

DRIVERS AND BARRIERS TO ADOLESCENT 'S PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS: A CASE STUDY

ELEMENTOS FACILITADORES Y BARRERAS PARA LA PARTICIPACIÓN EN PROYECTOS COMUNITARIOS: UN ESTUDIO DE CASO CON POBLACIÓN ADOLESCENTE ELEMENTOS FACILITADORES E BARREIRAS PARA PARTICIPAÇÃO EM ORGANIZAÇÕES COMUNITÁRIAS: UM ESTUDO DE CASO COM A POPULAÇÃO ADOLESCENTE

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ABSTRACT: This article presents some preliminary data of a research about a group of teenager 's participation (12-17 years-old) in a community project. It is based on a wider research project which, during two years (2013-15), has used an ethnographic approach to understand teenager 's daily experiences in that community project and the generated process through their interaction with peers and the educational team. The purpose of this article is to identify drivers and barriers that different agents perceive for participating in the community project. To this end, initial results are gathered in three discussion groups: adolescents who have a background on the organization (for at least 3 years) and high level of commitment related to a "projective type of participation" (Llena, Novella, Trilla, Noguera, Morata & Morell, 2015); their families and adult workers. Preliminary results of participant observation in the advisory group (22 hours) and assemblies (10 hours) of the community are also incorporated. Data analysis shows that there are three principal drivers to participate: the profile of the adolescents and their families, the relationships they established with the educational team and their awareness of learning. Regarding obstacles, there are other three aspects: participants' lack of interest on the available opportunities, their stage of life and their expectations.

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<p>PALABRAS CLAVES: Organizaciones comunitarias Participación Adolescentes Ciudadanía</p>	<p>RESUMEN: Este artículo presenta los resultados preliminares de una investigación sobre la participación de un grupo de adolescentes (12-17 años) en una organización comunitaria. Basado en un proyecto de investigación más amplio, durante dos años (2013-15) se ha utilizado un planteamiento de tipo etnográfico para acercarse a la experiencia cotidiana de los adolescentes participantes en una plataforma comunitaria y a los procesos generados en la interacción con sus iguales y el equipo educativo. La finalidad de este artículo es identificar los elementos facilitadores y los obstáculos percibidos para despertar el interés y mantener la participación en el proyecto. Para ello se presentan los resultados recabados en tres grupos de discusión: menores que tienen un cierto recorrido en el proyecto (al menos 3 años) y han logrado un alto nivel de compromiso relacionado con una participación denominada “participación proyectiva” (Llena, Novella, Trilla, Noguera, Morata & Morell, 2015); sus familias y el equipo educativo. Además, se incorporan los resultados preliminares de la observación participante realizada en las reuniones del grupo consejero (22 horas) y en las asambleas gestionadas por éstos y dirigidas a toda la población de adolescentes del municipio (10 horas). El análisis de los datos muestra cómo el perfil del adolescente y sus familias, las relaciones que establecen con el equipo educativo y la percepción de aprendizaje constituyen los principales elementos facilitadores de la participación. En relación a los obstáculos, destacan tres aspectos: la falta de interés sobre las oportunidades disponibles, las características de la propia etapa vital y las expectativas de los participantes.</p>
<p>PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Organizações comunitárias Participação Adolescentes Cidadania</p>	<p>RESUMO: Apresenta-se neste artigo um conjunto de resultados preliminares sobre a participação de adolescentes (12-17 anos) num projeto de uma organização comunitário. Os mesmos estão enquadrados num projeto de investigação mais amplo, desenvolvido entre 2013 e 2015, através de uma metodologia etnográfica. Desta forma, é abordada a experiência quotidiana dos adolescentes participantes no referido projeto, bem como os processos gerados na interação com os seus pares e com adultos de referência. O objetivo deste artigo é identificar elementos que facilitam e dificultam o surgimento do interesse no projeto e a manutenção da participação. Para tal, apresentam-se os resultados divididos em três grupos de discussão: adolescentes que já tinham uma relação com a organização (há pelo menos 3 anos) e um elevado nível de compromisso com a chamada “participação projetiva” (Llena, Novella, Trilla, Noguera, Morata & Morell, 2015); as suas famílias e a equipa educativa. Incorporam-se também os resultados preliminares da observação participante realizada no grupo conselheiro da organização (22 horas) e nas assembleias (10 horas). A análise dos dados demonstra que o perfil dos adolescentes e das suas famílias, as relações que estabelecem com a equipa educativa e a perceção de aprendizagem constituem os principais elementos facilitadores da sua participação. Em relação aos obstáculos, destaca-se a falta de interesse relativamente às oportunidades disponíveis, as características inerentes à etapa da vida em que se encontram e as expectativas que têm.</p>

Introduction

The traditional conceptions of citizenship made from the relationship between individual and State have been replaced by new emerging citizenship, more multi-dimensional, flexible and adaptable to several social contexts. This approach overcomes the traditional conception of citizenship as a status and addresses the question of the term understood as practice. From this perspective the citizenship is a changing concept not only associated to a legal status but also to a social bond and the recognition of the relationship dialogic established between people and their socio-cultural context. It is a vision focused on various practices areas (political, social, cultural or economic) characterising a person as a competent member of society.

This exercise of prominence in public life is related to the concept of “active citizenship” developed by the European Union and mainly used in educational contexts in order to promote

students’ social involvement. In fact, the promotion of active citizenship is becoming a key element in the construction of social cohesion and democracy. De Weerd, Gemmeke, Rigter and Van Rij (2005) defined it as: “political participation and a participation in the associative life characterised by tolerance, non-violence and law and human rights’ recognition”. Those authors identify seven indicators for active citizenship: 1) volunteering in organizations and networks, 2) community activities’ organization, 3) voting in the elections, 4) participate in political parties, 5) participate in interest groups, 6) participating in peaceful protests, and 7) participate in public debates. This paper will be focused on the fifth point: participation in a community project such as interest group.

From this approach citizenship becomes one of the axis of youth policies aiming to achieve their full development (Benedicto, 2011). Benedicto reminds us that we are at risk of questioning their effectiveness “if not dealt with the obstacles with which young people are to be recognized as

citizens and, by extension, to be heard from his own condition of youths” (p. 16).

This approach considers participation over the right to be recognized in the Convention of the Child Rights of (art. 12, 13, 14,15 and 17) and promoted by major international institutions concurring such as the European Council or UNESCO. Its educational content, and its potential for “learning to learn”, defined it as an “educational principle” reflected in the everyday practices of intervention projects. As Oscar Rebollo’s explains the importance of the everyday life over the transformative process is based on the repetition of everyday practice from the respect of the speaking time, the listening attitude, the key role of the people, etc. All of these elements constitute the educational dimension of participatory processes. This paper will show a perceptions analysis of an experienced (at least 3 years) participant group (15-17 years) and high level of commitment in a community project, their families and educators in relation to drivers and barriers encountered in the participatory process. The questions proposed in the paper are: How do teenagers, their families and educators feel their participation in community activities? What educational practices stimulate these teenager’s commitment? What are the barriers detected along that process by different agents (teenagers, families, and educators)?

1. Community projects and the development of active citizenship

From the sociology of social learning, Luz Morán emphasizes the relevance of social spaces where citizens’ practices as “locus of learning” are generated. The author relies on classical authors’ works, as Michel de Certeau (1999) in relation to everyday life on the civic practices and as does Dubet (1994) on the work of the “actor” and social experience, to build a relevant framework for cultural analysis of social practices. Her proposal adopts a dynamic approach to learning with a biographical approach “requiring thinking on the diversity of places and institutions where such practices are developed” (p. 33). She feels it essential to incorporate the different plans composing personal experiences given that learning of current citizenship is built and deconstructs on several contexts that alongside with the traditional spaces for socialization (family, school, neighbourhood) incorporating broader and not necessarily “physical” environments. The community spaces outside school were relevant for its potential to achieve high levels of involvement. However, the literature review shows a complex situation involving context and agency data, as discussed below.

Researches on this topic dive us to a variety of youth’s studies which since its inception in the 1980s have been focused on the relations of young people with their environment in terms of citizenship and socio-political participation. *The Report on Youth in Spain 2012* (El Informe sobre la Juventud en España 2012) points out the consolidation of “non-standard” forms of social participation. In relation to the teenagers, the project *Tiempos escolares y tiempos de ocio*, whose field work was developed in 17 autonomous communities, analyzed school times and its impact on everyday life and socialization experiences of students of ESO (Obligatory Secondary Education). The authors highlight that only 3.8% of the offered extracurricular activities are of social projection, as volunteering. Another recent survey among adolescents aged 12 to 17 years, reveals that only 4.6% of the sample devote some time to volunteering during the week going down to 1.4% on weekends.

At the same time, the amount of works seeking to explore their own processes of participation and the role played by educational institutions have increased. In the United Kingdom, the goal of the project “Creating Citizenship Communities”, was to analyze the role of schools in the development of citizenship as well as to explore perception and community practices of young people. For this reason, an analysis (questionnaires, interviews) on implications and barriers in relation to the role of schools and youth participation was conducted. The authors identified five issues: types of community involvement/engagement; participants’ profile; motivations, challenges to involve more young people in their own community and the role that school can play in participatory processes. The research team concluded that there is a certain consensus about the opportunities of the centres promoting future participation of students in the community, especially in volunteering, although they say that more information about the practices that strengthen this involvement is required. In this line of research, three key conditions completing the above-mentioned proposals to encourage participation from the experiences of young people both in school and in community experiences were identified in Barcelona: information’s reach, the intergenerational work and sustainability (Novella and others, 2014).

Another big study on this subject was led by Warwick of the University of Leicester in collaboration with the University of Cambridge (Carolyne Mason & Hilary Cremin) and the United Kingdom Community Service Volunteer Service. This project was focused on the barriers and opportunities for children in situation of social disadvantage

for participation and civic engagement. Their results suggested that while many young people feel civically engaged, there are still many personal, contextual and administrative barriers impeding this process. One of the most important obstacles is the young self images as non-influencers agents, discouraging many of them to contribute to the community. Another barrier is the low valuation of volunteering as an opportunity for personal and community development.

Literature on citizen's education reflects an intense debate on setting up educational programs outside school to "groups in risk of social exclusion" related to participation and coexistence. In 1996, Youniss and Yates reviewed 44 empirical studies in order to learn about the benefits of community programmes over participants. Their findings supported the conclusion that such services offer intense experiences and the possibility for social interactions associated with prosocial development. In these spaces, they developed feelings of social responsibility, community binding, improve their self-esteem, and increase understanding of social issues. Among their recommendations, the authors pointed the need for case studies on specific projects or programs and the relationship between professionals and minors.

The concern and attention to educational projects in people at risk of social exclusion is made evident by the recent proliferation of case studies seeking to delve into the processes of youth participation given that socio-educational level, cultural differences and life experiences are forecasting the extent of community involvement and civic engagement (Flanagan & Levine 2010). Usually, the taken units of study tend to be educational spaces outside school hours where ethnographic methodology is often used as a tool for the study of the socio-educational processes (Cusworth, Bradshaw, Coles, Keung & Chzhen, 2009; Hall, Coffey & Williamson, 1999; Kirshner, 2008; Schwartz & Suyemoto, 2013). Studies claim that these differences are increased both by parental education and the differences in the opportunities both in school and outside it.

In a closer environment, ethnographic methodology was selected by Lozano Escobar (2007) to discuss the rituals that young teachers put into practice during socioeducational interactions planned in community contexts of Barcelona. In this case, the author chooses the metaphor of "educator tribe" referring to those communities of educators characterized by their motivation and originality working in the search of social transformation and the authenticity through the expressiveness.

Finally, within the set of empirical contributions published about the community spaces for participation, we highlight such works that according to their commitment focused on "social activism" are used as a tool of resistance and action which purpose is to generate dynamics of awareness and fight for social justice with young people with exclusion's experiences (social, racial, sexual) (Ginwright, Noguera & Cammarota, 2006; Kirshner, 2008).

In short, these investigations remind us the practical dimension of above mentioned citizenship, which underlines the near and local meaning. This type of community programmes become citizenship schools, simultaneously promoting initiatives to promote the positive development both of participants and community. In general, these projects intend adolescents to acquire leadership roles, improve their social responsibility, their social skills, sense of efficacy and critical thinking. According to Hall, Coffey and Williamson "these spaces seek to offer children the opportunity to sit down with members of their town and offer them social visibility" (1999, p. 506). However, we cannot forget the low participation in those activities reflected on sociological reports.

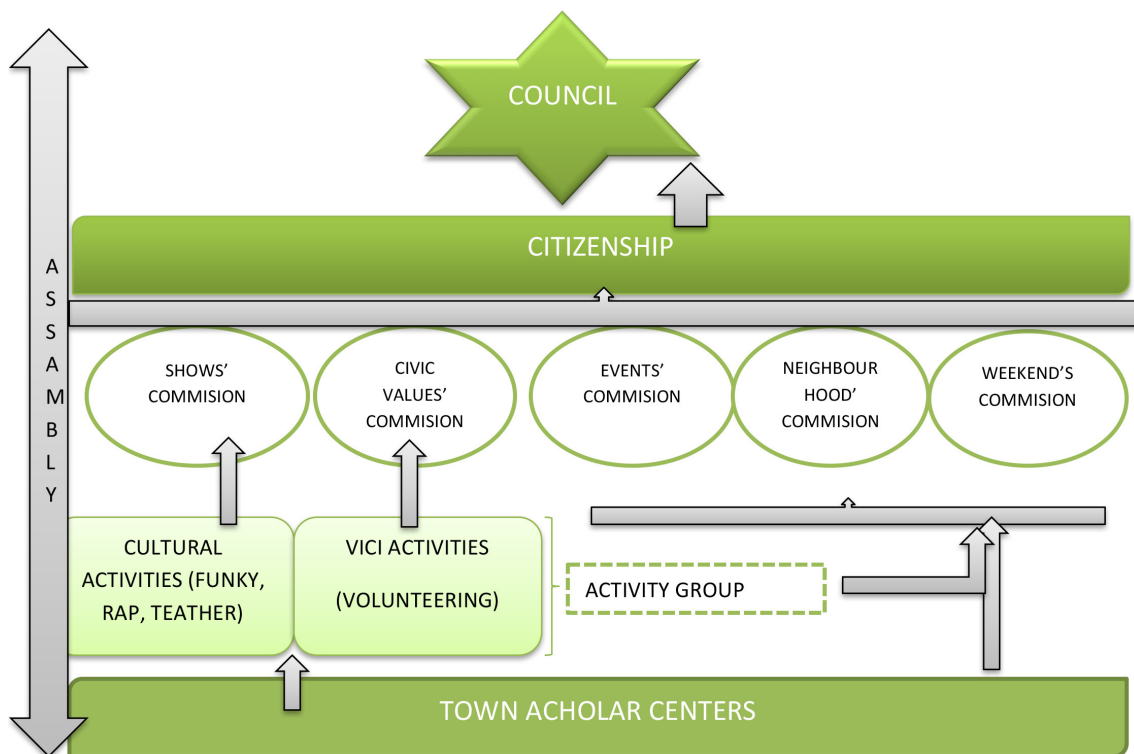
2. Case of study description: Platform for participation

The Municipal Platform for youth participation, base for the case study, is located in a municipality of Biscay with 15.35% of population under 18, according to the Census in 2014. The platform is open to all teenagers in the municipality. Although the headquarters are located at the centre, there is a decentralisation policy seeking visibility for the main 4 districts. They are also located in a school of each of these areas, and also have a physical space in two community centres.

The education team is composed of 18 people with different profiles: technical, coordination, social educators and workshops monitors. The work is organized in coordination between this educational team and secondary education schools of the mentioned districts. During both free time and lunch time recruitment activities to develop values and skills are conducted.

According to the reference documents (base project, website) generated by the platform, the program's purpose is to generate opportunities for youth to develop leadership skills. Following this extend, a "ladder of opportunity" was designed offering various options to children between 12 and 18 years (Figure 1). In general, adolescents begin their journey in secondary education with an information campaign at beginning of the year.

Figure 1: Structure of Platform for Youth



Source: Own elaboration from internal documents in the project.

At the first stages the “activity groups” offer activities, which may be cultural (such as rap, funky, theatre) or focused on “civic” aspects with a focus on community (volunteering, fair trade, etc.) (figure 1). In addition, all participants can explore social issues in the general assembly where processes and project plans are discussed, or in the workshops with their classmates or teachers and monitors. To develop new levels of responsibility adolescents can join five organising committees: a) events commission, to plan events for participants (new year’s Eve, carnivals, parties); b) civic values community’s committee, created to manage events for the municipality (performances organized give visibility to the different workshops and services); c) 4 district committees, with the aim of giving life to the neighborhood from the adolescents perspective; d) weekend committee, to organize special activities during those days. At weekends, anyone interested attend a training course in civic values called “citizenship school”. Finally, adolescents have the opportunity to belong to the “Council of the platform”, its highest management body. In short, the process is conducted in different scenarios where various forms of participation are identified, which although “phenomenologically different, all of them bring significant elements for participatory competences” (Novella Camara, 2008:38).

3. Methodology: empirical development and design

As mentioned before, this research is part of a case study performed in a municipal platform of youth participation (Biskay) aimed at teenagers (12-18 years). It has a qualitative research approach. And examines the innovation as an integral part of the educational process, without measuring the methodological efficiency (Pescarmona, 2014). This type of analysis is relevant to those social intervention professionals who wish to support the participation of young people at highest levels of responsibility and for researchers interested in learning of citizenship spaces (Kirshner, 2008).

In order to explore the perception of facilitator elements and barriers perceived by the different agents related to the participation in the project, the results of three focus groups accompanied by contributions of participant observation in the spaces of assembly and meetings of the advisory group are presented now. The focus groups were as follows a) 10 teenagers aged 15 to 17 (5 boys and 5 girls); b) their family (7 mothers and a father) and c) educators in the process (4 women and 2 men).

The participants selection was carried out on the basis of a key criterion: extensive experience (minimum 3 years) with a high level of participation. Following Novella’s classification (2008) it could be

called “projective participation” given that the children belong to the Council (Figure 1) involved in the design, planning, execution and assessment of the assembly. As to say, they are involved from the inside: once there, they generate new projects which would correspond to “metaparticipation” and depending on the debate they propose, design, implement and evaluate new projects.

Focus groups took place in areas near to their homes and in privacy contexts. All of them were recorded and transcribed. Prior informed consent protocols were signed.

The questions raised during the sessions revolved around four themes: perceptions about participation, motivation, aspects that limit or encourage participation and suggestions for improvement. These are related to the research questions: How do teenagers and their families live the participatory experience? Which barriers do they detect? and which educational practices are favoured by their commitment?

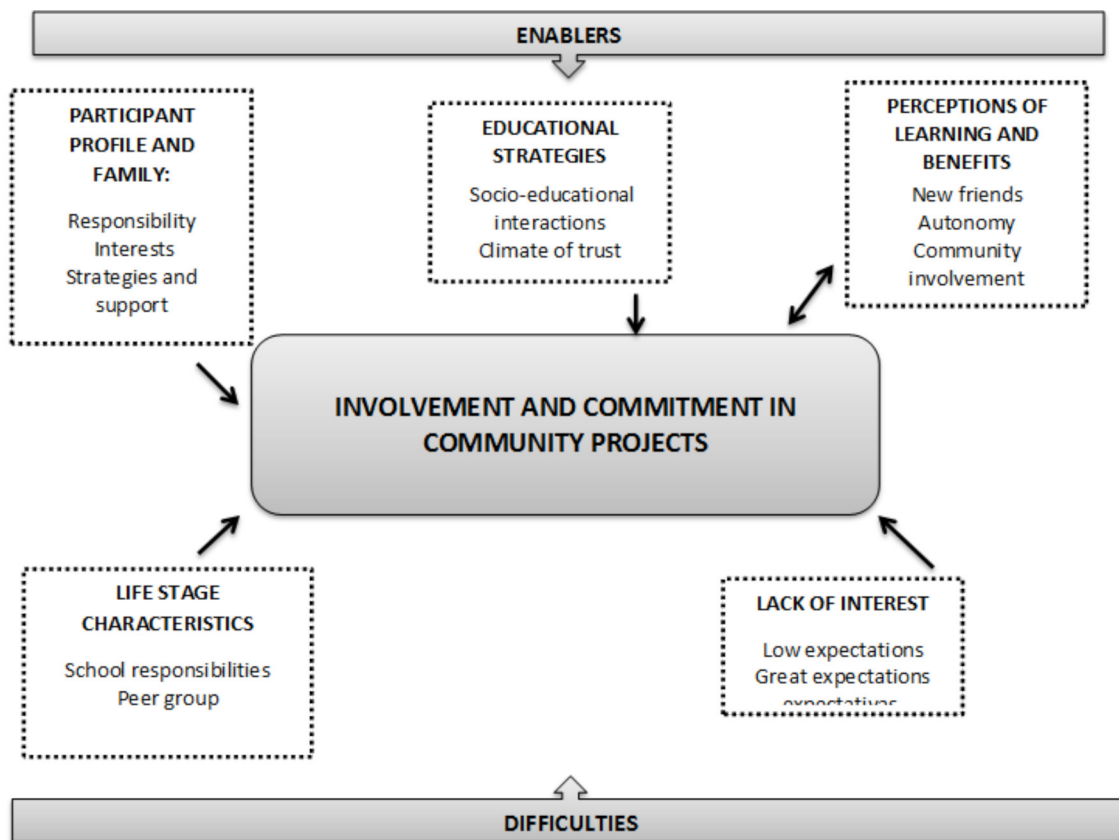
In order to clarify and deepen into the discussed topics, a participant observation in the meetings of the advisory group (22 h) and the

assembly (12 h) were conducted. Based on field notebook entries they began to write the first research papers trying to systematize, introducing the first information categorizations, and registering personal interpretations as well as the necessary clarifications and qualifications (Ruíz Olabuénaga, 2012). The questions leading the observation were: Which educational strategies are being used by educators for decision-making? What type of relations are enhanced among peers and between adolescents and educators?

4. Results analysis and discussion

The results are organized around two analysis axes: the drivers and the perceived obstacles for the participation in community youth projects. The interaction of all of them allows us to better understand the process complexity (Figure 2). For confidentiality reasons, “A” stands for teenagers, “F” for families, and “E” for educators. The following number has a recognition function of subjects.

Figure 2. Elementos facilitadores y barreras percibidas por los adolescentes, sus familiares y el equipo educativo para su participación y compromiso en el proyecto



Source: Own elaboration.

4.1. Drivers for youth community participation

As figure 2 shows, three elements were identified: the profile of adolescents and their families, educational strategies and the perception of learning.

Profile of the participant and their family

Just as in Davies research, (Davies et al., 2012) a first facilitator element identified for the involvement in the project was the profile of teenager coming and remaining in the project for several years. All respondents agreed that adolescents are characterized by their responsibility and interest in some minority issues, such as reading or volunteering. This status gives them a “twist” from the rest of their peers from high school class, and enable them to identify affinities with other platform’ partners. This circumstance has a contradictory effect. On the one hand it does not seem to be an obstacle to this group to maintain friendship ties with other “non-participating” equals, simply it has allowed them to develop interests and meet new people. On the other hand, the families seem aware that their children differ from their peer cohort since the majority do not attend such projects. They show astonishment by the commitment and responsibility shown by their sons and daughters when participating on certain type of activities considered arid and little rewarding:

“You are wierd, wierd, wierd, thank goodness that they are so wierd that for them the wierd are the others, then that notice if they are wierd”. (F6)

“Well this is not just to have fun, there is a meeting and he comes, getting super involved I mean, i.e., even if the meeting is boring, as to say, he still comes”. (F3)

We speak about teenagers that stand out by their sense of duty and responsibility with the project, who not only understand the need to participate in the program but also showing a high degree of commitment in the proposal, management, organization and evaluation of activities:

“Because you also get involve... I am and I say, well then I’ll finish too, because I do not like leaving things unfinished. I don’t know... you have a commitment and if you don’t show up you feel guilty”. (A3)

Educators consider that family plays an important role. This perception reminds of the fact that the family is the one that normally assumes responsibility in choosing and managing free time activities for their children. Teachers appreciate mainly parents modeling:

“But in the end... a child of 12-13 years starts and then if you want them to participate... it has to be like that almost almost since he was born... he must has something... If you are encouraged at home your aitas’ are in a mountain group, then when you are 10 years you say... you can stay there ...I do not want it any more. But you have a reason. At the end you have to have someone who... usually the people who have been in associations from younger ages, almost all of them turns to be monitor so, it has to be like this... “. (E6)

Not all of the surveyed families have a volunteering tradition, even if they are aware of their child’s interest and the opportunity to participate in other activities in protected environments and helping them in their organization (transports, schedules) to booster continuity.

Educational strategies

The relationship between educators and teens seems to be a key factor to establish and maintain participation. Both teenagers and family members and educators recognized the power of the trust between them. This aspect appears as a crucial element to maintain the interest and assistance. The three groups are about communication and dialogue, the horizontal relationship and the empathy that create a respect and trust ambience in the group.

“That’s... what really works now is the communication between them”. (F4)

“I don’t know, I think it is... nice to feel that there is always a person to help you right?” And... teaching us many things, they are role models, which...can also help us to decide in the future,... with our studies or anything else that we need.... They are always there not asking for explanations. As my colleagues said, it is also to respect people, to communicate, to exploit our talent and surpass yourself always”. (A1)

“I think that it happens because they do not feel that we judge or treat them as children or direct their thinking, or ... they are treated as adults aren’t they?”. (E6)

In this sense, the three consulted group valued teenager’s opportunities for expressing their opinions, feeling heard and valued. As in other studies (Jennings, Parra-Medina, Hilfinger-Messias & McLoughlin, 2009), consulted teenagers appreciate a friendly and safe atmosphere to feel free to be themselves, express their own creativity and their views in decision-making, acquire new roles,

experiencing new challenges and at the same time have fun in the process. In this environment, educator plays a fundamental role in maintaining the interests of participants and guaranteeing the necessary level of support, confidence and encouragement. Consulted teenagers show their surprise given the possibilities and opportunities to take on responsibilities:

"But I believe that in any association where you go... they tell you let's do skating, let's do whatever, but they don't ask you what would you like you?". (A5)

Their families reflect on the same point:

"They feel important and they are because of the educators... they feel important and responsible, as you can do at home with them in other situations, isn't it? It is something that they like, it is something they like, it is not about like going to the cinema or hanging out with friends or... no, they like that". (F2)

In participant observation during the assemblies some verbal and non-verbal behaviours supported by educators were identified. Some examples are: knowing looks in assemblies with teenagers speaking up or reinforcement sentences as "very good", "that is". This type of answers are given to counselors teenagers during their performances as well as other participants when they intervene on an individual basis (questions, comments) or carry out a collective response (applause). In the advisor group's meetings an "extra" time is devoted to comment on members' concerns, also participants' interventions are prepared and carried out activities outside the context of the meeting with his counterparts to arrive at a consensus are reviewed. The adults of reference constantly asked for their opinion, it strengthens their skills and competencies acquired through their assemblies' leadership and emphasizing the force that relationship among equals has in order to acquire a sense of belonging and commitment.

Perception of learnings and benefits

The group of equals is a highly motivating element to seek and maintain participation. In this case study, we see that the opportunity to make friends is a key factor for teenagers. In effect, the structure makes it easy to gather together teenagers of all districts and of different ages, where youth create bonds of friendship and mobility outside the space project and the neighborhood of residence:

"What I like more about this project is that we are with people older than ourselves. Finally we get on very well because on the street it is difficult for a 12 year old boy to be friends with one of 17 than here". (A9)

Along with the social dimension, previous research indicate that learning contexts that allow maintaining a sense of belonging and a range of successful experiences are more likely to hold the interest (Strobel, Osberg & McLaughlin, 2006). As noted in the previous section, these learnings are back to the concept of participation as "educational principle" (Novella et al., 2014). Teenagers and family members considered that their participation in the platform is providing positive knowledge, values and skills for their future. Educators are aware of that lack of contrasted information to evaluate these claims, although their perception indicates a similar path. Between the mentioned learning, in all the discussion groups are designated the competences related to the ability to communicate and the personal autonomy:

"well you learn...I don't know I'm more open thanks to this people". (A4) "

"Respect people more". (A10)

"Well I think that what you get here is they feel confident". (F5)

Along with opportunities for individual development, such programmes should provide opportunities to apply skills in the adult world (Benedict and Morán, 2007). Young people will be better able to mobilize if they acquire knowledge, skills, and networks to act on an issue that concerns them (Cremin, Warwick, Harrison & Manson, 2009; Maiztegui & Fonseca, 2014; Schwartz & Suyemoto, 2013). It is therefore vital work to recognize and enhance the capacity of adolescents to contribute to the benefit of their communities. In this case, during the experience of participant observation in assemblies and meetings of the advisory group, the interest in engaging in the neighborhood life and share the activities developed in the platform was stated. A teenager explains it in a focus group:

"Think on the others. Because for example if you are in a neighborhood commission, it is because you want to do activities for your neighborhood, for you, but also for the kids in your neighborhood. Or if you're in the council is because you want to represent them, you think about what they want." (A9)

In this case, the adjustment between the opportunities to develop their responsibility as they acquire experience is one of the mentioned reasons by the three consulted groups to explain the continuity of community practice. An example of the highest security and consolidated commitment appears when one of the respondents mentions the ability to assume the failure, not to achieve the objectives set by the group:

"Learn to fail". (A7)

4.2. Elements that hinder youth community participation

The obtained data showed two relevant aspects on this topic: the characteristics of the vital stage and the lack of interest on the available opportunities.

Vital stage's properties

The age is presented as a delicate variable for community participation. The more they get into adolescence and youth, individualistic attitudes tend to emerge. This shared feeling by the three consulted groups point out previously discussed factors, to analyze the general decline of the participation of youth in late adolescence. These factors are: on the one hand, academic reasons, since they are finishing their compulsory education, they request more and prioritize the academic subjects. On the other hand, their own evolutionary development detachment (Flanagan et al., 1999).

Both arguments have emerged in discussion groups in this research. On the one hand, families emphasized more on times and the educational requirements reducing the free time. Teenagers also confess to have increasingly less free time as they to progress on their educational commitments. This element, along with the economic cost, are basic conditions to initiate civic engagement

"Then they also have to study much more". (F5)

"Right, they are much more tired, then they have to make decisions; I can go for this or not". (F7)

"So I don't have more time". (A8)

"You don't have time enough". (A7)

On the other hand, teenagers and educators consider that there is a risk of project's detachment. Flanagan believes that the detachment of the evolutionary development "can occur by the awareness that the world is not that perfect place

that you have been told" (Flanagan et al., 1999, p. 148). Reality shows them a dissonant picture with previous information. Without further data, the speech of teenagers and educators go on this second line. Adolescents believe that it is an issue of image, and of following the predominant social roles among their peer group. Educators also are critics towards the influence exerted by the media. On the other hand, it seems that the slices become spaces more eye-catching to late adolescence to community projects in which coexist with adults. Ortega, Lazcano and Baptista (2015), offered an explanation to this phenomenon pointing the success of these spaces by the vivid sense of autonomy and shared privacy (p. 83).

"Let's see, okay... what happens is that it goes by classes and age also. For example, the ones on first year as they are always the smaller they will be willing to do more than the fourth year that are older, but it happens... People becomes more lazy basically because there are fish markets". (A3)

"Because they are very old and very cool". (A6)

All three groups agree that being at a peer group or getting new friends have a large influence teenagers' decisions. The free time and leisure practices can hinder solidarity practices and increase leisure practices in commercial spaces:

"In third year, you can start to go to the Sonora" (laughs) because if you have gone to the Sonora (laughs) Well if you have been to la Sonora (more laughs) you don't want... well if you've gone to Sonora and already know what it is you don't want to go to any platform party, because...". (A5)

"If suddenly someone wakes up and instead of going to the platform go to Sonora then maybe we would have a problem but...". (F2)

The adolescence is a time for research, in which exploration is almost mandatory. The curiosity that made of facilitator to the project, may be affected if from the organizational level the innovation sense is lost. Such projects are spaces to feel safety and property but at the same time, must be a challenge and support to go forward. It is closer to Vygotsky (1991) (Chaiklin, 2003) meaning "zone of proximal development", which refers to the distance between the level of acquired skills and the level of potential development needs, i.e., the help you need to overcome the difficulties posed by action to develop it autonomously.

Educators are aware and try to solve it with big decision-making space where participants can

carry out initiatives. But along with this, it appears an organizational barrier that sometimes break with the adolescents' expectation: the repetition of certain activities due to internal issues.

"It is clear that kids haven't done it before but for those who have been there longer, we had already done it." (A7)

Lack of interest on the available opportunities

This section collects both the idea of lack of interest of the project, as well as the related comments to the difficulty of maintaining the participants' high expectations. When asked about what other teenagers are not involved in any of the different possibilities offered by project, the three consulted groups named expectations and personal needs throughout the process. Generally, the adolescent group is critical against the attitude of their non participant peers, and related this behavior with a lack of interest in the available opportunities. Issues such as the lack of knowledge related to a certain indifference are mentioned:

"-Why do you think they do not care?" (Researcher)

-Because you do not know what is this (A8)

-Of course, because if people it is engaged to something... (A7)

"-Don't want to know". (A5)

This is a complex issue that appears in previous investigations and it is reflected on both the visibility of the project and on the teenagers' interest (Novella and others, 2014). Overcoming those barriers will mean to get closed and to share rewarding experiences, detonating factors for future involvement. Although the consulted group attends regularly their meetings and assemblies, it can be assumed from observation the decrease of the participants in assemblies as the scholar year progresses (first assembly is held in September, the second in March and the third in May).

5. Conclusions

This paper is a first approach to the perceptions and experiences of a participatory adolescents' group, their families and educators. Despite the methodological limitations arising from the group homogeneity, the results of this study showed three main findings (Figure 2). First of all, that novelty is an element for participation even if there are barriers preventing initiatives visibility

or leading to its abandonment, especially during late adolescence when school requirements and the influence of the peer group becomes more evident. Secondly, teenagers' speeches pointed out the importance of the sense of belonging to the project in order to move forward to higher levels of participation (metaparticipación) and responsibility. Thirdly, educational strategies carried out by the educational team seem to become a key aspect for the development of the platform's belonging feeling, which will facilitate the further development of the civic identity based on values and community actions.

The diversity of adolescents and the voluntary nature of their participation requires spaces support involving different perspectives and allowing flexibility. According to Rebollo (2005) it is essential to bare in mind the everyday importance, the speeches of the three agents (teenagers, families and educators) emphasize the need for working from a dynamic perspective, in which innovation must be continue in order to meet participants' expectations. Our data are similar to those obtained in the research led by Professor Hall (1999) on the construction of the civic identity in youth community spaces. Participation at the beginning of the experience is high, in our case, this increase is reflected in 1º ESO (first year of secondary education) since it is new. But, as time goes by some participants loose their initial enthusiasm is declining (Hall, Coffey & Williamson 1999). If the project does not meet their expectations, teenagers stop coming, as observed in subsequent courses. In addition, the data show how evolutionary stage can hinder the maintenance of interest.

However, the speeches of those remaining indicate the meaning and the value that they provide to assistance, to the encounter between different generations and the community sense of their actions. In this respect, the platform offers a safe space in which youth can experience positive feelings of belonging, developing biographical narratives both personal and community.

This analysis suggests that community projects are provide a structure a structure for active citizenship. A notion that "emphasizes local references in the construction of the sense of belonging and affiliation" (Hall, Coffey & Williamson, 1999, p. 509). A notion that leaves behind the deficit conception of the collective youth to see them as fundamental agents of social transformation (Benedict & Morán, 2007; Novella and others, 2014). This article is a modest initial attempt to theorise on the elements that affect the participatory experience and processes arising in such spaces to successfully address the evolving needs of adolescents. The data analysis will continue inquiring

the necessary conditions to create a culture of youth participation, how it is constructed and reconstructed in the possibilities and limitations provided by the cultural spaces in the support of the sociality of teenagers and their biographical trajectories.

Notes

ⁱ Basque term: Translation: Parents.

ⁱⁱ Local disco.

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