Risks and Responsibilities? The Individualisation of Youth Transitions and the Ambivalence between Participation and Activation in Europe.

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"It was a big 'no way'. Being on benefits for three years I had begun to lose sight of my personal goals. I was afraid to come off benefits; afraid to go back to work; afraid to set goals, but most of all afraid to fail." (L., 23, female, UK)

"Oh sure, it is well known that there's no work, but to keep saying 'there are no opportunities' and still day-dream about the so called 'permanent job' seems to me a waste of time … you have to create your job by yourself, inventing new professions, realise your desires." (A., 21, female, Italy)

These two quotes represent two key features characterising young people's transitions to work and citizenship in contemporary European societies: an increase in risks of social exclusion and an increasing individualisation of transitions. Phenomena such as youth unemployment, dropping-out from education or training, fixed-term contracts or informal work and status zer0 (being neither in work, education nor registered unemployed) are restricted to a limited, yet increasing part, of youth. However, it can be argued that young men and women in general have to cope, individually, with increasing uncertainty and insecurity in social integration. Individualisation and de-standardisation of youth transitions can be interpreted as one aspect of the social change from Fordist to post-Fordist societies; in Central and Eastern Europe, transformation processes are even more radical. A profound process of flexibilisation – reinforced by trends of globalisation – has decoupled former links between education and employment, which once helped to secure standard biographies. Individualisation means that new opportunities arise while social inequalities prevail. However, rather than following collective patterns, mechanisms of social reproduction are transferred into individual decisions, such as staying-on in education (or not staying-on), reducing aspirations if interesting jobs are difficult to find, moving-out from the parental home in order to live an individual live, etc. Thereby individuals' motivation becomes a crucial factor in social integration and social reproduction. This individualisation process is accompanied – and one might even say reinforced – by a shift in public policies concerned with youth transitions towards 'activation'. A key characteristic of this policy trend is to underline the self-responsibility of individuals for their careers and their social integration; or to rebalance rights and responsibilities of citizens.

The aim of this article is to reflect possibilities and ambivalences in supporting young people in their transitions to work by taking contextual differences across Europe into account. It is based on the findings of the EU-funded study 'Youth Policy and Participation' (YOYO), which has

been concerned with the 'potentials of participation and informal learning for young people's transitions to the labour market'. The study involved nine countries – Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain and the UK – and consisted of two main research steps: first, exploratory interviews with young people on their transition experiences; second, case studies into the potentials of participatory projects to re-motivate young people for active engagement in their transitions to work. After a brief introduction into changes in young people's citizenship, especially the trend towards activation, some exemplary case studies are presented. The final section discusses whether or not, and under what conditions, participation is a way to solve the dilemma of young people's social inclusion.

Citizenship in the context of de-standardised youth transitions
When Thomas Marshall conceptualised the concept of citizenship in the early post-war years, he reconstructed the making of the modern citizen as a historical process during which first civil rights then political rights and finally social rights where established (Marshall, 1950). The hegemony of a (gendered) life course regime 'education – employment/family work – retirement' was centred around the equation of work with social integration and citizenship – in the adult life stage. It is obvious that this conceptualisation was strongly influenced by the assumption of full employment, apparently confirmed by the growth rates of Fordist large-scale production and consumption. In this context, young people's citizenship rights were postponed to a guaranteed future. Such structures of transitions towards work and citizenship have dramatically changed in the context of globalised knowledge economies and flexibilised labour markets. Education and employment have decoupled, with transitions not only prolonged but also fragmented. The shift from linear towards so-called 'yo-yo' transitions, which are increasingly reversible, confronts young men and women with the contradictory demand to reconcile autonomy and dependency across different life spheres (Walther, Stauber et al., 2002).

The decoupling of education and employment which is central to this change does not mean that education has lost its importance. In contrast, it is the key factor in individualised social reproduction. However, uncertainty in determining which qualifications and key competencies are necessary for a "satisfactory life in a well-functioning society" (Rychen and Salganik, 2003) has increased attention on lifelong, especially informal and non-formal, learning. However, for as long as education systems struggle with recognising informal or non-formally acquired learning, individuals will have to find out for themselves what learning pays-off in the competition for scarce secure and well-integrated social positions (cf. Field, 2000).

The YOYO project was concerned with the biographical perspectives of young men and women towards these new demands. As a first step, explorative interviews were conducted with young people who had experienced processes of 'cooling out' (Walther, Stauber et al., 2002) and whose motivation was hence expected to be seriously damaged. As a contrast group, other young people were interviewed who combined formal and informal resources within individualised choice biographies (e.g. young self-employed; cf. du Bois-Reymond, 1998) as they might serve as 'models' for transition policies. Thematically, these interviews centred around not only career aspirations and experiences with institutional actors in transitions systems but also within informal contexts such as networks, youth cultures or the family. As crucial with regard to the assessment of one's own biography appeared to be the reflection of an individual's *motivational career*. Motivation results from the interaction between intrinsic interest – or at least the insight

into the necessity of extrinsic means to achieve subjectively meaningful goals – and experiences of self-efficacy (Deci and Ryan, 1997). Motivation is both influenced structurally by access to resources and opportunities and a dynamic process, open for change. This may even imply adaptation – as long as it is to realise subjective life plans.

The so-called biographical 'trendsetters' for instance dealt with this by distinguishing between (frustrating but strategically necessary) formal education and subjectively meaningful learning processes and by relying on informal networks (cf. Raffo and Reeves, 2000). In contrast, the more disengaged young men and women obviously showed a generalised distance towards learning without distinguishing between formal education and training and alternative forms of learning. Prevailing negative experiences with institutions were reflected in internalised individualised ascriptions of failure. In many cases, this was generalised into a self-concept as a 'loser' or 'victim' and led to a withdrawal from counselling, education or training measures. This process occurred especially amongst young men as young women more often succeeded in 'saving' their motivation for more promising opportunities; however, even this was not necessarily sufficient to overcome barriers of segmented labour markets.

Activation: the only way out or just additional pressure?

The motivation of individuals to 'actively' engage in their process of integration into work and society is at the heart of the activation discourse. This discourse is characteristic of the shift from a Fordist welfare state, which was primarily interested in maintaining a social order by standardising life courses and securing living standards, towards post-Fordism. This latter constellation is characterised by flexibilisation but also by the fact that the potential of the welfare state is being undermined by unemployment turning from being a conjunctural into a structural phenomenon, by demographic change and by the globalisation of economic and financial markets; welfare expenses also rise while resources decline. Entitlements for support increasingly lose their self-evidence while being coupled to conditions, obligations, and responsibilities, which simultaneously serve as legitimation towards tax payers, who in contexts of scarcity, competition, and pressure, start questioning the legitimacy of public expenditure (van Berkel and Hornemann Møller, 2002). It can be argued that the motives of activation are not only inspired by neo-conservative and neo-liberal imperatives but also by policy makers' embarrassment at facing constraints which are beyond political influence. Fordist re-distributive welfare approaches were also not necessarily successful in achieving social justice, especially if applying bureaucratic principles in a normalising perspective (Fraser, 1989).

Active labour market policies, with their shifting focus from bringing people into the labour market rather than paying benefits, depend on the active collaboration of individuals. In its most accentuated form, activation imposes negative incentives such as reducing benefit levels and sanctioning passive job search by benefit cuts, e.g. 'workfare' (Lødemel and Trickey, 2001). Such approaches start from the assumption of unemployed persons as passive – either in terms of 'learned helplessness', 'culture of dependency' or in terms of a rational choice model preferring benefits to work (cf. Kronauer, 1998). There are however other approaches – the so-called 'activation optimists' (van Berkel and Hornemann Møller, 2002) – in which individuals are viewed as interested in meaningful activity, and in fact as active, while their coping strategies - due to a lack of resources and social recognition - fail in becoming productive. Interpreted as empowerment, activation aims at creating necessary preconditions (resources, scopes of action,

competencies), removing barriers and relies on positive incentives (Rabe and Schmid 2000).

Both interpretations imply that the question of institutionalised state support is posed in a new way. A critical social policy perspective needs to consider that the way back to a normalising re-distributive welfare state is neither economically possible nor desirable; it also need to consider experiences from the view of addressees (see below). If the function and location of social policy and social and youth work practice is conceptualised as being an intermediate 'translator' between systemic and life-world contexts, the focus is shifting from support for integration into the standard life course (normalisation) towards support in coping with individualised riskful life situations.

Participation 'hard' and 'soft': variations across Europe

In the following discussion, it is considered if participation is an approach to balance systemic demands and subjective needs as much as it is about being active, taking on responsibility, and also having power and identifying with shared goals. Participation has always been a principle in youth and community work approaches, while it is also one of the key issues in the current debate about the civil society. Recently, participation has been taken-up by the European Commission in its White Paper on youth, where it is promoted as the key perspective for youth policy (EC, 2001). However, participation programmes and discourses are mostly related to 'soft' policy areas, where participation is possible due to a low level of regulation and, at the same time, restricted by budgets. In contrast, in 'hard' policy sectors such as education, welfare or labour market, which administer larger budgets according to experts' justification and bureaucratic principles, participation remains marginal, or may be postponed or reduced to procedural aspects (Walther, Stauber et al., 2002).

The objective of the YOYO-project can be rephrased in terms of analysing the extent to which the choice biographies of 'trendsetters' can serve as models for supporting 'disadvantaged' youth in their transitions to work. The underlying assumption was that 'trendsetters' profit from both structural possibilities and personal motivation reinforcing each other. *Biographical self-determination* therefore was the key perspective, in which participation stood for the structural dimension and motivation for the subjective one.

Being an international project, attention of course was on differences between structural contexts in allowing for participation; how soft and hard policy sectors are related in different 'transition regimes'. The problematic of comparative analysis primarily resulted from the bias of sampling participation rather than mainstream case study projects. However, despite this biased approach, only a few of the analysed projects in fact corresponded to this ideal combination of 'hard' and 'soft' policy principles. In contrast, the sample was revealed to be highly heterogeneous between youth work and employment schemes. Therefore rather than comparing case studies directly, the model of 'transition regimes' was applied as a concept of mid-range validity to relate differences and similarities to wider socio-economic and institutional contexts (cf. Walther, 2000).

Inspired by the Esping-Andersen model of welfare regimes (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Gallie and Paugam, 2000), transition regimes cluster national constellations with regard to socio-economic structures, state institutions and cultural values and patterns and their dependency on specific paths of modernisation. The relation between social security, school, vocational training, labour

market, mechanisms of doing gender, interpretations of 'disadvantage' (structural versus individualised) and dominant concepts of 'youth' create different 'climates of normality' for young people's transitions to work and adulthood. While all across Europe, individualisation and de-standardisation of transitions is taking place, this takes different forms and global concepts such as activation are being interpreted and set into practice differently. Thereby, relating the analysis of case studies to this broader perspective helps to analyse under what conditions participation in fact can be seen as an optimistic activation approach which in fact empowers young people to become the masters of their biographies.

In the following, five exemplary case studies from different European transition regimes, standing for different types of projects, are analysed with regard to their understanding and scope of participation and their effectiveness in re-motivating young people.

Italy stands for the *sub-protective transition regime* which is characterised by a considerable lack of reliable vocational training, youth policies and welfare structures for young people. The relation between education level and labour market perspective is blurred: the permeable school system provides three out of four school leavers with a school qualification giving access to higher education but more than one third of young people under 25 are unemployed – across different levels of education. Transitions primarily mean long waiting phases, dependency on the family of origin and/or involvement in the informal economy. Consequently, young people lack a well-defined social status. Young women are particularly concerned, as their career opportunities are even worse, while family dependency more often means control and restriction of autonomy.

This structural deficit is especially obvious in the South, in cities like *Palermo*, where 60% of young people are unemployed. Since the 1990s, however, the third (or non-profit) sector has been growing significantly and many community and youth organisations have emerged. One is *ArciRagazzi*, an association aiming at providing young people a horizon of autonomy through community-based activities of cultural practice. Over the years, groups of young people have grown-up, which despite high social and cultural heterogeneity, have developed high levels of cohesion, while the mixture allows for 'peer learning'. Although the project does not dispose of systematic links with the labour market or other transition actors, the project workers and those responsible for the project see it as relevant for young people's transitions to work:

"We would not be so well accepted by the young people, if they would see us as a measure of professional orientation ... Experimenting is the most important in the transition to work, to have time and opportunities to see what you want ... The experience of developing and realising own ideas can help the young people to invest their creativity also beyond the limits of the association." (Project worker ArciRagazzi)

For the interviewed young men and women simple usership has turned into voluntary engagement and – at least for some of them – into the early stages of a freelance career as they manage a self-administrated children and youth centre in a deprived neighbourhood (Lenzi et al., 2004):

"You can be yourself ... I mean, nobody should tell you, 'do this, do that'. You should decide yourself, just try out. During this one year in the project we have made mistakes – but, ok, this was growing up, a way of self-training ... They trusted me and gave me the opportunity to design my future ... Dreaming of the stable job is waste of time ... You have to create your own job, invent new professions, realise your desires." (A., female, 20)

The *employment-centred transition regime* is represented by *Germany*. Here, the standard life course prevails as the main point of reference, reflected in objectives such as 'training for all'. However, the combination of a selective school system and a rigidly standardised system of vocational training guarantees increasingly less reliable allocation to recognised and integrated social positions; increasing numbers of young people remain excluded from regular vocational training. They are labelled as 'disadvantaged' – interpreted primarily in terms of learning and socialisation deficits – and channelled into remedial schemes of so-called 'vocational youth assistance' ('Jugendberufshilfe'), which aim at the compensation for individual deficits and making such young people 'fit for training and work'. Social and youth work professionals in these projects admit that much 'motivational work' is necessary, due to a high level of stigmatisation and uncertain destinations after the projects. Young people's transition experiences reveal a tension between biographical orientations towards the standard life course and neglected desires for autonomy:

"You get pressure: you must, you must – training, training, training ... there's no way of experimenting with other ways." (J., female, 21)

The measures of support offered by the 'caring' welfare state aim, primarily, at 'placing' all (somewhere) and, consequently, are often experienced as alienating. This applies especially in employment service and career guidance; many feel forced into a passive role:

"[The employment service] is just an administration. They are not in the mood for helping you. They stare into your file, saying bah, bah, bah, treating you like a cow."(S., male, 23)

Critical evaluation applies also for the effectiveness of vocational youth assistance measures:
"Some on this scheme were lucky and got an apprenticeship; not me,"(I., male, 19)
although in most cases the individual youth and social workers are held to be trustworthy.

Mobile Youth Work, Stuttgart, an outreach service addressing young people in deprived neighbourhoods, in the context of a major national programme to combat youth unemployment in 2000 got additional funding in order to serve as a 'door opener' for vocational youth assistance. The aim was to reach young people who had withdrawn from employment services and careers guidance and to support mobile youth workers in supporting 'their' young people also with regard to transitions to work; an ambivalent approach between low threshold support and increasing control. Due to being situated external to the formal transition system, the only possibility and resource mobile youth workers have to offer is accompaniment on the basis of a trust relationship. This includes not withdrawing support if young people take decisions which result in a deterioration of their transition situation, e.g. by dropping out from a practice placement because they do not feel respected by the employer (Pohl and Stauber, 2004).

"Young people need a place to act out this clash: why do you need an upper secondary certificate to work in a bakery? They need a real person to talk to about this injustice, and maybe later on they see that, ok, this is unjust, but this is how it is. I have to look for another opportunity ... Otherwise he or she takes this as a personal offence by society."
(Project responsible)Where in society do our kids have the opportunity to reflect upon the demands they have to face when they have left school? To reflect together with somebody else. Young people need a place to act out this clash, why do you need an upper secondary certificate to work in a bakery? They need a concrete person to talk about this injustice, and maybe later on

they see, ok, this is unjust, but it is like that and I have to look for another opportunity. But, if they only have to face this anonymous demand, they have no chance to cope with it productively. All that comes out is that he or she takes this as a personal offense by society (Leader of German outreach project).

Many young people refer to project workers as 'good friends' and to the project as 'real family'. In this safe context, they even accept pressure by project workers to apply for apprenticeship places as an expression of care and recognition:
"Sometimes she [project worker] really was a pain in the ass, hassling me about writing applications ... But she took her time ... If nobody really cares, you get the impression that nobody gives a shit whether you get something or not." (F., female, 18)

A good example is the (success) story of a young man who succeeds in completing an apprenticeship instead of getting stuck in a criminal career. He only started an apprenticeship as a bricklayer to improve his chances in a pending trial at court:
"After six months I really was fed up. I thought to myself, I will continue until the trial, then I will leave. Then the trial came, I was quite lucky, it went well. Seven months of first years passed. I said to myself, at the end of the year there's a bonus payment, I might as well wait until then." (S., male, 23)

The youth workers accept this pragmatic training orientation and step-by-step, he sets himself meaningful and reachable aims – and successfully completes the apprenticeship:
"The longer I was there, the more my interest grew – to get a good qualification, to be really involved." (Ibid)

Denmark belongs to the *universalistic transition regime* cluster, wherein participation is not reduced to youth policy but is a basic principle of general and vocational education as well as in labour market policies. The education system first of all aims at motivation for personal development and only in the second place to direct labour market relevance. To a certain extent, this can also be said for activation measures structured by the possibility of choice between alternative options and positive (material) incentives; in cases of long-term unemployment, self-initiated projects (e.g. environmental protection) also qualify for receipt of social benefits. As young adults from the age of 18 enjoy full citizenship status, they are entitled to an educational allowance for the duration of initial vocational training or higher education – regardless of the income situation of their parents. Corresponding to the importance of general education, apart from pre-vocational measures (like the so-called 'production schools'), there exist measures aimed at motivating young people for a subjectively meaningful learning biography. One example – which however has been stopped by the liberal-conservative government – is the *Open Youth Education*, a national programme which although concentrating on early school leavers, was open to all young people:
"It is not up to us to decide why the young person does not want to take on a traditional youth education. If he does not want to then we cannot force him to do so, at least not in the kind of society we wish to have. But we can try to create incentives and believe that because he gets started at something he will discover that he is actually able to do something." (Ministerial official, Open Youth Education)
In *Open Youth Education*, students arranged individual education plans with only a few

compulsory elements, while learning in non-formal context, peer learning and even stays abroad were principally foreseen. In developing and realising their education plans, young people were supported by personal advisors whose role was defined by *"... never imposing limitations or restrictions but of course by directing the attention to possible problems of different options." (Advisor, Open Youth Education).*
Young people have internalised this optimistic approach towards an education-based life plan. The statement "it is my education, I take the decisions" (M., female, 18) stands for both the willingness to take responsibility and for the fact that experimentation and individual choice of lifestyles if "deviating from the straight way adopted by all" are supported – as long as they pursued within the system (Bechmann Jensen and Holmboe, 2004).

Outlining a *post-socialist transition regime* cluster requires even more reductive simplification. While Central and Eastern European societies share the heritage of a socialist or communist regime in which life courses where stable but only to a restricted extent open for choice, processes of de-standardisation and re-standardisation since 1989 have taken different forms and directions. In *Romania,* aspects of de-standardisation prevail and imply precariousness for large segments of the population. While the education system is organised comprehensively, neither general nor vocational education keep pace with changing labour market demands. In view of drastically decreasing social benefits, the coping strategies of young adults are structured by precarious, informal work, plans of emigration or the accumulation of education and training that may one day capitalise on the labour market. *SOLARIS* in Pitesti is at first glance a normal training provider, offering a range of vocational qualifications, computer and language courses. However, due to being an NGO, what they offer is more flexible in terms of meeting the demands of both young people and employers. Courses are not organised in a participatory way – they are not even free, except in cases of particular social disadvantage – but due to the fact of not been linked to the state, the project enjoys a high level of credibility among young people; this relates to different dimensions:
"It was a friendly relationship, not like the relation between teachers and pupils in school." (D., male, 25)

This credibility also includes the effectiveness of the training offer with regard to their relation with the labour market:
"NGOs offer young people what public education institutions do not provide: non-formal courses with qualifications that are demanded on the labour market which however are not offered at school." (Project worker SOLARIS)

In the end, it is the mere existence of such a project which is perceived by young adults as a space of possibilities to influence their own lives in the context of change and uncertainty. This also includes voluntary or even professional work in the project (Marcovici et. al., 2004):
"Before, I never was involved in social activities ... I only was interested in myself and my friends ... Through this course I understood that each of us can do something. If we are fleeing from this responsibility we would never have any excuse in case of failure. " (D., male, 27)

The *liberal transition regime* in Europe is mainly represented by the UK, seen as the pace maker for neo-liberal activation policies and a re-balancing of 'rights and responsibilities'. Corresponding to the primacy of market and individual provision, youth is referred to as a

transition status which should be replaced by economic independence as soon as possible. This is reflected by the programme 'New Deal for Young People' between 18 and 24 years. After a short orientation phase, jobseekers are obliged to opt for (subsidised) employment, training, voluntary work or environmental work; otherwise their benefits are reduced or suspended (to which they are entitled from 18 years old onwards independently from their family; while allowances or wages in any option are higher than benefits). The programme in the meantime has been extended to single parents however including child care support.

Lifting the Limits has been a pilot project for lone mothers in a rural area of *Northern Ireland*. Most of the young mothers had been on benefits for a long time before they entered the project. In the sense of self-fulfilling prophecies, their self-concepts reflected the effects of the discourse on a dependent underclass and of repressive activation policies:
"It was a big 'no way'. Being on benefits for three years I had begun to lose sight of my personal goals. I was afraid to come off benefits; afraid to go back to work; afraid to set goals, but most of all afraid to fail." (L., female, 23)

The project succeeds in buffering the external pressure completely. The young women are employed, receive a wage and in 18 months are trained as Community Leaders. Participation for the project responsibles means
"… a kind of self-determination … having freedom of choices …, and it's having the courage and the self-confidence to maybe stand up to people and say, 'this is the choice I want to make and these are the right choices'… for us it means that these young people are adults and that they have a right to determine the programmes that they engage in – to shape them. Because if … young people don't feel that their views are valued and respected … they are not going to engage." (Director Lifting the Limits)

Participants in the project receive a qualification corresponding to level three out of five of the modularised British education system (NVQ) and qualifies them for access to higher education in youth and community work. Central elements of the course are practical outreach projects, in which the participants work with other young mothers in the community; this project is also characterised by peer learning and high levels of mutual support (Hayes and Biggart, 2004):
"It felt amazing that I could do that …being able to do that I suppose showed me that I could do everything I wanted to do, despite having a child." (L., female, 23)
"There was a few of us who went through difficult things during the project, you know, outside of work, and everyone was always involved in supporting each other … It's strange to put eight people in a room …and all just get on really well – I've never seen it in my life!" (A., female, 23)

Ambivalences of citizenship between autonomy and self-responsibility
It seems obvious that the projects described above succeed in re-motivating young people for active engagement in their transitions to work and in developing a reflexive learning biography. However, only *Lifting the Limits* was able to secure biographical perspectives in a sustainable way by providing both 'hard' and 'soft' resources. 'Was' because it shares with all the others a precarious funding situation: after the end of the pilot programme, it was not incorporated into mainstream policies; *Open Youth Education* was stopped due to a lack of political will; funding for the 'door opener' project of *Mobile Youth Work* was stopped after one year and re-directed towards social work in schools while young adults at *ArciRagazzi* continue to be dependent on

their families in order to secure their precarious biographies. This may be interpreted as a clear trend of convergence towards a repressive model of activation in Europe, in restricting individual autonomy. Nevertheless, this case study analysis allows us to identify elements of a participatory approach enabling young people to become subjects of their own lives (cf. Rabe and Schmid, 2000). This implies conceptualising individuals as principally interested in also being active if their coping strategies lack the resources and recognition which are necessary to become productive. Consequently, positive rather than negative incentives are applied in order to provide necessary resources, opportunities and competencies.

First of all, this is reflected by possibilities of *choice*, as is the case in the universalistic transition regime, where recognised options are simultaneously materially secured and where possibilities of identification and motivation emerge. Choice allows for identification and intrinsic motivation. This includes keeping processes of orientation and counselling *open* rather than imposing adaptation to what seems realistic and possible right from the beginning – as illustrated by the example of *Mobile Youth Work*. From a more general perspective, this can imply the modularisation of qualifications to better mediate between systemic and subjective interests and to give young people the possibility to engage - and to try out - step-by-step. *Lifting the Limits* and *ArciRagazzi* provide evidence that so-called 'disadvantaged' young people do not necessarily have to compensate for deficits before taking responsibility for something 'real', including biographical decisions. Referring to the concept of 'disadvantage' in interpreting transition problems resulting from the competition for scarce positions has not only proved to be an obstacle for competence development, it also hides existing competencies (Walther, Stauber et al., 2002). Non-formal education, or the recognition of competencies acquired outside of any pedagogical setting, can therefore be a form of participation – unless informal spheres of life become formalised themselves, and thereby exposed to the pressure of capitalisation. A prerequisite are social *spaces* which are open for individual shaping and access to *flexible support* – according to individual needs.

Participation evolves in *relationship* to other individuals and social contexts and thus depends on *trust* and *confidence* between project workers and young people. The example of *Mobile Youth Work* reveals a differentiation between a socio-political and pedagogical interpretation of activation: in the context of reliable relationships, individuals need and accept binding agreements as an expression of inter-subjective recognition. Participation in this sense does not exclude *conflict*; in contrast, inasmuch as individualisation implies diverging interests, participation necessarily has to avoiding hiding them through asymmetric structures and provide instead spaces for conflict (cf. Stevens et al., 1999).

It can be concluded that participation – or: participatory activation – is only a potential solution for the dilemma of young people's social inclusion if it is not reduced to a 'soft' pedagogical understanding but extends to the 'hard' structural and socio-political level. Enabling responsibility requires securing negotiation power by rights and resources and validating the participatory expertise of the 'soft' policy sectors, especially youth work in the context of transitions to work. However, in the light of the dismantling of workers' participation in the economy and of activation social policies undermining individual autonomy, the present trend seems to point in the opposite direction (cf. Böhnisch and Schröer, 2002). The extent to which civic participation is used to replace social rights, thereby hiding structures of power and inequality and becoming a 'new tyranny' (Cooke and Kothari, 2001), needs to be examined. Under conditions of post-Fordist individualisation, the status of *citizenship* depending on the

combination of civil, political and social rights (Marshall, 1950) needs to be proved by *lived citizenship* (Hall and Williamson, 1999), the relevance of citizenship for individuals in terms of the subjective possibilities for appropriating their own everyday life and biography. This means that social policies may fail in providing citizenship and social justice if they do not involve the addressees in the interpretation of their needs – and of rights and responsibilities (Fraser, 1989). Re-distributive welfare and civic participation therefore need to be interrelated to avoid both bureaucratic normalisation and individualisation of risks of exclusion.

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