an entitlement and a status) and their de facto citizenship (constructed through the experience of being a member of a particular community and society in practice) (Lister 2004). This de facto social inequality of people in poverty, which is seen in structural class divisions between nonpoor and poor citizens (Jones 2002), is related, both in historical and in current arrangements, to the social question (Rosanvallon 2000). These gross social inequalities continue to cut across the everyday lives of people in poverty and 'can lead to second-class citizenship' (Lister 2004, p. 165). This reflects the exclusionary tensions and contradictions in citizenship.

From our point of view, citizenship refers to the ways in which the relationship between the individual and the state is constructed, and we are also concerned with the political values of Western democracies such as equality, freedom and solidarity (Schuyt 1972). This relationship between the individual and the state can be constructed in different ways, depending on different underlying assumptions about the responsibilities of a citizen and the state, and about processes of learning. In that vein, Biesta (2011a) makes a conceptual distinction between citizenship as a social identity and citizenship as a political identity.

Biesta (2011a, p. 1) asserts that citizenship can be seen as a *social identity*, referring to the citizen's place and role in the life of society and the citizen's *social participation*, since 'the one who fits in, the one who goes with the flow' is part of the social fabric. In this frame of reference, citizenship is considered to be an identity that should be established by the individual citizen and is 'obtained through identification with an existing socio-political order' (Biesta 2011a, p. 145). As such, citizenship is often perceived 'as an individualistic bourgeois charade designed to obscure fundamental economic and social class divisions' (Lister 1997, p. 17). In the case of people in poverty, their second-class citizenship has been translated as a problem of the deviant behaviour of the poor (Lister 2004). In this understanding of citizenship, poverty is predominantly framed as an individual problem and therefore as something that needs to be overcome by the individual as part of a process of identification or of conforming to the sociopolitical order. In that vein, Biesta (2011a, p. 5) refers to a socialisation conception of civic learning, which is about the individual *learning* of people in poverty *for future citizenship* that is necessary to become part of an existing sociopolitical order.

A different conception implies that citizenship is perceived as a *political identity* (Biesta 2011a); this refers to the democratic potential for the citizen to have *political participation* as the one who stands 'out from the crowd, the one who goes against the flow, (…) and who, in a sense, is always slightly "out of order"' (Biesta 2011a, p. 1). According to Biesta (2011a, p. 3), who draws on the work of Rancière, no social order can ever be fully equal: 'While in some societies or social configurations there may be more equality – or less inequality – than in others, the very way in which the social is structured precludes the possibility of full equality, or at least makes it highly unlikely. (…) Rancière maintains that every social order is all-inclusive in that in any given order everyone has a particular place, role, and identity. But this does not mean – and this is crucial – that everyone is included in the ruling of the order'. Rancière defines politics as always democratic, 'as an interruption of an existing social order with reference to the idea of equality' (Biesta 2011a, p. 3). In that vein, democracy has to be understood as occurring in the moments when the logic of the existing order is confronted with the logic of equality. However, the moment of democracy is therefore 'not merely an interruption of the existing order, but an interruption that results in a reconfiguration of this order into one in which new ways of being and acting exist and new identities come into play', as a process of dis-identification or subjectification (Biesta 2011a, p. 4). For Biesta (2011a, p. 5), this also suggests a subjectification conception of civic learning, which is about the learning that is involved in the engagement with an ongoing and never-ending 'experiment' of democracy, implying both individual and collective processes of *learning from current citizenship experiences*.

Participation of People in Poverty: The Belgian Case

Over the last decades, the symbolic significance of participation as full citizens for people in poverty – which indicates a collective sense of human dignity and solidarity in our society (Fraser 1996, 2000) – has been defended and extended through the

political struggles, campaigns and collective action of a rather vibrant civil society, including people in poverty or the so-called de facto non-citizens, for structural and participatory democracy (Powell 2008). This struggle for the marginalised to have full participation in society has been pushed onto the political agenda, and since the 1960s and 1970s the argument has gone that the political and policymaking process is strengthened when the standpoints, perspectives and experiences of minority groups are directly represented (Beresford 2002, 2010). Since the 1990s, the formal participation of people with experience of poverty in policymaking has figured prominently on the international agenda as 'they have the capacity to place, and indeed sometimes to force, life knowledge on the political, professional, academic and policy making agenda' (Beresford 2000, p. 493). In order to enhance the performance of key public services, *user participation* has moved into the foreground of social policy, placing participatory ideas and strategies into a more central position (Lister 2002; Simmons and Birchall 2005; Krumer-Nevo 2005, 2008). User participation has been put forward as a way of using dialogue to support new forms of responsiveness and accountability, because it is assumed that user participation has 'practical value for the performance of key public services by shaping better-informed decisions and ensuring that limited resources are used to meet service users' priorities' (Simmons and Birchall 2005, p. 261).

In parallel with international developments (Cancian and Danziger 2009), Belgian conceptualisations of poverty and antipoverty policymaking have shifted and changed and have informed assumptions about the citizenship and participation of people in poverty. In that vein, Vranken (1998) describes a remarkable conceptual shift in antipoverty politics in Belgium that has been inspired by these developments since the 1990s. During the 'golden sixties' and the 1970s, social policy 'rediscovered' poverty owing to 'a broad critique on welfare politics since the Belgian welfare state was conceived and implemented, such as negative consequences of economic growth, dehumanizing and alienating effects of production measures, and increasingly uni-dimensional patterns of consumption' (Deleeck 1972, as cited in Vranken 1998, p. 64). After this 'rediscovery' there followed a 'redefinition': from the end of the 1970s and during the early 1980s, the focus of the definition of poverty mainly shifted to non-materialistic and cultural aspects, rather than being perceived as a lack of material and social resources, and 'this shift took place because of the belief that material poverty was eradicated' (Vranken 1998, p. 67). Along with this shift in perception, people in poverty were mobilised as social actors 'through social movements, such as ATD Fourth World, who asserted the claim to give voice to the real interests and concerns of poor people' (Vranken 1998, p. 68). A significant milestone was the appearance of the *General Report on Poverty* (AVA) in 1994. This was the result of a joint venture by social workers and other actors in civil society, particularly (self-) advocacy organisations of people in poverty, and was aimed at guaranteeing the recognition of the standpoints of people in poverty in a structural dialogue with representative policymakers in the Belgian welfare state to pursue full citizenship for people in poverty. As the Prime Minister of the day, J.-L. Dehaene stated, 'in the future, the government will take the conclusions and the suggestions in the general report as a point of departure for anti-poverty policy making' (AVA 1994, p. 416). The coordination of the AVA as a policy instrument became an annual Belgian

enterprise, and a network of social movements of poor people, calling for their rights of citizenship, was constituted (Van Robaeys et al. 2005).

As a consequence of these developments, participation has come to function as a central and dominant social policy concept for the implementation of antipoverty strategies in Belgium (Bouverne-De Bie 2003). Antipoverty policymaking has been predominantly based on the principle of empowering people with experience of poverty in order to support their participation in policymaking processes (Dierckx 2007). The depth of the yawning gap between the poor and the nonpoor is emphasised as an essential cultural dimension of poverty, and antipoverty policymaking is pursued through making individual empowerment the building block which enables user participation:

> We cannot forget that the accumulation of social inequality and exclusion makes up the individuality of poverty. The dimension of the depth of this gap is of crucial importance: how deep is the gap between the poor and the rest of society? (…) The powerlessness of the poor is crucial: they cannot bridge the gap that separates them from the rest of society under their own power; they need help to do this. And that is exactly the role of government intervention and the welfare sector. (Vranken 2007, p. 37)

In this dominant Belgian approach, explicit government intervention is meant to bridge the cultural gap created by vicious processes of social exclusion which result in individual feelings of powerlessness, apathy, isolation and shame (Van Regenmortel 2002). This 'psychology of powerlessness' has been the rationale behind a paradigm of individual empowerment which is intended 'to improve the participation of people in poverty' (Van Regenmortel 2002, p. 75). According to this approach, participation 'is viewed as (…) the mechanism by which people gain mastery over their lives' (Van Regenmortel 2002, p. 75). That being the case, Belgian social policy concerned with antipoverty policymaking is formally preoccupied with empowering people in poverty so that they can engage in self-advocacy and participation and can claim their full citizenship; this is the dominant way to implement antipoverty strategies (Dierckx 2007).

In the next section, we go on to describe and discuss empirical research on the challenges of practices of citizenship and participation which are inspired by these perspectives and assumptions in antipoverty policy strategies (Krumer-Nevo and Barak 2006). We aim to discuss the underlying dynamics of learning in these practices.

User Participation in Public Policy Units: A Pilot Project

In this section, we describe the framework of the innovative pilot project in public policy units in Belgium and our research involvement.

An Innovative Pilot Project

Since antipoverty policymaking in Belgium is embedded in a logic of user participation, social policy has shown an interest in deploying, in public policy units, users

with experience of poverty as experts in implementing and monitoring antipoverty policies. In the drive to become more responsive to the needs of disadvantaged users, user participation has been injected into public service delivery to empower the recipients of social policy (Gilliatt et al. 2000). Since 2003 (see the Flemish 'Decree on Poverty Policy' in Degrande 2003), the user participation of people with experience of poverty in public service delivery has been formally recognised by policymakers in Belgium. The 'Decree on Poverty Policy' stated that people in poverty can only transform their experience into expertise by following an advanced educational programme (Walschap 2001). The surplus value of active participation by the poor in public service delivery was emphasised because of an assumption that poverty at play in public services was in tension with the 'hard-to-understand' culture of poverty, characterised as a psychology of powerlessness (Nicaise and Dewilde 1995). This assumption is defined as 'the missing link':

> The idea of an expert by experience in social exclusion is a response to (…) a missing link between the policy makers and aid providers of all the services with which the socially excluded come into contact, on the one hand, and the excluded persons themselves, on the other hand. (…) The key element consists of the fundamental difference between the position of an excluded person, who is forced to live in long-term exclusion and that of the organisations and participants in policy making, who are not familiar with this social experience nor with the harsh reality of the life of socially excluded people in all its aspects, particularly the sense of shame and humiliation due to the fact that the excluded have no control over their own lives. (The Missing Link Europe 2011)

In 2004 the Council of Ministers in Belgium decided to recruit service users with experience of poverty to work in public policy units, and this initiative was launched by way of an innovative pilot project coordinated by the Federal Public Service for Social Integration (POD MI). The POD MI was commissioned by the government to enhance and reinforce national antipoverty policies in Belgium (POD MI 2006). This was an idea which was developed in the Belgian National Action Plan (NAP) on Social Inclusion 2004–2006, so the rationale behind the pilot project was the idea mentioned above of a missing link, or gap, between people in poverty and the government; this gap is most obvious in the psychological effects that are manifest in people in poverty since their experiences with federal public policy units often cause feelings of powerlessness and incapacity (POD MI 2006). The gap was defined as a lack of responsiveness in social administrators to poor service users (Demeyer and Réa 2008). In response to this failure to provide high-quality responsive public services, people with experience of poverty were educated and trained as experts, by taking part in an educational programme which transformed their experience of living in poverty into expertise in order to drive changes from inside the public policy units (Spiesschaert 2005; Casman et al. 2010). The POD MI agreed a full-time contract with for each of these experts with experience of poverty, the costs of which were subsidised by the European Social Fund (ESF); under these contracts, the experts were required to continue their advanced education for 2 days a week and were employed in federal public policy units for the remaining 3 days a week.

In 2011, 26 experts with experience of poverty worked across 22 federal public policy units, and their tasks involved (see POD MI 2011):

- Improving accessibility for service users in general and for poor and socially excluded service users in particular
- Supporting the recipients of welfare in dealing with administrative procedures
- Listing the needs of poor service users
- Improving the quality of accessibility by means of proposals with respect to communication
- Assisting in transversal collaboration between the policy units involved
- Drawing attention to the structural lack of voice for people in poverty

The project ran from the beginning of September 2005 until the end of August 2011 and was integrally funded by the ESF. As researchers, we were appointed as external and interim evaluators from March until August 2008 (see Final Report, POD MI 2008).

Research Involvement

The evaluation research was carried out as a piece of applied policy research to document and consider the implementation process through which organisations affect levels of privilege and disadvantage in society, as well as the distribution of privileges and advantages in these organisations (Hinings and Greenwood 2002). The research team applied a qualitative research design (Bogdan and Biklen 1998) using two complementary research approaches in order to document and analyse what actually happened in the federal policy units involved:

- We *collected all the relevant and available documents*: policy documents, collaboration protocols, function profiles of the experts with experience of poverty in each federal public service, reports of consultations with experts with experience of poverty and their colleagues, observations made by members of the coordination team and by the members of the organisation responsible for advanced education and reports and observations made by the experts with experience of poverty.
- We selected and contacted research participants, asking them to attend a *qualitative semi-structured interview* (see Bogdan and Biklen 1998) on the basis of their being directly involved with the employment of the service users with experience of poverty in the context of each federal public service involved. Eventually, eight employed experts with experience of poverty and eight of their close colleagues who were appointed as their support workers were recruited and participated in the research project.

We applied a qualitative content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon 2005) analysing the available documents and the 16 qualitative, in-depth interviews with the relevant

actors who were directly involved. In the next section, we discuss the enacted practices of participation and civic learning which are evolving in the public policy units and the underlying notions of citizenship.

Uncovering Different Notions of Participation and Learning in Public Policy Units

Our research documents ambiguous social practices relating to user participation in the public policy units. In what follows, we address the underlying notions of participation in the practices in the public policy units involved and discuss the dynamics of learning there. Since it has been observed that the extent to which user participation is 'substantively modified by group processes (…) or by individual processes (…) remains an open question' (Simmons and Birchall 2005, p. 275), we distinguish between the dynamics of the individual learning of the employed service users and the dynamics of the joint and collective learning of the employed service users and other employees.

Dynamics of the Individual Learning of the Employed Service Users

In the Belgian approach, the conceptualisation of poverty as a 'gap that poor people cannot bridge under their own power' translates antipoverty policy strategies and practices into a logic of empowerment to induce an individualised process of the personal growth of poor people. This approach is clearly at work in the educational programme, where poor people were educated and trained as experts to transform their experience of living in poverty into expertise in order to drive changes from inside the public policy units (Casman et al. 2010). The educational programme produces people in poverty who have socialised (or specialised) in 'being poor' and therefore have a reason to exist in the public policy units. Many of the public policy units involved act upon this use of user participation by recognising that these people are experts who 'personally experienced exclusion, who have coped with this experience and extended it' (The Missing Link Europe 2011). As employed users, their viewpoints on poverty and antipoverty policymaking in the public service unit acquire a status of authority and expertise; but, in deference to their expertise, they are individually responsible for solving problems associated with the delivery of a responsive public service on an interpersonal or organisational level (Block 2003). In practice, the so-called antipoverty practices in the public policy units turn out to have counterproductive implications, as they 'construct citizens committed to a personal identity [and] a moral responsibility' (Rose 1989, p. 131, as cited in Baistow 2000, p. 98), or lead to an *identity politics* of people in poverty. As Phillips (2004, pp. 36–37) argues, 'identity politics threaten to reinforce the very patterns of

domination they otherwise claim to challenge, for in ignoring or promising to transcend differences (…); they treat difference as a problem – and those marked by them as a problem too. (…) In doing so, they leave the agenda to be set by people whose power has been so much taken for granted that they do not even think of themselves as a distinct social group'. In the public policy units, the expertise of employed experts with experience of poverty risks to remain exclusively an expertise in poverty and social exclusion and discourages opportunities for collective learning about the ways in which public policy units can deal with, and act upon, poverty and social inequality issues in the long run.

Moreover, these practices of user participation may lead merely to rhetorical change because service users with experience of poverty risk being, in the end, little more than physically present. As one of the experts with experience of poverty observes, she was dealt with during the implementation process as an expert who had been expelled from the group and not as a colleague:

> That moment, a colleague asked me: "Oh, are you alone here?" and I said, "Yes, please join me!" But the colleague refused: "No, I sit over there with the colleagues; you are not an employee or a colleague here". In the federal public service, I was like an appendage to the regular employees. I was allowed to be physically present, nothing more. If you ask me, employing us seems to be a charitable act to help us poor duffers, because they want to do something about poverty in our country. However, the employment of 10 or 20 individuals with experience of poverty won't uproot poverty at all.

Le Grand (2003) grasps the nettle by asking how *democratic* user participation can actually be if the participation of service users tends to remain primarily instrumental and tokenistic, merely implying rhetorical change. As Beresford (2010, p. 499) observes, since 'the aim is to draw in the views and ideas of service users to inform and in some cases legitimate, existing decision-makers and power holders, (…) for many service users, it can feel like little more than tokenism or a "box ticking" exercise rather than meaningful involvement'. Participation may become an empty exercise, at best a token gesture or, at worst, a manipulative and exploitative exercise. As Cook (2002, p. 522) argues, we have to ask fundamental questions about participation processes in which the objects of social policy are meant to find their voice in different areas of social policy: 'if we are not prepared to do anything about the responses, why ask the questions in the first place?'

Dynamics of Collective Learning from Experiences

Focusing on the ways in which practices of user participation can influence the extent to which the public policy units in question give meaning to, and challenge, poverty issues shows the importance of collective and reciprocal processes of learning. Employing *expert* users with experience of poverty – which is done by the POD MI as an external incentive to guarantee the quality of public service delivery – might discourage and free the social administrators in the public policy units from learning to be responsive to service users, including those living in poverty. User participation

might work as a camouflage technique that masks the lack of collective responsibility and accountability for dealing with the poverty problem in public policy units. However, in contrast to these practices, in some public policy units, a collective concern and responsibility for dealing with the poverty problem was established. This collective responsibility appears to be a political choice made in some public policy units, those units where people with experience of poverty were employed on the condition that the units first explicitly subscribed to antipoverty politics as a mission statement. Simmons and Birchall (2005, pp. 273–274) also stress that the interplay between collective and institutional dynamics and user participation is essential, arguing that 'as a starting point, providers must decide whether or not they actually want greater participation'. From that perspective, one of the employed people with experience of poverty explains how the meaning of the antipoverty perspective is construed in practice.

> The director of the public service was well-informed and implemented the anti-poverty policy-making incentive in the organization. I don't have a clearly outlined task, just that my colleagues could ask for my advice when they had to deal with problems associated with poor service users and inaccessibility. My colleagues told me that it was really useful – there was an openness allowing us to ask questions and to reflect – as they had expected that I would be a know-it-all and give orders about what to do. They appreciated the joint process of learning and I became a colleague in the collective.

In these policy units, it is remarkable to see that the employed service users with experience of poverty were perceived as regular employees whose perspectives were included and discussed in everyday practices because of their specific knowledge of the strategies of people living in poverty which was gained from their personal experience, rather than as experts who had a monopoly of knowledge and an individual responsibility in bridging the 'missing link'. In this scenario, the questions of people with experience of poverty can offer the collective a lens through which a public service can question taken-for-granted practices and improve its responsiveness, which symbolises 'a demonstration of respect for people in poverty as being equal citizens' (Lister 2001, p. 70). In these public policy units, the role of employed service users enables both individual and collective processes of learning from current experiences, in a process of subjectification and civic learning on an organisational level. As one of the employed service users observes:

> A lot of colleagues said that they don't know the taste of poverty. They told me that they couldn't grasp the depth of poverty. For them, the homeless and beggars are 'really poor'. I explained to them that poverty is a very complex and existential condition, sometimes very subtle and hard to recognize. And I stressed the importance of their involvement in recognizing this in our public service delivery, because we can't solve poverty and certainly not when it is considered to be an individual responsibility; but we can work upon the structural dynamics of social exclusion.

This involves a continuous and collective questioning about whether, and how, the public service delivery is of high quality and whether the administration is useful for the range of questions posed by recipients of welfare in general and by people in poverty in particular.

Concluding Reflections

One can argue that the educational programme implements the idea that poor people should *learn for* future citizenship by establishing a social identity as a poor, although articulate and expert, consumer, an identity that is necessary for becoming part of an existing sociopolitical order; this is a socialisation conception of civic learning (Biesta 2011a). Biesta (2011b, p. 143) warns of the tricky nature of 'entry conditions for participation' for individuals who wish to take part in the game of democratic participation; 'when democratic politics is restricted to those who already agree on the basic rules of the political game, the most important and most difficult aspect of democratic politics, that is, the process through which such an agreement about basic rules is achieved, is left out of the picture'. In the first approach, when the educated and trained expert service users are employed as inter-preters of the poverty problem in the administration of these public policy units (Casman et al. 2010), they are supposed to bridge the gap, or the 'missing link', between people in poverty and those working in the administration of federal public policy units (POD MI 2006). It can be argued that this approach reflects social citizenship because the ways in which the public policy units deal with the poverty problem are implied in supplying the 'missing link', in tuning the demands of poor service users to the ways in which the service is, usually, offered. The employed experts by experience are not included in the decisions made or in the ruling of the order. In addition, the logic of equality remains out of the picture, which implies that these practices remain undemocratic. The research findings show that this idea of bridging the 'missing link' turns out to be instrumental and tokenistic in practice, discouraging opportunities for collective learning about the ways in which public policy units can deal with, and act upon, poverty and social inequality issues in society in the long run. The second approach might echo the democratic potential of the participation of people with experience of poverty as employees, whose new identities can come into play while a process of dis-identification with being an 'expert' takes place, and who stand 'out from the crowd, the one who goes against the flow, (…) and who, in a sense, is always slightly "out of order"' (Biesta 2011a, p. 1). Their interruptions can make 'visible what has no business being seen', link-ing up with the idea of equality (Biesta 2011b, p. 144) and are 'work that happens on the borders of the democratic order' (Biesta 2011b, p. 146). However, in the second approach, one could also argue that the involvement of people with experi-ence of poverty does not necessarily and inherently grant them political citizenship, since the moment of democracy implies not merely an interruption of the existing order due to a confrontation with the issue of poverty and (in)equality but should also result in a reconfiguration of the collective. The vital question remains when, and how, these moments of interruption, which can perturb the arrangements in public policy units that have been taken for granted, are actually captured as political resistance against the existence of poverty and social inequality in our society. This suggests the necessity of a politicisation of citizenship, that can take place in actual

social practices that develop in the relationships between people, is embedded in a set of inter-relational questions and in a diversity and plurality of interests and concerns and is actualized and constantly renegotiated through (inter)actions in which temporary lack of consensus is a vital element (Roose and De Bie 2007; Roets et al. 2012). Antipoverty politics thus require a reclaiming of collective politics and values such as solidarity, collective responsibility and interdependency (Lister 2004).

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Chapter 14
Education and Sustainability Issues: An Analysis of Publics-in-the-Making

Katrien Van Poeck and Joke Vandenabeele

Introduction

In contemporary society, learning emerges as a solution for numerous social and political problems (Biesta 2004; Simons and Masschelein 2009). Individual learners should acquire the 'proper' knowledge, insights, skills and attitudes in order to 'learn' to adapt their behaviour to what is considered desirable and make themselves competent to deal with the given challenges. Hence, experts and expertise play an ever more important part. This propensity applies to sustainable development in particular.[1] The dominant discourse on education for sustainable development (ESD) defines issues of sustainability as matters of individual learning, as problems that can be tackled by applying the proper learning strategies (Van Poeck and Vandenabeele 2012). In policy discourse as well as in academic literature, ESD is mainly seen as an instrument to foster the values and principles of sustainable development, to promote corresponding behavioural changes and to qualify people for the role of active participants that contribute to the democratic realisation of sustainable

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[1] Although 'sustainable development' is omnipresent in policy discourses, the concept remains largely contested (see, e.g. Bruyninckx 2006). Critics consider it a vague catch-all term susceptible to divergent interpretations. Its meaning is highly ambiguous as the concept conjoins profoundly contradictory meanings. However, this shallow consensus conceals convictions and interests that are still basically antagonistic. Sustainable development is thus the subject of a continuous, more or less explicit struggle over divergent interpretations. We decided to use this problematic concept nonetheless as a key notion in this chapter because it indeed largely affects policy discourses as well as educational practices, particularly in the field of environmental education. Yet, it is important to emphasise that we do not put forward one particular interpretation of how a sustainable society should look like. On the contrary, what our analysis reveals is precisely how educational practices can deal very differently with the ambiguity inherent in the concept and the struggle over diverse interpretations it brings about.

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development. This framing of social and political problems as learning problems is reinforced by the increasing hegemony of the discourse of 'ecological modernisa-tion' (Hajer 1995; Læssøe 2010). An ecological modernisation perspective acknowl-edges the structural character of the ecological crisis, yet assumes that the existing political, economic and social institutions can internalise the care for the environment. A fundamental idea is the possibility of reconciling economic growth, techno-scientific innovations and the solution of ecological problems. Within this discourse everyone is expected to do their bit, and the environmental challenge is considered a positive-sum game depending on the participation of every individual, firm and country as allies rather than as adversaries.

Framing sustainable development as a learning problem faced by individuals reflects what Biesta (Chapter 1) calls a socialisation conception of civic learning, assuming an instrumental relationship between learning, citizenship and democ-racy. Education, then, is about learning for future citizenship. Yet, reducing civic learning to the socialisation of everyone into the same standard fails to acknowl-edge citizenship as an essentially contested practice and tends to exclude margin-alised voices and alternative arguments and points of view. This is particularly problematic in the context of sustainability issues that are pre-eminently open to uncertainty and contestation and characterised by strongly intertwined, often irrec-oncilable values, interests and knowledge claims. Critics have raised the concern that education for sustainable development – like education *for* anything else – tends to reduce education to a mere instrument for promoting a specific but implic-itly taken for granted form of 'sustainable' behaviour (Jickling 1994). A sustainable society then emerges as something that is – or, at least, can be – well known and accordingly pursued systematically. In this chapter, we want to articulate a different perspective on ESD – labelled elsewhere (Van Poeck and Vandenabeele 2012) as 'learning *from* sustainable development' as opposed to learning for sustainable development – one that attempts to move beyond the omnipresent socialisation perspective and leaves room for a struggle over divergent interpretations of what can be regarded 'sustainable' in face of concrete issues.

We are inspired by Biesta's idea of learning *from* current citizenship, incorpo-rated in his subjectification conception of civic learning. Learning, then, is not aimed at the acquisition of particular knowledge, skills, competences or disposi-tions but stems from an exposure to and engagement with practices in which demo-cratic citizenship can develop and where public solutions for private troubles are sought and negotiated. With respect to ESD a democratic approach is broadly regarded as preferable. Yet, democratic practices do not as a matter of course prevent sustainability problems and serve 'the common good'. This paradox between the sense of urgency emerging from a deep concern about the state of the planet and the living conditions of its inhabitants on the one hand and the conviction that it is wrong to persuade people to adopt pre- and expert-determined ways of thinking and acting on the other (Wals 2010) brings about an ambiguous relation between democ-racy and sustainable development (Læssøe 2007). If all learning outcomes are con-sidered equally valid as long as they have emerged from a democratic process, this might lead to an 'anything goes' relativism which is problematic since it prevents

legitimate criticism of erroneous views and opinions and runs the risk of neglecting the far-reaching implications of many sustainability issues and the injustices they often bring about.

Researching Education in the Light of Public Issues

This ambiguous relation between democracy and sustainability underlines the need for an alternative perspective on ESD, one that enables to understand how educational processes can move beyond a socialisation perspective without falling into undue relativism. Therefore, we introduce the idea of 'learning from sustainable development' understood as an educational practice presenting sustainability issues as 'public issues', as matters of public concern. In the context of sustainability, transparent and uncontested facts are rare. Sustainability issues are characterised by uncertain expert knowledge and a lack of undisputed normative frameworks for ethical decision-making. They are so complex, entangled, uncertain and contested that they resist being treated as matters of fact (Latour 2004). Hence, they do not fit within existing routines and traditional institutions are inadequate to deal with them. When neither the existing policy order nor the available expertise is able to claim a problem, it can develop as a 'public issue' if the diverse actors affected by it organise themselves as a 'public' (Marres 2005; Simons and Masschelein 2009). The issue then becomes a matter of concern (Latour 2004) that, because of its nature, blurs the traditional boundaries between those who know and those who do not (yet) know or between views, questions and interests taken into account and those not taken into account. Precisely these boundaries are implicitly taken for granted in a socialisation perspective on ESD. Therefore, we focus on how a public might emerge within educational practices as a point of departure to further understand how these practices can fully acknowledge the democratic paradox and go to the core of the tension between democracy and sustainable development.

Drawing on the insights of Dewey, Marres (2005, p. 47) explains how the specificity of the public rests on the particular way in which it is implicated in issues, or, in her words, how 'issues call publics into being'. In Dewey's account, a public consists of actors who are affected by particular actions or events while they do not have direct influence on them. An issue qualifies as a public affair, then, if the spread of the effects of a given action is far enough to substantially affect actors who are not directly involved in the action. If these actors are to address the issue at stake, they must organise into a public. Such a public is, thus, *caught up* in the affair. Latour, too, argues that our globalised world is characterised by the intimate entanglement of a variety of actors that are, willingly or unwillingly, connected by the expansion of all kinds of 'makeshift assemblies' such as markets, technologies, science, ecological crises, wars and terrorist networks (Latour 2005a, p. 27). Those many differing assemblages are *already* connecting people no matter how much they do not feel assembled by any common dome. Our relation to public issues, he

argues, should thus be understood in terms of 'attachment'. This notion of attachment is used by actor–network theorists to refer to a special relation between human and non-human entities.[2] Attachment, in this account, is a mode of 'being affected by' whereby actors are both *actively committed* to an object of passion and *dependent* on it (Marres 2005). They must do a lot of work so as to create the situation in which they can be overtaken by the object while, at the same time, the object binds them in the sense that their pleasure and perhaps even the meaningfulness of their world is conditioned by it. Starting from these attachments, Marres argues that one cannot adequately define a public by merely referring to actors that are commonly implicated in an issue. The fact that actors are all affected by the issue at stake is not a sufficient characterisation for it. She emphasises that actors are not only jointly but also *antagonistically* implicated in public issues: they are bound together by mutual exclusivities between various attachments. 'They come together in controversy because they are divided by the issue at stake' (Marres 2005, p. 128). Obviously, such a public cannot be conceived of as a *social* community.[3] On the contrary, a public comes into being precisely when no social community exists that may take care of the issue at stake. The task of the public is thus to take 'care of the serious trouble in which those who do not necessarily share a way of life are collectively implicated' (Marres 2005, p. 56). A public is therefore not to be understood as a sociable collective, a convivial get-together of people that share a lifestyle or a commitment. Being jointly implicated in an affair is not necessarily based on 'shared interests'. Rather, what binds actors is that, in order for them to take care of an issue, they must take into account the effect it has on others. It is, thus, *the issue* that brings actors together, not the bonds of a shared form of life. And these issues transgress the boundaries of existing social communities.

As a conceptual framework to guide our investigation, we draw on Marres' distinction between the 'privatisation' and 'public-isation' of issues. She defines public-isation as an attempt to articulate issues, draw actors into it and formulate a possible settlement for it. In contrast to privatisation, public-isation implies the broadening instead of limiting of the involvement of actors in a given affair. Yet, public-isation cannot be reduced to the inclusion of actors since such an approach

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[2] Actor–network theory (ANT) is an approach that evolved out of science and technology studies. Authors such as Bruno Latour, Michel Callon and John Law developed a distinctive approach to social theory and research characterised by a constructivist perspective (avoidance of essentialist explanations), a 'material-semiotic' method (mapping relations that are simultaneously material and semiotic) and an extension of the understanding of the social by focussing on networks of human as well as non-human actors (thus acknowledging the agency of non-humans, their power to transform society).

[3] In 'No Issue, No Public', Marres (2005) goes into the concept of 'community' in the light of public issues. She characterises Dewey's notion of the public as 'a community of strangers' and criticises his ambiguous account of community life. Although this discussion is utmost relevant in the context of ESD, we cannot elaborate it within the scope of this book chapter. By introducing the concept nonetheless, we want to emphasise that in face of public issues, a public cannot be understood as a social community/sociable collective.

would fail to acknowledge the issue and its content as a crucial dimension for public involvement. Therefore, public-isation also entails the proliferation of conflict, making room for contestation and controversy as an occasion to enact the irreconcilability of the actors' attachments. Privatisation, by contrast, is characterised by the containment of conflict and contestation. Instead of paying attention to antagonistic attachments, privatisation limits the scope to issue definitions that assemble shared attachments. In doing so, the exclusivity among the multiplicity of concerns, claims and ideals is sidestepped. Yet, it is precisely such sustained attentiveness to joint and antagonistic attachments to issues that goes to the core of the democratic paradox we described. Marres emphasises that a public does not emerge 'out of the blue'. Organising a public around an issue takes time and effort. Actors have to be drawn in and work has to be done in the sense that a 'public-in-the-making' must engage in the public-isation of the issue, in articulating the joint and antagonistic attachments at stake. This 'work' is the focus of the case study we present below: we analyse how such publics-in-the-making engage is this endeavour and whether (and, if so, how) a public is composed around the sustainability issues that are at stake within two different practices of ESD. An attempt to move beyond a socialisation perspective requires a change in research focus shifting attention from examining the acquisition of individual competences to analysing concrete *practices*. An analysis of publics-in-the-making allows for such an alternative perspective on educational practices.

In order to understand how publics-in-the-making engage in privatising and public-ising practices related to the issues at stake, we developed an analytical framework inspired by the policy arrangements approach (PAA) (Arts et al. 2006). As Latour (2005b) argues, a public organises itself within an actor–network, that is, through interactions of human and non-human actors. Using the PAA we want to reveal such actor–networks by analysing practices of ESD on four closely intertwined dimensions: the actors involved and their coalitions, the resources that are mobilised (educational tools, methodologies and activities), the formal and informal rules of interaction and the discourses on sustainable development and ESD. Furthermore, the PAA allows us to examine how actors engaging in such practices are, on the one hand, affected by long-term, structural developments (such as the above mentioned tendency to frame social and political problems as learning problems as well as the increasing influence of ecological modernisation) but are, on the other hand, able to develop alternative practices and discourses. By analysing this duality of actor and structure, as well as both the content and organisation of these practices (cf. four dimensions), we seek to reveal whether and how a public is composed within the two cases and how this affects the way in which sustainability emerges as an issue of public concern. Our aim is not to characterise the two cases as either 'privatising' or 'public-ising' practices but rather to contribute to a better understanding of what it means and requires to deal with the issue of sustainability in ESD and of how these practices can foster a broad involvement of actors and the proliferation of contestation and controversy.

Composing a Public Around Sustainability Issues: Analysis of Two Cases

We conducted a multiple case study in both formal and non-formal learning settings. In the remainder of this chapter, we describe and analyse two diverging educational practices: the project 'Environmental Performance at School' (incl. six participating schools) and a 'regional centre for action, culture, and youth'. Data are collected by means of document analysis (55 documents), audio-recorded in-depth interviews (10) and videotaped observations (25). The data have been analysed using the qualitative analysis software QSR NVivo.

The Environment, Nature and Energy Department of the Flemish government established an environmental management project for kindergarten, primary and secondary schools: 'Milieuzorg Op School' (MOS) or Environmental Performance at School. The project attempts to raise pupils' awareness of environmental problems through the school's own environment. A school entering the MOS project commits itself to developing environmental performance activities in order to become an eco-friendly and sustainable school. Currently, nearly 4,000 schools (74 % of the Flemish schools) participate in the project. MOS coaches support schools by giving them teaching aids, examples of good practice, training and advice. As an incentive MOS introduced labels as awards for good work. The 'MOS logo' is a three-level quality label. The criteria to receive a first, a second or a third logo are the same, but the requirements to be met become more stringent each time. To obtain a logo, schools must realise both educational and environmental benefits in connection with the theme(s) chosen (water, energy, waste, mobility, greening) and take into account the following process criteria: view and planning, pupil involvement, support, communication and embedding.

''t Uilekot' describes itself as a 'regional centre for action, culture, and youth'. The centre consistently addresses environmental issues in the context of international solidarity and social justice. It runs a café and develops activities in four domains: ecology (e.g. supporting resident's associations, organising political actions, guided tours of the wastewater treatment plant or ecological garden, making films about ecological issues), international solidarity (e.g. action and education concerning peace, racism and development cooperation, selling fair trade products), culture (e.g. organising concerts, literary cafés, theatre and expositions, selling second-hand books and CDs) and youth work (e.g. workshops, courses, excursions, holiday camps, a pupils' parliament).

Actors and Coalitions

The document analysis and interviews revealed that an abundance of actors is involved in the MOS project, which reflects a concern for broadening the involvement

of actors. Four civil servants of the Flemish government coordinate the project under the authority of the Minister of Environment. An advisory board consisting of representatives of the Environment, Nature and Energy Department, the Department of Education and Training, the provinces, educational institutions, etc. formulates advisory opinions concerning the overall management of the project. Sixteen provincial MOS coaches visit and support the participating schools. At the school level, a crucial role is attributed to the teachers. They have to put MOS into practice and translate the project's aims into educational initiatives for pupils. Usually, one teacher or a group of colleagues serve as a focal point for MOS. The headmaster/-mistress plays an influential part in whether or not to support and facilitate the project, take decisions and consider or reject proposals. As suggested in the project's guidelines, the administrative and maintenance staff often is involved through practical and technical tasks, and most schools develop collaborations with partners such as local authority services, NGOs and relevant actors in the school's neighbourhood. The project's process criteria, the guidelines and the advices given by the coaches or included in the manuals seek to broaden the involvement of a variety of actors that can bring in expertise and suggestions and contribute to environmental performance activities concerning the five MOS themes.

In line with this, a key role is reserved for the pupils. They are MOS' ultimate target group and 'pupil involvement/participation' is one of the project's process criteria. Pupils are involved in the project through lessons or by participating in environmental performance activities. Furthermore, the project urges schools to engage (a group of) pupils more intensively. We found that this is predominantly applied through formal and task-oriented structures, procedures and tools such as 'MOS councils', working groups with representatives of all classes, pupils' councils, elections for the MOS council, surveys and suggestion boxes. Exceptionally, more informal participatory practices occur:

> In the group discussions, there they can certainly say what they want to be rid of. Yes. It's possible that a child saw things, images of, of deforestation or of drought there in Peru because we muck up… It can happen that a child is worried about it and brings this in the discussion. If you feel as a teacher that other children, too…It's possible that, that this is the start for working on it for two or three weeks.

Almost all interviewees remarked that realising this participation criterion is very difficult. Furthermore, the participatory ambitions differ a lot among the varied MOS schools. Complaints were frequently voiced about the lack of commitment on the part of the majority of pupils and teachers. Respondents remarked that it is difficult to motivate people for the project. Since not many people spontaneously find it appealing, teachers as well as pupils are regularly designated as members of a working group or as a focal point instead of volunteering for it:

> Working groups like sports, those are the things people like. But who is really engaged for the environment anyway? Except for those few green people. It's not sexy.

The coordinator and MOS coaches we interviewed reported that 'real participation' is rare. They presume that teachers are often afraid to lose control and to (partly)

give up power. The coordinator described such 'real participation' as the involvement of pupils throughout the whole process and specifies that they are faced then with broad questions such as: What do we find here? Is this a problem? Why is it a problem? Who suffers from it? Who benefits from it? What can we do about it? What are the possible solutions? What is the result of our actions? Did we expect this result? Are there any other actions required? Our analysis of documents, observations and interviews with MOS teachers confirms the coordinator's and coaches' criticism. We found that participation is often limited to carrying out practical tasks (e.g. being responsible for closing doors and putting the lights off, maintaining the compost heap, measuring the amount of waste, water or power consumption, checking the compliance with environmental management measures), delivering messages to fellow pupils (e.g. reporting the outcomes of working group meetings, making posters and drawings, writing poems, creating slogans) and having a say in decisions that are only indirectly connected with the sustainability issue at stake and therefore rather tend to distract attention from it (e.g. trivia regarding the organisation of happenings such as a voting whether or not the pupils would make noise during a parade in the neighbourhood and a brainstorm about the means they could use for this). Hence, sustainability is presented as something that is known, uncontested and reducible to compliance with environmental management rules at school and ecologically sound behaviour. Participation, then, is mainly a matter of becoming a member of a particular social community that shares a commitment to environmental performance at school and engages in finding ways to contribute to this. Yet, the questions raised by the coordinator do reflect another perspective on participation, one that acknowledges the importance to take care of sustainability issues with the openness to take into account the effect the issue and the actions that are undertaken has on others.

The regional centre for action, culture and youth has about 300 sustaining members and 30–40 volunteers that run the café and/or participate in working groups to prepare actions, organise activities, etc. The centre employs three (part time) staff members. Activities are organised for children/youth as well as for adults. Just like the MOS project, the centre seeks to involve a variety of actors, yet, in a very different way. Here, the emphasis is on how people are, directly or indirectly, deeply (and often unequally) afflicted by sustainability issues. By collaborating with poverty organisations, community arts projects, unions, etc., they deliberately try to reach vulnerable people such as poor persons, illegal foreigners and people suffering the consequences of sustainability issues. An interview with a staff member, the document analysis as well as several observations showed the centre's aversion to forcing taken-for-granted top-down measures or solutions upon people. It rather seeks to build coalitions with them, looking for solutions together and supporting initiatives started by people that are concerned about or affected by sustainability issues. For instance, when the centre organised a concert, one of the musicians turned out to be a fisherman who used sustainable techniques. He talked about his experience that it was utmost difficult to stand up to the competition with the fleet using common, intensive fishing methods and that he started a petition striving for an inshore three miles zone for sustainable fishery. This encounter was the trigger for making

the documentary 'Fish and Run'. It shows the centre's openness to the entrance of new actors into the public-in-the-making:

> Euhm, most people here hate… discussions without a basis. Nobody feels like, euhm, going to a conference… about sustainable fishery where… three minister's advisors, three civil servants and seven professors come to explain how it must, how it all works. That doesn't match reality. But if people who are engaged on it say, like, I want to start a petition, then we say: man, this is terribly interesting. […] Then we say: they are mates. We're going to give them a boost. They can count on us. That's what we want to be engaged in.

This particular way of broadening the public-in-the-making, starting from ad hoc collaboration with concerned people, affects the way in which sustainability issues are dealt with. The very particular concern of the fisherman and the idea he strived for (in other words: his 'attachments') were acknowledged, examined further, complemented, refuted and adjusted by others' points of view. Thus, making the film became a quest for a sustainable future for the fish as well as the fishermen. The issue of sustainable fishery was no longer a matter of implementing well-known solutions but was presented as a matter of concern in which a multitude of attachments are caught up.

Besides collaborating directly with actors affected by sustainability issues, the centre also consistently attempts to emphasise their attachments, perspectives, experiences and concerns. 'Giving voice to the voiceless' is a continuous and deliberate endeavour frequently reflected in the texts and films they have published, in the arguments used in debates and actions, etc. Through diverging initiatives, they have focused, for instance, on the fishermen mentioned above, on poor people facing difficulties to pay their energy bills yet for whom energy-saving measures are unaffordable and on people in the South suffering by the consequences of consumption in affluent countries. Social commitment and emotional involvement with these people were indicated as an important underlying motive for action:

> Those are the people you love. […] It moves, it still deeply moves me. Also if you see… Even if I watch the film for the twentieth time, if it's a while ago, I still watch it indignantly. And I think like hey, this system sucks, it's a fucking injust society, I don't wanna have anything to do with it….

We repeatedly observed this effort to draw in actors affected by sustainability issues and their attachments during debates and actions concerning the sustainability label FSC (Forest Stewardship Council). The centre made a film about it ('Sustainable on Paper') and discovered that the large scale plantations required to meet the growth of paper and wood consumption worldwide (although they are FSC certified) destructively affect the life and environment of local people. Whereas representatives of FSC recognised the problems revealed in the film but continuously referred to procedures for stakeholder consultation and reaching consensus amongst the members of FSC, staff members and volunteers of the centre consistently expressed their concern about the suffering people:

> Like you and me, we have the time to hold a debate on it every year. That woman whose son is out of a job, she doesn't have the time. She wants a solution, right now. Those 22.000 people in Uganda who are displaced, they don't wait for [the certification agency] to arrive there.

In doing so, they emphasised that sustainable forestry is not merely a matter of gathering and applying the proper expertise through adequate procedures but requires that the concerns and attachments of the people affected by it are taken into account. Yet, as we argued, drawing in the actors that are affected by an issue is not a sufficient characterisation of the public-isation of the issue. Therefore, in the next section we will analyse whether or not a multiplicity of attachments (and, thus, conflict, contestation and controversy) can emerge and how this is affected by the kinds of interactional practices that take place.

Rules of Interaction

Indeed – especially in the centre but also in MOS schools – we observed interactional practices that encouraged participants to voice their attachments such as asking open questions to probe people's opinions, emotions and concerns. For example, at the start of the first day of the centre's youth camp about 'the city of dreams', the instructor asked the children to talk about their dreams and desires and about what made them happy, sad or angry:

> If you would be God, what would you change in the world? … First for yourself and then for the world. What would you change for yourself?

This kind of questions contrast sharply with another frequently used type (particularly though not exclusively in MOS schools), one that rather prevents attachments from being expressed: asking questions to elicit an answer that one has already determined in advance. For instance, on World Water Day two pupils of a MOS school counted the number of drink cartons and cans the children brought to school. The day before, they were asked to bring only refillable bottles with water:

> – Teacher: 'What do we try to make you do?'
> – Pupil 1: 'Drinking water'.
> – Teacher: 'No. What do we try to teach you about all that waste?'
> – Pupil 2: 'That we put it in the right rubbish bin'.
> – Teacher: 'No. We just have to see that we have to sort out less, that there's not so much waste'.

Another interactional practice that fosters the utterance of divergent attachments is the discussion of sustainability issues. We observed this frequently in the centre but never in MOS schools. During a debate and an action concerning the FSC label, during the shootings for the documentary 'Fish and Run', the pupil's parliament, the youth camp and a working group meeting, plenty of time was taken for in-depth discussions. Divergent points of view were elaborated and clarified, participants frequently objected to each other's opinions, and they were given the opportunity to ask questions and/or to answer them extensively. Not only did those discussions enable a multiplicity of attachments to be expressed, they also served as a forum for criticising and challenging each other's opinions or knowledge claims. This was

made possible by the opportunities for objection, by keeping on asking questions in order to challenge people to clarify, refine or revise their arguments as well as by calling people to account regarding the consequences of their own opinions or behaviour. For instance, during the youth camp some children talked about their dreams in a rather self-centred way, only expressing consumptive desires regarding, for example, games consoles. Later on, the instructor returned to it when they discussed the slashing of rainforests out of avarice:

> Because those rich people only think about themselves, just like you only think about your WII, they too only…

These regularly occurring challenging kinds of interaction are a striking contrast with the restraint concerning accusations that we found within the MOS project:

> Let's all do our bit and see how we can do better without condemning each other or starting to do frenetic, euhm, yes, or accusing each other or…

These observations as well as explicit remarks during the interview with the staff member revealed that the centre shows great openness to contestation and controversy. Activities are often aimed at discussion and at the explicit articulation and clarification of divergent opinions. Not only is conflict regarded legitimate, it is considered indispensable in order to reform society:

> Basically, every deviating opinion is a contribution to the debate. That's how you deal with it internally or, euhm, externally with other organisations… Just… more than half of social and political life doesn't think this way. They can't stand it anymore. Instead of viewing a different opinion as a contribution to the debate, as we do, they consider it a sin.

In contrast, both observations and interviews revealed that the MOS project generally aims at fostering consensus rather than the sharp articulation of dissent:

> And sometimes you have to distil the essences from the variety of opinions. Like okay, we don't really know if it happens there too, but do you think that the environment, in a very general… do you think that the environment ought to be protected? Just thinking out loud. Often, opinions contain essences, and those essences are precisely the compromises.

Nevertheless, the way in which this pursuit of consensus is dealt with differs strongly at the level of individual schools. One respondent of a MOS school explicitly defines deviating points of view as essential for democracy and an enrichment of the educational process. Discussing the variety of opinions is therefore considered an essential part of the learning process. In two other schools, yet, the absence of contestation seems to be easily taken for granted:

> Also, our school regulations and so on, it says what's our view on MOS. So, if parents read this, they must approve of it, don't they.

One of the teachers we interviewed even indicated repeatedly that deviating opinions did not occur concerning the MOS project. Yet, when we observed an action in this school during which the compliance with waste reduction measures was checked, several pupils obviously displayed disagreement. The teachers and pupils organising the action ignored the critical comments. On other occasions too, the school aimed at avoiding discussion. We observed a MOS council where

teachers conferred on an action to check the use of bicycle lights. They expected pupils to start an argument about whether or not it would be bright enough to put off their lights:

– Teacher 1: 'Yes, but if you are there with the pupils and they say like, Madam, look, it's bright enough, I won't give you my school diary…'
– Teacher 2: 'Yes, but, no discussion, right? That's just the way it is'.
– Teacher 3: 'No discussion…' […]
– Teacher 2: 'It's beyond discussion, I tell them. They have to be switched on'.

Although in a general sense most respondents said that they consider contestation legitimate, it is sometimes treated as irrational when it comes to concrete issues. Consequently, trying to convince people with deviating opinions by providing (more) information is a strategy that is often applied. For instance, one of the MOS coaches mentioned a discussion in a school striving for a third MOS label concerning the choice between reusable bottles or recyclable drink cartons:

And they still argued about shall we go over to glass or just muddle on with the drink cartons. Come on, it was a heated discussion there. I thought well now, a school on that level, should this still be under discussion here in this meeting?

He responded to the situation by explaining 'Lansink's Ladder', a hierarchy in waste management recommending reuse over recycling.

We found that contestation and controversy regularly occur within the MOS project as well as in the regional centre for action, culture and youth. Yet, our analysis of the interactions shows how both cases handle manifestations of dissent differently. In line with the MOS project's task-oriented focus on promoting educational as well as environmental benefits, we mainly observed a pursuit of consensus and of the containment of conflict. On the contrary, the centre regularly fostered the proliferation of conflict by going into antagonistic attachments.

Resources

We analyse the use of educational tools, methodologies and activities in order to understand how expertise is drawn into publics-in-the-making through knowledge claims incorporated in the use or development of these resources and the way in which they are treated. This also affects the proliferation or containment of contestation and controversy.

Both cases make an appeal to expertise within their educational practices. Experts are deployed for giving advice, bringing in all kinds of expertise and sometimes to judge issues based on proper knowledge. Nevertheless, interviewees of the MOS project emphasised that expertise is neither unerring nor neutral. For the centre too, it is deemed necessary to take into account layman's knowledge as well:

Let the people speak, euhm, who are hands-on experts, euhm, or those who are involved or damaged, instead of, euhm, inviting the 77th expert. What doesn't mean that experts… don't have a part in it, right, but combine it then. See that there are also people with some sound… common sense.

Furthermore, the centre and one of the MOS schools also deliberately aim at building expertise themselves. Engaging pupils and teachers in developing expertise concerning sustainability issues, the MOS teacher argues, contributes to fostering commitment. The centre aims at developing expertise through action and research in collaboration with the people affected by sustainability issues.

Whereas the role of experts thus seems to be rather limited, our analysis of the resources dimension shows that they can also enter the public-in-the-making through the use or development of educational tools, indicators, methodologies and activities. This affects whether the involvement (here understood as active contribution) of actors is broadened or otherwise limited as well as whether controversy over knowledge claims is proliferated or contained. The interviews, observations and document analysis revealed that the resources that were used indeed varied strongly in this regard. Generally speaking, we found devices that were open to the involvement of actors and to contestation and controversy (e.g. working group meetings, drawing one's city of dreams, informal conversations) chiefly in the centre and devices that tended to prevent involvement and contestation (e.g. tests with water according to well-defined procedures, forms for completion, punishments and rewards related to environmental management precepts) more frequently in the MOS project. Yet, in both cases mixed forms (e.g. watching and discussing films, guided tours, role playing, reflecting on pictures of sustainability issues) appeared.

Whereas within the MOS project a selection of educational tools and methodologies is suggested in the thematic manuals for schools, the centre prefers direct and spontaneous conversations over the use of educational tools and methodologies:

> Throw away all those toolkits, methodologies and educational games […] and just talk with people about the things you want to talk about, right, instead of… rendering education infantile so that euhm, it becomes a schoolish affair that straitjackets people.

The centre emphasises the importance of the café in this respect. The informal meeting place is particularly appreciated because of its contribution to informal discussions at the bar, frequently bringing about new actions or other educational initiatives. MOS schools, too, pay attention to the material learning environment. For example, two of the six analysed schools as well as several schools that were discussed during the judging of the MOS labels have a school garden offering the pupils vegetable gardens to maintain, a stretch of woods to play in, a particular biotope to study, animals to take care of, etc. This enables children to experience and discover nature in a more or less unorganised way. The café as well as the school gardens provide a space for a variety of actors to get involved and for a multiplicity of attachments to be experienced, clarified, articulated and contested.

Not only the selection of educational tools but also the way in which they are developed affects this space for diverse actors and attachments. We have already mentioned the centre's films. Shooting and editing such a documentary offers opportunities to develop and express one's attachments concerning the issue at stake. Yet, this chance is predominantly reserved for the staff members here. Within the MOS project, pupils are regularly involved in creating educational tools such as

posters, brochures and texts, but the extent to which they can express their attachments and confront them with each other varies strongly. Sometimes pupils are completely left free to write a poem or a text about a sustainability issue. On the other hand, we analysed, for instance, an 'Ecological Footprint Booklet' consisting of precepts and drawings. It was the teachers who searched and selected suitable suggestions to reduce one's ecological footprint, whereas the pupil's role was limited to provide each precept with a matching drawing.

The ecological footprint is a well-known example of a very particular kind of educational tool, namely, all kinds of indicators or measuring instruments regarding sustainability. Within the MOS project, specific measuring instruments are developed in order to monitor the realisation of environmental benefits in schools. The ecological footprint, too, is frequently used in different ways. Several of the interviewed teachers emphasised its employability in order to raise awareness about our ecological impact. Frequently, this goes together with the use of educational games or other tools providing well-defined behavioural precepts aimed at reducing pupils' footprints. One teacher explained that she uses the concept within religious education to address the issues of social justice and solidarity in the context of sustainable development. She particularly emphasises the unequal distribution of ecological footprints and discusses with students what it would mean to live within the limits of a global average fair share.

Discourses

Finally, analysing which particular discourses on sustainable development and ESD are nourished in both cases enables us to understand further how they deal with contestation and controversy as well as which attachments are taken into account within a public-in-the-making.

In both cases, interviews revealed that the term 'sustainable development' is widely considered an unusable concept. For the centre, it is a meaningless catch-all term susceptible to divergent interpretations:

> Under the veil of sustainability, euhm… FSC cultivates plantations that are monocultures, hectares in size, and Indians are driven away from their land… So, that term means nothing to me.

Therefore, as we have already shown above, the centre prefers to start from concrete sustainability issues about which people are concerned. Sustainability, then, is a continuous quest for what could be regarded 'sustainable' in these concrete situations. MOS teachers repeatedly indicated that the concept is too difficult to understand for children and youngsters. As a result, they prefer to translate it into concrete subject matters, rules and practices starting from the five themes the project puts forward. In order to explain the content to young children, mascots are regularly used:

> It is euhm, if we tell the children like Max is coming, then they know immediately what it is about, right, or Max asked to close the windows. And the children use it at home too, you

know, like mom, we're not acting okay, Max won't be pleased now. Just to… for the children, well, the youngest anyway…

Here, sustainability is easily translated into a matter of 'do's and don'ts' that limit the space for contestation and controversy.

Both cases differ strongly with regard to how they conceive the pursuit of sustainable development. In line with the focus on do's and don'ts, MOS understands sustainable development as the result of individual efforts:

> We want to keep on, euhm… spreading the positive message that, if everybody would to their bit, that there are still plenty of possibilities for a splendid future for the children.

For the centre, realising sustainability implies a political struggle. This provides space for conflict over antagonistic attachments. The centre indicates that it explicitly pays attention to power relations and ethical considerations regarding injustices brought about by ecological issues:

> We want to build kind of a counterforce, We are, we are largely convinced that it is not… through lobbying, or through… persuasion that you can change things somehow but, but through, well, power is a dirty word, but anyway, through your own force, as a group or euhm, also as a group of victims or a target group.

With regard to the purposes of ESD, the centre's discourse is that ESD should especially aim at arousing interest for sustainability issues, gathering and inciting people to action and to play their part as critical citizens, helping those suffering from sustainability issues and evoking questions:

> Kind of deliberately, we choose from the start not to offer solutions. 'Cause, because we… always are a group that wants to ask questions, right, people have to think themselves and decide what they… We won't serve ideology… or solutions. And for a lot of people currently, in comparison with twenty years ago, it's not easy anymore. And they said… well, I thought I would get the solutions, and now I have even more questions than before… But I think, I think it's good. So if you can make people think and ask questions, than it's okay.

For MOS, the principal purposes of ESD are to foster changes in behaviour and attitudes, raising awareness, realising environmental benefits and creating support for environmental management measures:

> You could call it knowledge, in a sense, but I think it's more important to change behaviour, too, and eh, change attitudes. I think that's more important than general knowledge about waste, waste-disposal and so on, or sorting waste. How you must sort it is important, of course, but it's more important that you just breed that behaviour, that you'll do everything you can.

Most respondents of the MOS project argued that they want to prepare children and youngsters for their future role in society:

> Raising our children's awareness, especially, making them much more aware of everything… Yes. Actually, preparing them a bit already, for society, what they can already bring in, qua environment, health… et cetera, safety, euhm… It's now that we have to teach our children, right.

Our analysis of the discourses on sustainability and ESD reveals how sustainability issues can be presented as well-known matters translatable into behavioural

precepts and proper attitudes everyone should adopt unanimously or otherwise as disputed matters that require a continuous quest for and struggle over what is 'sustainable' in real situations causing people's concern.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, we wanted to inquire into whether (and, if so, how) a public is composed around the sustainability issues that are at stake within two different practices of ESD. We analysed how publics-in-the-making engaged in the endeavour to present these issues as 'public issues'. More specifically we wanted to understand how the arrangement of educational practices contributed to the 'privatisation' or otherwise 'public-isation' of issues. The four dimensions of the PAA turned out to be an adequate framework to take into account the variety of actors in the actor–network within which publics-in-the-making organise themselves. Furthermore, our analysis reveals the duality of actors and structure. Although the structural development of framing sustainability as a learning problem as well as the discourse of ecological modernisation tend to prevent the emergence of sustainability issues as public issues, we found that actors within educational practices can enable that in particular moments and places issues can emerge as a matter of public concern. As Marres (2005) argues, organising a public around issues takes time and effort: a public-in-the-making must engage in articulating joint and antagonistic attachments through which actors are caught up in the issue. A sustained focus on those joint and antagonistic attachments is crucial to move beyond a socialisation perspective on ESD without falling into undue relativism (and, thus, to take seriously the democratic paradox). At particular moments, the cases indeed seemed to engage in such an articulation. Nevertheless, it requires a continuous vigilance so as to prevent that one falls into one pole of the democratic paradox, for instance, by reducing participation to building a (task oriented) social community in order to deal efficiently with the urgency of sustainability issues or to the (procedural) involvement of (affected) actors without the attempt to articulate their diverse, mutually exclusive attachments.

By analysing the involvement of actors, the interactional practices, the use and development of educational resources and the discourses that are nourished, we aimed at examining the cases as *practices* in which the privatisation as well as public-isation of sustainability issues take shape. Our aim was to further understand how education can emerge as a 'public space' in the context of ESD. In public-ising practices of ESD, education is not aimed at socialisation but creates a space for subjectivation. Simons and Masschelein (2010) introduced the concept of 'pedagogic subjectivation', understood as an experience of potentiality, a strong experience that one 'is able' (to do something, to know something, to speak about something, etc.):

> [P]edagogic subjectivation includes engagement with 'school material' (texts, books …) that one has at one's disposal. Teachers can turn this material into a 'thing-in-common', in the face of which others are perceived as equals and an experience of 'being able to' can

emerge. This experience, we suggest, is the experience of students' leaving the family and entering the school: not as a selection or qualification machinery but as a 'public space' because one is equally exposed to a thing-in-common. (Simons and Masschelein 2010, p. 601)

The 'thing in common' in the case of ESD is the issue at stake and the joint and antagonistic attachments it brings about.

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