PROMISE: Promoting Youth Involvement and Social Engagement: Opportunities and challenges for conflicted young people across Europe.

WP6: From Conflict to Innovation: Ethnographic Case Studies

http://www.promise.manchester.ac.uk/en/home-page/

Collated case-study reports

From ten countries: Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Slovakia, Spail, Russia, and the UK

Executive summary:

This document reports on the first stage of analysis of qualitative data produced. The findings from the holistic analyses of 22 individual case studies completed by Consortium partners in 10 countries are collected here. Each case study is assigned to a cluster grouping that will be analysed using meta-ethnographic synthesis for the second stage of analysis.

Each report focuses on a selected group of young people identified as facing conflict with authorities, older generations or social norms, in their particular cultural context. Each case study explores the conflict (and associated stigma) through an analysis of its modes, sites and agents, and explores how young people respond to that conflict (and stigma). The reports reveal a wide range of responses including demonstrations of youth agency through resistance, rejection, adaptation and even apathy. Moving beyond the normatively approved and formally organised youth activities, this collection of case studies includes examples of political, social, civic and community involvement, engagement and activism, creative activities and other forms of innovation.

In this introduction to the individual case study reports we outline the common research questions, selection of cases, ethics, methods, research instruments, data anonymization, storage and management protocols, and data analysis guidelines.processes of change and provide an opportunity for them to seize opportunities and realise potential.
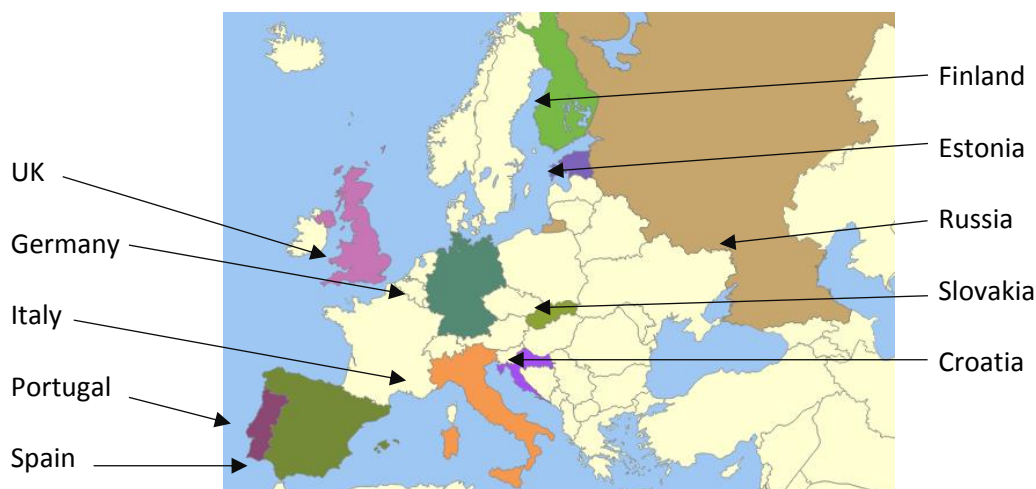
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1. INTRODUCTION

PROMISE is a 'Research & Innovation Action' collaborative research project funded under H2020, involving 12 partners in 10 countries, and runs from 01 May 2016 to 30 April 2019.

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The objective of PROMISE is to explore the role of young people (aged 14 to 29 years) in shaping society; past, present and future. The project addresses young people's engagement with social, environmental, cultural, and political issues as well as the challenges they face that affect their participation in society. The PROMISE project aims to investigate how young people's, often negative, responses to these challenges creates conflict, and how, instead, their responses can provide opportunities for positive social engagement. The research is conducted through a number of different Work Packages (WPs).

WP6 adopts a case study approach. This approach is widely used, and accepted, within qualitative social research where no claim to 'representativeness' is made and, on the contrary, capturing the significance of the 'particular' is emphasised.

Central to the qualitative case study is the recognition of the fundamental importance to understanding the *context* of social research. As Burawoy (1998: 13) puts it, qualitative research is based on the epistemological premise that 'context is not noise disguising reality but reality itself'. The principle of reflexivity embedded in qualitative social science, moreover, assumes that social research is the product of the interaction of externally produced theory and internal narratives (indigenous narratives, respondents' interpretations of the social world etc.) that are profoundly *located* in time and space. Although PROMISE is a large transnational project, it starts from the premise that these locations are not limitations on but central to the knowledge produced through social research.

This approach is reflected in a two-stage analytic process. First, the data generated in each of the 22 individual ethnographic case studies included in WP6 are analysed in local languages by Consortium member teams on an individual case study basis. Second, additional knowledge and new insight is generated through cross-case analysis employing an adaptation of meta-ethnographic synthesis approach (Noblit and Hare, 1988; Britten *et al*. 2002; Pilkington 2018). This analysis will be conducted on 'clusters' of cases emanating from different countries.

This deliverable report (D6.1) thus reports on the first stage of analysis of data for WP6, namely the findings from the holistic analyses of individual cases. It thus consists of analytic reports on a total of 22 individual case studies completed by Consortium partners in 10 countries. However, it is important to note the two-stage analytic design as the requirements of the second stage have informed and shaped the practices and protocols adopted across both stages of analysis. In particular, in order to maintain consistency in analysis between the two stages, and to avoid the duplication of work, a common coding practice has been employed at the first (individual case) level of analysis. On the basis of this coding, a set of coding documents has been produced from each case which are used in the second (cluster) level of analysis (and will be reported on in D6.2 (Month 32). This anticipated second stage of analysis is also evident in the inclusion of a section of each individual case study report devoted to the elicitation of potential themes for future analysis at cluster level and the collation of individual case study reports in this deliverable according to the four thematic clusters to which individual cases are assigned rather than country or partner responsible.

In this introduction to the individual case study reports, the common research questions, selection of cases, ethics, methods, research instruments, data anonymization, storage and management protocols and data analysis guidelines are outlined.

2. Research questions

The overarching research questions addressed in WP6 are:

1. What are the sites, agents/agencies and forms of conflict encountered by young people?
2. What are the consequences of and constraints on young people resulting from stigmatisation as problematic or conflict-prone?
3. What forms do young people's responses (individual and collective, online and offline) to conflict take? (NB these can be organised or individual activities and may relate to youth styles/fashion/street art; political or social participation; criminal behaviours or desistance activities etc.).

   What meaning do young people attach to them? Do young people feel these responses can effect change? What is the innovative potential of these responses?
4. How do we as researchers evaluate how effective these responses are in mobilising and implementing young people's drive for social change? In what cases do these responses constitute social innovation? How are they perceived as innovation by young people/ older generations/authorities?
5. What role do intergenerational relations play in both causing and overcoming conflict and producing social innovation and change?
6. How might the experience of groups in finding creative responses and driving social change out of conflict be transferred to peers?

These questions are rooted in a set of agreed definitions of core concepts devised after the Kick-off meeting and were used as the basis for developing common research instruments, namely the 'Skeleton interview scenario' (see Appendix 1) and the Skeleton coding tree' (see Appendix 4).

3. Selection of cases

Indicative case studies had been proposed in the PROMISE Description of Action and a provisional clustering devised at the point of finalisation of the research proposal. On commencement of WP6, consortium partners revisited their initial suggestions and provided details of their final proposed cases for study using a common 'case study template' to ensure all cases met the required criteria for inclusion. All partners proposed two case studies with the exception of P11 (HSE) whose funding from HSE required the completion of additional cases. For this reason a total of 22 cases (rather than the anticipated 20 case studies) have been completed for WP6.

An initial clustering of cases was agreed by the Consortium after discussion of the completed case study templates. This clustering was revisited however a number of times as cases continued to evolve or be exchanged as partners explored questions of access and logistics or in the light of new interesting cases that emerged during the mapping of activism for the WP3 national report. The finally agreed selection of cases and their clustering is detailed in Table 1 although it remains possible that a small number of cases will be included in more than one cluster where their findings clearly cross-cut cluster designations.

Table 1 Clustering of individual case studies

	Education/justice/society (Cluster Synthesis Lead: UCP)	Culture/politics (Cluster Synthesis Lead: CJD)	Economy/leisure spaces (Cluster Synthesis Lead: IPI)	Gender/sexuality (Cluster Syn. Lead: HSE)
P1: UNIMAN (UK)	'Risky Youth' and Criminalised Identities	**Youth mobilisations of 'suspect communities'**		
P2: IPRS (Italy)		No-TAV : Stigma as a drive for social change	Artistic/Creative Start-Ups in the Suburbs of Naples	
P3: CJD (Germany)		The autonomists: Perceptions of societal change among radical left youth		Young Muslim Women: 'Neo-Muslims'? Social engagement of devout young female Muslims
P4: UAB (Spain)	No Neets		Self-building, alternative accommodation and public space uses	
P5: UCP (Portugal)	Young people with paths of psychosocial risk and deviant behaviour			Young gender activists
P6: UMB (Slovakia)		Not in our town - NIOT	Returning young migrants	
P7: FYRN (Finland)			Intergenerational Contests and Spatial Occupations in the City	Young motherhood in multicultural Finland
P9: UTARTU (Estonia)	Young ex-offenders and recidivism	Struggling against hegemony: rural youth in Seto country		
P11: HSE (Russia)		New pro-citizen activities of young Petersburgers for 'public morals and order' People living with HIV and HIV activists (St. Petersburg & Kazan)		Grassroots initiatives, conflicts and solidarities of LGBTQ scene of St. Petersburg Grassroots initiatives, conflicts and solidarities of the feminist scene of St. Petersburg
P12: IPI (Croatia)			Supporters' Varteks FC	Zagreb Pride- LGBTIQ NGO
Total no.	4	7	5	6

4. Ethics and security

All partners completed ethical clearance procedures ahead of commencing fieldwork either through their own institutional ethical review committees (and verified for compliance with PROMISE guidelines) or, where institutions did not have their own ethical review procedures, through a formally constituted procedure for ethical review via the PROMISE Ethics Sub-Committee (ESC). A full description of the ethics and security framework and procedures can be found in the PROMISE Data Handbook.

All partners received ethical clearance by month 12 (Deliverable 24 (9.4) H - Requirement No. 3, submitted 18 April 2017).

All participants to the studies were recruited on the principle and practice of informed consent and relations with respondents were conducted in strict adherence to the ethical guidelines set out in the PROMISE Description of Action and Data Handbook.

The PROMISE ESC continued to be operational throughout fieldwork and analysis stages advising on issues from anonymization of data through protection of respondents to the ethics of what should be included in the final report. Any significant issues arising in individual cases are reported on in the individual case reports.

5. Research methods

The empirical research upon which the reports in this deliverable are based is broadly ethnographic in design and took place over a period of 9 months (January-September 2017). While, as noted above, the research design allowed a significant amount of flexibility in each case study, it was agreed by consortium members that a number of common research instruments would be adopted to ensure consistency across case studies and enhance the 'value-added' of cross-case analysis. Below, the shared approach, methods and research instruments are outlined. Specific adaptations and implementation in each case are described in individual case study reports.

5.1 An ethnographic approach

The case studies conducted were all 'ethnographic' in that they employed a research method based on a sustained involvement in the lives of others. This minimal definition of an ethnographic approach was envisaged from the outset in order to allow for the necessary flexibility in methodology to make it appropriate for the range of groups being researched and for innovative methods to be implemented whilst remaining true to an underlying principle of the project to make a meaningful intervention in young people's lives and to open channels through which young people feel sufficiently secure and valued to participate actively in the research.

This understanding of ethnography means that all case studies were fieldwork-based. However, fieldwork undertaken ranged from classic participant observation in which the researcher was routinely engaged in activities, communication and daily lives of respondents (see, for example the No -TAV case study conducted by Partner 2, IPRS), to more sporadic attendance at meetings or events and sustained in-between through physical or social media-based communication and engagement (see, for example, the Varteks and White Stones case study conducted by Partner 12, IPI).

Each case study employed an appropriate combination of fieldwork techniques including: semi or unstructured person to person audio recorded or online interviews with key informants; the creation of a detailed field diary to record observations, reflections and questions for further inquiry, and information to support the interview material; and written records of informal conversations with individuals or groups.

In some cases these core methods were supplemented by the organising of particular interactive workshops or events. Examples include an interactive walking tour arranged by P1 UNIMAN in their 'Suspect Communities' case study; a photo competition devised by P9 UTARTU in their 'Young ex-offenders and recidivism' case study to encourage participation by young people; a visit to the University for some participants of UNIMAN's 'Risky youth' and criminalised identities; photo-elicitation and peer research methods, each used in a number of case studies and discussed below. These additional methods and techniques are reported on in the individual case study reports.

In other cases (e.g. the 'Autonomists' case), data were augmented by analysis of documentary materials such as manifestos, leaflets, websites, flyers and posters. Whilst in others data were gathered from newspapers, social media sites and other public domains , see for example: the Seto case study based in Estonia discussed by Pp, UTARTU' or the artistic start-ups case study of P2: IPRS)

5.2 Peer research method

At the start of the project the research teams discussed the possibility of using the peer research method as a participatory approach to conducting fieldwork. A training workshop in the value, advantages and pitfalls of peer research was provided by the Coordinating team and each team assessed the appropriateness and logistical possibility of using this method with their respondent group. Peer research was subsequently used in 6 case studies (listed in Table 2) and is discussed in their individual case study reports.

Table 2: Case studies involving peer research

Partner	Case
P1: UNIMAN	Suspect Communities
P2: IPRS (Italy)	No-TAV
P4: UAB (Spain)	1. No-NEET
	2. Self-building, alternative accommodation and public space uses
P9: UTARTU (Estonia)	1. Young ex-offenders and recidivism
	2. Rural youth in Seto heritage region
TOTAL	6

There is a wide and growing literature on the benefits of including the respondent group, in this case, young people, among the research team as Peer Researchers (Schuhbotz, 2012). A main benefit is it gives young people an opportunity to have a direct voice in the project and steer the direction of research as part of an empowering process (Ryan et al. 2011). Working with the research team as peer researchers in the co-production of knowledge allows a space for young people to share experiences between the team and with their peers and to gain a set of research skills through a thorough training and certification process. Within PROMISE, a

peer-research training programme and support package, validated by the University of Manchester Research Ethics Committee was devised and shared with partners using this method. The training and certification process at the end of peer research training is one way to give something back to the young people and, as much as possible, to enable a sense of empowerment. This can be particularly important in research within divided or marginalised communities and where young people's experiences are typically ignored (Bennett and Roberts, 2004).

The Training Programme for Peer Researchers

Much of the training takes the form of open discussion that will guide and influence the research from design to dissemination. The following outline of training was suggested:

Module 1: Introduction to the research
- The peer research method
- Research questions
- Designing the research
- Safety in the field
- Support needs: asking for help.

Module 2: Interviewing
- What makes a good interviewer
- Key interviewing techniques: using open-ended questions, active listening and probing for more information
- How to manage the interview process from start to finish including, how to begin, putting the interviewee at ease, conducting the interview and how to close down the interview
- Ensuring safety of researchers and participants
- Discussing your own experiences
- The importance of noting and reacting to non-verbal communication
- Setting up the interview – practical issues, including digital audio recording.

Module 3: Ethics
- Gaining consent and checking the interviewee's capacity to participate on the day
- Confidentiality and anonymity- what these mean in practice: Peer researchers are subject to the same agreements of confidentiality as academic researchers and will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.
- How to deal with sensitive or difficult topics and situations: Due to shared experience and increased rapport, interviews may be more emotive than in traditional research.
- What to do if, for example, the interviewee seems unwell or appears to be at risk.
- General health and safety procedures.
- Working as a lone researcher, and working in pairs.
- The support system: making use of what's on offer.

Module 4: Analysis and dissemination
- Conducting qualitative analysis
- The emergence of themes
- Dissemination strategy

It is essential to put a system of support in place to include regular debriefing sessions after interviews and to discuss any difficulties throughout the research process. The research teams were asked to schedule these sessions in conjunction with a youth organisation partner from the NPPN.

5.3 Photo-elicitation method

Many of the partners employed the photo-elicitation method as a data-gathering technique in their case studies. A 'Masterclass' workshop at the start of the project, led by Simon Ruding from TiPP, introduced the method to researchers as a way of including further participatory and dialogic techniques into their case studies. Photo-elicitation was subsequently used in nine case studies (listed in Table 3).

Table 3: Case studies involving photo elicitation

Partner	Case study
P1: UNIMAN	Suspect Communities
P2: IPRS (Italy)	No-TAV
P3: CJD (Germany	Autonomists
P4: UAB (Spain)	1. No-NEET
	2. Self-building, alternative accommodation and public space uses
P5: UCP (Portugal)	Youth with risk and deviance pathways
P7: FYRN (Finland)	Intergenerational contests in the media city
P9: UTARTU (Estonia)	1. Young ex-offenders and recidivism
	2. Rural youth in Seto heritage region
TOTAL	**9**

The photo-elicitation method uses photographs as a vehicle to represent a situation or an idea that may otherwise be difficult to voice, express or discuss (Carlsson, 2001). Using photos to structure conversations in focus groups is a way to access participants' tacit knowledge and can give voice to ideas that they might not think are important enough to share. By sparking conversations the photo-elicitation technique allows participants to move beyond the limitations of the spoken or written word and can therefore be particularly useful in fieldwork with young people and around sensitive topics.

The method, set out in the 'Masterclass' workshop was adapted by researchers to suit the specific contextual and logistical contexts of their case studies, but the skeleton method is set out below.

Young people taking part in the study, and wishing to engage in photo-elicitation, were introduced to the principles of photography in an introductory workshop. After exploring composition, lighting and context young people were asked to capture images (somethings on their phones, sometimes on disposable cameras) which depict their relationship with power and / or demonstrate conflict with older generations: adults, educators, authority. Each partner chose a subject that was appropriate for their respondents and the context of the study. After the first session young people were given another 'subject' and asked to return to the second session with a set of photographs. Follow up sessions involved group discussions of what the photos represent for the young people.

UNIMAN used the photo method with young people in the 'Risky Youth and Criminalised identities' case study. In the first session with young people, after introducing participants to photography and the camera, UNIMAN explored '*who are you*?' by asking young people to represent their view of themselves. In the second session, young people returned with images of '*things that make you feel safe/secure and things that make you happy*' as well as a set of images about '*things that control you, things you'd like to change'.* By using photographs and exploring content (subject of the photo) and process (how the photos are presented), we have been able to ask young people to explore complex social relationships and identify points of conflict and transgression (Rasmussen, 2004; Smith & Barker, 2004). Allowing young people to take control of the image making process empowers them to make decisions about what to include or exclude from the photographic records, thus letting them control the images that are presented of their everyday experience (Smith & Barker, 2004). This approach locates the participants at the heart of the process.

The photographs produced by young people were linked to their transcribed discussions on NVivo11 as part of the analysis, and are included in the reports. The photographs will be exhibited as part of the National Showcase events later in the project.

5.4 Common skeleton interview scenario

After Consortium agreement that it would be advisable to work with a common interview scenario across cases, an initial version was circulated for discussion by the Coordinating term and a final version of the skeleton interview was adopted and circulated in November 2016.

The skeleton interview scenario contained four blocs of questions addressing the key research questions of WP6. These blocs were: getting to know the respondent; eliciting sites and effects of conflict / stigmatisation; understanding responses to conflict; and transferring experience.

In each of these blocs there were: a series of opening questions pertinent to the theme of the bloc; suggested prompts; and follow up questions. While each of these blocs of questions had to be addressed in each case study, partners were encouraged to adapt and add to the 'prompts' and 'follow up questions' elements of the skeleton interview schedule in order to reflect their country or case context. As part of the implementation of cases partners translated, amended and extended the skeleton interview scenario. The core interview schedule (before translation and amendment is attached here as Appendix 1.

For each interviewee (or other key respondent), researchers also completed a socio-demographic data sheet (for entry into the Nvivo database 'classifications' function) and a 'respondent memo' (recording brief details pertinent to the context or process of the interview conducted. Templates for these are appended here as Appendix 2 (UK adapted variant) and Appendix 3 respectively.

6. Data anonymization, storage and management

The nature of ethnographic data makes its sharing with other researchers more complex than other kinds of qualitative data. For this reason, detailed guidelines on anonymization, transcription and preparation of various forms of data (textual, visual, audio etc.) for upload to NVivo were provided in the PROMISE Data Handbook. In order not to repeat that detailed information, in this section, the principles underpinning those guidelines – adhered to by all participants in the Consortium – are outlined briefly here followed by a diagrammatic overview of the data management process (See Figure 1)

6.1 Guiding principles

The data management guidelines devised for PROMISE ethnographic case studies sought to balance three objectives:

- To create – as far as possible – an 'authentic' (full, honest, holistic) database that minimises 'censorship' of data, even where data are of a sensitive or personal nature and can only be fully understood with the experiential knowledge of the original field researcher;
- To ensure <u>no</u> data are disclosed that could allow the identification of individuals or groups;
- To maximise the potential for collaboration on cross-case analyses of ethnographic case studies.

For this reason, the guidelines require all data - interview transcripts, field diaries, messaging, documents - to be uploaded in their fullest possible form. However, in preparing the data for uploading they also require that:

- Pseudo-anonymisation of data (replacing original names of people, places and organisations with pseudonyms) takes place immediately after collection of data through the assignment of a pseudonym to any record of data collected from a participant and the storing of the record of relationship between personal data and pseudonym assigned separately and in secure and encrypted form.
- Anonymisation means the removal of anything that could identify interviewees without rendering the data so free of context that their significance is compromised. This takes place at the point of transcription of interviews and follows protocols set out in the PROMISE Data Handbook. Field diaries, documents, social media messages and visual images must also be anonymized as soon as possible after their collection.
- Any <u>sections of data that are sensitive must be flagged clearly to indicate that these sections of the material should not be used by other researchers without consultation with, and approval of, the original field researcher</u>.

Particular issues or problems encountered by teams – for example where naming of a town, city or organization from which respondents were recruited – might lead to their identification, were discussed with the Ethics Sub-Committee and advice given must prioritise the interests of the respondents.

6.2 Overview of Data management process

Figure 1: Flowchart (overview)

Fieldworker:
- Discusses the study with potential participant(s)
- Provides a current copy of the PIS and ICF
- Answers any questions / concerns.

Participant decides <u>not</u> to take part → No further action

Participant agrees to take part

ALLOCATE A PSEUDONYM

Store link in secure area 3

(i.e. link between pseudonym and participant's name)

Consent (written or verbal)

Arrange interview(s), and collect data

→ Fieldwork diary

→ Audio-recording of interview

→ Video/film/ music recordings

→ Other

Physical items:
STORE IN **SECURE STORAGE AREA 1**
(e.g. locked filing cabinet in locked room)

USE PSEUDONYM TO IDENTIFY ITEMS

TRANSCRIBE *(in same language)* into Word; **check accuracy**

Store pseudo-anonymization log *(if generated)* in secure area 3

Electronic items:
STORE IN **SECURE STORAGE AREA 2**
(e.g. encrypted hard drive with password-controlled access)

PSEUDO-ANONYMISE DATA *(and re-name files)*

E-files
(e.g. interviews, notebook, photos,

Pseudo-anonymization log *(if generated – not compulsory)***:**
STORE IN **SECURE STORAGE AREA 3**
(e.g. encrypted hard drive with password-controlled access)

UPLOAD ALL FILES TO NVIVO

(Electronic data files)
STORE IN **NVIVO**

Produce 'node memos' and 'respondent memos' *(in English)*

ANALYSE DATA
WRITE REPORT

National report

BEFORE SHARING DATA, CHECK/ENSURE:
➢ all pseudonyms are in place
➢ photos of faces are pixelated *(unless specific additional consent was given)*

SHARE electronic data files (Upload to UNIMAN 'Dropbox for business')
(e.g. WP6_UNIMAN_Prevent_Field Diaries_Meeting 02.07.2016)

ANALYSE DATA
WRITE REPORT

Cross-national report

7. Data Analysis

As noted in the Introduction, WP6 is designed on the basis of a two-stage analysis process. In this document, only the first stage - single case analysis - is described. This process is depicted figuratively in Steps 1-3 of Figure 2 (below).

Data analysis in WP6 is premised on a 'multi-grounded theory' (Goldkuhl and Cronholm, 2010) approach. This works on the principle not that new theory is induced from data analysis but that theory is essential to interpretation and knowledge production and can result in the revision or refining of theory. How this works in practice is outlined in the PROMISE Data Handbook but essentially employs standard inductive coding followed by a process of 'theoretical matching' and validation against both data and existing theoretical frameworks at the interpretative level.

Coding was conducted by all teams using NVivo 11 computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). Textual materials such as (original language) transcripts of recorded and online interviews, field diaries, social media communication and notes of informal conversations as well as relevant sound and image files were uploaded as 'sources' into their relevant NVivo 11 project.

As depicted in Figure 2, the first step of coding consists of the coding of qualitative data sources (e.g. semi-structured interviews, field diaries, focus groups, images) in native language by partners as separate, individual projects. Ethnographic case data were coded, in the first instance, to a maximum of two hierarchical levels. After discussion with the Consortium members participating in WP6, it was agreed to employ a 'Skeleton coding tree' for Level 2 nodes (see Figure 2).This meant that a list of Level 2 (parent) codes (in English) were agreed by partners prior to the commencement of coding. These were imported into each Nvivo data base and used, where appropriate, as 'parent nodes' under which inductively generated Level 1 nodes (in native language) were grouped. Where Level 1 nodes did not fit within pre-determined Level 2 nodes – for example because this activity or experience was specific to the case - new Level 2 nodes could be created for that case.
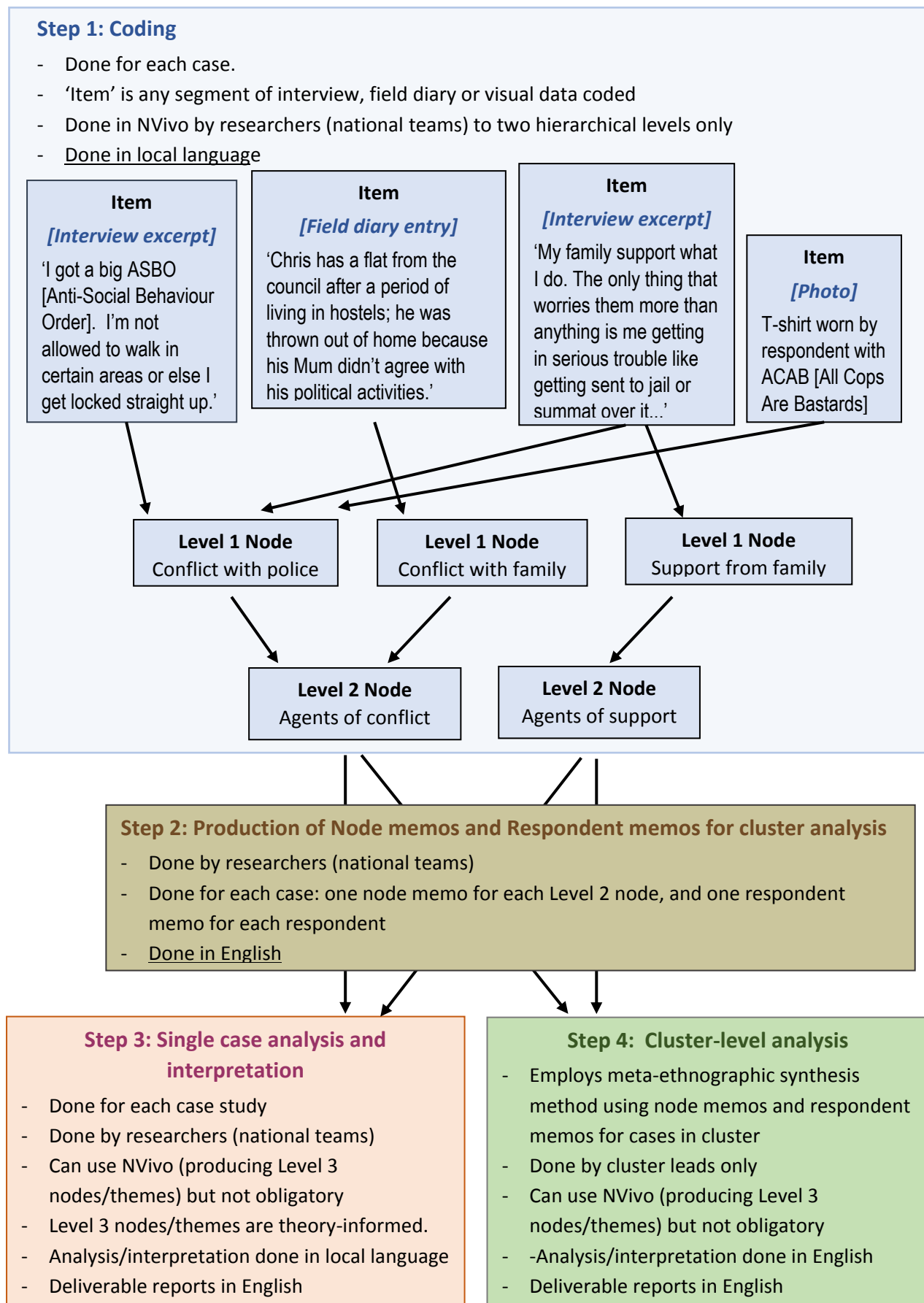
The skeleton coding tree was circulated for discussion among partners and amended following a pilot coding of excerpts of a shared interview. In practice, the coding tree worked well with new Level 2 nodes being introduced rarely. The skeleton coding tree is attached as Appendix 4.

Extensive guidelines on coding, designed to standardize coding practice (length of text coded, multiple-coding, types of codes generated etc) as far as possible across cases, were provided in the PROMISE Data Handbook.

Following coding to two hierarchical levels and the production of documents required for cross-case analysis, researchers continued to analyse their data sets, drawing on theoretical frameworks to generate third level nodes or 'themes'. These themes, together with the socio-demographic data from respondents imported into Nvivo, were used to refine the overall findings of the case and prepare the individual case study reports (Step 3 in Figure 2).

Figure 2: Data Analysis Flow Diagram

Step 1: Coding

- Done for each case.
- 'Item' is any segment of interview, field diary or visual data coded
- Done in NVivo by researchers (national teams) to two hierarchical levels only
- Done in local language

Item

[Interview excerpt]

'I got a big ASBO [Anti-Social Behaviour Order]. I'm not allowed to walk in certain areas or else I get locked straight up.'

Item

[Field diary entry]

'Chris has a flat from the council after a period of living in hostels; he was thrown out of home because his Mum didn't agree with his political activities.'

Item

[Interview excerpt]

'My family support what I do. The only thing that worries them more than anything is me getting in serious trouble like getting sent to jail or summat over it...'

Item

[Photo]

T-shirt worn by respondent with ACAB [All Cops Are Bastards]

Level 1 Node
Conflict with police

Level 1 Node
Conflict with family

Level 1 Node
Support from family

Level 2 Node
Agents of conflict

Level 2 Node
Agents of support

Step 2: Production of Node memos and Respondent memos for cluster analysis

- Done by researchers (national teams)
- Done for each case: one node memo for each Level 2 node, and one respondent memo for each respondent
- Done in English

Step 3: Single case analysis and interpretation

- Done for each case study
- Done by researchers (national teams)
- Can use NVivo (producing Level 3 nodes/themes) but not obligatory
- Level 3 nodes/themes are theory-informed.
- Analysis/interpretation done in local language
- Deliverable reports in English

Step 4: Cluster-level analysis

- Employs meta-ethnographic synthesis method using node memos and respondent memos for cases in cluster
- Done by cluster leads only
- Can use NVivo (producing Level 3 nodes/themes) but not obligatory
- Analysis/interpretation done in English
- Deliverable reports in English

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Skeleton Interview Scenario

Background: Overall research questions to be addressed in WP6

1. *What are the sites, agents/agencies and forms of conflict encountered by young people?*

2. *What are the consequences of and constraints on young people resulting from stigmatisation as problematic or conflict-prone?*

3. *What forms do young people's responses (individual and collective, online and offline) to conflict take? (NB these can be organised or individual activities and may relate to youth styles/fashion/street art; political or social participation; criminal behaviours or desistance activities etc.).*

    What meaning do young people attach to them? Do young people feel these responses can effect change? What is the innovative potential of these responses?

4. *How do we as researchers evaluate how effective these responses are in mobilising and implementing young people's drive for social change? In what cases do these responses constitute social innovation? How are they perceived as innovation by young people/ older generations/authorities?*

5. *What role do intergenerational relations play in both causing and overcoming conflict and producing social innovation and change?*

6. *How might the experience of groups in finding creative responses and driving social change out of conflict be transferred to peers?*

Potential thematic blocs/opener and follow up questions

N.B. while the themes will be relevant across all cases, the specific questions may vary from case to case. You will need to adapt these questions and prompts to fit in with each case study.

Common questions	Prompts	Suggested additional questions
Bloc 1: Getting to know the respondent. **In this Bloc you are trying to get at background information about the respondent – why they are involved in the group/activity and what happened before that prompted their involvement.** **Their experiences of being in the group come out in Bloc 3 (after discussing stigma in Bloc 2) – in Bloc 3 you may want to return to some of the points raised here.**		
Tell me a bit about yourself **(YOU MAY WANT TO USE A WARM UP EXERCISE/ LOOK AT PICTURES ETC.)**	Prompt from town, family, school, work, leisure	o What is it like where you live? o Do you live with family? o Are you at school / college / do you work? o What do you like to do when you're not at school / working?

Start with point of contact [the organisation or activity they are engaged in that led us to them]: Please tell me about yourself and what you do here (the activity you are involved in).	Prompt for what the organisation does/ the group activity is/ the individual activity is.	How did you first hear about/ get introduced to X (e.g. organisation)? How long have you been active (present) on the scene/in the group? What is your position/achieved status/role in the group? Is this supported/mentored by adults?
How did you hear about the organisation/ activity? Why did you become involved? How long have you been involved for?	Prompt for past behaviours and stigmas – reasons for joining the group/engaging in the activity.	Was joining the group a requirement? (e.g. in the case of criminal justice intervention)

Bloc 2 Eliciting sites and effects of conflict/stigmatisation [RQ1, RQ2, RQ5]

In this Bloc you are trying to unpick any experiences of stigma and conflict and locate the sources of the stigma/conflict. A good approach is to be led by the respondent – allow them to identify stigmas rather than assuming specific stigma or asking directly about them. Please explore all stigmas/conflicts that are raised by the respondent. Remember to include intergenerational conflict.

Is it a good time to be a young person [in country x or city/town y]? [**here we are picking up on general representations of youth and sites of conflict for all youth**]	Prompt for general representations of youth, positive experiences as a young person and areas of difficulty from which they can discuss conflict and stigma.	o What makes it good for you? o Why would you say it isn't good at the moment? o Are these things that affect most you people, do you think? o Can you give some examples of why it's good to be young in country X now? o What are the problems young people face right now? o What's the best thing about being young now? o What's the worst thing about being young now?

Do you think you have a particularly hard time right now? When/where do you feel that?	Prompt for feelings of inequality, discrimination etc. Any particular area of inequality/ discrimination. Intergenerational inequality/conflict?	o Is this a problem across all young people? o Do you feel there are some groups of young people who get it easier than you? o Do you feel there are some groups of young people who have a harder time? (Within your town and within broader region/country) So, in other words, 'who is more stigmatised than you?' o Is it about opportunities or something else? o How do you feel about your opportunities compared with previous generations?
Who gives you a hard time?	Prompt for particular agents, agencies and intergenerational conflicts	o Can you give me some examples of people who give you a hard time? o Why do you think they give you a hard time? o What about authority figures e.g. police, teachers, parents etc.
Does this conflict/tension/representation get in the way of doing things? For you personally? For others like you more generally?	Prompt for particular ways the respondent feels conflict/ tension	o What does it prevent you doing? o How else does it change things for you/ for other young people you know? Can you give examples?
Do you feel like your concerns are listened to?	Prompt for why/ why not, in what ways.	o Who do you want to listen to you? o Do older people/authorities listen to you?
Who/what helps you overcome these barriers?	Prompt for agents/agencies including intergenerational issues. Also media role	o How do they help? o How important is that help to you? To others?

Bloc 3 Understanding responses to conflict [RQ 3, RQ4]

This Bloc tries to get inside the respondent's understanding of the activity they are engaging with e.g. street art, youth club activities, political activism etc. Your aim here is to get the respondent to describe what they do, with who and what advantages it has for them. Also explore how others perceive the activity/organisation (peers, older generations, authority)

NOTE any intergenerational responses/ conflict

Tell me about [activity x].	Prompt for who, when, where, what and how they feel about it. Ask for examples.	o Who is involved [individual/collective activity]? o How/where do you meet/act [online/offline]? o What sorts of things do you do when you get together? o What does a typical meeting/session/day look like? o Tell me about your last meeting/activity/ the last time you met. o How much time do you spend in your week/month/year doing this? o Do you improve at the activity the more time you spend doing it? o Do the tasks, roles, responsibilities change the more you are involved? o Are there any similar 'formal' activities? o Or is there any support from formal groups or adults e.g. youth centres, libraries, school etc.? o Do you have any future expectations linked to your involvement in these actions; for example, in 3, 5, 10 years… are you considering any possible occupational/educational trajectory that relate to the activity?
What do you enjoy about [activity x]? Why is it important to you?	Prompt for what others involved get out of it too to elicit range of meanings attached	o Can you give examples of something you've enjoyed? o How did others respond?

Do you think [activity x] makes a difference? How is it perceived as innovative by young people?	Prompt for respondent's understanding of the 'worth' of the activity	o How? Why/why not? o Who does it make a difference for [individuals involved vs wider society]? o Does it make more of a difference than the formal ways of addressing youth issues? E.g. education, employment, leisure, art, political participation, volunteering? o How could it make more of a difference? o Are there barriers that prevent it from making a difference for more young people?
How is [activity x] perceived by others? - Peers - Family - Older generations (society) - Authorities	Prompt for understanding of others' perceptions: include peers, older generations, family, authority. Ask for stories of peoples' reactions to the activity.	o Do you think others understand what it is you do here? o Do others understand the benefits of this activity?
What changes do you see around you as a result of [activity x/organisation y]?	Prompt for stories of change within various settings such as within the family, peer group, neighbourhood, community.	o Who benefits from those changes? o Do you think these changes are seen as positive by wider society? o Can you think of examples of changes? o Why do you think society sees the activity as positive/not? o Do older generations see it as positive? o What about views of authorities?

Bloc 4 Transferring experience [RQ 6, RQ5]

This Bloc is about what the activity provides/could provide for other young people and how it can be shared (NB not all the activities will be seen by authorities as 'positive' but this Bloc tries to get at what the respondent feels the activity has to offer others)

Who knows about what you do [in activity x or organisation y]?	Prompt for what the respondent is hoping to achieve through sharing experiences.	o Would you like more people to know about it? o Why should more people know about it? o What is the role of the media (micro media, mainstream media, social networks etc. in dissemination and impact (regarding local community and broader society)? o Can older generations help to share your experiences?
Are there other young people who might benefit from [activity x]?	Prompt for how and why the activity could help others	o How could you involve them/contact them? o What would advise them in setting up their own [activity x/organisation y]?

Appendix 2: Socio-demographic data sheet (Example is UK adapted]

Attribute	Circle or write in (if 'other' is selected)
Age: (in years, at	……………………….
Gender:	• Male • Female • Transgender • Non-binary
Education:	• Currently in general academic secondary education • Currently in vocational secondary education • Did not complete secondary education and left • Completed general academic secondary education • Completed vocational academic secondary education • Currently at university • Completed university • Currently in post-secondary vocational training • Completed post-secondary vocational training • Studying for postgraduate education • Completed postgraduate education • Other ………………………………………….
Employment:	• In full-time employment • In part-time employment • In full-time education • Working and in part-time education • Unemployed • Economically inactive (caring, looking after family members/household)
Residential Status:	• Live at home with parent(s) • Live at home with other relatives e.g. grandparents • Live independently alone • Live independently with own partner/children • Live independently with friends • Live in care or foster care • In detention/prison (at time of research)
Family Status:	• Single • Married or living with partner • Divorced/separated from spouse or partner
Ethnicity*:	• White • Mixed • Asian or Asian British • Black or Black British • Other …………………………………………
Country of birth	• Country of research • Other ……………………………………………..

Religion	• Christian – Roman Catholic • Christian – Protestant • Christian – other • Buddhist • Hindu • Jewish • Muslim • Sikh • Other religion …………………………………………. • No religion

*Please note when selecting the 'ethnicity' category:

- **White** includes: White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British, Irish, Gypsy or Irish Traveller or any other White background
- **Mixed** includes: White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Asian, any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic background
- **Asian or Asian British** includes: Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, any other Asian background
- **Black or Black British** includes: African, Caribbean, any other Black/African/Caribbean background

Appendix 3: Respondent Memo template

Exported attributes from the classification sheet applied to the relevant data source

File name	Age	Gender	Education	Employment	Residential Status	Family Status	Ethnicity	Country of birth	Religion

Reflections on interview context and process *(where these are potentially relevant to the interpretation of data)*

Anything else deemed relevant, but not recorded elsewhere
For example:
- key moments in the respondent's 'story' *(although should not be used to simply summarize the interview);*
- sections of the interview that the respondent requested not to be recorded;
- gesticulations or visual signals made by the respondent *(e.g. suggesting ironic attitude to certain things said, or indicating unspoken meanings that will not be discernible in the written transcription);*
- tone of engagement with the researcher *(e.g. ironic, sarcastic, enthusiastic, which might not be evident from the transcribed data).*

Appendix 4: Skeleton Coding Tree

The codes listed below provide a skeleton for the coding tree that we will use to code the interviews (using NVivo) from each case study. It consists of shared family nodes (Level 2 nodes) that will be used as the starting point for the coding tree you use in each case. These are not exhaustive. We expect that alongside these common Level 2 Nodes (which we anticipate will be generated naturally in all cases), additional Level 2 family nodes will emerge while you are coding. These more case-specific Level 2 nodes can simply be added to your case. For the sake of consistency it would be helpful to name these Level 2 nodes in English.

Within each of these family nodes we anticipate a number of Level 1 nodes. Level 1 nodes are generated directly from the interview text through a standard process of open coding and retain, as far as possible, respondents own expressions (see Section 3.2 of the PROMISE data handbook). For this reason, Level 1 nodes will be in the original language of the interview.

Normally when coding these Level 1 nodes are generated first and then grouped through a process of axial coding. In PROMISE we will work more or less in this standard way. We are simply asking you, when generating your Level 1 nodes to group them under a number of shared Level 2 nodes if they logically fit there. This will help us significantly when we conduct the cross-case (cluster) analysis Where the Level 1 nodes do not fit the (finally agreed) list of shared Level 2 nodes, they should be generated anyway and grouped into case-specific Level 2 nodes. We would anticipate around one third to one half of the Level 2 nodes in each case will be case specific and the rest will be drawn from the shared codes.

Table 1 below is revised to take into account suggestions made at the WP6 meeting in Zagreb.

See Section 3 of the PROMISE Data Handbook for a full description of the coding strategy and practice we will use in the project.

Table 1: Skeleton coding tree (version 1)

Level 2 node name	Level 2 node description	Examples of Level 1 nodes that might fit in this Level 2 node
Education	Biographic (personal) experience and trajectory through education	Problems at school, inspirational teachers, educational achievement, university life
Family/home life	Biographic (personal) experience of family life or life in care	absence of family, experience of living in care, relationship with parents, relationship with siblings, relationship with grandparents,
Peer and friendship groups	Biographic (personal) experience of friendship and peer relations	a bit of a loner, my friends are really mixed
Employment/training	Biographic (personal) experience of employment or training	looking for a job, dead end jobs, gaining experience

Turning points	Key turning points (positive or negative) in the respondents life	first conviction, leaving home, meeting x, getting my head down, getting angry about y
Stigmatisation	Personal experience of feeling stigmatised, stigmatisation of others	people look at me funny, people like me don't get the benefit of doubt
Intergenerational relations	Positive or negative relations and interactions between young generation and older generations (can be abstract or personally experienced but relate to generations as a whole rather than own family experience)	older people think were always on our phones, the older generation had it so easy
Representations of youth	Generalised media or other institutional (discursive) representations of young people	youth are apathetic, hoodie-wearing thugs
Experiences of being young	Personal experiences of being young (understood as a shared experience, because young rather than just a personal experience)	not taken seriously, nobody listens to us, people are interested in our views
Contexts of conflict	Agents of conflict e.g. with whom, or with which institutions, do respondents come into conflict; Sites of conflict e.g. experiences (or generalised understandings) of tension or conflict focusing on where (institutionally or physically) these occur. These can be past or present sites of conflict.	I get stopped by the police every time I go in that park, teachers always give me a hard time, people stare at me in the street, the teachers never liked me, the police will always stop someone in a hoodie, they throw you out of that shop if you are with more than one other young person
Contexts of support	Agents of support e.g. who has helped respondents (or who helps young people) realise their potential or contribute to society; Types of support e.g. What types of support have facilitated respondents contributing to society, fulfilling their ambitions etc. This can also be generalised understandings of what help young people get	Teacher x was the first to believe in me, my brother really helped me understand I needed to work hard, There's nothing out there to help, the youth club gave me an opportunity to do x,

Activities engaged in (general) [Additional, specific activity nodes may be added for some cases – see description]	The activities do young people engage in. These can be directly socially participatory (volunteering, protesting, community action) or be personal interests e.g. sport, music, creative activities. *N.b. if one activity is really important in the respondents life then it could be a separate Level 2 node to allow more detailed Level 1 nodes to be created. In this case this Level 2 node could cover all other activities that are less important.*	youth group, boxing, charity events, making banners, don't do much
Activities (experience of)	What the activities add to the young person's life, what they get out of them, how they experience them	I get a real buzz from it, enjoy being with others like me, proud of what we achieve, feel a bit of an outsider
Activities (benefit of)	What benefit respondents gain from activities they are engaged in; What benefit to society (or others) the respondents feel their activities have	Skills learned, self-confidence, better understanding of others
Identity 1 [e.g. ethnicity]	*Identity related issues e.g. class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion will vary in their salience according to case. Please use Identity 1,2,3 etc. boxes to record those identities salient to your case*	exotic background
Identity 2 [e.g. sexuality]	As above	being Muslim and gay is tough
Identity 3 [e.g. class]	As above	brought up to know the value of money
Agency [n.b. social innovation may become one aspect of agency, but for first coding, keep separate]	Respondents' understanding of any personal action or social involvement that has had an impact on their own life, the lives of others, the environment around them etc.	

Social innovation	References to activities or events that are seen as being innovative or bringing about social change	making a difference,
Barriers to social involvement	This can include both personal barriers (lack of time, lack of experience or confidence etc.) and institutional blocks (exclusion of youth, stigmatisation etc.)	you can tell they are not listening, some people just don't have the time or money
Transferring experience	How the respondent passes on their experience or feels their activities have an influence on others	I got some respect from that, I always tell people about x, They asked me to get involved with y
Future	Imaginations of the future, hopes and fears for the future; way in which people identify with the past, present and future; generalised references to past, present and future (temporal identity)	excited, not much out there for me, pressure to get a job, a house…,I like it when people look at me with my future rather than my past in mind
Methodological Reflections	Attitude of respondent to the research, positionality of the researcher	What's in it for me? What's the point of the research? What will you do with the research?

CLUSTER 1: EDUCATION/JUSTICE/SOCIETY

➢ 'Risky Youth' and Criminalised Identities – UK

➢ No Neets – Spain

➢ Young people with paths of psychosocial risk and deviant behaviour – Portugal

➢ Young ex-offenders and recidivism – Estonia

PROMISE: Promoting Youth Involvement and Social Engagement: Opportunities and challenges for conflicted young people across Europe.

WP6: From Conflict to Innovation: Ethnographic Case Studies

'Risky Youth' and Criminalised Identities
UK

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Executive summary:

This report presents the key findings of *'Risky Youth' and Criminalised Identities,* one of two UK-based case studies conducted for PROMISE. It focuses on a marginalised subset of young people, from 'disadvantaged' neighbourhoods, who are labelled by authorities, and through public and media discourse, as 'troubled youth' and seen to be 'at risk' of offending. Their 'risky' label has, disproportionately, made them the target of increasingly punitive and controlling policies and practices, from policing to school discipline, and resulted in a variety of responses from young people including various forms of resistance.

This case study addresses young people's experiences of stigma and conflict, recognising unintended as well as intended consequences of control measures, and explores young people's varied, and sometimes unexpected, responses to their treatment and their perceived label (including withdrawal, refusal, non-participation, resistance, retaliation, apathy and acceptance). We analyse young people's structural and individual responses to the conflict they experience and, in so doing, highlight instances that inhibit or enable young people's agency and transformational capacity. We conclude by considering how relationships with key authority actors may be 'recast' to support young people through turning points, moments and processes of change and provide an opportunity for them to seize opportunities and realise potential.

Contents

1. Introduction

This report presents the key findings of *'Risky Youth' and Criminalised Identities,* one of two UK-based case studies conducted for PROMISE. It focuses on a marginalised subset of young people, from 'disadvantaged' neighbourhoods, who are labelled by authorities, and through public and media discourse, as 'troubled youth', and are seen to be 'at risk' of offending[1]. Their 'risky' label has, disproportionately, made them the target of increasingly punitive and controlling policies and practices, from policing to school discipline, and resulted in a variety of responses from young people including various forms of resistance.

Drawing on literature from critical penology, social and psycho-social theory, and youth sub-cultural studies, this case study addresses young people's experiences of stigma and conflict, recognising unintended as well as intended consequences of control measures, and explores young people's varied, and sometimes unexpected, responses to their treatment and their perceived label (including withdrawal, refusal, non-participation, resistance, retaliation, apathy and acceptance). We analyse young people's structural and individual responses to the conflict they experience and, in so doing, highlight instances that inhibit or enable young people's agency and transformational capacity. We conclude by considering how relationships with key authority actors may be 'recast' to support young people through turning points, moments and processes of change and provide an opportunity for them to seize opportunities and realise potential.

1.1 The construction of youth as 'problematic'

Over the last few decades, young people in the UK have increasingly found themselves constructed as a 'risky population' (Goldson and Muncie, 2015; Goldson, 2005), with many presented as troubled or troublesome (Ralphs et al, 2001; McAra and McVie, 2005) and seen, by authorities, to be teetering on the edges of criminality (see for example the portrayal of young people in *'Troubled Families Programme'*, HM Government, 2017). In particular, certain groups of young people are constructed as problematic and labelled (by authorities) as offenders, ex-offenders or 'at risk' of offending due to socio-economic factors, typically deprivation. This construction is driven by frequent reporting in the populist press about "out-of-control" or "antisocial" young people (Goldson and Muncie, 2015) and is often tied to concerns about a small hard-core of 'chaotic', 'dysfunctional' or 'problem' families ' (Crossley, 2015) and 'blaming' discourses of disengagement (Fergusson, 2016). After the English riots of 2011, Ken Clarke, the then Justice secretary wrote in The Guardian about a 'feral underclass' of youth calling for greater punishment and controls on the 'criminal classes' (Ken Clarke, 2011). These ideas were fed into policy responses (for instance the 'Troubled Families programme, 2011) focussed on the idea that there exists a group of families whose anti-social behaviour can be ascribed to 'a culture or genetics of poverty' and whose children will necessarily fail (Gordon cited in Crossley, 2015: 2). This ignores structural factors, such as poverty, racial inequality, and injustice in favour of assuming a twisted moral code or some form of pure criminality. There is no evidence to support this underclass claim, which continues to resurface from time to time (Welshman, 2013). However, this ideology frames the current approach to the management and control of young people in the UK.

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[1] The labels of 'disadvantaged', 'troubled' and 'at risk' can be found in media discourses, policy documents and the theoretical background to practice-based initiatives. The current Conservative-led *'Troubled Families Programme'*, launched in 2012 uses these terms.

The 'authority' response to the 'problem of troubled youth' from statutory agencies (including youth justice, welfare and education agencies) is to increase controls through informal, formal and legal structures (Fionda, 2005). Youth justice policy, swinging between the 'caring ethos of social services and the neo-liberalistic ethos of responsibility and punishment' (Muncie and Hughes 2002: 1), has taken a punitive turn, as young people have become subjected to evermore restrictions as part of preventative or controlling interventions. Interventions can take the form of "zero-tolerance" punishments in schools, harsher treatment within the justice system or increased levels of surveillance of young people on the streets. In many respects, youth justice practice appears wedded to the idea of the 'quick fix solution' largely shaped by the political rhetoric of punitiveness (Downes and Morgan, 2012) and grounded in neo-liberal correctionalism and responsibilisation (Case et al, 2015). The increasing and varied interventions young people are subjected to result in a climate of regulation, criminalisation, stigma and reduced life chances.

As negative labels become embedded and punitive interventions are enacted, it becomes harder for young people to engage positively in society and they are more likely to feel marginalised, to withdraw from mainstream society, or to exhibit anti-social or criminal behaviour (Deakin, 2018). It's well established that young people from deprived communities are treated more harshly by the criminal justice system for relatively minor offences (Bateman, 2012, McAra and McVie 2010), demonstrating how labelling and criminalising groups of young people can result in criminal convictions and ultimately lead to a cycle of criminal behaviour and a poverty of opportunity for young people. A report by Unlock finds that 'a criminal record represents a significant barrier to the ability to move on and can drag people down, even decades later.' (Stacey, 2018). With the lowest age of criminal responsibility in Europe (age 10 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and age 8 in Scotland with prosecutions from the age of 12) this is a case of storing up problems for young people's futures.

At the same time, young people from marginalised sections of society have seen their own experiences of victimisation and marginalisation by authorities or by individuals, dismissed or underplayed. As Brown (1998: 116) points out 'the pre-dominant categorizations of youth do not sit easily within a 'victim' discourse […] in popular and policy discourse such issues are often treated with cynicism, disdain or vehement denial' (see also Francis, 2008; Morris, 1987). Indeed, in recent years increasingly younger people have been deemed to be a risk **to** society (Case, 2006) rather than at risk **from** society. Voices from the academic community have called for a children first, positive approach to youth justice (Case and Haines, 2015) or a child-centred, human rights approach to young people's problems (Goldson and Muncie, 2006)

1.2 Stigma and stigmatisation

Goffman defines stigma as 'the situation of the individual who is disqualified from full social acceptance' (1990: 9). A vast interdisciplinary literature has built on Goffman's (1963) influential analysis as a starting point from which to understand contemporary constructions of inequality as inevitably tied to power: social, political and economic (Link and Phelan, 2001). Waquant (2010; 2009; 2008) addresses stigma in contemporary neoliberal societies as a feature of daily experience in areas of high unemployment and poor housing. His analysis of stigmatisation, as embedded in public and media discourse provides a counter narrative to the 'criminal classes' approach of recent policy initiatives (Cummins, 2016) and speaks to the key placement of experiences of stigma in the lives of people in 21st Century Britain.

The importance of addressing the stigmatisation of young people is captured in Tyler's assertion that 'stigma is widely accepted to be a main factor in determining life chances' (Tyler, 2013).

Tyler's analysis of *social abjection* as a discourse that is used to justify punishing the poor through neoliberal mechanisms such as the dissolution of welfare structures, is of particular relevance to young people. As described above, services for young people are being replaced by control measures, and this replacement is explained through government and public discourses of young people that set them up as the abject: out of control young people from 'disadvantaged' backgrounds who require punishment and control. Further examples of social abjection can be seen in the demonization of specific groups of young people, for example the teenage mother (Kidger, 2005) or the young person in care (Taylor and Fitzpatrick, 2006). The Coalition Government, and now the Conservative Government, have overseen the deepest and most swingeing cuts to social provision since the development of the welfare state, and these cuts are 'fuelled by the crafting of stigma, violence and hatred from above' (Tyler, 2017).

Aligning closely with PROMISE themes, this case study focuses on the experiences, actions and responses of a stigmatised group of young people (aged 13-30) who are (or have been) perceived, and treated, as 'risky' (Becker, 1963). They experience conflict with authority (for example the police, social services, teachers) and with older generations due to perceptions that they are engaging in criminal, anti-social or transgressive behaviour. The sites of conflict and stigmatisation are often public spaces due to the highly visible presence of young people 'hanging out' on the streets and in parks. However, sites of stigma may also be 'virtual' through media representation, social media and other information–sharing processes.

Within these sites, the main agents of conflict and stigmatisation are institutions, such as the agencies and individuals of the youth and criminal justice systems (especially police, PCSO's and youth justice workers), but also include social services, teachers, older generations and the media depicting negative images of troubled youth. We attempt to unpack the complex relationships between young people and authority that include supportive and enabling elements as well as oppressive, stigmatising and harmful elements. In discussing the stigma faced by young people we build on Goffman's (1963) analysis of stigma drawing on Tyler's (2013) theoretical construction of social abjection.

We also include reference to the psycho-social literature on narrative scripts and hooks for change. Drawing on key sections of the desistance literature, (McAdams, 1994; Maruna, 1999; Giordano et al, 2002; and Rumgay, 2004) we reference the role of identity 'scripts' (Rumgay, 2004) within the formation of a young person's identity and as part of the process of change. While the desistance literature refers to the process of personal adaptation to a non-criminal lifestyle after a period of offending, some key messages about identity, representation and change are transferable to an understanding of the stigmatised identities of young people of this case study. We apply the theoretical underpinnings of elements of the desistance literature to consider the stigmatised identities of criminalised young people and position traumatic events in a young person's life within the framework of a disruption to the young person's narrative script. This has a particular relevance, here, in relation to the stigmatised identities of young people experiencing deprivation and inequality or facing traumatic events in their lives. It speaks both to the stigma they experience, and to their responses to stigma as part of their mechanisms to manage conflict and create a brighter future.

1.3 Responses to stigma: resistance, refusal and apathy

Our final results section considers young people's responses to the stigma and conflict they experience in relation to their involvement in society. We draw on Lister's definition of agency as encompassing the legal, socio-political elements of action, participatory practice and rights as "the object of struggle" (Lister, 2007: 695), whilst recognising that young people's actions may sometimes be overlooked or constrained (Marsh et al, 2007). Lister's notion of "struggle" (Lister, 2007: 695), has a particular relevance in relation to stigmatised young people.

We employ the PROMISE definition of 'innovative potential'[2] in our analysis of the sites and forms of social innovation, social involvement and wider forms of engagement. However, we develop this definition to include activities and ideas that may not be viewed, by authorities and in public discourse, as positive or pro-social but that demonstrate alternative forms of agency. Our analysis picks out notions of power and independence within an understanding of young people's agency and agentic potential.

Part of our analysis centres on young people's non-participation, refusal and apathy. Our conceptualisation of agency (and innovative potential within the PROMISE project) actively includes these less pro-social responses (Ekman and Amnå, 2012; Amnå and Ekman, 2015). These responses reflect young people's voices and are, in themselves, expressions of the wider dynamics of agency. In circumstances dominated by conflict or trauma in young people's lives these expressions have a particular relevance (Munford and Sanders, 2015). For young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, explanations of non-participation have centred around three dominant discourses: transition, social exclusion and disengagement (Fergusson, 2016). These discourses, reproduced in the media and public discussions, steer the policy response and inform practice, as discussed above. Moving beyond these discourses we explore the forms that non-participation can take to encapsulate both 'positive' and 'negative' forms of social engagement and involvement (Amnå and Ekman, 2015).

A thread running through the findings is the role of relationships in young people's lives, in particular, the ways positive relationships can enable social involvement and engagement. Here, again, we draw on the desistance literature in relation to 'hooks for change' (Giordano et al, 2002). In the final section we consider the 'recasting' of authority: from restriction to reassurance; from barrier to opportunity; and from preventing to enabling. In order to enact agency, and harness opportunities towards a positive future, young people need the assistance of significant others as well as facilitative policies and practices (Munford and Sanders, 2015). This ideal of the pro-social enabling relationship stands in contrast to the relationships described in the 'Stigma and Conflict' section of this report which raise questions about the deeply compromised relationships between young people and some of those responsible for their care and protection.

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[2] Innovative potential is considered, here, to be any activity or idea that could lead towards individual or social change (e.g., desistance from crime; positive engagement with society e.g. through employment, education, training; development of social and cultural capital e.g. through non-formal learning, creativity, knowledge acquisition, social responsibility, entrepreneurship, active citizenship, physical, emotional and mental health).

1.4 Research questions

This case study explores the following questions:

1. How do young people view themselves and how do they describe others' perceptions of them? In particular how do they understand their image through the lens of older people and authority figures? And what is their understanding of how that image is formed?

2. How do young people experience conflict in their lives? What do they identify as the modes, sites and agents of stigma and conflict? What do they identify to be the impact of this stigmatisation and conflict?

3. What are young people's responses to the conflict they experience? What meaning do they attach to their responses? How do their experiences, and responses, inhibit or enable social involvement? Is there something innovative about these responses? How and in what ways are they transferred or shared?

2. Methods

The data was collected for this case study using a two-stage process drawing on elements of the ethnographic method combined with Arts-Based Research methods (ABR) (Barone and Eisner, 2011). The first stage involved accessing, and spending time in, the space occupied by young people attending youth clubs and courses (this was limited to 'organised' clubs, services and events), and participating in activities in order to begin to understand their interests, behaviour and motivations for attending. Whilst this could not be considered 'immersive' ethnographic research it allowed is to capture the context of young people's experience and begin to become familiar to some of the young people who were later to become interview respondents. The second stage, overlapping with the first, involved semi-structured and unstructured interviews, creative activities such as art and multi-media projects, and photo-elicitation. Fieldwork was conducted between December 2016 and April 2018, and included participant observation at youth clubs and courses for young people, participation in creative workshops, one-to-one interviews, conversations with youth organisation leaders and other young people, group photo-elicitation sessions and youth-led exhibitions.

Between April 2017 and April 2018 a total of 21 semi-structured biographical interviews were conducted and recorded with young people aged 13-30. Contact with the young respondents was made primarily through links with 4 youth clubs and support groups run by third sector organisations already known to the researchers. An additional group, run by a third sector organisation providing creative activities as part of the statutory youth justice provision was also accessed. The combination of voluntary and mandatory settings, offering creative, supportive and developmental outlets for young people, provided access to young people of different ages with a range of life situations and aspirations, all with a shared experience of stigma. A brief description of the research sites is provided below:

1. **Youth club 1:** is a voluntary sector youth club for young women, organised by a local voluntary youth organisation and running one evening per week. It is held in a large community-led space with break-out rooms and a dance studio. Between 5 and 10 young women attend. Activities range from art, multi-media and physical activities to talks about personal, financial social and health matters. Music and dance are particularly popular activities.

2. **Youth club 2:** is run by the same voluntary organisation that runs Organisation 1 and provides a similar service for boys and young men in the same area for one evening per week. It is held in a large community-led space with a separate basketball court. Between

10 and 20 boys and young men attend. The main activities are basketball and computer games.

3. **Youth club 3:** is a partner organisation to youth club 1 and 2 providing a service for young men and young women in a different area one evening per week. It is attended by 5 to 15 young people. The club is held in a very small room that limits the types of activities it can support. There are no organised activities (other than using the art materials provided). The young people talk and play on their phones.

Nine young people interviewed for this case study were engaging with youth club activities and accessed through youth clubs 1, 2 and 3. Young people interviewed at youth clubs are identified in the findings section as YOrg.

4. **Support group:** is a voluntary sector support group set up for young people, aged 16 and over, who have left the statutory care system for 'looked-after children'. This group runs one evening per week and is attended by between 15 and 20 young people. Activities range from talks about personal, financial social and health matters to art projects and physical activities. The young people are provided with a meal cooked on site by the voluntary sector staff.

Six of the young people interviewed were accessing this support programme for young care leavers and interviewed on the premises. These young people are identified in the findings as YCL.

5. **Mandatory art course:** was commissioned by the statutory Youth Justice agency (YOT) and provided by a local art-based outreach group with experience in delivering creative courses to the penal sector. The course ran every day for 3 weeks over the summer of 2017 and the young people were mandated to attend all sessions as part of their court order. Activities involved drama, drawing, multi-media, photography and music workshops delivered by a team of 5 arts-based practitioners.

Six interview respondents were taking part in this mandatory course for young people serving community orders supervised by the Youth justice agency. They are identified in the findings as YOT.

There was significant cross-over between the features of these groups, for example: 5 of the 6 care leavers had served community-based orders; 3 of the 6 young people attending the YOT were looked-after children (in care); a minority of the young people attending youth clubs had been subjected to criminal justice proceedings. However, the things linking all participants in the research were their experiences of conflict with the police, being labelled as 'risky' youth and experiences of being targeted to receive punitive sanctions and criminal justice interventions.

2.1 Participant observation

Participant observation was conducted at 34 events between December 2016 and January 2018. This involved taking part in activities, attending drop-in sessions and speaking informally to young people and staff at events organised by the third sector organisations running the 5 groups detailed above. The research team were invited to attended events led by youth organisations, community groups and the police including: 3 exhibitions/productions of film, art and drama created by young people; 4 workshops focussing on key issues including social media, sexual harassment, sexual health and addictions; 3 police/community-led advice sessions on knife crime and criminal exploitation; 15 drop-in youth club sessions; 5 meetings with youth workers; and 3 days of arts-based workshops for young people serving community sentences involving varied topic-based discussion sessions, a photo workshop and creating two videos about identity. The

observation's that took place in the months prior to the interviews enabled the research team to identify potential research participants, identify the range and modes of stigma, conflict and innovation to inform the development of interview questions, identify a 'subject' for the photo elicitation task, and begin to gain trust from the participating youth groups. One of the early participatory sessions (prior to the photo-elicitation task) encouraged young people to think about what makes them happy. They were asked to write the first things that came into their head on post-it notes which they attached to a large sheet providing a talking point with the researchers.

Plate 1: 'What makes you happy?' Post-it notes from a preliminary session of the photo elicitation method

At the YOT arts college, the young people took photos and discussed their choices, in a photo-elicitation session. In addition they produced artwork, including drawings and 2 videos, in several workshops. The care-leavers support group also took part in 2 photo-elicitation workshops and produced photos that they discussed in group sessions. The photo workshops were designed to allow the young people to explore their own sense of identity within their surroundings as well as outside the group, and to explore ideas of resilience and pride as well as challenges and controls. Participants have agreed to share these photos. Any that could reveal the identity of our respondents have been anonymised.

A documentary artist captured several creative-art sessions held as part of the Youth Offending Team (YOT) statutory course attended by young people sentenced to a community sanction (see Plate 2).

Plate 2: Documentary artist sketch depicting an art-session at YOT summer arts course

2.2 Interviews

Interviews were conducted with 21 young people and focus groups were held with three groups of 6-8 young people. The interview schedule was based on the 'skeleton interview scenario' developed for PROMISE and used by all partners and was adapted for each of the three types of site (youth club, support group, mandatory course). Recordings were made of all interviews and of two small focus group photo-discussions. Recordings varied in length from one that was over 2 hours to two that were just under half an hour. The total length of interview recordings was approximately 26 hours with an average (mean and mode) interview lasting 42 minutes. The majority of interviews were conducted with young people who were keen to talk and share their experiences but 2 interviews, both conducted with young men in the YOT arts college, were notably short and the young men were not forthcoming with their thoughts or experiences. Both of these respondents were dismissive of activities on the arts course, resisted engaging in discussion or tasks and sat separately from the group as much as possible. Their lack of engagement, which in itself presents an interesting response, is discussed in the 'Key Findings' in relation to apathy, lack of engagement, response to authority, and resistance to accepted social norms. Additionally, one respondent taking part in the YOT arts college refused to take part in the interview saying it would be 'boring'. The drawing in Plate 3 depicts elements of refusal, boredom and apathy captured by the documentary artist.

Plate 3: Young people at YOT: refusal, boredom and apathy 'He's not drawing me… I mean it!'

2.3 Ethics

The research team followed PROMISE ethical guidelines, as set out in the *Data Collection, Storage and Analysis Handbook*, in all aspects of the fieldwork including accessing respondents, informed consent, conduct of interviews, recording of interviews, and anonymisation, storage and use of data. In general (with the exception of the two young men attending the YOT course mentioned above) the young people said they enjoyed the interview discussions. On several occasions the young people said they wanted to remain in contact with researchers. Two young women from the care-leavers group arranged to visit one of the researchers in the University for a tour of the campus, and many of the young people from youth clubs 1 and 2 are still in contact with one of the researchers via youth club events and local policing strategy initiatives. Plans to engage the young people in dissemination activities are on-going.

An important observation related to the engagement of young people in the research is the role of us, as researchers, in the field and the challenges and opportunities this presented and continues to present. Issues of positionality were pertinent throughout the research process from access to dissemination. Access was negotiated through authority figures (youth workers running youth clubs, support groups and creative sessions), and we were often introduced to the young people by the youth workers leading the group. From the outset, therefore, researchers were viewed as semi-authority figures alongside youth workers (less formal and authoritarian than teachers and social workers, but retaining the mentoring, supportive role of an older person). In general, the relationships between the young people and the youth workers were extremely positive, so, despite our connections with 'authority' we were, typically, viewed without suspicion. The research team attended events with the young respondents and participated in activities but remained in the 'caring adult role'.

2.4 Analysis

All the data was imported into NVivo 11 for coding, data analysis and concept building, and analysis was conducted thematically. The data imported was extensive and varied, and included: textual, visual and audio-visual material. Textual material was comprised of transcripts of individual recorded interviews and group workshops, field diaries of notes from the participant observation, notes of informal discussions and respondent memos. The non-textual material included all the creative work and audio-visual material produced by the young people during creative sessions and photo elicitation sessions, and the documentary artist drawings of sessions.

Our inductive, thematic coding linked the various forms of data (e.g. interview data with field-diary notes and respondent memos) to allow for observational and interpretative material to be included alongside the voices of respondents. Dominant themes centre on experiences of trauma and stigma as key factors in the construction and reconstruction of identity, and the varied responses of young people to their experiences, to stigma and to the barriers and opportunities to social engagement they are presented with. In line with a 'multi-grounded theory' approach (Goldkuhl and Cronholm, 2010) the theoretical literature provided the framework for our interpretation of the data. After coding, we interpreted the data against existing theoretical frameworks.

3. Key Findings

The following section presents the key findings of this study. Divided into 3 thematic subsections, it maps onto the key themes of PROMISE exploring questions of youth identity/representation, experiences of stigma and conflict, and young people's varied and sometimes unexpected responses to their perceived label. The many conflicts experienced by young people, and their responses to these conflicts are closely linked to young people's position as 'risky youth'

3.1. Identity and Identification

The young people taking part in this study discussed their identities during the interviews and as part of the photo elicitation sessions, and were keen to demonstrate who they are through their past experiences, their opinions and the various activities they engage in. These include individual and group identities and are deeply rooted in their biographical narrative. For some this is specifically linked to traumatic life experiences, while for others their identities are tied up with positive messages from their family and others who are close. For all of the young people their sense of self is strongly influenced by how they are perceived, and, importantly, how they think they are perceived, by those around them. Significantly, they all showed an awareness of some form of 'deviant identity' or label of troublemaker that had been constructed for them (Becker, 1963) based on various socio-demographic characteristics.

An overview of the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents can be found in appendix 1. This section fleshes out some of those characteristics that stood out, from the discussions, as identity-shaping, and draws on the experiences that young people see to be fundamental to who they are. These characteristics and experiences provide young people with a set of expectations and a blueprint for their feelings, actions and behaviours – a 'script for survival' (Rumgay, 2004), for example, being a young black male, a mother, or a gay black woman. They also form the intersection of multiple and complex inequalities.

3.1.1 Intersectional identity

Our burgeoning understanding of gender and intersectionality has 'much broader applications for wider social theory' (Walby et al, 2012: 224) and is helpful in considering the intersectional identities of the young people taking part in this study. Intersectional identity has a deep relevance for young people experiencing multiple inequalities in the ways they understand and portray themselves, the ways they understand their portrayal by others and the ways they respond to society. Of the 21 young people interviewed, 8 are black or shared heritage. Discussions around racial identity were linked closely with experiences as a 'young black man', a 'young, black woman' or intersecting with sexuality and family expectations. Most of the young people interviewed are growing up in an area where people sharing their ethnic origin are in the majority. They felt proud of their ethnicity but were aware of the inequality it brought, particularly in relation to targeting by the police. Experiences of perceived racist treatment by the police are discussed in the section entitled 'Stigma and conflict'.

There were a number of discussions about what it means to be growing up as a young black male, and the specific criminal identity that as attached to these characteristics. Brian discussed the difficulties he faced on the streets of his home town: on the one hand he wanted to cultivate a reputation as a man to be respected which would ensure he was not pressured by those around him. A reputation as a respected man of the street would protect him from others attempting to draw him into criminal or gang activity. On the other hand he felt that respect could only be earned through engagement with criminal activity which he argued was the best way of proving he was not to be messed with. This is a problem he felt is experienced by young, black males more than any other group.

Gaining respect was a key feature of the 'young male' experience(for black, shared heritage and white respondents) and became the subject of the rap song and video made at the YOT arts course. For most of the young people interviewed as part of the YOT course, respect was equated with being seen to be tough, engaging in criminal activity and being a member of a gang (Deakin et al, 2007). Being someone who could garner the respect of others (by being sufficiently tough) could be demonstrated through verbal and visible cues: speaking the right way (using particular words and phrases), wearing expensive clothes and trainers, and bragging about engaging in criminal activity. The video made by the young people (8 males, 1 female), using cut-outs, still and moving images and rap lyrics set to music, depicts tough images of young men in an urban environment, gang symbols and implied violence. The title of the video '8 caps, one barrel' refers to a gun and bullets, and the words '*I want respect, give me respect*' are repeated as a chorus throughout the song. These images of tough, street-based gang culture (with its associated wealth and glamour) may be far removed from the experiences of the young people we spoke to, but they represent an illicit aspiration that some of the young men in the group were impressed by and wanted to emulate (Deakin et al, 2007), and reflected a stigmatising image common in public discourse. The images, signs and representation of gang culture presented in the video, and the discussions of being tough and gaining respect on the streets were almost exclusively the preserve of the young men (of all ethnicities). With the exception of a brief reference made by one interviewee, the young women we spoke to did not express any interest in gang culture, street-based violence or gaining respect in this way.

Plate 4: Title screen of the video produced by young people at the YOT arts course

https://youtu.be/CY1BvwmQo04

Both male and female respondents projected a strong embodiment of their gender within their experiences. A number of observations about gender and sexual identity were picked up from the interviews and field note observations. These included gendered identity (as a strong, respected male or feminist female), sexuality and sexual identity, gendered roles (as a mother or partner) and gendered abuse. As discussed above, gender was not raised as a discrete factor in their identity, but rather viewed with an intersectional lens (Walby et al, 2012), as one of a number of important socio-demographic factors eg age, ethnicity or sexuality; and amidst a range of significant contextual factors eg living in care, poverty and disrupted schooling. Becki demonstrates a conflict around intersectional identity that arose for her from a 'clash of cultures':

> I am gay, but coming out was a big thing. Both my parents are from Jamaica; homosexuality is just not allowed in that country. Luckily enough, my mum has adapted and got used to like the more modern times. Whereas my dad's still in this cultural wave. (Becki, YOrg)

Two other female respondents, identifying as lesbian, discussed their pride in their sexuality and wanted to share their experiences of coming out, relationships with previous partners, and the importance of their sexuality to their identity. Jaq chose Miley Cyrus (an openly pansexual woman who is comfortable with publicly exploring her sexuality) as the subject for her first art task: 'drawing an artist you identify with and admire'.

For some of the young women, becoming a mother, and experiences of motherhood, were the key factors that they felt shaped their current identity. All of those who were mothers returned to discussions about their children and parenting experiences time and again throughout the interviews, and the role of mother provided a narrative script (Rumgay, 2004). The circumstances of becoming young mothers (all of whom had been in care) was, of course, different for each individual, however many respondents (in interviews and in the group photo sessions) discussed becoming a mother as one of the most significant aspects of their identity and their independence (overtaking any previous ambitions to attend college or get a job). When asked if she had an idea about training or employment she might want to pursue in the future, Sophie tentatively said, 'I

don't know, no. At the minute, I don't know like. It sounds dead bad but I'd like... I don't know, just I like it just being a mum, like. I feel like that's my life, do you know what I mean, like?' (Sophie, YCL)

The fulfilment of their responsibilities as mothers is felt to be a significant accomplishment for those who cared for their own children. As teenage mothers on benefits, they are positioned in a role that is socially frowned upon and, often, they are seen as problematic citizens (Kidger, 2005). Their success as mothers, seemingly against the odds, is a great source of pride that the young women in the YCL group talked frequently about. In the interviews and in the group session they discussed the struggle to stretch money throughout the week and their sense of achievement in the evening when their children are bathed and ready for bed.

However, motherhood did not always produce positive experiences or a narrative script. For those young women whose children had been placed in care (either shortly after birth or during infancy), experiences were traumatic and a cause of great shame and sadness (this is discussed below in the section on *Deprivation, trauma and the disrupted narrative*).

3.1.2 Deprivation, trauma and a disrupted narrative

Throughout the interviews young people discussed the various difficulties, deprivations and traumas they had experienced, and continue to face. Whilst not directly linked to PROMISE themes, these life situations and experiences are a critical part of these young people's lives: providing essential biographical and contextual information that directly links to their self-concept, personal identity and their ability to demonstrate agency and navigate barriers to social involvement. Trauma was discussed by almost all of the respondents, including: descriptions of traumatic experiences growing up in care, mentioned by most of those with a care background: the death of a parent, partner or close family member discussed by six of the young people; severe physical and sexual abuse or neglect mentioned by six respondents; and removal, by social services, of their own child, mentioned by four respondents. Many discussed how these traumas impact upon who they are, their choices, their life chances and their internal identity narrative. Many pinpointed the deep rooted influence of significant traumas in their lives and the long-lasting effects of trauma. For some, such as those who were taken into care, suffered abuse or experienced the death of a parent or partner, the trauma marks a biographical disruption, in other words, an interruption of the 'story of a life' (McIntyre, 1981), requiring a rethinking of identity via a new 'script for survival' (Rumgay, 2004)

Danielle, Samantha and Becki all left school or training because of a traumatic life experience such as personal ill-health or the death of a family member. They felt unable to manage school or college while coping with a range of significant and challenging life circumstance.

> I did half a year and then I just had to leave, it was just getting too much... 'Cause I found out my dad was dying and my sister was causing trouble for me. So I just couldn't, and there's no point in doing a course, what I couldn't just put my head down and do it. 'Cause I thought, I thought to myself, I would fail it anyway if I wasn't putting all my effort into it, so I thought there's no point in staying just to fail it. (Danielle, YCL)

> I left school 'cos .... my boyfriend got murdered, so I just, I just thought, 'Nah, I'm not gonna go back to school anymore.' So I just left. (Samantha, YCL)

Becki fell behind after suffering from a life-threatening illness. She was unable to attend school for some time and missed large amounts of teaching resulting in her falling behind and achieving poorly on tests. She responded to her poor grades by avoiding attending school as she felt unable to cope. This was compounded by a teacher telling her she would fail. These widespread experiences of expecting (and being expected) to fail are discussed further in the Structural Responses section below. In all of these cases, traumatic experiences disrupted the education and the life-path of these young people. These events disrupted the internalised narrative that they, and others around them, had constructed in order to make sense of, and integrate their past and their perceived future (McAdams, 1994; Maruna, 1999). However, these examples also convey some form of demonstration of agency in the young women's decisions to leave school or training (this is dicussed in detail, later, in the *Responses* section.

Of the 21 respondents, 9 had spent some time in care during their childhood and, at the time of interview, 3 respondents were living in care. Young people gave both positive and negative descriptions of these experiences of care, more commonly the latter however. Some found solace and support in the relationships formed with foster carers; others experiences conflict: this is addressed more fully in the section below. However, they all discussed some form of traumatic experience resulting from their time in care. Amelia's traumatic experiences in childhood (in care and prior to care) are mentioned in this respondent memo: 'She has been hugely affected by her childhood, most notably: abusive and neglectful parent; her self-referral into care; and experiences of rape whilst in care.' (Researcher notes: Amelia's Respondent memo, YCL).

An on-going feature of being in care, that was mentioned frequently as particularly traumatic, is the transitory nature of the care provided. Young people discussed moving between care homes, and moving between foster homes:

> I lived probably in about seven different foster homes, like being... 'Cause I lived with my sister at first and my brother, but then I got moved from there to live with my other sister and... Yeah, we all got split up. It's been quite sad, actually. It's quite a sad story. (Princess, YCL)

Sophie notes the effect that moving around so much in care had on her relationships with carers:

> Obviously like me growing up in care, I didn't really have... 'cause I was moved around and that, I didn't have like a set person that I could go to and know like trust in and stuff like, and listen to. (Sophie, YCL)

Sophie talked about the effect of two traumatic events: having her new-born baby taken into care the death of her boyfriend shortly afterwards. She described 'hitting rock bottom' and being knocked off track. These events presented a narrative disruption, in particular, disrupting the roles of mother and girlfriend and the script (for living) that these roles had provided for her (Rumgay, 2004): 'I think it was obviously when I lost my boyfriend and that, and everything happened like my baby got adopted and that. I think that was it like I literally just hit rock bottom.' (Sophie, YCL). She went on to describe a lengthy period of being 'a mess' and how meeting her current partner got her 'back on track' as she realised 'I need to sort myself out'. Meeting her new partner provided a hook for change (Giordano et al, 2002) and the circumstances for her to make decisions and move forward in her life.

For some young people, traumatic events could lead (eventually) to demonstrations of agency (as demonstrated earlier when Amelia self-referred into care after abuse at home). Danielle decided to cut ties with her mother after long periods of abuse and neglect.

> Social services took us into care … And then I went back home at the age of thirteen and they said, "It's not safe here." So I went back into care and I just thought, 'What's the point of running back 'cause she [mother] doesn't care, so I might as well just do whatever and keep away from her,' so that's what I did. (Danielle, YCL)

While typically traumatic events are associated with a disruption of agency, or some sort of block on agentic potential (Ataria, 2015), Danielle's story suggests that young people may not always experience the effects of trauma in this way. Her decision not to return to her mother represents a moment in Danielle's life that she presents as her 'own choice' based on an assessment of outcomes. She presents the situations as 'knifing off' (Maruna and Roy, 2007) a negative and traumatic part of her life (her relationship with her mother). Despite being in line with the wishes of the state via a court order, Danielle reframed her compliance as a decision-making moment.

3.2. Stigma and Conflict

Young people's own perceptions and understanding of their identity relate very closely to how they are perceived by others (as well as how they 'think' they are perceived by others), and the various conflicts that they experience. This section explores young people's *perceptions* of the way they are represented and misrepresented by authority figures and older people (including via the media), and the stigmatising nature of assumptions that are made, by exploring the forms, sites and agents of the conflict that young people face. It should be noted that some of these examples of conflict were experienced by the young respondents themselves while others reflect what they have heard from other young people or observed in public settings.

Experiences of stigma and conflict were frequent occurrences discussed widely by respondents. These took multiple forms and occurred at multiple sites (public spaces eg streets and parks, in school, in care homes, or in the family) and with multiple agents (police, social services, teachers, parents, other authority figures). All the young people described elements of negative relationships with people in authority. While these relationships are often complex, containing elements of support and care as well as conflict, this section focuses primarily on the conflictual elements (see the section on 'Young People's Responses' for a discussion of the complexity of relationships).

3.2.1 Older generations

The majority of young people felt they were labelled as troublemakers simply for being a young person in their local area, indicating the stigma and moral judgement that surrounds young people from impoverished neighbourhoods (Tyler, 2013). This stigma was generally felt to be instigated and perpetuated by older generations (including those from their own neighbourhoods), fuelled by the media, and centred on ideas that young people cause trouble, are disruptive or rude, and lack respect for others.

> Well, to be honest, there is a lot of negative stuff going around about young people nowadays, 'cause people say that it's all the young people causing all the trouble, but it's not always the young people. (Aiden, YOrg)

This stereotype of causing trouble or being up to no good extends to groups of girls as well as boys.

> If it's a gang of guys all stood outside, then somebody might instantly think, 'Oh, they're up to no good.' But even with a group of girls stood outside, it can be even like, 'They're up to no good.' Because it's in numbers I think. (Keira, YOrg)

Representations of 'young people as trouble makers' (Goldson and Muncie, 2015) was a particularly interesting area of discussion in many of the interviews. A few of the young people reflected on the fact that typical teenage behaviour could be seen as 'causing trouble' by older people. However, most felt that adults were too quick to call-out anti-social behaviour and that this prevented younger people from being themselves and having fun. This concept was represented in a series of photos from the photo session that took place with the YOT group in which the young people were asked to take a self-portrait that represented something about their character. Some of these photos (shown below in Plate 5) depicted young people having 'fun' in an anti-authority way, eg riding in a discarded shopping trolley or standing on a desk, and were intended to demonstrate the nature of the young people taking part. All of this behaviour was harmless fun in the eyes of the young people but could easily tip into anti-social behaviour for a nearby adult.

Plate 5: 'Having fun or causing trouble?'

Young people tend to be the most visible groups in our communities (Goldson and Muncie, 2015). With the reduction in youth club opening hours (one of the organisations had been reduced from 5 to 2 days per week due to funding cuts), young people have little option than to get together in

public spaces: on the streets or in parks. They are more visible to older people, some of whom find a group of young people intimidating. Many of the young people we spoke to felt they were seen as suspicious, by older generations, for being part of a group of young people, for being in public places or for the clothes they wear 'they always assume that young people, they're gang bangers [members of a gang]….but some of them just dress like gang bangers (Jo, YOrg). The majority of respondents discussed this (mis)representation of young people and how this can lead to unfair stereotypes that are applied to all young people. Keira linked this directly to the media reporting of youth crime:

> if people listen to the media and like the television, then they get their information from that, then they assume that, because one person's done one bad thing and has got into media because of it, that everybody else is going to do that. 'Cause it's like that stigma again behind teenagers, and that one representative versus everybody else. (Keira, YOrg)

On many occasions in interviews and though their creative work (such as the video) young people expressed how incensed they were to be regarded in this way. The theme of respect was significant for many of the young people and the importance of reciprocal respect (between generations) was highlighted.

Another, related, criticism raised in the interviews was the perception that older generations don't think young people are worth listening to. Many felt that despite significant life journeys, including narratives of trauma and survival, their experiences and knowledge are not recognised by older generations.

> They just see young people and think, 'They know nothing,' or 'They're too young to know anything.' A lot of us know a lot more than most people. We've been, lived through a lot more than most people and I hate that we get judged because of our age range. (Becki, YOrg)

A further example of this was the perception that older generations are scathing of young mothers, deeming them untrustworthy and irresponsible parents, and creating the next generation of problems.

> Before the baby's born, they say, 'Well, how can you cope when, when they're born, when they're five?' They're not even born. They're not even four years old yet. "Oh they have tantrums and stuff." Like, give me a chance to be a mum. I'm not gonna do like my mum did. (Samantha, YCL)

3.2.2 The police and the justice system

Given the representation of young people as troublemakers it is unsurprising that conflict with the police and the Criminal/Youth Justice System is experienced frequently (Goldson and Muncie, 2015) (and mentioned in almost all of the interviews, the group discussions and much of the photography and creative work). Much of the conflict centred on interactions between the police and young people in public places.

Young people in groups on the street are visible to the police, as mentioned in relation to older generations above, and they are therefore more likely to be targeted by the police for just hanging

out (McAra and McVie, 2005). This sense of a policed, controlled or even constrained use of space was raised by young people, both male and female, throughout the interviews as a key concern.

Of particular significance (discussed by the majority of respondents and with frequent references in interviews and discussions) was being seen as 'criminal' (Ralphs at al, 2009). There is a clear sense from the interviews that the label of criminal was associated with past behaviours (but could just as easily be associated with being a young person out in a public space, day or night). They felt they had been firmly, and indefinitely, labelled as troublemakers in the eyes of the police in particular. This label related closely to age, as many felt that, as a young person with (or without) a criminal conviction, they were perceived as 'suspect', not listened to, and not believed by the police: they were prevented from explaining their actions and felt they were judged as 'guilty' before any facts had been heard. Young people expressed an overwhelming sense of injustice when discussing their interactions with the police (Smith, 2012).

There were many examples of situations in which young people had felt targeted by the police in a public space. These ranged from officers asking groups of young people what they were doing, and moving them on, to accusing them of things they had not done. The young people felt they could not argue back without causing further trouble. These concerns seem to be almost universally shared by male and female respondents and were expressed in one of the videos produced at the YOT arts course.

Plate 6: 'He's a male in a police station': Still image from video and lyrics written by young people at YOT,
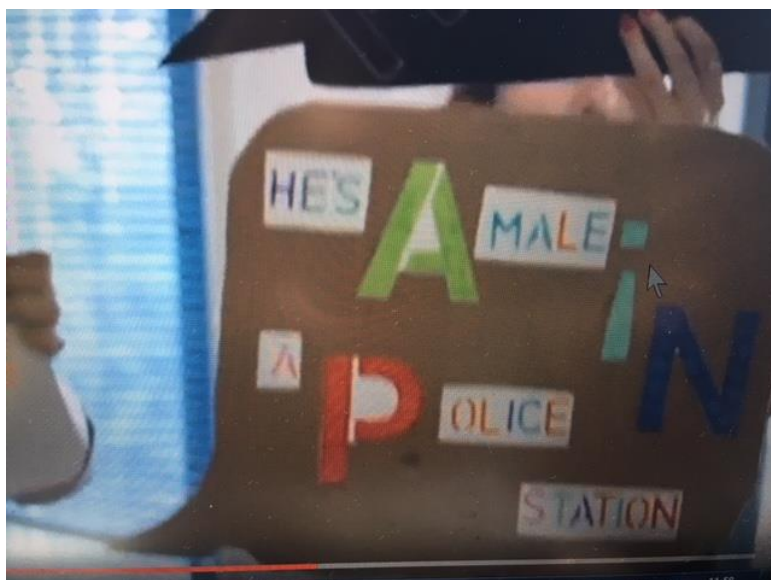
Verse 2
Person B
No name
He's a male in a police station
Locked up
By police
There was never any hesitation
Even though
Person B
Is in a tricky situation
He's stuck – in a rut
Just like the state of our nation

https://youtu.be/3mOUJmG9ClQ

Troy describes an experience of feeling targeted by the police as part of a group of young people out on the street which raises questions about young people's rights in relation to the ways that police officers engage with them.

> They [police officers] saw us on our bikes, yeah…. And they kept on like videoing us and that. And we were like, 'Why you videoing us? What we done wrong?' And they was like…. 'It don't matter what you done wrong. I can do whatever   I want.' One of my mates said, 'Would you like it if I videoed you?' And they …. drove off, saying, 'Watch it.' (Troy, YOrg)

Other examples of conflict extended to being wrongfully arrested, typically because of the young person's (or their family's) criminal past. Helen was known to the police as a 'troublemaker', frequently having to be returned to her care home after being caught causing criminal damage. Her previous run-ins with the police meant she was the prime suspect in any low-level criminal incident and her protestations of innocence were ignored:

> I'll never forget me and Catherine being done for a load of cars, smashing a load of cars that we didn't smash. We did not smash them cars. We was nowhere near the Estate when them cars got smashed. And we got nicked walking back to the Estate and got accused of smashing them cars, and we didn't even smash the cars. Which made us even more angry…. they don't believe you. Because with the record that we had, they just don't even bother even trying. (Helen, YCL)

There was an association made by several of the young people who had been in care between their status as care-leavers and police expectations that they will be 'troublemakers' who commit criminal behaviour. Young people felt the 'care-leaver' and the 'in-care' label was stigmatising, linking closely with the label of 'risky' or 'suspicious' (Taylor and Fitzpatrick, 2006). Many of the care leavers, even those without a history of criminal behaviour, had experienced this stigma. Those that did have a criminal record explained that it was very difficult to move on from criminal behaviour when no-one believes you can. Further stigmatising experiences in relation to care are discussed in the section 'The care system' below.

Some young people described incidents in which the police had used excessive physical force.

> I think it was when we'd kicked… off in the children's home, and we'd caused damage to the children's home. And the police literally pinned us to the floor like we were full-grown adults. (Helen, YCL)

Recalling several incidents of conflict with the police, Jo, a young black woman living in a deprived area of the city where tensions between the police and young people are high, discussed various incidents of excessive force, a lack of respect and heightening tensions. 'The police, they make everything ten times worse than it is….' (Jo, YOrg). Her examples highlight the difficult relationship between police officers and young people.

> They can tell you to shut the F up, if they want to. Like with no cares in the world. But if you was to tell them to shut the F up, that's one charge on your name. Or I don't think they should manhandle you like they do as well, especially girls. Because I've seen a police officer manhandle... a girl, like push her down on the floor like a man. I'm like, 'That's gonna hurt her boobs. You've got to be careful.' Like he pushed her down on the floor and held her there. She wasn't even, she wasn't even struggling. He was just panicking. I think he was panicking. He didn't know what he was doing. (Jo, YOrg)

The conflict with the police described by young people has, largely, led to a mistrust of police motives and their ability to protect this group of young people. There were two positive mentions of the police as supporters and protectors of young people, 'They're okay. I like some of them… most of them are nice, if they help you out.' (Troy, YOrg). However, the vast majority of discussions referred to conflict with the police characterised by mistrust, and a stigmatising agenda:

The police, I could never... if I, say for example, if I was arguing with Scott [boyfriend] and there was a big domestic or whatever like, I would not ring the police, like no matter how frightened I was. Because I feel like they are definitely against me, definitely like. I've had bad like, things with the police, definitely, had bad times. (Amelia, YCL)

A lot of bad people like come onto our estate, with like axes and that and chase us. But we don't tell the police. We just go home and tell our mums. (Troy, YOrg)

3.2.3 The care and welfare systems

Young people's engagement with the care and welfare system ranges from none at all, to short-term intervention, to a consistent presence of social workers throughout their childhoods and indeed for some, a continuation of this now they are parents themselves. Predominantly, this consistent presence is experienced by young people who are in care or have left care. Care homes and foster care settings were described as a site of conflict by most of the young people who were or had been 'looked after'. Stigma was felt strongly by those young people who had been or are presently in care (Taylor and Fitzpatrick, 2006). Some respondents discussed experiencing bullying at school on account of being in care, whilst others felt embarrassed for their previous or ongoing contact with social services, especially in the case of respondents having a child removed from their own care. Relationships with social workers were a major source of conflict for these young people. Most felt they were not listened to, judged hastily, or that social workers gave false promises. Care homes or foster care settings were presented as sites of conflict: care workers, foster carers and other young people were presented as the agents of conflict in these settings. Experiences in care included examples of conflict with care workers or foster carers as well as conflict with other children (in care homes, or in school, as in Samantha's case):

People were just taking the mick out of me, 'cause you don't have a mum, you don't have a dad who look after you. And so got really angry. And I will hit the teachers, and the police will come and talk to me and stuff.... 'Cause people just taking the mick out of me for being in care, so thought, 'Fuck it.' I just left" (Samantha, YCL)

Danielle, like many others, expressed feelings of not being wanted, of being in the way, or of being a nuisance, as well as highlighting other disruptive behaviours that she felt linked to living in care.

I didn't feel like no foster carer wanted me and I felt like they were just doing it for the money. So I was trying to prove a point of basically I'll kick off, I would go missing, and then one of my foster carers actually said, "Yeah, we have been doing it for the money." So I thought, 'Well, I'm not staying here.' (Danielle, YCL)

Social workers were another major source of conflict in the young people's lives, particularly affecting young people in care (or who had left care). There were many stories of conflict between social workers and young people whose families (parents and siblings, or children) had been split up by social work decision-making. Most young people felt that were not consulted in the decision that affected them, many of them hugely traumatic and life-changing such as being taken into care or having a child removed. They felt that social workers didn't listen, fobbed them off, didn't like them, or couldn't be bothered to help them. Many of the care leavers expressed significant concerns about the role of social workers in their lives, particularly in relation to judging their suitability as a mother. Having children taken into care was a source of great stigma and pain for many of the young women.

Feelings of being judged by social workers were common, with having a child removed set as the ultimate cost (Taylor and Fitzpatrick, 2006). Sophie discussed her problematic relationships with social services and shared her own story of being pregnant and having to sleep on the floor because the social worker hadn't arranged for the flat to be furnished. The unfurnished flat was then used as evidence that Sophie was not a fit mother and given as the reason for taking her baby into care. The child was removed permanently, something that Sophie says continues to 'break my heart' and she clearly views as a source of stigma and embarrassment. She keeps the situation hidden from others as much as possible in an attempt to manage the shame of stigma through concealment (Goffman, 1963)

> I don't tell people that obviously I had a baby that's been adopted; if anyone asks I've got two kids. And it sounds dead bad, but as soon as I say that, they're gonna be like, 'Oh...' they turn their nose up, like, 'Oh god. Why?' Do you know what I mean? And like they automatically think things and put things in their own heads. (Sophie, YCL)

A few respondents talked extensively about the transient nature of the support they received from other adults whilst in care (Taylor and Fitzpatrick, 2006). The numbers of people mentioning this in the interview are low, but the discussions capture something important about the contexts within which conflict can arise in care homes, and raises issues for the provision of care (Winter, 2015). As mentioned earlier, a feature of care provision is the frequent movement of young people between care homes and foster care placements. Coupled with the high turnover of staff in some care homes it becomes very difficult for young people to form meaningful relationships with care staff. Amelia talked about the difficulties of forming 'emotional' relationships with care staff and the problems this caused for her as a teenager.

> But then you don't actually get like the emotional kind of, like... 'Cause obviously when you go in care homes, like it's different staff every day and like, yeah, you get attachments to them, like you bond, but it's not the same, you know it's not the same. Especially when you're getting older and you're a teenager and like you can't have a stable relationship with anyone. So it's just emotionally not good, but I suppose it is better than like, being abused at home. But I suppose you get abused in care as well. Like, when I was about, I think fourteen, and I was in a care home and obviously one of the staff like, you know, I've had sex with him and yeah, so it's really bad. So even in care like, you can get abused, but I suppose…(Amelia, YCL)

In our much lengthier discussion both on and off the tape Amelia recognised that the sexual relationship she had, at 14, with one of the care workers, which at the time she saw as consensual, was driven by her need to build an emotional connection, but instead led to further conflict. The adults around her had failed to provide her with the emotional support she required making her vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. After leaving the care home, Amelia had reported the abuse, and at the time of the interview the police were investigating the case. Amelia's story highlights the importance of positive, meaningful relationships with care staff to help young people manage the challenges of care (Winter, 2015). The importance of relationships in helping a young person build agency and transformational capacity is highlighted in our final section.

3.2.4 Schools

The majority of young people described common experiences around deprivation and a frustrating lack of opportunity in relation to education and what they thought constituted 'a good start in life'. A key feature of their conflict-laden experience was disrupted schooling and exclusion, or a history of disengagement with school, training or work.

School settings were described a site of conflict by many of these young people, with some having been excluded permanently, attending Pupil Referral Units or accessing a reduced timetable in mainstream schools. Conflict, labels and stigmatisation were discussed as a key part of young people's educational experiences, and impacted significantly on their achievements academically; the label of 'fail' was presented as a barrier for their experiences more widely. This stigmatisation is exacerbated by the labelling nature of results-driven school policies that seek to exclude those children who are achieving lower grades alongside records of poor attendance and 'problem' behaviour (Deakin and Kupchik, 2018).

Many of the young people had struggled, or, at the time of the interview, were struggling at school. Liam discussed being excluded from mainstream school after attendance issues, and the ongoing problems he faces attending the Pupil Referral Unit.

> I was like, "You know what, fuck you, I'm not coming into your school." ….So I stopped going in and then the next thing is like…. "Right, you're being moved." I was like, "Well, fuck it, it can't be worse." Gone to it, it was all right for the first couple of week. And I'm thinking, 'For fucks sake … and then half the time you just don't wanna go in because it's either the teachers just fucking waffle on shit or students just say, "Oh, yeah, I did this last night and it was sick and we robbed a car."(Liam, YOT)

Clashes with authorities in school, combined with the label of 'fail' made for turbulent educational experiences for many of the respondents and many felt this limited their life choices for the future.

3.2.5 Peer groups

The context in which conflict arises with peers was discussed by half of the young people. This included discussions of who they are in conflict with, how the conflict arises and how it manifests. Chris talked about having difficulty controlling his anger amongst friends, particularly if a joke is pushed too far, or someone makes fun of him: 'I don't want to get in trouble, it… just happens sometimes. It's like someone will say summat and that. I'll just snap straight away and then just go from there. (Chris, YOT)

In many cases, peer pressure can contribute to conflict with authority. A common story was the negative influence of other young people from the peer group who encouraged anti-social or criminal behaviour, sometimes in exchange for approval or acceptance within the group. Jaq and Chris, for example, both talk about 'hanging round with the wrong crowd' and how this led to them being associated with criminal and anti-social behaviour.

> Because I was hanging around with the wrong people at the wrong time. I had the wrong mates, but learned from that….I had like, yeah. I had deffo the wrong mates. I had like a mint, I won't say mint, wrong gang to hang around with. (Jaq, YOT)

I got a police warning for being around with the wrong crowd, that people were doing stuff that I was never involved in, but I was getting cautioned for being in association with them people. So every time they'd done something, they'd try and put the blame on me. (Chris, YOT)

Marcus and Helen described how they tried to impress their friends and others around them by cultivating a tough image ((Taylor and Fitzpatrick, 2006; Deakin et al, 2007). Helen, in particular, describes this as a tactic to gain approval and get everyone to like her:

I'd just get into trouble really for... Basically, I think it was, I tried to stand out to other people, but I'd end up putting myself in trouble anyway. So I'd always get in trouble for it. I realised that you can't really do things to make other people happy. You just have to do what you want to do yourself, and then it'll build up that confidence more for you to join in with others and do similar things with them. (Marcus, YOrg)

When I was on my own, I was a lovely young person to be around, and I was very mature, and I was very capable; but when I was with influences, that all just went to the side and just a horrible [Helen (pseudonym)] came out….So it was literally, it was very peer, peer... I think I must, I must have just wanted to be liked by everyone (Helen, YCL)

Another example of conflict amongst peers was evident in one of the photo sessions (at YCL) as there appeared to be tensions between some of the young women in the group. This was one of a number of observations highlighting tensions within the peer groups. Charlotte had taken a photo of her mother's grave in response to the photography task 'what makes you happy?' The incident, described in the researcher's field entry below, demonstrates conflict and a lack of empathy from Charlotte's peers in what was supposed to be a supportive group.

Plate 7: Photo taken by Charlotte of her mother's grave: a place she feels happy

When it came to her photograph, she said, "I feel happy when I visit her. That's all I can say because I feel uncomfortable" and did not expand beyond this. I got the feeling that this discomfort stemmed not only from the intrinsically sensitive nature of the subject, but also from Charlotte's relationship with other members of the group. For example, when Mark (the photo-elicitation lead) said that it was Charlotte's turn to discuss the photograph of her mother's grave, two of the young people that I was sat with looked at one another, with one rolling her eyes and another saying, sarcastically, "Oh great". (Field diary observation, Photo session, 8th November, 2017)

3.2.6 Family

Family was the site of conflict for some young people. Some of those living with their family discussed long-term conflict arising from arguments with parents and siblings, but also accepted that this may be a normal part of family life. Jo spoke at length about conflict with her family over expected norms, in particular, her inability to 'fit in' (Jo, YOrg). She felt, as a proud gay woman with piercings and a shaved head, she was far from her (conservative, Jamaican) parents' and siblings' idea of the perfect daughter/sister. For Jo, the conflict that ensued had caused her to feel isolated from the family and to seek approval elsewhere (through dance and the youth organisation she attends).

Unsurprisingly, the majority of family-based conflict was experienced by the young people who were care-leavers, or currently in care: many mentioned an abusive family situation, often a past characterised by neglect and violence, involving a parent with addictions, before being taken (or sometimes, electing to go) into care.

> My mum used to drink and she smokes weed, and my dad drinks and, I dunno, I just, I think obviously they've not been, they've not been taught how to like love and like, you know, proper (Amelia, YCL)

> So my mum was an alcoholic, so she drank very heavily; and she was, dare I say, bat-shit crazy…. I was supposed to go back [home] to my mum; and she was supposed to pick me up from social services, and she didn't turn up (Helen, YCL)

From the perspectives of the researchers, these stories were deeply sad and frequently shocking to hear, but they were told to us in a 'matter-of-fact' way, displaying a normalisation of experiences by these young people, and perhaps also demonstrating a 'hidden resilience' (Munford and Sanders, 2015) to negotiate traumatic circumstances. Their experiences were almost always presented with a sense of moving forward, either as a learning experience that helped the young person be a better mother to her own children, or as a turning point, during which the young person learnt to rely on themselves. Making the most of a 'least bad option' (Aaltonen, 2013: 377) and how key moments of a young person's life can 'operate to expand or restrict life choices' (Munford and Sanders, 2015: 2) were key features of the interviews and are discussed in more detail, below, in relation to young people's responses.

3.3. Young People's Response

The experiences of stigma and conflict have prompted a variety of responses by the young people involved, from action and resistance, to apathy and withdrawal. These can be divided into those located within structural milieus and those playing out in personal contexts. Within both of these contexts there are responses that inhibit young people's social involvement and those that enable their social involvement. The majority of these instances (enabling or inhibiting) can be seen as a demonstration of young people's agency.

3.3.1 Agency in Young People's Lives

Agency is a key concept to unpack, in the case of young people's lives, as it is fundamental in understanding their broader social involvement and engagement. Further, it is an undercurrent to all of these young people's narratives. Socio-political debates on the constructions of human agency are complex and of course, cannot be tackled in the remit of this report, however Lister's

key tenets of citizenship and agency are particularly useful when considering the agency of children and young people. For Lister, agency encompasses the legal, socio-political elements of action, participatory practice and rights which critically "are the object of struggle" (Lister, 2007: 695)**.** This struggle for agency is an undercurrent of young people's narratives throughout the dataset, as young people's status as embodied agents is sometimes recognised and enacted, sometimes overlooked or constrained (Marsh et al, 2007). Understanding young people's agency is not straightforward, however key signposts of expressions of agency have emerged from their narratives within this case study. Broadly, agency is understood and presented by young people as power or independence, which thematically emerged in stories of respect for others, and being respected by others, peers and adults alike. Young people also expressed agency through attempting to take responsibility, for their own actions and futures, and for the welfare of others, such as friends and family. Moments of resistance, whilst also expressions of agency are, typically enacted, however, in less pro-social ways, through what would typically considered to be antisocial activities and behaviours. Responses of non-participation and apathy were also recorded and the conceptualisation of agency in this case study allows for the inclusion of these less pro-social responses (Ekman and Amnå, 2012; Amnå and Ekman, 2015). These (anti)responses are indicative of young people's voices and these expressions of agency are particularly important to record in circumstances dominated by conflict or trauma in young people's lives (Munford and Sanders, 2015). Again, Lister's notion of "struggle" (Lister, 2007: 695), is useful for encapsulating both 'positive' and 'negative' forms of social engagement and involvement (Amnå and Ekman, 2015) and is particularly relevant in relation to marginalised and criminalised young people. Young people's agency has been exhibited in both structural milieus and individual contexts in response to a range of experiences.

3.3.2 Structural Milieus

There are a range of structural milieus in which young people respond, in both 'positive' and 'negative' ways, to the various experiences of stigma and conflict discussed above. All responses can be seen as a form of resistance to the label and stigma they face: those we have termed 'positive' typically prompt mobilisation in young people, whereas 'negative' responses generate apathy and withdrawal. There emerges a parallel then, between these positive and negative responses, which present young people with barriers to, or opportunities for, social engagement and innovation within various spheres of their lives.

Barriers and Opportunities

Place and Space

Place and space emerged as a theme in young people's narratives in relation to where they live, spend time and how they, and others, perceive these places as well as young people's presence here. Understandings of young people's use of space are important in understanding their agency, as young people's "embeddedness in their local worlds" (Harris and Wyn, 2009: 327) offer key insights to their self-making, as well as opportunities for efficacy in everyday life (Harris and Wyn, 2009). As discussed above, experiences of conflict as well as misrepresentations and stigmatised identities are prevalent here and young people respond with a sense of frustration as well as resistance and resilience to these experiences. Responses to the place young people live in are mixed, with some feeling positive due to the sense of peace and quiet, whereas others report the negative impacts of anti-social behaviour and criminality in these areas. In relation to the latter however, some were resistant to misrepresentations of local areas, which they feel are perpetuated by the media in some cases.

'Cause like, obviously you get on the news it's like, "[local area 1] this, [local area 1] that" and then you've got a youth centre in the middle of [local area 1] where it's a load of kids that are probably outside smoking drugs and doing this, you know, fighting and, and then all you're thinking is, all that. Then it's just a centre of full of those kids, but that's not what this is. (Becki, YOrg)

Plate 8: I love Salford image

The resistance towards, and resilience despite, negative stereotypes associated with place are also present in some of the photographs produced during the photo-elicitation exercises. The images in Plate 8 and 9 represent young people's responses to some of the negative connotations they are confronted with and show that young people enjoy their localities, despite perceived or actual negative activities.

Plate 9: Litter vs flowers
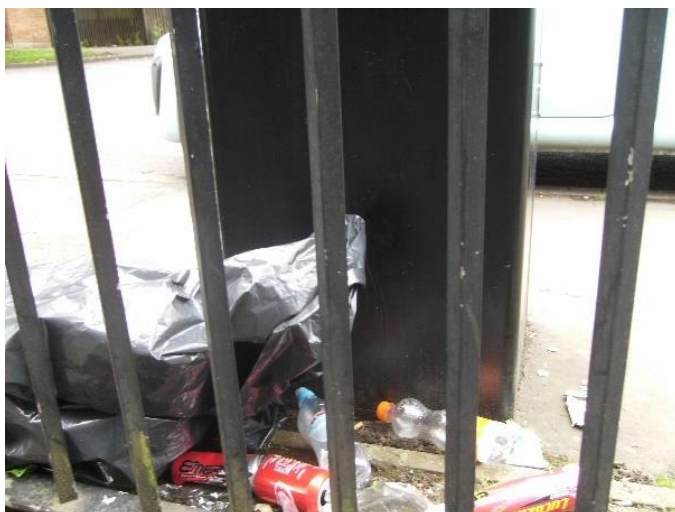
The class identity of the local areas in which these young people live are discussed in terms of poverty and lack of opportunities, particularly for children and young people. The responses to these experiences are ones of frustration, but also hope for a better future, as Brian explains: "the

kids out there, then it's either they could be in danger or they could end up doing that [getting a job], innit." Brian (18, YOT).

This sense of resisting, as far as possible, the negative impacts of crime in the area is mirrored in young people's resistance towards the constraints imposed on their use of space:

> So it's like, if you tell somebody that they can't go to a certain place, gonna make them want to go there more, rather than if they weren't told it as much, maybe they wouldn't do it as much. (Keira, YOrg)

Kiera discusses the overall sense that the more young people's use of space is policed or constrained, not necessarily directly by the police but authority in general, the more likely they are to respond with resistance or even in direct conflict. The formal or informal *policing* of young people's space is another key intersection with their opportunities for or constraints on their agency (Kennelly, 2011). Fundamentally, there is a sense of engaged frustration in response to young people's experience of space and place across the case study.

Knowledge and Learning

In this case study, young people's experiences of educational institutions and authorities has largely been negative, as discussed above. Understandings of education and learning experiences of young people are key again to their agency as typically, young people's identities are polarised as troublemakers or achievers (Narin et al, 2006). Young people's responses to their negative experiences (discussed earlier), however, offer a more nuanced sense of identity than the dominant perception of academic versus deviant concepts present.

Despite largely negative experiences in education, many young people respond in a reflective manner, attempting to carve out opportunities and compensate for low attainment by attending college, for example, or focusing their attention more closely on specific skills training such as mechanic courses.

> And then I done my college, my first year, which was my maths and English. And then I went, and my catering and I got a B Tech in my catering. And then I went on to my second year, doing my employability and everything. And obviously, I got the offer to do my mechanics on the side as well. So I did that and I've passed, I've passed it and I've passed my maths and English and everything. (Aiden, YOrg)

Aiden's response to a sometimes-difficult educational experience was to focus on aspects or specific subjects which corresponded to his key strengths, like many other young people did, such as photography and sports. For others, like Liam, the mobilising factor to achieve academically is evoking the pride of his parents, especially his Mum. This is particularly important when set against some of his less positive behaviours and actions (resulting in wearing a Home Detention Curfew tag):

> say if you got a good GCSE, you've shown the school, your mum, everyone, that you just achieved like, I don't know, a GCSE. So really, your parents are thinking, 'Well, going to school, you've paid off then. Not going to school, you've fucking come back doing nothing.' So it's what it is really. (Liam, YOT)

After moving schools, Jacob's positive response to education is prompted by the friendships and more supportive relationships with his teachers:

> It was brilliant, like it was all right, like. I got on with the teachers well. And I don't know like, I met new people. I just like, I don't know what I can say like. I just loved it. I loved my school (Jacob, YOrg)

This reflection is seen as a mobilising response and further, as a form of agency and resistance, in other words, attempts to prevent their negative past experiences adversely affecting their future. The friendships and supportive relationships with teachers provides the 'hooks for change' (Giordano et al, 2002) that Jacob required to move on from the problematic patterns of behaviour he had adopted in his previous school. In contrast however, others respond with a sense of inevitability or powerlessness; they feel resigned to the low educational attainment of their educational experiences. A strong sense of futility underpins Kade's response to his difficult educational experience: "I try my hardest and hardest but I don't know, I don't even know if I can do it" (Kade, YOT).

Further, in stark contrast to Jacob's positive response to his teachers, Becki resigns herself to the 'label of fail' which she feels has been imposed on her by her teacher, with little she can do to the contrary (Wood, 2016).

> … felt so degraded that I just felt useless and it was like, it's not even the way like, it was the way he was saying it as well, very direct like, "You're gonna fail," like. There wasn't like, "If you don't do this [Becki (pseudonym)], you're gonna fail." It was, "You're gonna fail," like and after that he didn't even seem like he cared. He was like, he made his judgement, "You're gonna fail," is there even a point in teaching her anymore? […]After that, my grades were a lot worse than they were before. I was skipping maths, wasn't coming in and I had to think to myself, 'Is it all because that teacher told me I was gonna fail?' I really thought I was gonna fail and really got my mind to the point where I was gonna fail. (Becki, YOrg).

Responses to educational experiences are mixed across the data. Positive responses, even when some of their experiences have been difficult, are typified by mobilisation to improve or please others. Less positive experiences have prompted a sense of powerlessness and a perception that young people are unable to make a difference to their own lives through education, a barrier they feel unable to navigate. In all responses, relationships are set out as a key enabling factor, as well as a key inhibiting factor, to young people perceiving and activating their agency.

Aspiration: Employment and Careers

Responses to discussions and experiences of employment are more often positive amongst the young people in this case study. Young people frame these experiences and respond to opportunities and experiences of working as chances to realise independence, 'normality' and see the economic benefits as offering them a choice, to an extent, as to how to spend their time and enjoy their lives (Bryant and Ellard, 2015).

> So definitely, I wanna get out there and meet new people, 'cause I'm just kind of isolated, stuck in all the time and it's boring and yeah. So I would love to have a job and earn money so then I can progress in life and, you know, get somewhere. (Amelia, YCL)

There is a clear sense from Amelia's discussion that employment is associated with independence and agency. Amelia is a young mother and she has ambitions to gain employment not only for the special benefits she anticipates, but for personal, professional and economic progression. Others, such as Finn, view employment as a distraction from negative behaviours and actions. He explains how his life would be different if he had a job: "just would, wouldn't it? I'd be working so I wouldn't be out doing daft shit" (Finn, YOT).

Young people distinguish between jobs and careers in their discussions and many have ambitions to pursue a variety of roles including psychologists, graphic designers, youth workers and firefighters. Stephen discusses his career plans and his pathway to achieving this:

> BTech in sports, level 3. Whilst playing football at the same time. […]Right now I'm looking to get a scholarship in America next year. That's what I'm looking for. So all that would help me get there […] I already knew what I wanted to do. I wanted to be a physiotherapist, so I thought I'd just do something in sport. […] So I can go uni, but I do need to get distinctions in all the modules and the sciency stuff. […] So I just thought stick to what I want to do. 'Cause that can get me where I want to be. (Stephen, YOrg).

A strong undercurrent of the realisation of agency is present in these responses to employment, and young people's plans for the future are discussed by them with confidence and excitement in the majority of cases (Bryant and Ellard, 2015).

Organizations, Support and Change

Young people's responses to the organisations they have contact with in their daily lives differs but can be roughly divided based on statutory compared with voluntary services.

Statutory services and youth programmes

The statutory services young people have contact with include the police, social services and branches of youth offending teams such as mandatory youth programmes. Contact with the police and judicial system more broadly is an overwhelming source of frustration for the young people involved. Resistance towards, in young people's opinion, unfair treatment and targeting by the police is encapsulated in a largely adversarial relationship with and positioning towards the police (as discussed earlier). Only a small number of young people saw the police as a source of support. Many reported being labelled as 'criminal', feeling this was unfair in the context of being young and are concerned that this would limit their future life chances. Jo expresses in her discussion of contact with the police, the reason many young people's reaction to police is that of resistance:

> Yeah, 'cause he was rude. He didn't have no manners. But then my mum always taught me, you always be... like show adults respect innit. So you speak... I was speaking to him like yeah, like I respected him. And he's speaking to me like, like he didn't respect me. (Jo, YOrg)

Fundamentally, young people feel that police lack respect for them which in turn, significantly undermines young people's agency within these direct interactions, as well as more generally.

This constraint on young people's agency is palpable in their discussions of their experience of mandatory orders issued by youth offending teams.

To be honest, when I, when I started my YOT order, I was thinking, 'Right, I'm just gonna get through this YOT order, be easier, quick and simple.' That's mostly my choice, that's what I, that's what I decided. But then I didn't know I were gonna be doing this with my YOT order. (Liam, YOT)

Young people's responses to and descriptions of these programmes is predominantly negative, sceptical, cynical and typified by resistance. Many report the programs as a waste of time and discuss the notion that they could be doing something more productive with their time which can be sensed in Liam's discussion above. At points, this resistance develops into refusal to participate, as exemplified in the below illustration.

Plate 9: YOT Illustration: "Do you want me to help you or go away and leave you alone?"

In the context of this case study, non-participation is taken seriously as an example of agency in young people's lives (Amnå and Ekman, 2015). Resistance or refusal to participate in activities represents an attempt for young people to experience power over their day-to-day lives. In the case of these youth offending orders, refusal to participate is problematic, given the mandatory nature of the programmes. Here again, this "struggle" (Lister, 2007: 695) is present as a way to understand agency in the context of young people's lives. Thus, the response of frustration to the point of refusal to take part is understandable on the part of these young people.

Whilst there is generally resistance to some of the mandatory programmes young people are attending through youth offending teams, there are some elements young people find interesting, or in the worst-case scenario, some aspects of the programme they dislike the least (Munford and Sanders, 2015). Generally, these are the creative activities including music and video production, poetry and artwork. During interviews, some respondents even expressed pride in their work here. The illustration below shows one young person enjoying a creative project as part of the youth offending programme.

Plate 10: YOT Illustration: "I'm getting into it!"

Social services and another statutory service some young people have contact with. As discussed earlier, young people's relationships with social workers, and the welfare services more generally, are inherently problematic. Therefore, young people's response to this is a sense of mistrust towards the workers and the services, as well as explicit anger, especially in cases where young people have felt judged or that they have been treated unfairly.

> I just don't like them…Because they just judge me. I think it's because my mum didn't look after us and stuff. So they're gonna judge me, aren't they, 'cause my mum and dad didn't look after us? So that's why I don't like them […] I hate them. I had loads in the past. Loads. In and out, in and out, in my life. So I just don't like them. (Samantha, YCL)

Such emotive responses are understandable in the context of some of the reported experiences with social services in this case study, especially when fears of having their own child removed from their care is viewed as the ultimate cost of these judgements by social services.

The mandatory and legal component of these statutory services presents a response to authority as constrictive and unnegotiable, whether this was the case in reality or not. The overwhelming response to the experiences with statutory services was that of refusal and reluctance, non-participation and apathy. While these are absolutely expressions of agency, these responses have negative connotations. The most pro-social responses of young people are found in the context of their encounters with voluntary organisations.

Voluntary Youth Organisations

Young people's responses to their experiences with voluntary youth organisations are overwhelmingly positive (Mason, 2015) and provide many of the much needed hooks for change (Giordano et al, 2002). Young people's participation in these related activities results in feelings of being welcome, specifically the shared experience, they report enjoying the freedom to spend

time relaxing in a youth-friendly space and feel respected and supported by the staff in these organisations.

> I don't know, but it's just nice to just... I don't know, I think it's just like socialising and like the kids love it. 'Cause there's usually like a lot of kids that come as well, so they all play together. I don't know, just have a nice laugh with them. I don't know, it's just chilled.[…] I just enjoy getting out and just like, I don't know, like the people. I don't know, it's just a thing innit? It's like, more of like a... I don't know. It's just nice with people, it's just a happy, it's a happy environment. Yeah. (Sophie, YCL).

Some of the young people spoken to, as well as attending these organisations, have developed voluntary roles within. Much of this generative participation sees young people seeking to benefit others in their communities or fellow peers through their actions (McAdams et al, 1998). This altruism provides a strong sense of satisfaction for these young people, and for some, stands to counteract some of the stigmas and misconceptions that persist about young people.

> I wanted to be a good person and help people. And helping people makes me feel good about myself, 'cause I know, I'm helping other people and making their opportunities better. (Aiden, YOrg).

Largely, young people's participation in these organisations can be seen as a response to the conflict experienced in other areas of their lives. These organisations, and young people's membership of them, are predominantly conflict-free zones (with some exceptions). They stand as contexts of support for these young people, where they learn about further opportunities, perhaps build new skills and build strong friendships with their peers and strong, positive relationships with the members of staff at these organisations. Time spent in youth organisations are not without restrictions, however, as youth clubs have been hit hard by funding cuts in the UK. Youth workers, despite being the authority figures within these organisations, are liked and respected by these young people. The relationships they have developed with these youth workers are the key to these positive responses. The impact of these positive relationships is unpacked in more detail within the context of the individual responses of young people.

3.3.3 Individual Contexts

Relationships

The relationships young people have with their peers, as well as adults, stand as the key contexts of support in their lives (Mason, 2015; Munford and Sanders, 2015) and vital hooks for change (Giordano etal, 2002). A key source of support is those voluntary organisations discussed above, which will be returned to shortly. Other sources of support have been found in peers and friendship groups, partners and family. As Troy explains, a positive home life results in his happiness more generally:

> My family makes me happy. […]just make me happy. Like when I'm down, they make me laugh. (Troy, YOrg)

For those young people who are parents themselves, their relationships with their children act as a mobilising force in their lives:

Like they've made me, they've made my life. [...]They've just made me like realise what life's like about. Like you can do good in life. Because obviously I've got them, so I've done good with them, do you know what I mean? So they've made me feel like I am worth something. (Sophie, YCL)

Despite a dominant theme of conflict in education settings, schools are also cited as a source of support for some young people, particularly on account of the positive relationships with teachers and teaching staff.

School, which was really good. And they supported me amazingly all the way through to year eleven. [...]Even when, like, they kicked me out so many times and let me back in. Even letting me back in just for one day a week, just to do the subjects that I enjoyed doing, that I believed in. (Helen, YCL)

The key response to these positive relationships is that young people feel able to build personal resilience alongside these supportive relationships. To return to the voluntary youth organisations, the support young people report here is fundamental to their everyday lives. This can be seen in the below exchange at a youth organisation, as the respondents describe their feelings about their relationships at this support group (Café Lime):

RESPONDENT: Café Lime is our family.

RESPONDENT: Yeah. Like here a lot, like everyone here, it feels at home. It feels like, do you know what I mean?

RESPONDENT: It's safe.

RESPONDENT: Yeah, you feel safe and secure.

RESPONDENT: You feel wanted (YCL Photo session discussion)

Other respondents, in individual interviews, specifically discuss the respect and equality present in the relationships between them as young people and the key workers of these youth organisations:

You're made to feel quite equal anyway. So like they don't, like the staff don't look down on you, like, 'We're staff and you're not.' They aren't like, they're on your level, do you know what I mean? They chat to you, they involve you. They're not like... they don't look down to you or anything. (Sophie, YCL)

Everyone that works here, I love them. Because they like show me the respect that... like I don't usually get treated with respect, so like it's a new thing. (Jacob, YOrg)

These relationships are some of the key contexts of change in young people's lives. The support received from these relationships helps young people to navigate many of the barriers they encounter in various aspects of their lives. Opportunities are seized through this support and for many young people, these supportive relationships help to prompt significant turning points in their lives.

3.3.6 Turning Points

Turning points represent junctures at which young people have made changes in their lives, on account of specific experiences or general changes in attitude or outlooks. Overall, these are positive, personal responses to sometimes difficult circumstances. The specifics of these turning point responses were varied across the dataset. Some specifically are prompted by young people's involvement with the judicial system as in Kade's case:

> Well, obviously, I regret it all 'cause now I'm in care. But when I go back home I'm not gonna mess it up. I'm not gonna get involved with the police again.[…]'Cause it's, I think it's just a waste of my time and a waste of the police time. (Kade, YOT)

Again, notions of independence emerge, as young people discuss general growing-up and maturity, taking responsibility, whether through parenthood, employment or leaving home and in some cases, going into care as positive turning points in their experience. Also, attending particular programs and organisations were cited as helping young people to navigate some of the barriers to social involvement they had previously experienced. Marcus' response centres on respect and maturity:

> I became, like, more respectful. 'Cause obviously, when you're younger, I would, like, if I was to be told off, I'd probably be a bit more disrespectful in a way. But as getting older, I just realised that, if I do something wrong, just like apologise and just respect what the other person's saying and just get on. (Marcus, YOrg)

Helen presents a particularly reflective response to her experiences, which have been quite difficult at times. Helen explicitly discusses feeling relieved and happy when she was moved into a care home after her mother was no longer able to care for her. She discusses, with determination, a sense of power over her future:

> Like, people can do it. Just because you've come from the past, it doesn't have to determine your future like that. That doesn't have to determine where you're going in your life. Absolutely not. (Helen, YCL)

Another specific turning point she describes, tying in with McAdams et al's (1998) thesis on generativity, is her career path as a youth worker: 'It's working alongside the people that used to look after me. It's good. It's kind of one of those 'Look at me now' moments.' (Helen, YCL)

Helen's sense of pride and satisfaction is obvious here. Each of the young people's stories of experiencing a turning point in their lives represents a sense of empowerment for them and having a sense of control over their future (Munford and Sanders, 2015; Bryant and Ellard, 2015). In other words, they have been able to navigate or overcome some of the many barriers which have been present in their lives.

3.3.4 Recasting Authority

A dominant theme present in the above structural and individual responses has been the struggle for agency on the part of young people but also their response to authority. Authority is responded to either in different terms, that is to say, authority is not always resisted by the young people spoken to in this case study. In particular, two examples stand out from the data. Firstly, Helen's experience of foster care (Bryant and Ellard 2015). As mentioned above, Helen was relieved to be placed in the care of social services. Whilst at times she experienced conflict with

some social workers, police and other young people in the care home, she described her experience of the foster-care system and particularly her foster parents, as a fundamentally positive experience.

> It turned around when they moved me out of the children's home and put me in foster care. […] So that was the day, that was the day it changed for me, absolutely, completely and utterly. […] So, it was scary, but it was good. It was, it was the... I had boundaries. I had, I had set things to do. I had, I had a routine. I had people that I had to answer to. I had to go back to school. Like, my mum didn't care if I went into school or not […] And at the home. They was dead supportive as well. […] I've been out for lunch today with my foster mum […]had a really positive time, so I'm really, really lucky. I'm really lucky […] Because they were, it was a family home, like. It was, it was a family (Helen, YCL)

Helen discuss the specific aspects of foster-care she found to be the most impactful in her life. She specifically highlights boundaries, routines and an overall structure to her life. As with the relationships with staff in voluntary organisations, Helen's foster parents are figures of authority in her life. However in these cases, relationships with authority have not rendered these young people as feeling powerless. A similar example is found in a mandatory youth program through the youth offending team in the illustration shown in Plate 11:

Plate 11: Documentary artist Illustration of a YOT art session: 'Oi, no swearing'

One of the young respondents is monitoring the behaviour of another young person, by reprimanding their use of bad language. Here, this participant is happily conforming to the rules of the programme, in other words, as in Helen's case above, enjoying the structure and boundaries of a relationship with authority.

A key undercurrent to the positive experiences, which have enabled social engagement and innovation in these young people's lives, are young people's responses to authority which 'recast authority' as reassurance not restriction, thereby providing a much-needed 'hook for change' (Giordano et al, 2002). Fundamentally, young people feel that respect is reciprocal within these relationships and responses to authority. These are flexible relationship, in which young people have freedom of expression and feel listened to. Here then, there is space for social engagement to be encouraged and for social innovation to emerge to encourage agency and support the key turning points in young people's lives (Nolas, 2013; Wood, 2016; Mason, 2015; Munford and Sanders, 2015; Bryant and Ellard, 2015; Lister, 2007; Ekman and Amnå, 2012).

4. Conclusions

This case study has explored experiences of conflict and stigma in the lives of young people, from 'disadvantaged' neighbourhoods, who are labelled by authorities, and through public and media discourse, as 'troubled youth', and are seen to be 'at risk' of offending. They are undoubtely the target of increasingly punitive and controlling policies and practices, from policing to school discipline, and this has resulted in a variety of responses from young people including various demonstrations of resistance: some that we have seen as enabling of social involvement (whether that's in line with, or against, the expectations of the state), and some that we see as a barrier to social involvement.

Our analysis has addressed 1) how young people view themselves through the lens of older generations 2) the modes, sites and agents of the conflict they experience and 3) what we can learn about, and from, young people's responses. The key themes of identity, stigma and conflict, and young people's responses are closely linked to issues of respect, relationship bonds and independence, and highlight the opportunities and barriers in young people's experience.

A key finding of this study is the perception amongst young people that there is an unfair/incorrect representation of young people by the media, older generations and authority. They feel that, as young people, they are judged by the mistakes of other teenagers and all tarred with the same brush. For some young people the process of conflict itself can be seen as a source of identity, particularly when conflict is in pursuit of greater independence on the part of the young person, or fighting against a label or some other stigma. Whilst not expressed in such terms, young people were aware of the constructed identity of 'the criminal underclass' that, through stigmatising language and ideology, are designed to exclude. They feel silenced, unentitled to speak and are aware that they are labelled as troublemakers if they try.

The majority of young people revealed an oppressive level of conflict in their lives. Conflict and stigma exist at multiple and overlapping sites and with multiple and overlapping agents. For example, a 'looked-after' young person may experience conflict with peers or teachers arising at school related to their 'looked after' status (or factors resulting from it). Similarly, they may experience inequality of treatment on the streets due to police targeting of young people 'hanging around', and they may also experience conflict in their care home after an incident of conflict with the police or at school. When the care home is not a supportive or enabling place to be, these young people are caught in a viscous 'chicken-and-egg' cycle of reaction and authority response.

The experiences of stigma and conflict prompt a variety of responses by the young people involved. Many young people, despite having had several difficult and negative experiences, report supporting relationships with some authority figures, encouraging positive attitudes towards, and hopes for, their futures. Whilst the experiences discussed above create many barriers for young people, opportunities are created and seized in a number of spheres. Conflict can be a spur or enabler to social involvement and personal change, and feelings of despair, injustice and an inaccessibility to power can be a route to alternative forms of action. In short, conflict can constrain or enable social engagement depending on a number of structural factors, social conditions, relationships (or lack thereof) and the actions of individuals.

For many young people, authority figures represent agents of conflict rather than support. However, discussions of the agents of conflict reveal complex relationships with authority (within certain groups, such as the police; and within individuals such as a particular care worker) involving a nuanced (and often confusing) mix of stigmatising and supportive elements. The

positive elements of support are fundamentally related to respecting young people as independent individuals and providing structure and guidance to allow young people to seize opportunities to realise potential, whether in relation to educational, employment or personal development. Relationships with those in authority provide a spectrum of experiences for young people: as enablers of change and innovation; as agents of resistance, or sometimes to further stigmatise and control young people, posing barriers to social engagement. Supportive relationships are a critical key to unlocking agentic potential and provide some clear pathways towards policy recommendations.

There are some clear policy implications from this research. Young people need supportive people and supportive places. The nature of those relationships and those places, and how they can be encouraged within the voluntary and statutory sector are important discussions to have.

5. Future analysis

Further research and analysis within the cluster mighty include:

1. A more detailed elaboration of the concepts of 'stigma', social abjection and 'trauma' and their correlation with 'agency' and 'response'. Is there evidence of intergenerational disgust?

2. Explore a narrative approach to the data drawing on McIntyre's notion of Narrative Unity and the notion of "a whole life" (1981, After Virtue) in relation to critiques by Rudd (2007)

3. Exploring the concept of agency, including an analysis of the uses of 'bounded agency' in which young people from marginalised communities seek out and grasp opportunities to demonstrate alternative forms of agency (see the work of Aaltonen, 2013; Allard, 2007; Evans, 2002; Shildrick and MacDonald, (2008); Munford and Sanders, 2015), and thinking about agency through the concept of 'hope' (Bryant and Ellard, 2015)

4. withdrawal, refusal, non-participation, resistance, retaliation, apathy and acceptance

5. Exploring relationships – what are the features of relationships that enable young people to achieve agency (as well as of those that inhibit)? How do these develop, how are they sustained and how do they support or inhibit young people? How is authority sometimes recast? What are the conditions of recasting authority?

6. Exploring support/interventions (voluntary and mandatory) accessed by young people: How does intervention encourage, support and facilitate innovation? In what ways does it operate as a site for change, innovation and resistance? Is there a sense in which intervention poses barriers to social engagement or further stigmatises?

7. Develop a theoretical construct of criminalised young people's responses to stigma and conflict. This would seek to describe and explain the range of responses from reaction to inaction, anger to apathy, and the contested concepts of resilience and resourcefulness.

   The elements we would wish to include are:
   1. Recognition of poverty and disadvantage, and poverty of opportunity.
   2. Breaks/ disconnections in a young person's biography / disrupted narrative. This would include a recognition of the role of trauma.
   3. The role of stigma, labelling and conflict.
   4. The role of relationships
   5. The impact of control.

Synergies with quantitative data from WP4 and WP5 include the following analytical themes and areas:

- young people's confidence in the justice system,
- young people's confidence and trust in authority more generally
- young people's engagement with the police and the social welfare system;
- the extent young people feel discriminated against and in what ways;
- young people's experiences of discrimination by the police and other indictors of relationship with authority;
- How trust in authority is related to forms of participation
- How agency (using measures of self-efficacy and self-esteem) relate to forms of participation/ social involvement.

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Appendix: table of respondents' socio-demographic data

Name and Organisation	Age	Gender	Education	Employment	Residential Status	Family Status	Ethnicity	Country of birth	Religion
Aiden YOrg	18	M	Currently in post-secondary vocational training	In full-time education	Live at home with parent(s)	Single	White	UK	No Religion
Amelia YCL	21	F	Left school prior to GCSEs	unemployed	Lives independently with child	single	white	UK	Atheist
Becki YOrg	18	F	Completed general academic secondary education	In P/T employment	Live at home with parent(s)	Single	Black or Black British	UK	Christian – Roman Catholic
Bradley YOrg	18	M	Full Time College	In Full Time Education	Living With Parents	Single	Mixed	BRITAIN	Christian (Other)
Brian YOT	18	M	Stopped attending school on a regular basis in year 8	Starting a new job the week after the interview took place	Lives with mother and one younger brother	Single	Black British	ANGOLA came to UK when he was 1 year old, moved to the area 5-6 years ago	Muslim
Chris YOT	16	M	Just finished final year of secondary school	None at present; no plans for future employment or education	Lives with Dad; no siblings. Mother mentioned briefly in interview	Single	White	UK	None
Danielle YCL	20	F	Left at 16	Unemployed, full time mum	Live independently with partner and children	Living with partner	white	UK	None
Finn YOT	17	M	Did not complete secondary education and left	Unemployed	Live at home with parent(s)	Single	White	UK	No Religion
Helen YCL	30	F	NVQ Level 2	P/T Youth Engagement Worker	Lives with her 3 children	Single	White British	UK	None
Jacob YOrg	17	M	Completed secondary school	Customer Service Apprenticeship	Lives with Mum	Single	Black or Black British	UK	None
Jaq YOT	17	F	Planning to start FE college	education	In care	Single	white	UK	None

Jo YOrg	19	F	BTec	Seeking	With parents	Single	Black	UK	None
Kade YOT	14	M	Attending a Pupil Referral Unit and transitioning back into mainstream schooling (2hrs a day)	/	Care home	Single	white	UK	None
Keira YOrg	16	F	Completed GCSEs in general academic secondary education; about to start 'A' levels at local college	Part time work at SM community partnership (where youth club was hosted) helping out with summer holiday club with younger children	Lives with Mum and 2 siblings (14 years, and 18 months)	Single	Mixed	UK	None
Liam YOT	15	M	Starting year 11 in Sept. Attends PRU (2nd one Liam has attended, having been removed from school and 1st PRU)	None	Care home	Single	White	UK	None
Marcus YOrg	18	M	Completed secondary school, currently at college	In College and working P/T in a nightclub	Lives with Mum	Single	Black or Black British	UK	Catholic
Princess YCL	20	F	Completed general secondary	In full time employment	Supported lodging-room in a family's house	Single	white	UK	None
Samantha YCL	24	F	Did not complete secondary education and left	Unemployed	Lives independently with children	Single	White	UK	None
Sophie YCL	23	F	Completed General Academic Secondary Education	Unemployed	Lives independently with partner and children	Single	White	UK	None
Stephen YOrg	17	M	Completed General Academic Secondary, Currently in college	In F/T Education but about to start PT job	Lives with Parents	Single	Black or Black British	UK	Christian – Other
Troy YOrg	13	M	At school	/	At home with mum and 2 brothers	Single	mixed	UK	Catholic

YCL   – young care leaver
YOrg   – youth organisation
YOT   – youth justice intervention

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No NEETS

Spain

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Executive summary: The economic crisis in Spain has led to a significant increase in the youth unemployment rate, meaning that many Spanish young people could not find a job (around 59.2% in 2012). The Spanish media in 2014 used for the first time the label 'NEET' to refer to those young people who neither studied nor worked, implying that they were the only agents responsible for their situation since they were too idle to get a job.

We wanted to explore the concept 'NEET' and see how young people from vulnerable backgrounds with irregular trajectories cope with their lives and socially participate through youth organisations. We conducted 21 interviews with young people participating in 4 youth organisations. All of them have had irregular trajectories in the past 2 years but at the present moment they were actively participating and taking responsibilities in a youth organisation. This stigma, as well as others we have detected ('too alternative' for young people fighting the system and 'migrants' for immigrants), made them feel like they were outsiders and, sometimes, led them to drug use. However, the young informants declared they have learnt a lot (either technical skills such as how to lead a meeting, or personal and social skills such as getting to know themselves or improving their social interactions) after getting involved in those organisations. These acquired skills empowered them to build their own projects. They also identified another key element in facilitating their involvement; the opportunity of build a relationship with someone else (whether that be a youth worker, a friend or a relative) helped them overcome difficult situations.

The results obtained led us to propose the concept "No NEET" when referring to young people with irregular trajectories in order to avoid the stigma associated with the NEET label and to emphasize young people's active role in society. The informants were not apathetic and passive but actively committed to contributing to society through the organisations they are part of.

Contents

1. Introduction

The present report presents the findings obtained after seven months fieldwork with young people in vulnerable situations, marked by their poor access to the labour market as well as the stigmatisation they experience for being either 'immigrants,' 'too alternative' or 'NEETS.'

The research is based on an inductive approach rooted in a critical adaption of the grounded research approach (see Introduction to D6.1 for further details). Below, we discuss the main topics of interest emerging from the fieldwork: young people and the labour market, marginalisation, and youth subcultures. We also present the research question that guided all the research.

1.1 Young people and the labour market

The economic crisis starting in 2008 has affected the entire Spanish society, but most significantly young people, worsening their already initially disadvantaged economic circumstances. Spanish youth (aged <25) unemployment has doubled from around 20% in the 2000-2007 years to above 40% since 2008, clearly deviating from the EU-27 average (21%) (Eurostat, 2018), and exceeding 50% in 2012, only behind Greece in Europe. Below, we show a table that compares data on the Spanish youth population, youth employment and participation in formal and non-formal education. As we can see, youth unemployment and participation in formal and non-formal education have increased since the beginning of the economic crisis, which is consistent with Rahona's (2009) theory that participation in education increases in times of high youth unemployment but decreases in times of general unemployment.

Table 1. Youth unemployment and participation in education 2007-2016

	Youth population (15-29 years old) (1)	% unemployed (15-29 years old) (2)	% self-employed (15-29 years old) (3)	Formal/non-formal education (15-24 years old) (4)
2007	8,864,390	18.1	3.87	58.82
2008	8,819,170	24.5	3.61	58.99
2009	8,620,383	37.7	2.81	60.74
2010	8,320,653	41.5	2.50	63.63
2011	8,022,276	46.2	2.38	65.25
2012	7,769,138	59.2	2.47	67.53
2013	7,508,878	55.5	2.49	68.90
2014	7,264,495	53.2	2.62	70.94
2015	7,112,935	48.3	2.65	72.06
2016	7,030,427	44.4	2.43	73.00

Sources: (1): Data from Eurostat 'Population on 1 January by age group, sex and NUTS 2 region' [demo_r_pjangroup] Extracted on 21.07.17, SEX Total, AGE From 15 to 19 years + From 20 to 24 years + From 25 to 29 years (the sum was calculated by the authors), UNIT Number, TIME 2007–2016. (2): Data from Eurostat 'Unemployment rates by sex, age and NUTS 2 regions (%)' [lfst_r_lfu3rt] Extracted on 21.07.17; AGE From 15 to 24 years, SEX Total, UNIT Percentage, TIME 2007–2016. (3): Data from Eurostat 'Youth self-employment by sex, age and educational attainment level' [yth_empl_040] Extracted on 21.07.17, SEX total, AGE 15–29 years, GEO Spain, UNIT: thousand) converted into percentages by the authors using the total youth population from source 1. (4): Data from Eurostat 'Population by sex, age and participation in education and

training (last 4 weeks) (1 000)' [lfsq_pgaied] Extracted on 21.07.17, SEX Total, AGE From 15 to 24 years, TYPTRAI Formal and non-formal education and training, UNIT % (calculated by the authors using the total population 15–24 years from source 1 and the yearly averaging of the four given quartals), TIME 2007–2016

The number of Spanish youth (16-29) who became unemployed during the hard years of the crisis, between 2008 and 2012, constituted the clear majority of all those who lost their jobs in Spain during that time (Rocha, 2012). Avalot (2015), the youth organisation of the Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT) syndicate, shows that 90% of the work contracts made with people under 30 were temporary, while 6 out of 10 were for less than a month. In this context, Avalot calls this phenomenon 'youngster from month to month,' stating that young people in Catalonia cannot make plans further than one month into the future due to their lack of stability. The same is true in the rest of Spain. Serracant (2012) identified different structural forces such as globalisation, the economic crisis and labour market flexibilisation as causes of this situation and highlights how this precariousness has a strong effect on youth transitions into adulthood. Beyond the average percentages, young people belonging to more vulnerable groups suffer much more from difficult scenarios, and the cuts in main welfare policies are badly affecting vulnerable young people in Spain. For example, young people in Spain are the age cohort with the highest probability of living in a household where no one has a job (European Commission, 2016).

In 2011, 21.7% of young people in Spain aged 15-24 were not in employment, education or training, a rate that decreased in 2016 to 14-17%[1] (Eurofound, 2012, 2016). They were labelled NEETs ('Not in Education, Employment, or Training'), being the first time that the term was used in Spain. The media contributed to stereotyping and stigmatising these young people as passive. For instance, Carmen Pérez, an El País reporter, labelled José Luis Flores *apathetic*, describing him as a 23 year old young man who has 'spent the last three years either in his bedroom or the living room' (Pérez, 2014). The political discourse in Europe is marked by a tendency to adapt young people to a labour market that is perceived as a fait accompli and to construe employability, activation and labour market mobility as the solution for youth unemployment (Lahusen, Schulz, and Graziano, 2013). All three terms clearly ascribe the responsibility for unemployment to the young people who have to be employable, active and mobile, resulting in the stigmatisation of young people who did not meet these criteria. However, subsequent research found a different situation when assessing this category and revising the statistics criteria, with actual NEETs being below 2% of the youth population, depending on how they are defined (Navarrete 2011; Soler, Planas and Feixa, 2014). Therefore, there is some statistical inaccuracy in the label 'NEET', since young people on a gap year or engaged in child care technically would count as NEET but would not match its definition.

1.2 Youth at the margins

Young people became an object of study after the Second World War, when consumer society consolidated youth as a market niche to target policies and marketing campaigns (Sánchez and Hakim, 2014). Since then, states have designed specific policies for young people, but they often are peripheral and do not have a real impact on the main problems affecting young people

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[1] The last study made on European NEET was conducted by Eurofound in 2012, since then there is no specific data on NEET youngsters are in Europe, only approximations.

(education, labour market and housing). Walther (2006) analysed the balance between public policies and family and observed that, among Mediterranean countries, families tend to be responsible for compensating for the lack of public policies. In times of economic crisis, differences in young people's economic status are wider; their welfare depends on what their families can do for them to make a difference in their present (as being part of society or being at the margins) and their future (according to the educational opportunities they can have in their youth). Therefore, young people from more vulnerable family backgrounds will have a specific socialisation process that might lead them into fewer opportunities than young people from more affluent family backgrounds.

When talking about the socialisation process, it is important to mention Durkheim's (2001) concept of 'anomie'; an individual state of not being fully developed because the person has not accepted and integrated the rules that society has created in order to regulate collective and individual behaviour. Merton (1957) links this concept to a broader approach that includes cultural traditions and relations among means and purposes. Merton proposed five different categories of individuals in terms of their relationship with societal norms. The first category is 'conformists,' individuals who respect the established means to achieve their own goals, contributing to social stability. The second, 'innovators,' accept the ends but not the means, transgressing the accepted means in order to achieve their goals. The third, 'ritualists,' are individuals who reconsider what is success according to their own purposes and happiness, but still engage in ritual practices society deems important to pursuing success (e.g. attending college). The fourth, 'retreatists,' are individuals who refuse both social means and purposes and isolate themselves from society. Finally, 'rebels' are people who both refuse social means and purposes and try to push society towards new ones.

Traditionally, social change has been linked to youth. This association has its origins in the early 20th century, when Mannheim (1991) proposed the theory of generations. He argued that youth, as a generation, represents values of social change and progress, while adults, particularly the elderly, represent traditional values. The implication is that young people from each generation are the leaders of social change at any given time. Since then, agency, social change and innovation have been topics of deep interest in youth studies, being conceived as one of the main branches of knowledge. However, as Durkheim and Merton had pointed out, there have always been some young people who get involved in innovative organisations and others who do not. Some of the most recent studies on the topic have detected two important variables affecting the reasons why a youngster would be more or less willing to take part in organisations for social change. The first one is family: those parents who are more present at children's schools and are socially active (getting involved in neighbourhood activities, in social clubs, etc.) have a positive influence on young people's social participation since parents' social involvement is a source of social capital for their children (Chan and Elder, 2001; Matthews *et al.*, 2010). In this way, family and home-related aspects have an influence on how young people become integrated into the central spaces of social life and awaken their interest in society and politics (Benedicto and Moran, 2007). The second influence is youth policies; the social space that young people have within society (which is determined by youth transition regimes) shapes their practices and constructs a cultural model that frames young people's psychological orientation (Walther, 2006). Therefore, the context in which young people live plays an important role in defining the opportunities young people have to socially participate (Solé-i-Martí and Ferrer, 2015).

1.3 Youth subcultures

Youth subculture is one of the three main topics of research in youth studies (Johansson, 2016). The study of youth subculture examines how young people contribute to social change by devising new ways of socially organising themselves. In some cases, this innovation implies an intergenerational conflict between young people and adults:

> 'Youths' socially transgressive actions may be understood not simply as culture-specific manifestations of psychological distress but more importantly as critical cultural practices through which young people display agency' (Bucholtz, 2002: 531).

Young people use different symbols and cultural manifestations in order to identify themselves as a specific youth group, usually called an 'urban tribe.' These everyday expressions are a way that they have to express their ideas, to shape their symbolic power and create a communication space (Mead, 1973: 47), and it is also a 'strategic action that seeks distinction from other youth groups' (Bourdieu, 1985: 267). However, there are more implications of the urban tribe analysis. Hall and Jefferson (1993) approach urban tribes as a power war between the 'parent culture' (represented by adults) and the subordinated class (represented by young people). Young people wish to resist class oppression by distinguishing themselves from adults and their system but, in fact, they are often stigmatised by adults, which ends up reinforcing that class-based oppression (Willis, 1981).

1.4 Research question

Those young people who do not find their place or cannot access either in formal employment nor formal education, or less prescriptive trajectories might be part of the solution to their social engagement. This can be through access to different mixes of intermediate structures such as family, ethnic communities, and local and youth associations (Eseverri Mayer, 2015). These alternatives involve a broad understanding of human and social capital, following authors such as Coleman (1990), according to whom, human capital includes skills and capacities acquired through education or experience, but is not limited to formal academic education.

This article aims to explore the importance those intermediate structures (especially soft institutions) have for young people with irregular trajectories. We focused our fieldwork on understanding how young people labelled as NEET satisfy their basic needs as well as their need for belonging and participating within society. To do so, we interviewed 21 young people from vulnerable backgrounds (including young immigrants as well as young people born in Spain) who participate in youth organisations.

The research aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- Describe how young people from vulnerable backgrounds cope with their lives
- Describe what stigmas or discrimination young people experience
- Identify the key elements that help young people from vulnerable backgrounds overcome their situations

2. Methods

The paper is based on qualitative information obtained from seven months of ethnographic fieldwork (from June to December 2017). During this period of time, we gathered data using three different research methods: participant observation; semi-structured interviews; and collection of written and visual material.

Following the PROMISE guidelines, in the beginning, we looked for organisations founded and run by young people in a vulnerable social situation that associate themselves in order to cope with their situation and find a way to transition into adulthood. However, after four months of not being able to find a group that matched the initial guidelines, we decided to look for organisations that, although they were not founded and run by young people in a vulnerable situation, were set up to help such young people. Therefore, we made a call to all Spain National Policy and Practice Network (NPPN) members as well as searched for Internet organisations made by and for young people that share the objective of improving their social situations (for instance, by helping them to get work permits or by helping them to build a leisure program in the neighbourhood). It is important to note the intention we had when we chose our sample—we chose youth in vulnerable situations regardless of whether they were native-born. Consequently, 14 members of the sample were not born in Spain and have had problems acquiring work permits and accessing the labour market; and seven were young people born in Spain who live in a vulnerable context and are part of organisations that aim to offer leisure alternatives to young people.

The study is based on information obtained through participant observation and through interviewing young people involved in four organisations. (Below is a brief description of the organisations. We have deleted the organisation and participants' names in order to preserve the anonymity of the informants, instead we have assigned them numbers). All of these organisations are based in Barcelona.

1. **Organisation 1:** Its purpose is to enable people without work permits to take a course to become waiters or cooks. The organisation also allows them to do an internship where some of them end up being employed. We had access to the organisation through a member of the NPPN, and interviewed five young people involved in this organisation.
2. **Organisation 2:** Its purpose is to help young people in a vulnerable situation. They have different programmes but we focused on the youth centre and the supported housing for young peoplethey have. We interviewed nine young people involved in this organisation (seven from the youth centre and two from the supported housing for young people). We had access to the organisation through a researcher from our institution, IGOP.
3. **Organisation 3:** This is a consolidated self-managed youth club where young people decide on the youth workers they employ, the activities they do for the young people, and the activities they do to engage with the neighbourhood. We obtained access to the organisation by searching online for self-managed youth clubs in Barcelona and contacted them. We interviewed three young people associated with this organisation.
4. **Organisation 4:** This is an emerging self-managed youth club. They are completing all the bureaucratic paperwork to consolidate themselves as a youth organisation with some help from the Council. We had access to the organisation through a worker at the Youth Services department at the Barcelona Council who is working with self-managed youth organisations. We interviewed four young people from this organisation.

It is important to note that access to the informants has not been easy. On the one hand, we had some issues constructing the sample; as a result, 75% of the informants in this sample were male.

Despite extensive fieldwork, it has been very difficult to gain access to more females. In Organisation 4, there were no females, and sometimes they were involved in organisations that did not fit with the sample criteria of having irregular trajectories. On the other hand, we needed several days of fieldwork with different organisations in order to negotiate conducting interviews. We believe that this is because the studied group has been researched intensively in recent years in Spain, when academia became interested in knowing how people from vulnerable neighbourhoods were coping with the economic crisis and in understanding why self-management grows in importance in those contexts. In other contexts in which young people in a vulnerable situation used the services of an organisation (either because they did not have work permits or because they suffered from domestic abuse), we have found that often workers, aiming to protect young people, have hindered us from contacting them directly. However, after several meetings with them and after intense fieldwork, they finally agreed to give us permission to interview young people.

After building trust with the organisations and the young people involved, we were able to carry out the fieldwork and utilise three research methods to gather data: participant observation, semi-structured interviews and collection of written and visual material. Details of these methods are found below.

2.1 Participant observation

We conducted participant observations - a total of 120 hours - in all the organisations. The activities we have observed vary for each organisation. For Organisation 1, we participated in the open café they have where young people enrolled in the waiter course do their internship, and where some of them end up working after finishing the course. For Organisation 2, we participated in a youth summer camp in the Pyrenees, and participated in everyday life of the youth club. For Organisation 3, we sat in the open room the youth club has where anyone can go and hang out with other young people. For Organisation 4, we were unable to do any participant observation since they did not have a place to do their activities.

2.2 Semi-structured interviews

We conducted 21 in depth interviews with young people from the four above mentioned organisations (see Appendix 1 to see more information about the informants' sociodemographic profiles). The interviews were structured by five topics of interest: socio-economic background; how, why and when did the young person get involved in the organisation; information about the organisation and the young person's role; how the organisation has impacted him or her and t wider society; and the main problems young people are facing nowadays in Spain. The interviewer shaped the interviews according to the interviewee responses. Therefore, although all the interviews share the same structure, the information obtained varies between the interviewees depending on what she or he emphasised and the resulting differences in the interviewer's questions.

The interviews are, on average, 1 hour 15 minutes long and took place at the location of the organisations they are involved in, except for participants in Organisation 4. Since the latter did not have a place to meet, we conducted the interviews in a café in the neighbourhood where they live. We gave information about our research to all the informants. They also were aware of the data management process and all of them gave consent to be recorded by the interviewer. Three informants were under 18 at the moment of the interview so we asked for, and gained, parental consent before interviewing them.

We also conducted peer-to-peer interviews (see Introduction to D6.1 for details of this method) at Organisation 1. Some of the young people attending the organisation were interviewing other youngsters, becoming researcher assistants to the investigation. These interviews are still ongoing and have not been analysed for the purposes of this report. They will be analysed in the following months and be incorporated into the dissemination stage of research.

2.3 Written and visual material

We held a competition open to any young person from 15 to 30 years old living in Spain to tell us about the problems they face as young people and how they cope with them in their everyday life. The competition was open from the 6th to the 28th of February 2018 and welcomed videos, photos, texts or audios. We received four contributions that have been included in the data collected and have been analysed in this report. There is going to be a second call for contributions during summer 2018.

All data collected from these three research methods have been analysed using software Nvivo 11 following a standardised skeleton coding tree shared by all the PROMISE researchers (see Introduction to D6.1 for more details). We did not need to include any extra nodes from the standardised coding tree.

3. Key Findings

We have structured the findings obtained in the fieldwork around five themes. First, empowerment and organisations, where we analysed the correlation between how empowered the youngsters are and the level of agency they have in the organisations. Second, stigmatisation, where we show what young people feel society thinks of them. This leads to the third theme, outsiders and drugs, which shows how stigmatisation makes them feel somewhat outside of society and how this feeling sometimes leads to drug use. Fourth, how some youngsters— especially those born abroad—reproduce the hegemonic discourse as a strategy to become more integrated into Spanish society. And finally, we discuss an element that has been key for most of the informants in order to overcome their vulnerable situation: relationships (a relationship with either someone who has experienced the same as them before and becomes their mentor, or a youth worker who becomes a positive influence on them).

3.1 Empowerment and organisations

From April to September 2017, we were actively looking for organisations created and led by young people from vulnerable backgrounds that aimed to improve their situations. However, it was not easy. We finally found four organisations that matched PROMISE guidelines, but only two of them (Organisation 3 and Organisation 4) were fully created and led by young people; the other two organisations (Organisation 1 and Organisation 2) were created and led by adults but offered services to young people in vulnerable situations.

The main difference between the two types of organisations was the young people's profile. While young people from Organisations 3 and 4 were born in Spain and had some life security (lived with their parents and had the opportunity to study), young people from Organisations 1 and 2 were born abroad (outside the European Union) and did not have the same level of life security as youngsters from Organisations 3 and 4 (either because they did not have work permits and could not study or work or because they were alone). This difference might be the reason why some of the young people decided to start an organisation on their own and others decided to join an

existing organisation. Young people with a lower level of life security are more worried about how they can satisfy their basic needs, such as a place to stay or a job that pays the bills, than their participation and social involvement needs, tending to engage in organisations that help them overcome their vulnerable situations rather than building one on their own. Therefore, the reasons why young people became involved in the organisations differ. People from Organisations 1 and 2 tend to learn about the organisations through social services, through other NGOs working with migrants or through word of mouth from other young people involved in the past:

> [young people] arrive channelled by other social entities such as [name of an NGO] and others in the neighbourhood, we always work within this network. There are also people who come through social workers; we also try to welcome them little by little. (102)

On the other hand, people from Organisations 3 and 4 tend to be more active in the organisation. Subject 106, from Organisation 4, explained how the organisation was born and the role they had in it:

> We were in a play centre. Since we were under 16 years old, we were in a play centre that belongs to the town hall but is managed by a private company. It's a public facility but… what happens? Once you turn 16, you cannot do activities anywhere.
>
> **Interviewer:** There is no youth centre in the neighbourhood?
>
> There is nothing in [name of the neighbourhood]. So… we did not have anything in the neighbourhood and we said 'okay, we are going to set up an association!' (106)

Therefore, young people's profile links into their level of empowerment. Those who are not worried about their everyday life because they have a minimum level of life security tend to be more empowered than those with lower levels of life security. This difference also has an impact on the way young people participate in the organisations. Young people from Organisations 3 and 4 tend to be managers of the organisation and even bosses of the adult youth workers who work there:

> If now a guy who is very motivated with rap arrives then… hey, let's put on something, you know? Well, [the activities we organise are] up to the people [attending the organisation]. When we were organising activities, we were doing a lot of make-up workshops ... now that it is mainly boys coming there are more foosball tournaments, you know? […] It depends on the people, it depends on the demand. But what is really cool about 'espai de trobada' [meeting room] is that if it can be done, it is done, you know? Here you can fulfil your dreams about activities you want to do. They also teach you how to take care of a bar in a concert, to contact musicians... it's cool! It gives you ... well, total self-management! (119)
>
> We are the bosses! For instance, if the management committee one day, obviously with a justification, but if it decides that [youth worker name] should not continue working at the organisation, then she should leave ... you know? These decisions are not taken by the Town Hall or anyone else but us. (119)

And young people from Organisations 1 and 2 tend to be recipients of services offered by the organisation. However, when they feel stable at the organisation, they usually want to be part of it and start getting involved in the organisation's management. Young people from Organisation 1 start proposing dishes or drinks from their country of origin to add to the restaurant menu, and young people from Organisation 2 start proposing activities or discussing ways to improve the organisation. For instance, youth workers from Organisation 2 designed an activity where young

people involved in the organisation had to make groups and create a political party; then they ran elections and the winning party helped youth workers run the organisation during the following academic year. Subject 116, one of the youngsters from the winning party, explains how important it was for him to be part of the winning party:

> We got along together really well, we made trips to discuss things about the Organisation and we controlled a bit the Organisation since we organised activities in order to help [youth worker's name]. (116)

In addition, young people from Organisation 2, who were living in supported housing for young people, had to coordinate themselves with other flatmates and take responsibility for domestic tasks, which enabled them to become more independent than young people living with their parents. They gained competencies such as organisational or social abilities that empowered them in ways that young people from safer contexts would not be.

Young people involved in Organisation 2 got involved in two other activities: football; and creating a short video. All of these activities helped young people develop capacities for autonomy, responsibility or commitment, which made them feel more capable, increased their self-esteem and made them feel part of something bigger.

3.2 Stigmatisation

All young people interviewed have been stigmatised at some point in their life, although for different reasons: being immigrants; being part of an urban tribe; or taking part in an alternative youth club.

3.2.1 Immigrants

Some of the informants explained how society has stigmatised them for being immigrants (linked to a different colour of skin, difficulty in speaking Spanish or even a different Spanish accent), and discriminating them on the labour market for not having work permits, which sometimes led them to work in illegal businesses such as street vending or selling drugs:

> I have a colleague, I get along very well with him, and the other day, he confessed to being an illegal street vendor. In his country he was a French teacher, a language teacher! And I say how could it be that he came here and he is doing that! He has degrees, he can find a way! And he says, 'it is very hard when you arrive without permits, without knowing how things work. There are many people and I do not speak Spanish well,' he said... so what should he have done? When you are in this situation you just do what your friends do, because you need money to survive! Otherwise, what do you do? (104)

> Spanish people see you are Latino and then they start to ... you know? They want to introduce you into that world because they know your situation, and they take advantage of people, and many young people arrive here and they have no other way to make money but to resort to ... quick means, sell drugs or do other things, you know? (111)

Young people with an immigrant background also experienced racism in Spain, where people call them names or even ask them to leave the country, implying they are not welcome in Spain:

> 'As I was new, I knew nothing. They laughed at me and said: you [uses insulting diminutive of his nationality of origin] here, you [uses diminutive of his nationality of origin] see. And sometimes, when there is a fight between [uses diminutive of his

nationality of origin] and someone else, they say, 'get out of here, what are you doing here, if you do not like it here then go to your country!'(114)

We also found two stigmas applied to those born in Spain. The first one, created and applied by young people: 'urban tribes,' related to cultural manifestations such as music or clothing; and the second one, 'alternative youngsters' created by society and applied to young people involved in alternative organisations such as Organisation 3.

3.2.2 Urban Tribes

Urban tribes are an internal mechanism that young people use in order to classify other young people, going further than ethnicity. It is, in fact, a system that adults are rarely aware of or, if they do, usually, it is because media and publicity have popularised them. Maffesoli was the first academic to coin the term in 1985, describing it as a group of people that congregate together and share interests, style of dress and behaviours (Maffesoli, 1996).

We have found that urban tribes are present in young people's life and are a way to socially construct 'the other' following stigmas based on the way young people dress and the music they listen to, which leads into a specific urban tribe that gives information about the persons' social class (linked to educational level, cultural capital or purchasing power).

Some of the urban tribes detected by young people interviewed are chavs (*chonis* in Spanish)[2], posh, hippies and punks.

Interviewer: What would be the difference between a young man from [neighbourhood 1] and one from [neighbourhood 2]?

Interviewee: The way of dressing mainly, there they are more posh and here we are more chavs [...]

Interviewer: How do you, chavs, dress?

Interviewee: With skinny, with a cap ... skinny trousers are essential!

Interviewer: Are they more important than wearing a cap?

Interviewee: The skinny... they are a must!

Interviewer: But the posh people also dress like that, huh?

Interviewee: But the posh people wear shirts, and they act like posh people, and they talk like posh.

Interviewer: And how is to act posh and talk posh?

Interviewee: Eh... someone who acts posh is always trying to make a good impression. For instance, throw something on the floor and try to pick it up to make a good impression! We throw something on the ground and it depends on what we have thrown whether we pick it up or not! [...]

Interviewer: And would you say you are a chav?

Interviewee: No ... I do not like to be told that I am a chav! But ... we act like... I mean, I am a more like a *swag*[3], you know? I just do not like to say I'm a chav, you know?

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[2] According to the Oxford English Dictionary: 'a young lower-class person who displays brash and loutish behaviour and wears real or imitation designer clothes'.

[3] According to the Urban Dictionary: 'The new generation originally used swag to describe anyone thought to carry themselves in a way considered by some to be sexy / cool'

Interviewer: Ah okay...

Interviewee: Because chavs... there was a time in 2012 when chav were shaved, playing loud music while driving, they listened to *rapstead* [style of electronic music], electronic music. That's the reason I say that chavs have already evolved…

Interviewer: And how have they evolved?

Interviewee: To study! Now they study... Before they were NEETS and now ... we do not all work, but we study. (107)

3.2.3 Alternative youngsters[4]

The last stigma we found in the fieldwork is related to 'alternative youngsters.' Young people from Organisation 3 explained what they feel their neighbours think of them as: smoking marijuana all the time; outsiders; and doing nothing in their life. This makes them think that the people in the organisation are seen as too 'alternative' and, somehow, dangerous (but mostly unknown and strange). This is the reason why women, whose children are studying at the school next door to the organisation, ask them to hurry up when passing by the organisation. It is also the reason why some other young people refuse to take part in the organisation, as the informants explain below.

> Here there is a school called [name], and there are some mothers who pass by here and say to their children: *run, run, run*! They are a bit afraid their kids could see this or that, you know? So… well! If they really knew what we do here and the work we do with young people, because it really is cool work, but people from outside just see graffiti, sometimes they smell marijuana, and that's it! Then they all say that young people do nothing and think that this centre was built to put all these youngsters together… At least this is what my parents see.' (118)

> I have got friends that do not come here; they would not even set foot in it! Because we are hippies! Then I say to them, 'hey, come, there is a cool concert here…' And they say, 'what a stink! I am not going there!'

> **Interviewer**: Stink for… joint or sweat?

> Sweat, because we are all hippies… I know there are youngsters that think this but… (119)

> In these ladies' eyes [referring to women shopping in the supermarket next to the youth club] we are junkies! People that only smoke joints ... (119)

3.3 Outsiders and drugs

As we have seen, the vulnerable situation young people live in and the stigma they feel from others have an influence on their position within society. Most of them have problems accessing the labour market (either because of their work permit limitations or because of their social position), which makes them feel they are in a disadvantaged situation. However, there are other variables that are important in understanding young people's situation, especially family and belonging, which have an influence on a topic we discuss in this section: drug use.

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[4]   The term 'alternative youngsters' is a translation from Spanish term of 'jóvenes alternativos,' It is a name used by the informants to refer to young people who share the same desire to build an alternative to neoliberal society. Alternative youngsters are sometimes identified as part of specific urban tribes, such as punks, but in this case it refers just to a shared will to build a different social organisation, regardless of the cultural manifestations the young person shows.

3.3.1 Family

All young people interviewed have seen or even experienced family breakdown, either because one of their parents has left or they have divorced, because of drug or alcohol problems, or because of abuse. In these situations, the informants point out how young people tend to rely more on friends than family:

> Now we are much dislocated, both adults and children, we as adults pass it on to children and they grow up in this context. Where would a child from a broken family go? He does not have anything stable to go to, he does not have anything stable to follow ... a 4 year old boy suddenly stops living with mum and dad and then has to go some days with dad and some days with mum; dad says one thing and mum something completely different… in the end his school friends, where he spends long hours, say something different… so he will trust his friends because it is going to be something he likes! […] Here, school influences children more […] children only stay at home for eating and sleeping, you try to talk to them, end up arguing with them and then they just go to bed! […] they absorb a lot of the world, and the world corrupts a lot. I think that all these young people's behaviours come from there. What is the origin of an 11 year old boy smoking? Where did he learn it if his parents do not smoke? We really have to check what children learn at high school. (104)

Family disintegration is also related to violent behaviours. One of the informants explained how he has repeatedly seen young people with family problems getting involved in fights, being himself one of them:

> When you talk to them you realise they have a lot of traumas. The father has left his mother; the father beat his mother... [...] And they end up looking for problems. When you talk to them you realise and there's always something ... sometimes they are absent-minded, they end up crazy due to their mental dislocation (109).

3.3.2 Belonging

Belonging is a human need, but it becomes even more important in adolescence when young people construct their identities. Some of the young people interviewed had problems finding a space where they were fully accepted, regardless of their sexual orientation or ethnicity. Subject 118, for instance, considered himself to be an outsider both at home and at school because of his sexual orientation. At home, his parents were 'ashamed of him,' at school, he did not have any friends or receive support from teachers.

> She [his mother] is always telling me to not use makeup, not to talk this way, not to run like I do... she's ashamed of me, she's ashamed that I use lipstick, that I could fall in love with a boy older than me, she is even embarrassed that a neighbour could see me using stockings ... Then, of course, I cannot live in a place like that, right? (118)

The situation changed when he was 16 years old, when he found a group of three other youngsters that had similar issues as him at school because of their sexual orientation.

> We were a group of people that did not usually fit into any other group, either in the classroom group or in any other urban tribe. We did not fit ... we all did the baccalaureate in arts and ... I've never had friends at school, to be honest, until then I never had a group to go for a coffee, to go to the movies or even to go and just play to their homes. (118)

Nevertheless, the impossibility of belonging at home and at school had a deep influence on his self-esteem:

> I was afraid of the youth club. I was afraid of the people going there… it was too much for me just their saying hello. Since everyone had been a pain in the ass to me, I was a bit afraid, of course! I was afraid of what they would say about me, you know? (118)

However, the opportunity of being part of an organisation has a great influence on them. Although they might have felt like outsiders before, after getting involved in the organisation, being around people like them and taking part in the activities, they started feeling that they belonged to something bigger and they started feeling part of it. This is especially important in Organisation 1, where all the people involved are immigrants and have problems getting work permits; and Organisation 2 that offer services to young people no matter their origin, which creates a very heterogeneous group. The following quote is from a girl from Organisation 2, which illustrates what she had gained so frar from the organisation:

> [being here] helps people a lot, you know? They open their doors to immigrants and non-immigrants, they do workshops, they do waiters courses, and they help a lot. And, as I say, I did not expect to find a place like this, a place that would open its doors and give me the opportunity to work! I thought: I am going to do the course here and afterwards I am not sure where I am going to end up, if it is going to be a good place or if they are going to treat me badly, anything could happen! But here it is a very nice place and the colleagues are really good, they treat me very well... it is a beautiful experience! (105)

3.3.3 Drug use

Both family disintegration and the impossibility of finding a group to belong to have an influence on young people's drug use. Young people interviewed point out how living in a broken family and having a tough childhood could drive young people to drug use:

> 'It's a long story, it is very, very, very long to tell but well, my childhood was not easy, but despite everything I decided to stop it. The situation in this country is very complicated, for instance, anyone could get lost here, it is way too easy to get involved in drugs, vices, alcohol… it is very easy to get lost there!' (112)

In this sense, the informants also point out how easy is to find drugs in the neighbourhoods they live in, and that being involved with drugs is more common than people think. They have seen young people using hard drugs such as cocaine, and the informants relate this trend to the effect the drug has on them – they feel more powerful than they think they are in real life.

> People usually consider this problem to be marginal, but be really careful with drugs! Because there are many young people who are hooked. It's not that they just use drugs; I use drugs at parties even or…
>
> **Interviewer**: But harder drugs…
>
> No, marijuana, mushrooms or even a line, you know? If I feel like it, I do it and I do not have to justify myself, you know? I have to establish my own limits, you know? But I do see many people hooked to blow, and very young people! I think that using blow is linked to personal insecurities that you do not feel good about yourself.
>
> **Interviewer**: Why? How do you feel when you do a line?
>
> I'm not much into coke for this reason, because it makes you feel like an asshole!
>
> **Interviewer**: Like you are super cool?

Yes, like, 'what do you want? Let's do it!' You know? It's a bit like: I can do anything, you know? I see a lot of people hooked because of that. If I dig a bit in these people's lives, all of them have lots of family problems, identity problems… even people who dress normally and have a permanent job are people with lots of emotional deprivation from their families! [...] I believe that one of the main problems is that people do not love themselves enough and turn to this substance in order to escape from reality, and then younger people see them using it and behaving in a phony manner and then they want the same shit, you know?

Interviewer: And what is the age of people using coke?

I don't know, maybe 15 or 16 years old, 17... I've seen people 16 years old doing lines... and of course, these people do not do it because they have seen it in a movie, these people must have seen it somewhere [...] in this neighbourhood, this is a very serious issue. (118)

Therefore, drug use is usually linked to tough childhoods, becoming a way out of tough present situations (such as the impossibility of finding supportive friends or family). This is the case of subject 118, who started using drugs as way out of the discrimination he felt because of his sexual orientation:

So maybe I was looking for a way to escape, as well as my friend [due to their sexual orientation]. Smoking, sitting on a bench was our way to escape from reality at 15 or 16 years old. (118)

Although he admits he had an addiction and is now feeling the consequences in his mental health (some hallucinations and slow thinking), he explains how he has reduced his drug use to a level of only using them for pleasure. After finding a place where he can be himself (the youth club), he has been able to change the reasons why he uses drugs; he stopped looking for a way out of his reality and is now just seeking pleasure. His drug use is now more sporadic than before and it is less intense as well:

I smoke them while saying, 'I'm going to do this!' You know? I smoke but I'm doing something else, it's not like I'm sitting at the bench saying, 'life sucks', or 'what revolutionaries we are!' No ... now it is like, 'wake yourself up!' I am still very revolutionary, my ideas are still a bit crazy but I have a job now! Otherwise, you end up being what the system wants you to be - a guy that's sitting on the bench all day, you know? (118)

Therefore, the turning point in his drug use was meeting a youth worker that would listen to him and help him find meaning in life. The youth worker, by asking what he liked most and proposing activities according to his taste, got to know him better and helped him realise what he was really passionate about. Then, little by little, Subject 118 started facing his problems instead of smoking to avoid them, which allowed him reduce the amount of marijuana to one joint a day.

3.4 Reproducing hegemonic discourse

There are some discourses about immigration that emphasise how good it is for the receiving country since it will bring cultural diversity and it will enrich society. These discourses (framed in the multiculturalism paradigm) sometimes forget the social reality in which most of these immigrants are found: vulnerability, poverty and lack of human rights (such as housing, health care or jobs).

Most of the informants with an immigrant background come from this vulnerable situation where they did not have access to the labour market due to their irregular situation and, therefore, had difficulties having all their needs (housing, health, security, etc.) met. However, when talking about immigration as a social phenomenon, they often integrate the multiculturalism idea into their discourse by focusing on the basic human right to freedom of movement and to choose their place of residence, while paying less attention to the actual socioeconomic conditions immigrants experience in Spain.

This situation is more common among those young people who had access to the labour market (although not all of them had a permanent work visa), while those in a more irregular situation were more critical of the social aspects of immigration and the discrimination they experience. This is illustrated by the statement below, by subject 102, who holds a position of responsibility in Organisation 1. This position of power position, may have had an influence on the way he is able to mobilise the discourse of multiculturalism positively:

> My African mind most likely thinks as any other European mind, right? The only thing that has to be done is to live together and find the balance between us all. There are things we have in common among what we eat, right? We have the rice in common, for instance. In other words, the way paella is cooked here is similar to the way the rice is cooked in Senegal; there are a few things that change but the results are often almost the same. All these things are what we have to keep enjoying, right? (102)

Young immigrants also reproduced in their discourses the names Spanish society uses to refer to them. Below, we cite how a young person from Africa who refers to himself as a 'brown,' a term Spanish society uses to refer to a black person intending it to be more respectful than saying 'black' but with a clear intention of emphasising Africans' condition as immigrants.

> There I took a bus to go to [name of a city]. I stayed two weeks in a square waiting to get employment, there were many brown people there as well.
>
> **Interviewer**: What are they [brown people]?
>
> I am brown. (103)

3.5. The key factor: relationships

The informants agreed that what helped them to overcome their situation has been establishing a relationship with someone who has supported them. The informants said adolescence is a stage of life in which they need a lot of support but it is not easy to find someone they can fully trust:

> 'I think that when you are 16, 17 and even 18 sometimes, you have problems but you keep them to yourself. You do not really want to rely on anyone who could help you either because you are afraid or because you think they will not understand you. It is complicated but when you finally find someone to count on, you feel more comfortable releasing everything you had inside. (116)

However, most of the informants have been able to connect with someone who has helped them. The person who they have established a relationship differs in each case (a youth worker, a family member, someone from an NGO) but all of them have in common that the supportive person listens to them without judging, suggests solutions without imposing anything and provides a space where they feel important:

> In fact, something I really liked about [name of an NGO] is that it gives you a lot of freedom, there is no constant control... as there is no constant control this gives you space

to do what you want. On the other hand, when there are institutions that keep controlling you, controlling, controlling… and they think that through this control […] well, they do not give you room to do things, it causes other problems, right? Because they are breaking with individual´s rhythm, you know?'(111)

Some of the informants point out that the supportive person must be someone who has experienced the same as them (especially among those young people who have arrived in Spain by dinghy):

Now, if I tell you that I have come to Spain in a dinghy, you might not understand what you experience in there, right? But if I meet a colleague of mine who has arrived here by dinghy I can feel him, because at least 50% of the feelings that he has felt I have lived the same at a certain moment of my journey, so I can understand him better. I can tell him, 'now this is over, activate yourself, you are in a new stage of your life, enjoy it, do your best to meet your goals, otherwise you will be dragging with the past and not moving forward.'(102)

Others point out that they felt supported by other young people involved in the organisation:

It helped me to be here, in this environment of young people meeting up, having fun, playing… it is something that moves you and makes you get more involved with people around you and makes you think differently too: to lose fear, to have confidence with people, to relate to others... And this learning will be useful later on in your professional career. (111)

To establish a friendship with colleagues helps you a lot to overcome the problem, more than anything. (112)

However, the youth worker is a key person for most of them; a person that will hear you no matter what and will give you advice without imposing:

[the youth worker is important to me because of the] love she gives, for being there all my life, and for the advice she gives me [...] she is my model, someone who listens to me, someone who would give me advice if you have a question to ask, who gives me orientation. (113)

[name of the youth worker] is not going to judge you. She gives you her opinion but she never puts her opinion above yours. In other words, if you have to make a mistake, she will let you make mistakes. She will warn you that you might be wrong with it but she won't… she won't scorn your previous idea, she would make you think about it and make you finally say, 'oh, okay, well, this will be good for me or not'. Her way of guiding suits me really well. (115)

All the organisations we have analysed have been spaces where young people have been able to develop positive relationships with others. The shared points we have found as facilitators for establishing a positive relationship are:

- *Place:* the organisation has a specific place assigned, which allows people to meet regularly, know that if they go there most likely they will find the same people, and have somewhere to hang out when needed.
- *Activity:* the organisation develops a specific activity (for instance, Organisation 1 is a school/restaurant, while Organisations 2, 3 and 4 are youth clubs). This means that the people attending most likely share similar profiles and/or have similar tastes. Both elements are important in order to find potential friends, since people will have more things in common and it could make them get along better.

- *New people:* all the organisations allow people attending to meet people outside their normal circles. When they get involved in the different organisations, usually, they do not know anyone (or know just one or two people), which lets them build new relations.

- *People from different level of responsibilities:* in all organisations (except for Organisation 4), there are people leading the organisation, usually the youth workers or teachers. These people usually become mentors for young people and have a great impact on them. However, in order to be 'their'[5] youth worker they must have the following characteristics: listen without judging; be empathic; and get involved in their life.

4. Conclusions

The present research has contributed to youth studies by showing how young people in vulnerable situations in Spain cope with their lives while also satisfying their need to belong and participate in society. We have seen how the informants from more vulnerable situations (mainly those from broken families and those born outside Spain) are less empowered than people from safer contexts. Youngsters from more vulnerable backgrounds, who seek to overcome their situations while socially participating in an organisation, tend to engage in organisations that already exist—often run by adults—instead of creating something on their own as youngsters from safer contexts do. However, once they are part of a youth organisation, they tend to adopt an active role by proposing activities and changes to improve it. This involvement, whether it is self-managing a youth club for those young people from a safer background or just proposing an activity for young people from more vulnerable backgrounds, empowers and helps them develop competences that will help in their future (Coleman, 1990).

Stigmatisation has been experienced by all young people interviewed, no matter what their origin, age or backgrounds are. We have detected three main stigmas: their ethnicity; belonging to an urban tribe; and being 'too alternative.' Ethnicity is a stigma that society applies to them but they also apply it to other youngsters with different colour of skin or accent. The stigma of being 'too alternative' is also applied by both, society and other young people to other youngsters. However, the stigma of 'urban tribes' is usually more applied by youngsters than by adults, since adults are not always aware of all the urban tribes existing at the present moment.

Some of the young people were *at the margins of society*, either because they did not have work permits or because they considered themselves to be outsiders. According to Durkheim (2001), because they do not follow the rules that society has created in order to regulate collective and individual behaviour, they would not be considered 'full' individuals. However, Garfinkel (1967) argues that the concept of anomie is irrelevant because we cannot establish fixed rules since societies are in permanent change and the rules change according to everyday practices. Therefore, individuals would decide what rules apply to themselves in each situation they are in, but in any case, they would determine their conduct. Following Garfinkel, anomie would be irrelevant, and it would be more accurate to analyse how young people establish their own rules in order to solve everyday problems they face, never regulating their conduct, only adapting their

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[5] An informant said during the interview that young people tend to have 'a youth worker' in their life, and it is only one. She was implying that there is always one important youth worker (or mentor) in young people´s lives who gives them support in their most difficult times and to whom they will be grateful and love forever. She said that this person is never replaceable; they might have other good youth workers in their life but no one would be ever as again 'the' youth worker.

means in order to achieve their purposes. Therefore, we cannot talk about anomie when approaching the problem marginal young people face since it proposes a socialisation process that never was effective; we should talk of ways of coping with life or surviving (Tijoux, 1995). Young people in vulnerable situations could never have gone through the socialisation process as it is established by anomie theory since in many cases, they have been excluded from the labour market or their families have neglected them. Therefore, we should focus our analysis on how they cope with their life and the mechanisms they use in order to adapt themselves within society and to naturalise their marginality.The *stigma* of being 'too alternative' relates to Merton's (1957) perspective of 'rebellion' since those labelled this way aim to overthrow capitalism and create a fairer system (greener and more equal). The stigma of being 'too alternative' has historically been linked to subcultures such as punk, which has always been considered to be destructive and threatening. This is the reason why some neighbours of Organisation 3 were afraid of participating in any activity organised by them or even walking past the centre. In this sense, although young people from Organisation 3 sought to change the system through specific cultural strategies for coping with oppression, they might succeed only in reproducing it; confirming Paul Willis thesis (Willis, 1981). The other three organisations would fit with what Merton considered 'conformist' since they use established means to achieve their aims but with some sense of 'innovation' since although they all use legal means, their objective are not shared by mainstream society. Organisations 1 and 2 do work for irregular young immigrants in getting their work permits (something the public sector is not doing), and Organisation 4 is working to build a youth club in a neighbourhood where there is not any public service for young people.

All young people agree that what really helped them to *overcome their situation* of vulnerability (even marginality) and *become integrated into society* was having someone close to share their feelings with and ask for advice. This person is different in each case, but youth workers and mentors (older people who have experienced the same as them in the past) are the most common. What young people ask of them is: to hear them; to give support; to give advice without imposing; and to be honest. As we have shown above, drugs are a big issue for young people in vulnerable situations for three reasons: young people have easy access to drugs; they see other people using drugs in their contexts; and drugs are a way for many of them to escape from their realities. However, when talking about drugs, young people point out how positive relationships are important to prevent them from using them or to re-educate the ones using them.

5. Future analysis

In this section, we will outline the themes encountered in the study and particular issues we have detected for the triangulation stage.

5.1 Main themes

This study has given some clues about how important relationships are in overcoming difficult situations for young people. The informants point out some difficulties they experience during adolescence (creating their own identity, having to choose their studies) as well as other personal difficulties (abuse, neglect from the family or irregular situations). In all the situations, they consider that having someone close to them—a youth worker, a social worker, a friend, a mentor or even someone from the family—has helped them a lot. What they ask of this person is to listen, to not judge them and to give advice, always respecting their freedom to follow it or not, and letting them make a mistake and learn from it.

This main theme is a key finding for policy makers. Sometimes, youth policies focus on offering institutions, such as youth clubs, where young people can get involved but do not pay much attention to the youth workers they employ. The research has shown that what makes a real difference for young people is to have someone close to them, someone who can mentor them. This finding might suggest that youth policies should pay attention to both: creating spaces where young people can socially participate; and having youth workers who can accompany them.

Some immigrants have integrated the discourse of multiculturalism that emphasises the good part of mixing cultures but does not pay attention to the social inequalities immigrants experience in Spain. This is more common among those young immigrants who have obtained a job and have some life security, such as Subject 103, who calls himself a '*moreno*' (brown), a name generally used in Spain for black people.This study has also given some information about how people from the margins incorporate the hegemonic discourse as a way to get integrated into society and stop being an outsider; this is especially important among youth migrants.

The study has also given some indication of the stigmas young people experience, which are channelled from different directions: stigmas from society towards them (being an immigrant or an alternative); and stigmas that apply amongst young people (related to urban tribes).

5.2 Issues of concern

After reviewing all the data gathered during the fieldwork, we would like to propose two research questions that might be of interest for the cluster analysis:

- How do young people, making an effort to become socially integrated, actively or passively relate to hegemonic discourses? Do they incorporate or co-opt it into their speech?

In the specific case of young migrants, we suggest that it might be interesting to analyse how, when and why young migrants might claim their right to mobility (a right promoted by liberalism) but forget social rights such work or housing? Our data collected suggest that this usually happens when the individual has their social rights guaranteed, being even more common among those who have jobs with responsibility (such as being the coordinator).

- What facilitates a positive relationship with a young person in a vulnerable situation?

We have seen how important it is for young people in a vulnerable situation to have a positive relationship with someone else (who could be a youth worker, a friend or even a relative). In this sense, it might be interesting to know a bit more about what young people expect from this person, how they build the relationship and what the impact of having this positive relation is?

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Appendix: socio-demographic information

Subject number	Organisation	Age	Gender	Education[6]	Employment	Residential Status	Family Status	Country of origin
101	1	27	Male	Completed first general academic secondary education	Full-time employment	Lives at home with parents and partner	Married	Romania
102	1	32	Male	Completed first general academic secondary education	Full-time employment	Lives independently with own partner	Married	Senegal
103	1	32	Male	Completed post-secondary vocational training	Full-time employment	Lives independently with friends	Single	Senegal
104	1	27	Female	Completed first general academic secondary education	Full-time employment	Lives independently with own partner	Married	Dominican Republic
105	1	24	Female	Completed second general secondary education	Full-time employment	Lives independently with own partner	Married	El Salvador
106	3	18	Male	Completed first general academic secondary education	Part-time employment	Lives at home with parents	Single	Spain
107	3	16	Male	Completed first general academic secondary education	Occasional irregular employment	Lives at home with parents	Single	Spain
108	3	18	Male	Currently in second general academic secondary education	Full-time education	Lives at home with parents	Single	Spain
109	3	18	Male	Currently in post-secondary vocational training	Full-time education	Lives at home with parent	Single	Spain

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[6] There is two level of General Secondary Education in Spain. The first one ('ESO') is from 12 to 16 years old, is compulsory and gives general knowledge. The second one ('Bachillerato') is from 16 to 18 years old, is not compulsory and people attending have to choose between 5 branches of knowledge: science, technology, social sciences, art and humanities; the main goal is to prepare young people for 'Selectividad', an entrance exam to university-

110	2	20	Male	Completed post-secondary vocational training	Unemployed	Lives at supported housing for young people	Single	Argentina
111	2	27	Male	Completed post-secondary vocational training	Part-time employment	Lives at supported housing for young people	Single	Venezuela
112	2	22	Male	Completed second general academic secondary education	Unemployed	Lives at home with parents	Single	El Salvador
113	2	18	Female	Completed second general academic secondary education	Unemployed	Lives at home with parents	Single	Morocco
114	2	17	Female	Currently in post-secondary vocational training	Full-time education	Lives at home with parents	Single	Pakistan
115	2	20	Male	Currently in post-secondary vocational training	Full-time education	Lives at home with parents	Single	Spain
116	2	17	Male	Completed second general academic secondary education	Unemployed	Lives at home with parents	Single	Dominican Republic
117	2	18	Male	Currently in first general academic secondary education	Full-time education	Lives at supported housing for young people	Single	Morocco
118	4	21	Male	Completed first general academic secondary education	Part-time employment	Lives at home with parents	Single	Spain
119	4	19	Female	Currently in post-secondary vocational training	Full-time education	Lives at home with parents	Single	Spain
120	4	22	Male	Currently in post-secondary vocational training	Full-time education	Lives at home with parents	Single	Spain
121	2	20	Female	Completed second general academic secondary education	Unemployed	Lives at home with other relatives	Single	Spain

PROMISE
promoting youth involvement and social engagement

PROMISE: Promoting Youth Involvement and Social Engagement: Opportunities and challenges for conflicted young people across Europe.

WP6: From Conflict to Innovation: Ethnographic Case Studies

Young people with paths of psychosocial risk and deviant behaviour

PORTUGAL

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Executive summary:

In the scope of Work Package 6 of the PROMISE project, the Portuguese research team carried out an ethnographic case study on young people who presented life paths with psychosocial risk and deviant behaviour. This particular group of young people presented long paths of conflict with major normative social institutions like school, the law or the family, frequently leading to delinquent behaviour and/or school dropout.

The case study involved 26 participants aged 15 to 24 (9 girls) who were recruited among youngsters serving non-custodial youth measures and youngsters enrolled in two second chance education (SCE) projects. Data were collected over a period of 7 months using semi-structured, voice-recorded interviews, group discussions and participant observation.

This report presents the key findings of the case study emerging from the narratives of the participants. These address the major sites and agents of conflict experienced by young people with paths of psychosocial risk and deviant behaviour, with special relevance to school, family and the justice and protection systems; the ways by which these young people try to respond to and overcome their conflicts; the personal and social changes they recognise as resulting from these responses to conflict and the factors, mostly relational, that supported these changes; and, finally, how could these be transferred to other young people experiencing similar conflicts.

Contents

1. Introduction

In the scope of Work Package 6 of the PROMISE project, the Portuguese research team carried out an ethnographic case study on young people aged 15 to 24 who presented life paths with psychosocial risk and deviant behaviour. This particular group of young people was considered to contribute to the general aim of the PROMISE project as several dimensions of these young people's life paths tend not to conform to social norms or laws and/or differ from general social expectations regarding youth roles, social trajectories and behaviours. The research under this case study – designated as RISK case study – focused particularly on youngsters who presented long paths of conflict with major normative social institutions like the school, the law or the family, frequently leading to delinquent behaviour and/or academic failure and school dropout, which often overlap.

In Portugal, over the last decades, along with the growing urbanisation, the insecurity felt by those who live in the city increased significantly (Fernandes, 2008). This phenomenon can be partially explained by the expansion of social housing neighbourhoods and their association with drug trafficking, as well as with the growing visibility of social actors that prompted insecurity rumours (e.g., prostitutes, junkies, beggars) (Carvalho, 2013). Moreover, the growth of urban juvenile marginal subcultures has contributed to the association between youth and social disorder (cf. Fernandes and Pinto, 2008). Despite the lack of evidence from official figures, which revealed variations in juvenile delinquency until 2008 and a decrease since then (Carvalho, 2013), according to the European Social Survey 2008-2009, in a representative sample, 50% of the respondents in Portugal reported to be afraid of the crimes committed by young people (Marques, 2011). In fact, despite the decrease of juvenile delinquency in the country in recent years, representations of deviance, rebellion and attraction to risk tend to persist as distinctive images of young people (Lerner et al., 2010), leading to the idea that juvenile delinquency is a growing and increasingly serious phenomenon.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was ratified by the Portuguese State in 1990. This led to a broader evaluation and deep critical reflection on the efficacy and limits of the children and youth justice welfare model, and in 1999, two new laws were approved regarding children and youth: the Promotion and Protection Law for Children and Young People in Danger (LPCJP); and the Youth Justice Act (LTE). These two laws distinguish the situation of children and youth in danger, that legitimises a State's intervention of protection (LPCJP), from the needs and situation of child, between 12 and 16 years old, who commit an offence qualified by the penal law as a crime and, as a result, justify another kind of intervention, an educational one (LTE). The set of educational measures established by the LTE, ranging from admonition to custody in an educational centre, aims at the offender's socialisation and rehabilitation, "based on the core principle of education in the law" (Rodrigues and Fonseca, 2010, p. 1035). According to official data, non-custodial measures represent 83.4% of the total number of juvenile justice measures being implemented in the country by the end of 2014. Youth justice measures are selected in accordance with a minor's autonomy and best interest, as well as parents or legal representatives' involvement. When several offences have been perpetrated, different measures can likewise be enacted. The youngsters can serve a measure until they are 21 years old. According to the last official report, in 2016 the most applied measures were educational monitoring (34.1%), imposition of obligations (24.4%), and community work (22.5%). Most of the youngsters with educational measures were Portuguese (93%), in the age group between 14 and 16 years old (63%). There was a predominance of males (82%) in all the age ranges. Most of these youth were serving measures for offences against the person (49%) and property offences (41%) (DGRSP, 2016).

In the trajectories of young people with State measures, especially those under the Youth Justice Act, academic failure and early school leaving are frequent (Cunha, Soares, Veríssimo, and Matos, 2015). In fact, early school leaving tends to be linked with different psychosocial, institutional and structural risk factors encompassing individual (e.g., gender, learning difficulties), family (e.g., low mother qualifications, low educational expectations), school (e.g., absence of positive relationships) and social aspects (e.g., reduced community involvement and support) (Cefai, Downes, and Cavioni, 2016; Prata, Barbosa-Ducharne, Gonçalves, and Cruz, 2013). Moreover, social research has shown that early school leaving is usually the culmination of a long process of cumulative social and individual disadvantages and vulnerabilities, as early school leavers tend to come from deprived and often stigmatised family and community backgrounds, from schools with low socio-economic status intakes, from workless households, and from vulnerable groups, such as the disabled, those with special educational needs, teenage mothers, minority or migrant backgrounds and those with physical and mental health problems (Dale, 2010). Consequently, school dropout is rarely a discrete and isolated event in a youngster's life course. On the contrary, in many cases it tends to concur and reinforce other deviant and risk behaviours, like drug use or drug dealing, violence within peers, in the family or towards authorities (teachers, the police), and tends to be a relevant facilitator of youth criminal behaviour (McAra and McVie, 2010).

With regard to early school leaving in particular, according to official data in 2017, 12.6% of young Portuguese between 18 and 24 were out of school without completing compulsory education (which in Portugal constitutes 12 school years). Nevertheless, this rate has decreased dramatically in the last years (it was 28.3% in 2010) mostly due to the growing intervention of the Child and Youth Protection Services in cases of school absence and dropout and to the increase of vocational training programmes offered to young people with unsuccessful and/or conflictual school trajectories. Early Leaving of Education and Training in Portugal has always been more frequent among males (32.4% in 2010 and 15.3% in 2017) than females (24.0% in 2010 and 9.7% in 2017).

Given the present social and political emphasis on educational qualifications as the main path to economic growth, employment and social inclusion, academic failure and early school leaving became major focuses of social concern throughout Europe, leading to moral judgements and demands towards youngsters and their families (Alves, 2007). However, the main focus of conflict of these youngsters is the formal education system and, more specifically, the school and its' professionals. Traditional perspectives tend to focus on youngsters' (and families') disabilities, non-normative beliefs and disruptive behaviours, as well on parents' poverty and low qualifications, in order to explain their academic failure and inability to conform to school norms and cultures, thus leading to school disaffection and, eventually, school dropout. Nevertheless, educational policies and school norms can also be questioned in terms of their ability to guarantee education as a basic right and a precondition to citizenship and social inclusion for all (Tilleczek et al, 2011).

Although early school leaving rates have been dropping in Portugal recently, and youth delinquency rates cannot be considered alarming, young people with diverse and un-linear trajectories of disengagement in education (Tomaszewska-Pękała, Marchlik and Wrona, 2017) and displaying deviant behaviours continue to be present in Portuguese society and tend to be seen – and often see themselves – as being on the margins of society. And these are precisely the young people 'in conflict' which are the focus of this case study. In fact, before reaching legal adulthood, some of these youngsters may be in conflict with the law, as they may not be attending compulsory education and/or may have committed acts that are defined as crimes by the Portuguese law. For those reasons, many of them are objects of state intervention within the national Child and Youth Protection System and/or the Youth Justice System. Institutionalisation in

a residential care facility or attendance of 'alternative' vocational or 'second chance' education programmes may, in some cases, be specific compulsory measures enforced to the youngsters under 18 years old. Over that age, however, many of them may no longer be in conflict with the law regarding compulsory education, but may remain in conflict with society, by not conforming to normative behaviours and expected life courses in terms of education and often also in terms of work, family and leisure. Thus, they become easily labelled and stigmatised as problematic, deviant or dangerous young people. This focus on risk and danger is also on the basis of state and institutional interventions, which tend to be more about risk management and individual responsibilisation of young people, rather than addressing their psychosocial and educational needs and promoting their rehabilitation and positive social involvement (Alves, Guimarães, Marques and Cavaco, 2014; Neves, 2013; for a parallel with the Welsh context, see Caise and Haines, 2015).

Second chance education (SCE) is one of the rare measures available to these young people, both under and over 18 years old. It is well established and recognised throughout Europe (Day et al, 2013), although still incipient in Portugal. The few second chance schools that exist in Portugal welcome youngsters that have had unsuccessful and often conflicting paths throughout mainstream school leading, most of the times, to prolonged school absences or to effective school dropout before finishing compulsory education. Among these, it's not uncommon to find some youngsters who are serving, or who have served some kind of non-custodial youth justice measure. These schools aim to provide psychosocial support, academic qualifications and a positive educational experience to these youngsters, mainly using active and participatory methods and favouring vocational and artistic training. They usually develop a community-based approach, fostering young people's social, cultural and economic inclusion and initiative.

1.1 Research questions

Pointing toward a deeper knowledge of the experiences of young people with life paths of psychosocial risk and deviant behaviour in Portugal, as well as to support new ways to promote their positive social involvement, the *RISK* case study aims to answer to the following research questions:

1. What are the sites, agents and forms of conflict encountered by Portuguese young people with paths of psychosocial risk and deviant behaviour?

2. What are the consequences of and constraints these youngsters face resulting from stigmatisation as problematic or conflict-prone?

3. What forms do their responses to conflict take? What meaning do they attach to these responses? Do young people with paths of psychosocial risk and deviant behaviour feel these responses can effect change? What is their innovative potential?

4. How effective these responses are in mobilising and implementing these youngsters' drive for social change? In what cases do these responses constitute social innovation? How are they perceived as innovation by young people/ older generations/authorities?

5. What role do intergenerational relations play in both causing and overcoming conflict and producing social innovation and change?

6. How might the experience of young people with paths of psychosocial risk and deviant behaviour in finding creative responses and driving social change out of conflict be transferred to peers?

2. Methods

In order to address these research questions, data were collected over a period of 7 months using semi-structured, voice-recorded interviews, group discussions and participant observations. In addition, a photo-elicitation exercise was developed with some of the respondents and photos were used, when possible, to initiate individual interviews. Participant observations of daily activities and some key events took place before the interviews in order to gather information about the institutional context from where most respondents were recruited, as well as to create trustful relationships with the respondents. This also facilitated the refinement of the interview script and the reassessment of observation strategies when appropriate. Participant observations and group discussions were recorded in field notes and voice-recorded interviews were transcribed. Both sets of data were anonymised, coded (using Nvivo) and analysed thematically.

2.1 The case study settings and the respondents' recruitment

Participants in this case study were expected to be young people who presented long paths of conflict and non-conformity with normative social institutions like the school and/or the law. In order to recruit participants with this profile, the research team implemented two different approaches to the field. Initially, collaboration was fostered with a Youth Justice Team of the Ministry of Justice. This team was asked to present the project to all young people serving non-custodial youth justice measures at that time (September and October 2017) and invite them to voluntarily participate in individual interviews. Due to the limited number of youngsters serving non-custodial justice measurers at the time of recruitment, as well as to the voluntary nature of the participation, only six (6) participants showed willingness to participate in the study and were interviewed as a result of this recruitment approach.

As an additional approach to accessing respondents we invited two different second chance education (SCE) projects in the north of Portugal to collaborate with the PROMISE project, as a way for the research team to gain access to specific institutional settings where young people with the expected profile would be engaged on a daily basis. Both projects were private civil society initiatives (although working in close collaboration with the public education system, including being placed in public facilities and having teachers from public schools) which offered a lower secondary education qualification to young people who have had problematic and/or unsuccessful school paths and that have dropped out regular school or vocational training. The two projects agreed to participate in the PROMISE research and respondents were recruited from both, allowing for a total of 20 individual interviews. However, to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' engagement and experiences, a more prolonged ethnographic approach (including group discussions, participant observations, photo-elicitation and most of the individual interviews - 16) was developed in only one of these projects, which became our main research setting for this case study.

2.2 The sample

In total, 26 young people were individually interviewed, 9 of them girls. This gender imbalance, however, was a direct reflection of the general gender imbalance among young people with life paths of psychosocial risk and deviant behaviour, especially if early school leaving and criminal offences are taken into consideration, as these behaviours tend to be more frequent among boys.

Respondents were aged between 15 and 24; 6 of them under 18 years old, the age of legal majority. These participants were the ones recruited through the Youth Justice Team (1 aged 15; 4 aged 16; and 1 aged 17). All the participants recruited at the SCE projects were 18 or older. Most of them were aged 18 (7), 4 were aged 19, 4 were aged 20, 1 was aged 21, 1 was aged 22 and 3 were aged 24. All respondents were single. Two of them (1 male and 1 female) had a small child. Approximately half of the respondents (10) lived at home with both parents and the other half lived at home with their mother (10). 1 respondent lived with his father, 1 lived with his grandparents and 1 lived alone. The remaining 3 lived in a residential care institution.

Almost all respondents were engaged in full-time education (24), whether at a SCE project (17), at vocational training (6) or at regular school (1). Most respondents (20) were enrolled at a lower secondary education level (corresponding to 7th, 8th and 9th grade) and 4 were enrolled in an upper secondary education level (corresponding to 10th, 11th and 12th grade). Only 2 participants were not formally engaged in any education, training or employment activity at the time of their interview, though they were former students of one of the SCE projects and they were still coming to the projects regularly to participate in vocational or artistic activities. Just 2 of the respondents were also part-time workers. Although only 13 participants (3 of whom were female) had actually left school or vocational training for a significant period of time (more than a school year), nearly all (23 respondents, 8 female) reported to have had a problematic trajectory at regular school, mainly related to conflicting behaviour, school absence and/or academic failure. (See information about individual respondents in Appendix 1)

2.3   The interviews

The interview schedule was closely based on the common 'skeleton interview scenario' of the ethnography work package (WP6) adopted by the PROMISE partnership, in order to allow cross case comparisons and analysis. It was designed to stimulate a structured yet adaptable conversation with respondents lasting between 30 and 90 minutes. A total of 1010 minutes of interviews were recorded and transcribed, with an average length of 39 minutes per interview; the longest interview took 64 minutes while the shortest lasted only 22 minutes. Interviews explored respondents' general ideas about sites and effects of conflict/stigmatisation that young people face, as well as the respondents' own conflict and stigmatisation experiences. It also explored the ways young people respond to conflicts and the participants' personal responses to their own conflicts. Finally, it addressed the personal and social changes brought by these responses to conflict and the ways these could be transferred to other young people experiencing similar conflicts.

An initial set of 4 individual interviews was conducted in April 2017 at one of the SCE projects, allowing us to introduce minor refinements to the schedule that was later used in the interviews conducted at the main research setting in May and July 2017. The interview schedule had to be slightly adapted again when, in October and November 2017, the interviews with the young people serving youth justice measures were conducted.

The participants recruited through the Youth Justice Team were interviewed at different moments and in different public places of their own choosing (public parks, residential care institutions, cafés). All participants recruited at the SCE projects were interviewed in the projects' facilities, always in a private room. All interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis. The timing of the interviews was always defined by agreement between the researchers and the respondent. No individual files were accessed during the research and all information gathered about the participants was provided directly by themselves.

2.4 Participant observation

Due to the similarities between the two SCE projects and to better access conditions to one of them, participant observation was conducted only in one of these SCE projects, which became the main research setting of the case study. Participant observation was the first research technique to be used at this site and lasted for around 7 months (January to July 2017). One or two researchers observed project activities approximately once every two weeks (13 visits of approximately 3 hours each, although its duration would vary according to the activities observed) and participated side-by-side with the students in regular vocational activities (cooking, arts and crafts), weekly project assemblies and informal moments (lunches, recesses). Researchers also accompanied the students on two external visits. In addition to the data collection, this methodological approach allowed the researchers to build a close and trustful relationship with most of the project's students and staff, thus facilitating the adherence of participants to the individual interviews and the sharing of personal experiences and perspectives.

2.5 Group discussions and photo-elicitation

Two group discussions were organised with the students of the main research site. These were prepared and facilitated by the research team using participatory and creative techniques and students were invited to participate voluntarily. The first one, held in March 2017, addressed the two common themes of the PROMISE project – youth and conflict – and the participants (18 in total) were asked to share and discuss ideas about these two themes and the relations between them. The second group discussion, held in July 2017, was attended by 9 participants and focused on the youngsters' perspectives and past experiences in mainstream school and its comparison with their present experiences at the SCE project.

A photo-elicitation exercise was also done with the students. A short training session on photography was delivered by one of the researchers and a disposable camera was handed to every student who wanted to participate in the activity. Participants were asked to take pictures of places, persons or situations that were relevant to their life trajectories, whether as difficulties or conflicts, or as sources of support or change. A total of 10 participants took pictures and were asked to choose the 3 or 4 most important ones and write a title and subtitles to each of them with the help of the Portuguese teacher. These pictures were used, when possible, to start their individual interviews. At the end of the school year (July 2017) participants were asked to create (with the help of the Arts and the ICT teachers) an individual poster with their chosen pictures and the respective subtitles. These posters were displayed in a festive lunch at the school which gathered all the students, all the PROMISE researchers and school staff.

2.6 Ethics

Prior to the beginning of the research, all respondents were given an information sheet outlining the research and providing contact details of the researchers and were assured that they could choose not to participate or withdraw from the research at any point. Additionally, all participants were asked to sign a consent form before the interviews commenced. They were promised confidentiality and all field notes and interviews transcripts were anonymised to ensure that their identities were concealed.

In the case of the SCE project where participant observations were conducted, an information session about the PROMISE project was held before the beginning of the research and all students

were invited to freely participate in the research. The ones who agreed were asked to sign a consent form before their participant observation commenced. An additional consent form was signed by the students participating in the photo-elicitation exercise.

In the case of the respondents recruited through the Youth Justice Team, the project was presented by the youth justice officers to the youngsters, who invited them to participate voluntarily in an individual interview. To facilitate their participation, potential respondents were promised a 10€ shopping coupon for a media store after the interview. When young people consented to participate, their parents or legal guardians were also asked by youth justice officers to authorise the youth's participation. Only after this procedure, would researchers contact the youth's parents or legal guardians by telephone to ask them to meet and to sign the consent form. After that, the respondents were directly contacted by telephone by the researchers to arrange for the interview. Just before the beginning of the interview, researchers presented the project again to the respondent (including delivering another copy of the information sheet) and asked for a signed assent form.

2.7 Positionality

The positionality of the researchers was significant to this case study. Almost all the respondents were young people engaged in some kind of educational setting at a lower or upper secondary level, and the two researchers were university educated adults, in their 30's, and working fulltime in a university. This led most respondents to relate to the researchers as if they were teachers, and frequently addressed them as such. This positioning initially legitimated the presence of the researchers at the research sites and facilitated the respondents' interaction with them, as it gave them a 'familiar' code to communicate. Nevertheless, this representation of the researchers as teachers gave gradually place to more close and informal interactions, not only because through participant observations the researchers built close relationships with many young people, but also because the very role of the teachers in the SCE project proved to be much more informal and close to the students than the traditional teacher roles that are frequent in regular schools.

2.8 Data analysis

All interviews were anonymised and coded using Nvivo11 and all respondents were given pseudonyms. The interviews were coded into 26 level two nodes that were provided by the coordinating team of the PROMISE project and discussed within the whole consortium. Level two nodes were informed by theory in order to produce a number of main themes agreed by the researchers and used in the key findings section. The level one nodes were developed by means of an interactive process of coding interviews, discussing in team and getting final agreement. Nodes reflect the contents of the interviews rather than just being predetermined by the structure of the interview. At the start of coding, one interview was coded by all Portuguese team members and then coding was discussed. After that, though most interviews were coded by one single researcher, the one that did most of the interviews, the coding process was systematically discussed with other researchers.

3. Key findings

This section explores the key findings of our case study, organised by four main themes: major sites and agents of conflict experienced by young people with paths of psychosocial risk and deviant behaviour; the ways by which these young people try to respond to and overcome their conflicts; the personal and social changes they recognise as resulting from these responses to conflict and the factors that supported these changes; and, finally, how these could be transferred to other young people experiencing similar conflicts.

These themes emerged from the qualitative analysis of the interviews and also included data from the group discussions and the field diaries. Throughout the text, we include quotes from the interviews, as well as indicate the number of sources (and occasionally the number of references) in order to illustrate the consistency and relevance of some results. Whenever included, the number of sources refers exclusively to the interviews. When results are supported on data collected from other sources (e.g., group discussions), this will be evidenced in the text.

3.1 A life of conflicts

The idea of conflict is a familiar one to young people who have life paths marked by psychosocial risk and deviant behaviours. Many of the case study participants related being young with having or being involved in conflicts (something made very clear in the first group discussion held at the SCE project). However, for these young people, conflict is mainly about interpersonal violence, whether physical or verbal, happening at specific moments and in places. Nevertheless, from the narratives of the respondents, it could be argued that other, more structural types of conflict are strongly present and determine their life opportunities and choices, such as socioeconomic or gender disadvantage, stigmatisation, and social and educational marginalisation. In fact, there are several sites where the youngsters participating in this case study refer to having, or to having had, conflicting or problematic experiences. These are particularly present in educational, neighbourhood, family, intimate relationship and justice/protection settings.

3.1.1 Conflicts at school

Mainstream schools are the sites where the youngsters participating in this case study refer to having the most conflict-based experiences (20 sources). These experiences, narrated both in individual interviews (17) and in the second group discussion, tend to be particularly related to deviant or undisciplined behaviours at school, as well as to the lack of interest or motivation to be in school: 'I didn't want to go inside the school, I didn't like school' (Óscar, SCE); 'At my old school, I beat the record of disciplinary offences, really, … there wasn't a single class where I wasn't sent to the student's office with a disciplinary offence, because I was always getting into trouble' (Andreia, SCE).

Many respondents also made references to situations where school as a whole, and teachers in particular, stigmatised, did not care and didn't support students (16 sources), and some referred to school as having a distant relationship with the students (3 sources): 'School thinks we are not capable, doesn't insist [on working with us]. You don't come, you don't get. It's finished. Give up, go away. You're expelled' (Elsa, SCE).

In fact, when referring to school as a site of conflict, the youngsters mentioned the teachers as the main agents of the conflicts they experienced in this context. The quality of their relationship with

the teachers, who they tended to describe as being non-supportive, seemed to be the key point of this association: 'Mainstream school teaches, but it doesn't care about students, basically. … many schools always want to check our records, our past, and don't mind about our present or our future, they just want to know our past' (Telma, SCE).

School peers were also described as important facilitators of conflict with/in school, both in 11 interviews and in the second group discussion, these being especially associated with the encouragement of indiscipline behaviour and school absence: 'and also the company, a bit. I wanted to be on the street, hang out with my friends and stuff. And that was it'. (Edgar, SCE).

Some young people (8 respondents) described experiences of learning difficulties that were associated with school failure– 'I always had trouble in school, even when I was younger... Some [kids] took the test in five minutes, while I left with only half the test done' (Óscar, SCE). Others (7 respondents) described violent experiences (whether as victims or as agents of bullying or aggression to teachers or staff). These were mentioned in the interviews and in the second group discussion: 'I had a hard time staying focused, ignoring what others were saying about me, not thinking about what would happen to me if I were out on the break. I often came out and there were already people there to pick me up' (Lourenço, SCE). While not all conflict ended in school dropout, for many, these unsuccessful and/or conflicting paths favoured a progressive disengagement from school and education that, ultimately, led to moments of rupture with regular school (18 sources),: 'I left school at 13, 14; it was a decision of mine' (Martim, SCE); 'I wanted to do a vocational course and get out of regular school' (Elsa, SCE).

3.1.2   Conflicts in the Family

Many respondents (13 sources) described experiences of conflict within the family, namely conflicts with parents, who seem to be the main agents of conflict in this domain. However, detailed descriptions of family conflicts were intentionally avoided by most participants and researchers responded accordingly by not exploring it further. Consequently, the references to conflicts at home tended to be vague, like 'problems at home', 'I had conflicts with my father' and 'I have a bad relationship with my mom'. Some of the youngsters' narratives nearly reveal violent familial dynamics, although never explicitly: 'because I have been through too much', 'because things happened at home', 'trouble at home…', and in some cases these experiences were associated to deviant behaviour or school dropout.

> INT: And which of these behaviours led you to face a judge?
> HÉLDER: I blew up a car.
> INT: Wow. Why did you do that? What made you do that?
> HÉLDER: I lost my head, I didn't know what I was doing and, according to what I was told, I set a tire on fire and then the whole car set on fire.
> INT: And you, at that moment, had you been using? Ok. So, it was during that more complicated phase?
> HÉLDER: Yes, it was.
> INT: Ok. And so ... so what led you to do that, to get to that state, so lost in your head?
> HÉLDER: It was the problems I had at home. (Hélder, YJT)

3.1.3 Conflicts in intimate relationships

Intimate relationships were also described as sites of conflict by some youngsters (7 interviews, first group discussion). There were narratives about boys fighting because of girls, about having bad relationships and about how having a boyfriend or a girlfriend may enact problems with peers. This tended, however, to be "normalised" by the respondents, who considered these common "youth problems". One of the participants described how being a victim of abuse by her boyfriend led her to drop out of school: 'I had a lot of problems with him because he beat me up and everything, do you understand? And I ... I got to the point in my life when I said "No, that's enough, this is not what I want for myself" and I abandoned everything' (Andreia, SCE).

3.1.4 Conflicts in the neighbourhood and peers' influences

The experience of living in deprived neighbourhoods, or of coming from one, was also referred to by 8 respondents as a facilitator of conflicting experiences. Participants tended to refer to the neighbourhood as a context where conflicts are inevitable, and from which youngsters can't escape: 'Getting out of the neighbourhood life and becoming a normal person, the neighbourhood problems follow behind. A person can never remain normal' (Lourenço, SCE). This seems to be strongly related to the negative influence of peers from the neighbourhood, who were described as key agents leading to conflicting, deviant or even criminal behaviour.

> I came from a troubled neighbourhood and have had many friends that are currently in prison. I have maybe only 2 or 3 of my circle of friends who are normal.... It's difficult because, I'm not saying that if you are from a neighbourhood you have to go to jail, but it's difficult when we have friends who are ready to go do this and that. One is younger and always follows behind and goes ... influenced and then ... we also have that sense of feeling safe and being surrounded by 20, 30 friends. (Edgar, SCE)

In fact, most respondents (18 sources) referred to the negative influence of peers and friendship as an important factor precipitating young people's, or their own conflicting or deviant behaviours, such as steeling, skipping classes, getting into fights, drug use, and, eventually, school dropout: 'Society is upside down, there are friends who are not... If you are not with the right friends, you'll get into things that are unnecessary. And that's why one has to open their eyes.' (Francisco, YJT)

3.1.5 Deviant behaviour

Hashish and alcohol use are behaviours the respondents referred to as usual among young people (15 sources). Although these behaviours are commonly seen by society as potentially deviant and anti-social, respondents showed a double standard in this regard. Some linked it with youthful non-problematic conviviality and identity, an even as something quite present and valued in their daily lives (principally hashish smoking). Others, or sometimes even the same respondents, would reproduce general negative social representations and refer to drugs and alcohol use as harmful and 'irresponsible' practices that could lead to problems and, in some cases, they would even assume individual responsibility for the problems that they thought drug use had brought to their own lives, such as drug addiction, conflicts in the family or at school, or the involvement in violent or criminal behaviours: 'From the 6th grade onwards, it was at that time that I started smoking my first cigarettes ... and then I also started to use hashish and so, it was when ... I went down, I went all the way down. I began to destabilise my life a lot.' (Júlia, SCE)

Regarding violent behaviour, four respondents made reference to violence as something that is quite present within youth groups or even as part of the way of being young, while four others

stated having been directly involved in violent conflicts with others (peers, teachers). Some of these behaviours constituted criminal offences, and 4 respondents affirmed to having been involved in criminal acts like stealing, destruction of private property and drug dealing: 'I'd rather sell drugs, and I'm as guilty as Mr. Jose over there, who has a grocery store and sells wine, and everybody can get it there, and it's not obligatory… selling drugs, why is it illegal? Because we are not paying the state?' (Marco, SCE). The association between crime and youth was also present in the discourses of some respondents (5 sources), but youth criminal activities were usually justified by poverty, family problems, living in deprived neighbourhoods or by the negative influence of peers: 'Yes, that comes also from the difficulties they face at home, do you see? Because they have to make a living, do you understand? Some begin to deal others begin to steal' (Andreia, SCE).

3.1.6   Conflicts with the justice and protection systems

All of these conflicting relationships with persons, institutions or the law, led many of the participants to have contacts with the youth justice system (when having committed an offence qualified by the penal law as a crime) and/or the youth protection system (when considered by the child protection services or by a court as being at risk or in a danger situation, such as parental neglect, maltreatment or school absence) (15 sources). Some of these contacts, however, were also experienced as conflicts by the respondents. For example, in regard to the courts, some respondents showed that they didn't agree with the easy way judges would decide on a custodial measure, like Manuel (SCE): 'One goes to court, and, like, they put him in a foster care facility. They don't think they have family. Because if it were his son, I think they... would think otherwise', or Francisco (YJT): 'They have to think about the "if" and they are not like that. They want, they can and they rule. But they also have to bear in mind that we too are human, we also have things we like to do'.

The idea of potentially being sent to a residential care institution, whether due to a justice measure or to a protection measure, was very much present within the participants' narratives, and the ones who have actually been sent to one tended to have difficulty in accepting the decision and preferred to stay with their family and, thus, frequently running away from these institutions.

> 'After 3 years and 3 months I fled from the institution right away. Then they picked me up again, like one month later, and then they took me back to the institution with a cop everything, and then ... well, as soon as the cops went away they told me to go to school and I said, "that's fine, I'm going to school". The hell I will, I'll go home again instead.' (Hugo, SCE)

Seven respondents made references to the police as an agent of conflict with young people, whether in general terms or linked to personal experiences of contact with the police. Many of these, however, stated that police officers tended to act with the pre-conception that young people are bad or always looking for trouble, and linked this to the dominant social discourse of youngsters as marginal or delinquent:

> 'Occasionally, people go on the street and start looking sideways and we, the youngsters, don't like it. And some start insulting us verbally and we cannot admit it and, hence, the conflicts ... between us and the police. (…) there are cops who can't understand our side, because they are not on our skin.' (Sérgio, SCE)

3.1.7 Gendered conflicts

When asked to relate gender with the conflicts and difficulties faced by young people, the respondents' narratives show interesting contradictions. Many participants, and proportionally more girls, stated that nowadays, boys and girls face the same problems and have access to the same opportunities (14 sources, 7 female), stressing, instead, that individual choices and personal maturity are the factors that make the difference in the lives of youth: '[Boys and girls] are alike; you only need to have maturity in your head' (Sérgio, SCE); 'No. Me, being a girl and looking at the boys, I think if I'll do the same things they do I'll have the same consequences, if I'll get into what they get into I'll do the same, if I steal, it's not because I'm a girl that I won't get arrested.' (Roberta, SCE)

On the other hand, 14 participants (6 female) also argued that girls face greater difficulties than boys. Interestingly, within these 14 respondents, 5 girls and 2 boys, in other moments of the interviews, had defended just the opposite, thus indicating the possibility that these youngsters (especially girls) acknowledge the contradiction between expected gender equality ideals and the persistent of objective gender inequalities base on unequal gender role and expectations. In fact, these respondents defended that girls face more difficulties whether due to intrinsic reasons (7 sources, 2 female) like the 'natural' vulnerability and emotional character of women, in need of greater protection: 'A girl is weaker, more delicate. It makes sense, my mother doesn't let my sister go out at night without me. (...) Doesn't let her go out because she's a girl, it is more difficulty, [she is] weaker.' (Óscar, SCE); or due to external factors (10 sources, 5 female) like exposure to sexual harassment or sexual abuse by males, being exposed to a harsher moral judgement: 'I speak for myself ... how can I tell you? It's like this, if a boy gets a chick ... he's the king, but she's a whore' (Andreia, SCE); or being discriminated against in the job market: 'A woman no, there is more... in certain jobs she is not accepted.' (Telma, SCE)

A few respondents, though, argued that boys face greater difficulties than girls (3 sources, 1 female) since they mature more slowly (1 source, male), have more difficulty concentrating in school (1 source, male) or don't follow advices from others and have a more negative image in society (1 source, female).

3.2 Stigmatisation

The young people in this case study identified different experiences of stigma, as well as different factors that they consider having led to their own experience of discrimination or to the general prejudices of society concerning youth in general.

3.2.1 Own experience of discrimination: factors identified

Respondents refer to being discriminated against by others mainly due to their past behaviour, e.g., problems in school or violent behaviour (14 sources), although these are vaguely described: 'We had school records, school failure and all those things, bad behaviours, disciplinary offences, and all that' (Sérgio, SCE). Seven participants shared experiences of discrimination due to being from a deprived neighbourhood: 'many people discriminate us because we are from the neighbourhood. What's the problem of being from the neighbourhood? We are like other people; many people discriminate against this...' (Manuel, SCE). Other participants mentioned having felt discriminated against because they were not attending school or because they had not completed school (6 sources): 'Maybe a lot of people looked down on me because they knew that I wasn't

doing anything with my life [because he dropped out of school], because I wasn't working, they thought maybe I was going back to what I was before, I wasn't going anywhere.' (Marco, SCE).

3.2.2   Society's prejudices about youth

The participants also made frequent references to society's general prejudices concerning young people. However, these were mentioned from two different stand points. On the one hand, youngsters endorsed these prejudices, by distancing themselves from this 'problematic youth' and, sometimes, from youth itself (12 sources): 'Being young nowadays is tricky. They only cause problems. I think that in my time, when I was younger it was nothing like this' (Elsa, SCE). On the other hand, respondents also referred to prejudices carried out by older generations that seemed to represent young people as 'marginal' who 'are not going anywhere' and as delinquents: 'Nowadays I think they see us as, most young people, I think they see us as delinquents or the like' (Xavier, YJT).

3.3   *Overcoming conflict and stigmatisation*

All the participants of this case study have gone through some kind of experience of conflict and have felt discrimination or stigma towards themselves or, at least, in relation to some other young people who were close to them. However, all participants were also engaged in some kind of change-seeking path that would help them to respond to, or to overcome these conflict-laden and stigmatising experiences, and for some, this really felt like their last chance to seek positive changes in their lives: 'It's an excellent opportunity. … For example, I'm 24 years old, I'm young, but to finish my education I'm not that young anymore, right?' (Santiago, SCE).

3.3.1   Education is the way

All respondents were, or have recently been enrolled in some kind of educational context and this was the main activity they were engaged in. For many, however, this involvement in education was more than a daily activity. It was their concrete way of responding to the problems, conflicts and even stigma they have been experiencing. In fact, education was at the centre of the life of most participants of the case study, not only as a major site of conflict, but also as a major site of agency. Many respondents (14 sources) mentioned that they had recently made efforts to search for new education opportunities and/or they were striving to be successful at the educational paths they were in, and some clearly stated that going to school or the second chance project was their concrete way to tackle problems (5 sources). Among the respondents that were, or have been, enrolled in one of the SCE projects, five claimed to have arrived there via institutional indication and ten others at the suggestion of family or friends. However, twelve of them clearly stated that they came to the project because they wanted to, and not because they were told to.

> What motivated me was my conscience, my conscience. Maturity increased, did it not? It got to a point that I had to say, "I have to go back to school and improve myself." The social worker got me this [the SCE project] and I came. I grabbed it, to make people happy and that was it... (Edgar, SCE)

For the participants who were serving youth justice measures, these were considered the main activity they were engaged in. Nevertheless, education played a central role in their current lives as well, not only because going to school was a central part of their court ordered measures, but also because they actually felt that it was a decisive means to change the course of their lives and,

objectively, reach greater job opportunities in the future: 'I'm really wanting to finish the 12th grade to go abroad. It is my main goal to finish the 12th grade, to have more opportunities, it is an added value' (Francisco, YJT).

When asked about the reasons for being in the educational activities they were engaged in, respondents tended to stress the new opportunity to reengage with school and continue or finish their education (12 sources), more opportunities to find work in the future (6 sources), the possibility to 'be someone in life' and have a better future (6 sources) and, finally, the willingness to meet their own or others' (family, teachers) expectations regarding their future: 'My family and work, I have to be someone. If I were alone I wouldn't mind being a bandit, my friends were in jail. But no, I have a sister, I have a mother, I have a grandmother' (Marco, SCE). These findings also emerged clearly in the second group discussion.

This new engagement in education tended to be experienced by the participants as an opportunity to set a new course for their lives and, consequently, as a source of pride in themselves, whether because of their renewed commitment in school activities (7 sources), because of the positive way they were seen by others for reengaging in education (5 sources), or because of their own sense of self-improvement (14 sources) in aspects like maturity, responsibility, adjusted behaviour, effort and self-reliance: 'Yes [it changed the way I saw myself]. I gained more self-esteem and confidence in myself' (Elsa, SCE).

3.3.2 Individual efforts

In contrast with this prominent involvement in education, the youngsters participating in the case study showed to have a very low tendency to engage in other types of collective activities and very little interest in doing so. Besides school or vocational training, respondents reported very few other structured activities they were, or have been involved in, namely 'sports' (5 sources) and 'scouts' (2 sources). Other activities referred to by the respondents were of an informal and/or individual nature, like 'being with their girlfriend', 'being with friends', 'taking walks', 'listening to music', 'bike riding', 'writing a blog', or related to part-time or occasional work or volunteering, like 'being a fire-fighter', 'dancing in concerts at local festivities', 'working at a bike workshop' or 'doing volunteer work with animals'. When referring to ways of dealing with problems, individual perseverance and responsibility, as well as individual coping strategies were the ideas that stood out both in 17 interviews and in the second group discussion, namely ideas like 'school success depends only on us', 'we have to believe in ourselves', 'never give up', 'don't listen to what others say', 'think before you act', 'avoid stressful people and negative thoughts', 'let life go on', or 'go to some place quiet to relax or to think'.

3.4 From engagement to change

Change was a central issue for the participants of the case study, as all of them were, in one way or another, seeking to build new life paths that differ from their problematic or conflicting past experiences. As presented above, the ways they envision or engage in to reach this desired change oscillate between individualised efforts and formal institutional practices, the latter mainly of an educational nature, even for those participants who were serving youth justice measures. Especially when considering this kind of formal engagement, respondents were able to identify several resulting changes, both in themselves and in other young people, although these tended to be quite general and often nonspecific.

3.4.1 Strengths to move forward

When asked about the personal (felt or expected) changes resulting from being engaged in major institutional contexts like the SCE project or the youth justice measures, respondents were almost unanimous in stressing positive outcomes. In fact, they were all able to identify a wide diversity of personal dimensions that benefited from this experience, and only just a few respondents made reference to potentially negative impacts (2 sources). The most referred benefit was 'personal growth and new ways of thinking' (20 interviews, second group discussion), encompassing ideas like 'growth', 'evolution', 'recognising past mistakes', 'willingness to change', 'new life goals', 'looking at life in a positive way', and 'dreaming higher': 'I was worn out, I was out of control and I did a lot of bad things ... I now regret that.' (Xavier, YJT); 'how am I going to explain? Now I dream bigger than I dreamed before' (Raquel, SCE).

A second set of benefits highly referred by the respondents was related to a greater well-being and feelings of self-value, self-esteem and of 'being capable' (15 interviews, second group discussion).

> They give me the strength to go forward, and to me, that raises my self-esteem, doesn't it. And it makes me see myself in a better light. You are getting there, you have people who care about you, you already have something to hold on to and move forward' (José, SCE).

Other benefits frequently cited were the ones related to finishing a school degree and getting better academic qualifications (13 interviews, second group discussion), as well as improving the opportunities to find better jobs and have a better future (13 interviews, second group discussion): 'I finished this in an instant. The teachers thought that I was going to bail on this' (Óscar, SCE); 'It is knowing that I can have continuity in my future, to know that this can provide continuity' (Martim, SCE).

One other relevant set of benefits recognised by the respondents was related to the improvement of personal characteristics (12 sources), the improvement and diversification of relationships (family, teachers, peers) (11 sources) and the decrease or adjustment of behaviours that they now consider to be problematic (7 sources): 'My mother didn't like it very much that I was getting home late, for example, and when I told her that I was struggling to find a training course, our relationship started to improve' (Miguel, SCE); 'Ahhh, like working in a team.... Knowing how to respect others... with everything' (Manuel, SCE).

Finally, one last cluster of positive changes identified by the participants related to education and learning, namely building a better relationship with education and/or the school (9 interviews, second group discussion), improving or acquiring new skills or interests (8 interviews, second group discussion) and specific curricular learning (5 interviews, second group discussion): 'Always being in school, always going to school. It's one of the things that changed in me. There was no school that could hold me there for long' [Hugo]; 'I'm learning well. They teach you mathematics in a very different way from mainstream school, so that in a certain way you can understand things better' (Edgar, SCE).

Many of the personal changes the young people identified because of their involvement in these educational contexts were also the ones they were able to recognise in their peers, or the ones that they believed could possibly happen to others like them if they had the possibility to engage in similar activities. When asked about the changes identified in others, respondents referred mainly to general benefits (8 sources) ('positive changes', 'good things' 'the best thing that can

happen to us'), to better relationships with education and/or school (7 sources), to opportunities to find better jobs and have a better future (5 sources), to having the chance to finish a school degree and get better academic qualifications (3 sources), to promote greater well-being and feelings of self-value, self-esteem and of 'being capable' (3 sources), as well as personal growth and 'new ways of thinking' (2 sources).

3.4.2 Making change happen

In the face of such positive impacts identified by the participants, the key question, thus, became 'what made these changes happen'? The narratives about the ways participants experienced the activities they were engaged in were very telling in this regard. In line with the impacts they identified, their experiences were also typically positive. In fact, almost all respondents stated 'to like' or 'to feel good' in these activities (20 interviews, second group discussion), whether this was a SCE project or other new education settings associated to a youth justice measure. These positive feelings tended to be strongly associated with a sense of being welcomed, respected, not being judged, being valued and supported in this new context (22 interviews, second group discussion), especially by the adults present (teachers, staff).

> Not here, here you have that help, even if you are having a bad day you always have that call from the other side, like, good mood, you know it's the best for you and we need you, like, no other school does that. It's like that. Ahh, in other schools if you don't want to go, do not go (Marco, SCE).

> They help us a lot. If I have to talk, if I have to vent, you can go to them. They give advice; it's like a second mother and a second father, basically. I feel good, it's different. The warmth, the cosiness, the trust, is completely different. (Júlia, SCE)

> So I consider the [project name] a good place to be. Teachers strive to help us, in whatever they can. They do not just teach us stuff here, do they? They help us with many other problems. Personal problems, just like anyone has. (Santiago, SCE)

> No teacher ever spoke as well about me as these teachers. (Óscar, SCE)

The relationships established within these contexts were highly valued by many respondents (17 interviews, second group discussion), and particularly the relationships with the teachers in the SCE project (13 interviews, second group discussion). These relationships were described in a highly positive tone, invoking ideas of family, warmth, friendship, conviviality, closeness, trust, care, being heard, not giving up and being supported. These aspects could be confirmed through participant observations in the SCE project, where relationships between students and teachers were indeed witnessed as close, affective, supportive and frequently joyful. Moreover, many of these features were also referred to by respondents serving youth justice measures when referring to their relationships with their youth justice officers of the staff of the residential care institution.

Another aspect that was strongly valued by respondents, particularly the ones involved in a SCE project, were the teaching methods and the structuring of the daily activities (15 interviews, second group discussion), which tended to be described as flexible and adjustable to the students' individual needs, moods, preferences and learning paces. This was, in fact, something easily observed in the SCE project, as many students were frequently out of the classrooms, happily moving through the school and performing all kinds of practical activities or running errands for

the teachers inside or outside the school. The teaching methods were also praised by participants enrolled in SCE projects for their creativity and strong practical nature, thus, becoming more appealing and more 'productive' in terms of learning. Finally, the opportunities these students had to make suggestions and choices about their learning process as well as about the overall SCE project activities and rules (e.g., in weekly school assemblies, which could be observed as highly participatory, although often confusing moments) were also stressed as positive by some respondents.

> Sometimes, with a game you'll understand better [maths] than working on equations the whole week, and in English as well. I really like English. Portuguese too. They do not massacre you with that boring subject, pum pum pum ... they find a way for you to understand things... with games, with books and with readings and poems, etc. It's pretty good stuff. (Edgar, SCE)

> Maybe not doing everything the way the teachers would. We give some ideas and then we see if it's possible or not. I think this would be interesting because it also draws more from the student as well, motivates the student. That part also motivated me in the project, it was also getting away from the expected and choosing something else. (Rita, SCE)

One final aspect that the respondents said they appreciated in these educational settings, directly related to personal change, was the sense of commitment (11 interviews, second group discussion) that many identified in the adults leading these settings and in the ways these adults would relate to them. This could also be confirmed by the participant observations conducted at the SCE project in a wide variety of moments and practices (e.g., teachers calling students who were missing classes or who were going through a tough period, having long talks with students who were having personal problems or who misbehaved in some way, welcoming students back to the project after long periods of absence, working until late or on weekends, helping students find new training opportunities, internships or jobs, medical or legal consultations, going to court hearings, etc.). According to some respondents, this kind of commitment from the adults made them also commit to school work in a completely new manner.

> I like to feel responsible, I like to feel that I have responsibilities with this [the SCE project]. I like ... before I would wake up and "Hey school! What is this! I go there and do what? Now I wake up and come straight away. This is not even school, it's the [name of project]. It's 10 o'clock, teacher Elisa must be there already, teacher Jorge must be there already. Let's go! We call each other "let's get up". It's this motivation, you know? A person feels the need to come here. It's not like "school." (Nelson, SCE)

Lastly, it is relevant to stress that most of these highly valued aspects – respectful, trustful and supporting relationships, adaptable and participatory activities, commitment – were precisely the ones respondents tended to stress as the most different from the experience they were used to in previous formal education contexts, particularly regular school (17 interviews, second discussion group): 'Because I think here teachers are different from regular school. Regular school teaches but doesn't want to know about students, basically. But not here, here you notice the affection that the teachers feel for us. They make us feel good, like we are at home' (Telma, SCE).

3.4.3 Supporting young people and their changes

According to the participants, change never relies on one single factor. Beside all factors associated with change resulting from their experience in these new settings and from the relationships established within them, respondents clearly showed the importance of other relevant figures and relationships as support agents throughout youth's life paths and to youth's significant changes. These were mostly linked to the family context, with participants making emphatic references to family relationships as actual or ideal sources of support (23 sources), but also referring to these same relationships with sorrow for not being as supportive as they should, or as they would have liked them to be (15 sources).

> My parents. After all that I have done, they are with me, they are supporting me, they help me. If it were other parents, if they had not cared, they would have not come with me to court and to the police. Do you understand? (Silvio, YJT)

> There it is, I think it's because I didn't have a father, my mother always wanted to play the role of the two, like "what would his father say" "how would a father react", you know? (Nelson, SCE)

Peers and friends were also mentioned frequently as sources of support (19 sources), especially as people who can be trusted, who are willing to help or protect in difficult times and who can become a positive influence in moments of change. On the other hand, peers and friends can also be seen as negative influences, leading to problematic or harmful behaviour (18 sources): 'I've had friends who helped me out and I've also had friends who helped me to get into trouble, to make me do more bad things' (Xavier, YJT).

Finally, alongside family and friends, respondents also referred to other particular persons, groups or institutional settings as actual or potential agents of support for young people: professionals from the justice and protection systems (9 sources); psychologists or psychiatrists (7 sources); residential care institutions and its professionals (6 sources); the girlfriend or the boyfriend (5 sources); teachers from mainstream school (not from SCE projects) (3 sources); and the police (2 sources).

3.5 Transferring experience

The idea of making the changes the participants have experienced accessible to other young people was something they could easily understand and connect with (23 sources), and for some, it was even something appealing and engaging. In fact, many respondents agree that their personal paths and that of others with similar trajectories could be inspiring examples to other young people and to society at large (18 sources): 'Maybe if we show what we are worth, it can change the minds of the older generation' (Raquel, SCE).

> I would like that friends of mine, and I'm already convincing some, would put their hands on their conscience and see that that kind of life does not work. I would like them to say "I want to fight like you did." I wish they would say "you were right, that is very good." I wish more people would come here, people who wanted to change as I did' (Nelson, SCE).

When asked to think about the possibility of transferring their experience in the activities they were engaged in to others, many were quite sure about the importance of it, especially those enrolled in a SCE project, arguing that the project should be expanded to reach more young

people who need it (14 sources). But, for them, these young people in need of such help were not abstract individuals; they were actual friends, siblings or cousins, mates from their neighbourhood, colleagues from former schools, people they knew very well and that they described as the 'more problematic', 'those whom no one believes', the ones 'at home doing nothing', the ones marginalised by the school or family.

> And if many primary and secondary schools don't want to know of these non-students who will want to? Are they going to stay on the streets? Are they going to become drug addicts? If not for [project name] nobody else will want to know about them. If not for schools like [name of project] they are refugees in the streets, they have nothing. (Roberta, SCE)

Although the respondents could identify diverse ways of disseminating these educational projects or initiatives (14 sources) (e.g., publicising it on the internet or social media, on TV or in magazines, directly at other schools), the dissemination and engagement strategy most often mentioned was to create opportunities of direct contact with the projects (visits, one day workshops) and, particularly, to establish contact with present or former participants that could share their own experience and persuade them to participate in the projects (9 sources), much like some of them were persuaded to come by other former students.

> I think these people, the problematic ones, I think they should really come here to spend a day with us. In what school have you seen a teacher cooking with the students?! Nowhere ... right? And here it's wonderful, I like being here. I love it and I think these people would love it too. (Andreia, SCE)

> You can, if I talk to them, they'll see that I like the school. So let's talk. Like, if I see a colleague of mine talking about school and stuff, I'll say, "Oh, come to my school. (Hugo, SCE)

4.   Conclusions

Taking into account the key findings presented in the previous section, based on the analysis of the individual interviews, the group discussions and the participant observations carried out in this case study, this final section draws some conclusions.

To begin with, it could be argued that these young people with pathways of psychosocial risk and deviant behaviour experienced, and also enacted, a wide diversity of oppositions, resistances or nonconformities to social norms and/or to social institutions. Although these youngsters tended not to interpret conflict in such a broad way, it can be concluded that the conflicts they faced were closely related to structural contingencies and inequalities, such as socioeconomic, territorial or gender disadvantage, stigmatisation based on behaviour or place of origin, and social and educational marginalisation. These contingencies and inequalities strongly determined their life paths, which became defined – by others and even sometimes by themselves – as non-normative or as conflicting.

Many respondents made clear references to the fact that the ways they were treated by others ('society', older generations, and authority figures) were often based on prejudices related to poverty or to deprived neighbourhoods. This was particularly relevant in their relations with significant authority figures like teachers, judges or the police, relations which were built upon negative expectations, individual accountability for failures and mistakes, mutual distrust, conflict and, ultimately, marginalisation.

The participants' relations with regular school were particularly telling in this regard. Based on their narratives, we conclude that for them, school became a place of individual failure and interpersonal conflict, a distant context where they did not feel welcome and from which they stopped expecting positive outcomes. This favoured the emergence of a vicious circle of conflicting behaviours and conflicting institutional responses that eventually ended up in disengagement from education.

These non-normative and conflicting paths of young people, often seen by others and by themselves as a 'conflicting way of living', were not, however, recognised passively and uncritically, neither by institutional authorities, nor by the youngsters themselves. That is why the former devise specific institutional responses directed at these youngsters (e.g., youth justice measures, SCE projects, residential care), and that is why the latter actually engage in them, struggling to get back on the 'right track'.

This 'struggle' was often envisioned by the respondents as a path to be carried out individually, and out of each one's strength and will to change. Moreover, this individual accountability for success seemed to be congruent with the individual accountability for mistakes and failures promoted by the normative institutional interventions in education, justice and care experienced by many of these youngsters and frequently reproduced in their own biographical narratives. Interestingly, however, the respondents were also emphatic in identifying the support from others – family, peers, teachers and other professionals – as key facilitating elements of their 'struggle' towards change.

In fact, regarding the role of family and friendships, it is relevant to note that both groups were widely mentioned by respondents as contexts for relationships that could be either conflictive or supportive. In either way, these were recognised as having an important influence in their life paths, thus drawing attention to the relevance of close, convivial and interdependent relationships in the making of young people's social trajectories. This conclusion stresses the relevance of

acknowledging and addressing family and communal relationships and networks when supporting vulnerable young people to engage in positive personal changes (McNeill, Batchelor, Burnett, and Knox, 2005;).

The relationships established by the participants with significant adults (teachers, youth justice officers, psychologists) in the activities and institutional settings which they engaged in were also understood by most respondents as major facilitators of personal change, namely regarding self-value and self-esteem, moral and behavioural adjustment, commitment to school, work and/or family, and definition of long term life goals. But these were relationships quite different from the ones they referred to when talking about conflict. These intergenerational relationships, on the contrary, were mostly characterised by openness, respect, adaptability, listening, appreciation, support and orientation towards the future, commitment, participation, choice, and joy. For most participants these were highly valued relationships that were acknowledged as making all the difference in their lives. Although the role of supportive and individualized relationships has been stressed in the academic literature as a key success factor to promote both educational attainment (Bradshaw, O'Brennan, and McNeely, 2008; Johnstonbaugh, 2018) and desistance from crime and rehabilitation (Caise and Haines, 2015; McNeill, Farrall, Lightowler, and Maruna, 2012), this kind of relationships came as quite a new experience for the participants. Perhaps this is precisely where social innovation may reside, at least from their point of view as 'conflicted young people' under state/institutional intervention.

Lastly, it is pertinent to draw attention to the spaces for agency that most respondents made reference to regarding their involvement in the activities and relationships they are currently engaged in. Many, in effect, stressed the fact that this involvement was a result of their free will and of their commitment to change, and valued the opportunity to make choices and take action within the projects they are engaged in. All these aspects were referred to with a sense of pleasure and self-value, which in turn, showed to be particularly relevant in order to (re)engage in education, become open to new perspectives and build new goals. In fact, this respect and fostering of agency and self-determination is also a key aspect referred in academic research and recommendations about school engagement (Smyth, 2007) and about deviance desistence (McNeill, Farrall, Lightowler, and Maruna, 2012). Nevertheless, regarding this particular case study, the questions that emerge from this are: Will this level of agency be enough after these youngsters leave these projects or measures? Will they take from these experiences enough personal and social resources to face all adversities and build autonomous pathways?

5. Future analysis

Regarding future cluster analysis, it would be important to develop a comparative study about the experiences of conflict and stigmatisation referred to by youngsters with similar paths but in different countries and social contexts, as well as about the related factors, agents, and consequences. This could allow the establishment of different profiles of 'conflicted youth' and to understand their relations with different sets of social precipitants or protective factors.

It would also be relevant to understand, through a cross-cultural comparison, how – and why – these youngsters relate to formal authority institutions such as school or the justice and protection systems, particularly regarding the building of mutual (dis)trust and the barriers and facilitators for youth engagement in different kinds of institutional interventions.

The agency of young people with particularly rough and conflicting paths would be a relevant topic for cross-case comparisons as well, namely analysing what types of agency these youngsters display, in what contexts and for what reasons; what opportunities for agency do they have or are they given; what resources and competencies do these youngsters think they need to enhance their autonomy; and, lastly, how could their agency be further promoted.

Finally, a cross-case comparison would be particularly useful to identify socially innovative actions promoted by or directed to young people in conflict with the law or other formal institutions. Possibly, a comparative analysis of the standpoints of different youngsters in conflict might evidence 'innovative perspectives' that go beyond simplistic associations between youth, deviance and danger, take a critical stance over youth behaviour, shake normative social assumptions, and imagine new ways of being and relating to young people.

The data gathered in this case study could also be further explored if analysed in articulation with WP4 and WP5 data. This would include data related to experiences and attitudes of stigmatisation and to experiences and attitudes of social participation. Such an analysis would allow for a comparison between the experiences and attitudes reported by the ethnographic case study participants and major national and international tendencies identified in WP4 and WP5, thus, identifying personal or contextual variables (e.g., gender, class, education, family background, territorial background) with potential impact on the emergence of stigmatising experiences, or in the emergence of social participatory dispositions and behaviours.

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Appendix 1- Information about individual respondents

Research setting	Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Education	Employment	Residential status	Family status
SCEP1	Rita	20	Female	In lower secondary	In fulltime education	Home with parents	Single, no children
SCEP1	Raquel	19	Female	Complete lower secondary	NEET	Home with parents	Single, no children
SCEP1	Marco	24	Male	In lower secondary	In fulltime education	Home with parents	Single, no children
SCEP1	Paulo	22	Male	In lower secondary	In fulltime education	Home with father	Single, no children
SCEP2	Nelson	18	Male	In lower secondary	In fulltime education	Home with mother	Single, no children
SCEP2	Lourenço	24	Male	In lower secondary	In fulltime education / part-time employed	Alone	Single, no children
SCEP2	Roberta	18	Female	In lower secondary	In fulltime education	Residential care	Single, no children
SCEP2	Edgar	21	Male	In lower secondary	In fulltime education	Home with mother	Single, no children
SCEP2	Elsa	20	Female	In upper secondary	In fulltime education	Home with mother	Single, 1 child
SCEP2	José	19	Male	In lower secondary	In fulltime education	Home with parents	Single, no children
SCEP2	Júlia	18	Female	In lower secondary	In fulltime education	Home with mother	Single, no children
SCEP2	Manuel	18	Male	In lower secondary	In fulltime education	Home with parents	Single, no children
SCEP2	Miguel	20	Male	In lower secondary	In fulltime education	Home with parents	Single, no children
SCEP2	Sérgio	18	Male	In lower secondary	In fulltime education / part-time employed	Home with parents	Single, no children

SCEP2	Santiago	24	Male	In lower secondary	In fulltime education	Home with mother	Single, no children
SCEP2	Telma	19	Female	In lower secondary	In fulltime education	Home with mother	Single, no children
SCEP2	Hugo	19	Male	In lower secondary	In fulltime education	Home with mother	Single, no children
SCEP2	Andreia	18	Female	In lower secondary	In fulltime education	Home with parents	Single, no children
SCEP2	Martim	20	Male	In lower secondary	In fulltime education	Home with mother	Single, no children
SCEP2	Óscar	18	Male	Complete lower secondary	NEET	Home with parents	Single, no children
YJT	Francisco	17	Male	In upper secondary	In fulltime education	Home with grandparents	Single, 1 child
YJT	Hélder	16	Male	In lower secondary	In fulltime education	Residential care	Single, no children
YJT	Helena	16	Female	In lower secondary	In fulltime education	Residential care	Single, no children
YJT	Luísa	15	Female	In upper secondary	In fulltime education	Home with mother	Single, no children
YJT	Sílvio	16	Male	In upper secondary	In fulltime education	Home with parents	Single, no children
YJT	Xavier	16	Male	In lower secondary	In fulltime education	Home with mother	Single, no children

SCEP1 – Second Chance Education Projet 1

SCEP2 – Second Chance Education Projet 2 (main research site)

YJT – Youth Justice Team

NEET – Not in Education, Employment or Training

PROMISE: **Promoting Youth Involvement and Social Engagement: Opportunities and challenges for conflicted young people across Europe.**

WP6: From Conflict to Innovation: Ethnographic Case Studies

http://www.promise.manchester.ac.uk/en/home-page/

Young ex-offenders and recidivism

Estonia

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Executive Summary:

This case study looks at young ex-offenders in Estonia. The main focus of this analysis is how and in what domains young ex-offenders experience stigmatisation, and what impact stigmatisation has on their lives. The study also looks at the strategies young people have to avoid the negative impact of stigmatisation, and how stigmatisation affects a person when the label is internalised. The report is based on the analysis of 22 qualitative interviews with 24 young persons (21 male and 3 female), who have been convicted for a criminal offence. A photo elicitation approach as well as a peer-research approach were used to collect data. Fieldwork took place from August 2017 until March 2018.

Contents

1. Introduction

In the current research, our argument follows the tradition of a labelling approach in criminology that looks at how people come to be defined as deviant and then examining the implications that such definitions hold for the future offending behaviour (Muncie, 2010, p. 140).

States react to unlawful acts committed by young people through their criminal justice system, either placing them on parole in cases of less serious offences or imprisoning in cases of serious or repeating criminal acts. Although the main idea of interventions is the rehabilitation of young people via the influence of risk factors that are associated with delinquency, the effect is often the opposite to the desired one. A study of recidivism conducted in Estonia in 2010 revealed that the highest risk of recidivism was among convicted juvenile offenders. Every third person from 14 to 18 commits their next criminal offence already within a year after their previous conviction (Ahven, Salla, and Vahtrus, 2010). High recidivism rates indicate that reacting to delinquent behaviour by punishment and isolation is rather an ineffective strategy.

The reasons of such inefficiency are various but one of them is related to stigma attached to young delinquency because of their treatment by the criminal justice system. As Muncie (2010) notes, stigmatisation means creating difference and the latter is translated to undesirability and inferiority of a particular group. The stigmatised are cast as not quite human.

It may be useful to distinguish between public stigma that refers to discrimination by powerful groups, and self-stigma, when ex-offenders internalise these beliefs against themselves (Chui and Cheng, 2013). The first can lead to the second one and hinder reintegration. Several studies have demonstrated frustration that ex-offenders face with locating and securing employment (Pager, Western, and Sugie, 2009; Paat, Hope, Lopez, Zamora, and Salas, 2017) and education opportunities (O'Reilly, 2014). Ex-offenders attribute these difficulties to incarceration records, lack of stable work history, low educational attainment, and employers' misperceptions about the character of ex-convicts. Research in life-course criminology has demonstrated that desistance from crime is associated with the successful transition to adult roles (Laub and Sampson, 1993). Strong family, completed formal education, and stable work are often mentioned as the main turning points playing the important role in desistance from a criminal career. The "enduring stigma of a felony conviction imposes restrictions on parental rights, work opportunities, housing choices and myriad other social relationships, isolating ex-felons from their communities and fellow citizens. In short, both the rights and capacities of ex-offenders to attain full citizenship are threatened" (Uggen, Manza, and Benhrens, 2013: 260).

Although stigmatised persons may resist the stigma, it will often result in low self-esteem, self-exclusion, sense of inferiority and acceptance of the role attached by others. The internalisation of the stigma results in "why try" effect. "Why try" includes three components: self-stigma that results from stereotypes; mediators such as self-esteem and self-efficacy; and life goal achievement, or lack thereof (Corrigan, Larson, and Rüsch, 2009).

The focus of the PROMISE project is on participation, conflict, inclusion and innovation and, therefore, ex-offenders seem to be a group that definitely fits these criteria. From previous experience while conducting research with young delinquents, participating in committees for various intervention programmes, I learned that these youth are often blamed for being inactive, difficult to reach, never

grateful for the opportunities offered or delivered to them by the criminal justice authorities. Current research allows to go deeper into the problem and concentrate on the young peoples' views and problems they face; to learn how they see their relation to society; and what are the reasons for them to avoid any contact with the state whenever it is possible.

While the civil and political participation of young people is often analysed as a dichotomy participation vs non-participation, research on Swedish youth suggested that political passivity is a complex phenomenon and along with 'standby citizens', two kinds of genuinely passive young people could be outlined: unengaged and disillusioned citizens. Alongside active citizens, these people are in distinct categories with regard to their political behaviour (Amnå and Ekman, 2014). The majority of ex-offenders belong to the category of disillusioned youth. They do not identify themselves with the state, quite opposite, they are in conflict with the state.

As previously mentioned, disillusionment characterises not only young offenders' political and civic participation, but they also avoid participation in specific programmes and activities that are designed with the goal to help those young people, provide support, increase social skills and through these, also self-esteem, help to find education or start a working career. These programmes are offered either by probation or by some NGOs and are seen by the state as a measure of inclusion and reducing of recidivism. However, many of these programmes do not seem to work. It may be suggested that in the eyes of offenders' intervention programmes, they are associated with the state authorities and, therefore, not trusted by them. More effective may be peer-to-peer programmes that are based on trust, increase self-esteem of those who provide the programmes as well as of those who take part in them. It may be a better solution for the integration of ex-offenders and prevention of recidivism.

2. Methods

The main challenge for this research was to study young offenders as a group, while they do not form any coherent group. One of the possible approaches would be to reach young people in prisons, where they are locked together. However, it was not possible to obtain permission for the ethnographic study to be conducted in a prison. Therefore, it was decided to recruit young offenders into the study via probation, organise them as a group and conduct the research using a photo elicitation method. To achieve this goal and to enter the field we invited representatives of Ministry of Justice and the Probation service to participate in a National Policy and Practice Network (NPPN) – group. We organised a meeting, where the outline of the course was presented by the course teacher, the PROMISE project was introduced and the strategies of recruitment discussed.

To make young people more motivated to participate in the research, the research team in co-operation with colleagues from the Estonian Academy of Art organised photo art course for young people on probation. To motivate potential participants even more, we negotiated with the Probation service and Prisons Department of the Ministry of Justice that participation in the course would be counted as a social programme, if the court assigned this obligation to the young person. Our ambitious aim was to recruit 20 persons and divide them into two groups. In reality, 15 persons expressed their interest in the course and the probation officers provided us with their names. Only six persons appeared at the first session and five of them attended the course more-or less regularly.

The course lasted from the end of August 2017 until mid-October 2017. The group met for a 3-hours "mandatory" session once a week and one "optional" meeting to attend exhibitions. To avoid stigmatisation, the young people were treated as students – we met either at the University of Tartu law faculty building or in the labs of the photography department of the Academy of Arts. The course was titled as "Photo Art Course" and we never mentioned "offender" or "delinquent" in any written or oral communication. There was a Facebook closed group for the participants of the course to serve as a communication platform, share assignments and photographs. The structure of the assignments at the course was directed by the research questions:

1. What are the consequences of and constraints on young people resulting from stigmatisation as young offenders?
2. What are the sites, agents/agencies and forms of conflict and stigmatization encountered by young people?
3. What forms do young people's responses to stigmatization and conflict take? What meaning do young people attach to them?
4. What role do intergenerational relations play in both causing and overcoming conflict and producing social innovation and change?
5. How might the experience of young offenders in finding creative responses and driving social change out of conflict be transferred to peers?

We wanted to lead young people to tell a story of their life via photographs and the assignments were: portrait, one day of my life, people who are important to me, places important to me. The course ended with the exhibition "My Story" in the Children's Art Gallery.

To collect material for the exhibition and also to have material to initiate the interviews, two weeks prior to the end of the course, we gave the young people disposable cameras and asked them to make photos and bring the cameras back to the researchers, so we could develop, scan, and edit images for the exhibition. This was crucial moment in the dynamics of communication between the group and the researchers. For some reasons that we did not understand at that moment, this task was not completed; young people did not attend the remaining sessions except one, the youngest participant (SAM, 15). SAM was the only one to attend the exhibition too. Although we did not get photographs made for the exhibition, we used materials from home assignments and work in class as the material. The exhibition was open for visitors for two weeks and, according to feedback from the curator, was attended by the public.

To reflect on the experience of the organisation of the art course for young offenders, I should confess it was a very complicated and stressful task. The main source of stress was to make young people participate in the course. Every week, in addition to an announcement in the Facebook group, I sent a reminder to participants regarding the time and place of our meetings. If there was no confirmation or reply, I called the young people and invited them to the session. The task was not easy because phone numbers were changing nearly every week. Young people use prepaid cards and often, have no credit on their phone to call back. They do not share their accounts in social media, e.g., used accounts of their friends to join the group and in every sense, were trying to be as anonymous as possible.

While designing and delivering the photo art course, I always was aware about the stigmatising effect of interventions. Therefore, the vocabulary we used and places we met were as "normal" as possible

and no authorities ever attended the course or were allowed to the Facebook group. However, after the analysis of the interviews, I realised that I did not think about self-stigmatisation resulting in low self-esteem and low efficacy of the young people. What was "normal" for me and my colleague from the Art Academy was may be too overwhelming and demanding for kids with different backgrounds. However, the experience of the course was an excellent experiment to study the (non)participation and (non)engagement of this group. At the end of this stage of field work, I had obtained three interviews, while two persons had disappeared completely. After several attempts to reach them, I gave up and concentrated on the other forms of recruitment.

The first part of the field work demonstrated the importance of trust in approaching and communication with young offenders. The research team tried to reach young people via probation officers and that made the university people appear to look as representatives of the authorities in the eyes of respondents. Therefore, it was decided to use a peer researcher approach to complete the fieldwork. Luckily enough from the point of view of the research, one of my graduate students was also fitting to the target group of our research. Having committed several offences in the past and being punished and stigmatised by the criminal justice system, the student had a trustful relationship with many young people with a similar background. The moment we decided to use the strategy of peer-research, was the breakthrough in the fieldwork. All interviews were collected in a relatively short period of time: between mid-December 2017 and mid-January 2018.

In total, 22 semi-structured interviews were conducted with 24 young ex-offenders, one of the interviews was done with three persons. The youngest respondent was 15, the oldest 27, the main age of the respondents was between 21 and 25. There were 3 females and 21 males in our sample. Although males are overrepresented, the proportion reflects the gender distribution among offenders. In 2017 the proportion of females within those on probation was 8%, while only 5% among incarcerated persons. (Ahven, et al., 2018, lk 119) For all respondents, we collected written informed consent for young people; and for those under 18, parental consent was also obtained. All interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed using NVivo 11 software.

The average length of interviews was 35 minutes, the longest 1 hour 20 minutes, the shortest 14 minutes.

3. Key Findings

3.1. Stigmatisation experience

Most of the respondents interviewed for the project have experienced prejudices, discrimination or an unequal sort of treatment by society in general or by institutions. Usually, such attitudes are expressed by strangers, while relatives and close persons have more tolerant feelings.

> Yes, well, prejudices I've seen that. Well, not from my relatives, or the people who know me in general. They know me, who I am, not the prisoner. But for the strangers, who do not… who learn about crime from the media and who are frightened, they feel fear, they are afraid. They are afraid even to communicate with me. That's the preconception that I'm a prisoner, so I'm going to kill you or something. There is quite a lot of such

attitude. That's what the older people are feeling, especially the women and then the other people who are like a mamma's boys. (JB, 24)

In case I would say that I have been punished under criminal law for one or the other, a person will immediately look at me with another glance. Instantly. No matter what criminal act it is: I am a murderer or I have sold weed. If you're a criminal, you're a criminal. (KEN, 19)

The stigma refers to a stereotypical image of a criminal produced by the media: a cruel, violent killer who has no human feelings or attachments. The label "criminal" or "offender" or "ex-con" is a combined image of all the sins and fears of an ordinary citizen. If the offender is a female, the image is even worse: she will be considered promiscuous and definitely a bad mother. One of the female respondents described her experience with the special commission for delinquents, where she was sent to at the age 14 because of the use of drugs:

A man in the commission said that I would never get anywhere in my life that I drink so much (which wasn't true). … But he talked a lot about drinking. And then he used the word "whore". Which was interesting because I was sexually pretty inexperienced before that. The labels were just attached. … He said I'd be either a prostitute or I'd end up in jail. (SE, 25)

When the girl was about to give birth to a child and registered to a hospital in Finland, she told the doctors that she had been doing drugs before, because she thought this was relevant information for the medical system and can have had an effect on her child. The reaction of the hospital staff was, however, not professional. "In the hospital, it was also the attitude that I shouldn't have kids at all. It's like they were looking at you when you were taking something, it's like you're a drug addict. (SE, 25)

This stigma may be attached not only to the offender himself but to his family as well. This is also one of the reasons young offenders do not disclose information about their conviction even to their close persons, as it may not only upset them but also have an effect on their lives. "It can start to disrupt life. I can't imagine, for example, when my grandmother's friends knew I was in prison. They would never socialise with my grandmother." (JB, 24)

The stigma attached to the person then becomes the prism through which all the deeds and behaviours are evaluated. As one of the respondents told, if there is a car accident, the first thing would be not to look at the circumstances of the accident but to blame the driver because of his criminal past: "Nobody's going to look now that I did or that he ran on purpose, but looked at my profile, my past. They're see that I am a criminal and that's all. This is situation what happened to some people. You can't be sure." (BM, 27)

3.2. Effect of stigmatisation on employment

While looking for employment, many ex-offenders face situations when organisations do not want to employ them because of their criminal background. And even if they are employed, ex-offenders are not trusted and if any trouble happens, they are the first to be blamed for it.

You see that you've committed theft, you did. People don't take you to work... Let's say we all are working in the construction industry. And when something's missing, [ex-offenders} are the first to be blamed and to be questioned and bothered. Well, it's rather unpleasant experience. (IT, 28)

I sent a CV to [X] and [Y] and the negative answer came right away. No way. Like there is no vacancies. But even though there are many young people who work. I think that's the background. (JH, 23)

To avoid such situations and to get a job, ex-offenders usually do not reveal their conviction. When the information about their past is known, the employer may ask for explanations or, in extreme cases, fire the young person.

I never go to a job interview, "Hi, I'm a criminal, and that's why I got caught." When I'm already employed and ask what happened or why you came to work here, I'd tell them that there was such a thing. When I worked at the shop, I had this way that at the beginning I got to work there and after came the manager to ask that what is this thing with you and then I talked about it. Then he said, well, that's a pity. For example, he would have known it in a job interview, then I'm afraid he wouldn't even take me to work. (KEN, 19)

Because, actually, there are also those who have immediately been prejudiced that you are criminal, and living in N, I went to work at the pizza place. I told them that I had been convicted criminally before, but because nobody asked directly what it was, then I didn't think it necessary to talk. But one or two months later then suddenly, when the bailiff of these claims began to get there on the table, I received a letter that we would end up contract with you on your criminal background or something. But, well, that's discrimination. I was thinking that if you do it to me, I'd fight back. I went to work protection and got at least two months' wages as a compensation… The employer was admonished, [the work protection office communicated to the employer] that while the person has conviction before, it does not mean he cannot change. That whatever person has done before, he deserves a second chance. (RLA, 26)

Ex-offenders often look for employment from their social networks. The situation on the labour market in Estonia at the moment of research is favourable, as the labour market is characterised by the lack of working hands, rather than a high level of unemployment. While looking for employment via friends and relatives, the information about a conviction is not hidden. This knowledge, however, has not a strong stigmatising effect as the potential employer knows the young offender as a person or receives a recommendation by someone he knows and trusts.

Some employment opportunities are restricted for young offenders by the law. For example, the law does not allow convicted persons to work as a public official or security firms and will check for their background. While for the majority of youth interviewed for this project such restriction was not relevant, some youth considered it as a limit for their future career.

Perhaps, what prevents me from full life is that I cannot work in public institutions or I can't do certain jobs that might be of interest to me and where I can contribute or do something even. Because, thanks to his prison experience I have seen the system from the other side, I know both faceted. But there's nothing I can do. Because I'm a convict. (JB, 24)

The financial problems young people face will be discussed in more details below. One thing, however, shall be mentioned here in relation to employment. Many ex-convicts have debts and other financial obligations that they need to fulfil. Their bank accounts are frozen, part of their income is automatically deducted to pay their obligations, leaving a person with subsistence minimum only. This does not motivate ex-offenders to look for official employment with some better income, because the part of the salary they will receive will be the minimum. Ex-offenders would rather look for non-official employment that would guarantee them a better income.

So far, fines are still in the air, if I want to go somewhere good job…I understand it's important to pay the fines… A lot of the fines are unreasonable big, and I'm not going to pay all of them, but… no matter what I choose, I will get the minimum. You can do physically hard work that is well paid but [still get the same minimum]. (RLA, 26)

One of the opportunities to earn good money even for a low-skilled job is to go to work abroad, mainly Finland. A big share of the respondents have either been working abroad or would like to go abroad. In theory, this is possible for people under probation as well but in reality, this opportunity is restricted for ex-offenders.

Not allowed and denied to go anywhere from Estonia. Although I have two minor children. I have to provide for them, and then a probation officer just won't let go. What am I going to do, like shoplift for food or something? And then I will get punish for it. The probation officer simply does not authorise the work out of Estonia. (JH, 23)

The bans on leaving the country put brakes on those who want to work abroad, for example. In Finland, a lot of good opportunities are available, for example, I mean that the salaries are good and … they do not expect any special knowledge and skills that it is like a very good option for the prisoner, for example. (JB, 24)

3.3. Effect of stigma on other aspects of social integration

To set up a family or move to another place because of a new job or settle down after release from prison, young people are looking for housing. Many of the respondents have reported facing difficulties with that. First, it is nearly impossible for them to get a loan to buy an apartment or a house. Second, when looking for an apartment to rent, they get rejected because of their criminal past. As one of the respondents confessed:

That at the moment, for example, if there has been a wish to rent an apartment or something, then Google will draw all the chances to zero. That if you write the name [into application], it's pretty difficult. (MG, 23)

Yes, they [landlords] check too. When they see that one has been to prison, they will not let in that person. It's also pretty tricky then; ultimately, you'll rent accommodation through another person…. And then if the owner may come…you should be watchful. Then you say he travelled there and I am looking for cats or something. … The public info is just the worst. That everyone sees it. It could be that way that if I wanted to, I'd tell. But, well, who would ever want [to disclose] it, actually. Yes, they put everything up on the internet, come and read. (IT, 28)

The availability of information about crime and punishment via the Internet was brought up by several young people. Not only landlords, but also employers and other relevant institutions make background checks and the Internet allows for this to be done instantly. Even friends and potential partners will check information on the Internet.

Law enforcement also allegedly uses databases or other kinds of information available and execute more control over the convicted youth, in such a way, increasing the chance for them to get caught even for minor misdeed.

For example, police officers all times, absolutely. It happened that we drive a car. If I drive a car or someone is driving my car, the police are behind. Absolutely, immediately there is control, meaning they look for it, they see immediately that's my car. Then come all these paragraphs and then there is no like routine check but is so to say greater control [because I was convicted for drugs], they check the eyes, they order people to get out of the car--not like blowing up a blow check, for example. (EE, 23)

A: I mean, if I'm already convicted once, they're trying to make me really, like, doing something wrong. And then they're watching me twice as much as [they usually do], actually.

Q: Who are they?

A: Who are they? This whole system. Especially the drug police, I think. But there are all sorts of characters. I don't know how real it is, but I've heard that probation services have an overview of my social media for example. I do not know whether it is real or not, but I have heard such a thing. (KEN, 19)

3.4. Financial problems

Although not directly related to the labelling and stigmatisation paradigm, financial problems that young offenders are facing appeared to be an important topic that shapes their choices in life, relations with the state and opportunities available.

I've just started paying them back the last year. Soon it will be paid and it was not easy at all. Because those bailiffs, they have a full-of-crap ride on your back. Doing things they are not allowed to do. (MG, 23)

Criminal policy in Estonia is changing in the direction that any kind of punishment that takes freedom from a young person shall be used as a last resort. There are some rehabilitation and social

programmes in place, but their availability is scarce (especially outside Tallinn) and effect rather questionable. Therefore, when young people, especially minors, are caught for committing an offence, they are either punished by a fine or, if the offence is a minor one, the case will be closed but a person should pay the costs of the criminal procedure to the state. Depending on the number of convictions and the character of crime, by the age of 18, young people will have big sums of money as an obligation that they should pay back. Even when they are punished by a prison sentence, these obligations will still be in place.

> Take alone this behavioural control, probation. Just because I have to be in court with them… No one is thinking about how I'm supposed to feel that I just got out of prison, and I don't have a dime in my soul, and I'm going to have to pass a trial. I earn maybe 800 euros a month, one lawyer's paper is worth 700. (EE, 23)

> A: In two years, when I'm done with the penalty, I'll be very happy, I guess. Then I don't have that kind of financial commitment anymore. It's actually going to be over in a year.
> Q: How big was that fine anyway?
> A: EUR 2000.
> Q: Pretty tough. What about the costs of the proceedings?
> A: It is – the legal costs and the total. I'm still calling that fine.
> Q: When you got caught, you were 18?
> A: Yes. It really saved me a lot. I had just become an 18-year-old young person. I was still on the school list. Maybe I'd go to prison if I hadn't been on the school list. But with the fact that I was captured, nothing would change here in Estonia. They came and picked me up, and I have to pay the state now. It gives the impression that the war on drugs is a good income source for the state. (KEN, 19)

To ensure the money will be paid back, the accounts of young people are frozen and bailiffs will execute the orders of the courts. If an offender earns some money, a big share of it will be collected by bailiffs to pay the debts, leaving a person with a minimal sum of money to survive. This puts young people in a financially very difficult situation. Also, if ex-offenders would rather not disclose their previous conviction to the employer, letters sent to the employer regarding court orders will make this information public.

The constant need for money and inability to earn it legally may turn young people to crime. The criminal way is what they know; what they have already tried. It is money that the state will not reach for. Young people often have insufficient skills on how to manage financially. A few years spent in prison makes the situation even worse. As young offenders told in the interviews, they are desperately in need for guidance and support after they are released from prison.

> They're making me to pay fines, and then I'll become unemployed and I don't get this amount of money from anywhere. It may happen that you will be unemployed for a few years. But I have to pay fines, I am going to take credit for this. Basically, a guy could go and rob a bag from an old lady to get his money and well, that's what makes a man more crook. (IT, 28)

Well, I used to have big debts and stuff on me, and then I wanted to get rid of them. And then I found a solution that should bring [money]. But since I was put down [for dealing drugs], I didn't get too far. (TT, 19)

3.5. Resisting stigma: do not tell about conviction

Young people develop strategies to resist the stigma. These strategies are intuitive ones and used by everyone spoken to. The basic strategy to avoid being labelled is not to let anyone know about a conviction. However, as previously described, information availability on the Internet makes things more complicated.

Q: Do your friends in Estonia know anything about this [conviction] or do not?

A: No, there's no point in much talking. When it comes to private life, it is a private thing that you do not have to share with everyone. (SAM, 15)

Not trying to hide, but you're not going to talk about it yourself. If anyone asks or comes up, I'm not going to hide it. (AK, 26)

Q: Are you trying to conceal from others this information that you have committed crimes?

A: It's kind of you're not hiding it like that, but just for mom, for family members. That's maybe they will reject me. We are talking about drug, it's such a thing, you know. (TT, 19)

Interesting to note is that this strategy to avoid disclosure of information is also taught in prisons as a recommendation to be more successful on the labour market.

Well, that's how you find a job... well, that stuff like: go and do a CV and upload it to CV-center [*on-line job market*], this stuff is not going to help a person who came out of prison. When needed they gave some tips how to conceal that 5 years gap in the CV and how to cheat in your CV, just like any practical tips. [Tips] to fill that gap, so you have a real chance of getting somewhere. (JB, 24)

Relatives usually do not reject their convicted sons or daughters. A similar situation is with friends or other people who know the offender as a person. Stigma of "cruel violent killer" or "a dirty junky" cannot be easily attached to a person you know. This familiarity or opportunity to perceive an ex-offender as a person, not as someone belonging to a criminal cast, is also used as a strategy to resist stigmatisation. As described, while looking for a job, ex-offenders may not immediately reveal their status but rather hope that the employer will have learned this information already and then the young person will a chance to demonstrate his or her abilities and personal qualities. If a young ex-offender is not given time and information about their conviction being made public, he or she may try to explain in details what has happened and what he or she has learned from it. Additional information increases familiarity and separates the label from the person.

I've still tried to hide it [conviction] from the most. I might be able to explain to people there. But it takes such a pointless time, and whether it has any effect or not, and it may happen you can't convince one. (RLA, 26)

To avoid stigma, some young people decide to leave the place where they leave, to change their social network and to start their life from scratch. For many of ex-convicts, Finland is such a place when they can start their new life.

I've decided that this circle [of friends] is not exactly what it's most suitable for me. And since I had settled my life here in Finland already, I had some kind of base down here, so when I got out from prison, the very next day I had a ferry ticket, and I was back here. ... I decided that Finland is a new life base for me. That there I can start off from scratch. I'm going to put my life back together block after block. (RS, 24)

I went out there [to Finland] because I was 15, I graduated from 9th grade, and I was 4 months pregnant. Then I went there. I had so many problems and I knew I needed a fresh start. 'Cause mom had been living there already for a couple of years. (SE, 25)

3.6. Accepting stigma

What the interviews have demonstrated is that often, the reaction of a young person who was convicted for a crime was to withdraw from relationships and contact with other people. Very few respondents reflected on this:

I pushed out my best friend too, because everyone else was negatively reacting and I thought it [breaking relationship with good friend] would be a punishment for me, etc., and then I didn't trust anyone anymore. (SE, 25)

The majority, though, just reported loneliness, lack of trust and withdrawal from close contacts as their personality trait: "I am a reserved person" usually meaning that they do not share their troubles with anyone and they always face their problems alone.

Q: Was there anyone at the time who listened to your worries or someone you shared your thoughts with?

A: Well, I've been a very closed person my whole life. I would have had just a handful of those people who would have listened. But I'm just the type of person that I'd rather leave my worries for myself and not going to get others to hatch with them.

Q: Is it a conscious choice or do you feel that you actually would like to share or do you some reason not to do it?

A: Yes. That is exactly what the feeling was very often, that would like to share. But for some reason, did not do it. I don't know if this came from the shame that you don't want to tell anyone, or is it pride that you just can't express yourself and go with self-pride. (RS, 24)

Conviction, punishment, offender status and stigmatisation have influence on a young persons' self-confidence. This lack of self-confidence and fear to fail if they try new things, restricts young people from even trying, participating in social life, or moving on with their career. "The old" scenarios that already tried either by a person himself or by other people in similar situations seem to be a safe way to go. Such scenarios may also include returning to criminality as a way of life that works.

> One thing is that nobody wants to fail. This will affect many of the new things to try, etc. A lot of people see they're not worth anything. Second, you're afraid what [will happen] if you can't do it. I see a lot that people go the way that is already taken by many and looks safe (e.g., going to Finland to work). Or crime, because you know you can do it. And new things, particularly related to volunteering and education, I see it comes through such personal motivation, if something happens in your life e.g. parenthood, someone has supported you and you want to give back to the community, etc. People learn to see their worth, then this is what makes them want to contribute and give back. For people who don't feel their own value, they have a very hard time seeing that it matters. (SE, 25)

> They don't have a support network to get the support that they need… I think that [they have] poor social skills, are uncertain, and people don't see any good in them, so they might not see other opportunities in life that they could do, and they're going to commit crimes. The point is, when you're freshly gotten out of prison, you're still a prisoner with prisoner's attitude, and this readjustment is complicated for many. I've seen the people I've been in prison with… while I can adjust to the environment, most of them can't. And even more, if you're like young and such a howl too, it's hard to deal with. Because in the same way its aggressive-defensive attitude that is helpful in prison, that will help you survive, it will not work outside. (JB, 24)

For some persons, the new role that they get by accepting a new label may have some benefits. Peers with similar backgrounds may respect you, while enemies will be afraid.

> Some people, I'm sure, but if everyone was scared, I wouldn't like it. I still want to get along with people. Those who are my hate enemies, I will be happy if they fear me (laughs). (JK, 21)

3.7. Conflict with the authorities and alienation from the state

Young ex-offenders have many encounters with different kinds of authorities: police, prosecutors, judges, prison staff, probation officers, social workers etc. The main function of these institutions is to control. It is pretty clear that offenders are in opposition to the criminal justice system and have negative attitudes towards it but this is not always true. A negative attitude is related to a feeling of injustice, when young people feel they have been treated with disrespect or disproportionally hash or differently compared to other people in similar situations.

> I have been exposed to those who abuse this position to some extent. Just their attitude. Not that they're beating, or I don't know, it's just a degrading attitude. (JB, 24)

In Estonia [conviction] is rather is easy to come, yes. I'm sorry now that I say this, but in fact the Estonian legal system is sometimes very unfair in my opinion. (AS, 25)

Experience so far? Well, the police have been arrogant and conceited. No experience with the prosecutor and the judge. (IR, 26)

Young people appreciate when authorities are trying to help them. It came as a surprise that for many ex-offenders, although not all of them, the relationship with their probation officer was a really good one. This appears to be a very promising finding of the research. What is appreciated by young ex-offenders most is a "human-like" attitude, flexibility of demands when it comes to matching control obligations with study and work, and any kind of support and advice and just "normal talk" between the young person and probation officer.

Now the officer's name won't come back, the last one, she was a nice aunt, went there, was happy and I didn't take it as an obligation. (RLA, 26)

Q: What were the relationships with the probation officer?
A: Basically good. Very good, actually.
Q What was the attitude of her?
A: She was supportive. She talked to me, guided me. (AK, 26)

I'm getting along fine with the probation officer. Very well, you can even say. At first I had a very mean impression of her – like their job is to take me down for drug use at any cost, even though in my eyes it's a total waste of resources. Now I have shown her that I can handle my life. I already have a second job while I am under supervision of this probation officer. Work I find quickly when needed, and I have done the job. She has good attitude on me. (KEN, 19)

Personal encounters with the authorities, experiences of discrimination, stigmatisation and unjust treatment have an effect on how young people perceive the state and society in general, their place in it and whether they feel themselves as belonging to it or being alienated. Based on the interviews, it could be concluded that for young ex-offenders, the dominant feeling is alienation. Alienation from the state means non-participation and self-exclusion from all spheres of life: political, social, and even economical.

One should refrain from Estonia. … I don't have anything against the state. The economy's all turned down in here anyway, prices only rise. But it's just that they could have little better attitude. That if you went to the prosecutor's office and then you got a lawyer to come over there and he looks at you and your face and says, "We are going to lock you up." Well, that's not normal. Are you a lawyer? You have to protect me, not tell me we're locking you up. (IT, 28)

Well... how much do you hear of people who are going to stay in Estonia or to get rich by working here. The more you get familiar with Estonian laws, entrepreneurship, taxes and everything. It even makes me nervous, how it is possible to be so mean that you try to charge taxes on everything and get more and more strict here in Estonia. Nobody

wants to live here soon. And it's understandable that if you have to start doing your thing, the Estonian state will make it so difficult that I imagine that everybody would rather sell drugs if possible. That's why they are pushing the crime. In principle, they made it impossible to enrich [legally]. (RLA, 26)

But as there is a punishing prison in Estonia, not a rehabilitative prison, then it has just brought the grudge more up, the way I see Estonia now is that if I ever had a hat that has "Estonia" on it, then I'm not wearing it anymore. (EE, 23)

3.8. *The ways young ex-offenders participate in society*

For the purposes of this case analysis, I would define participation as "Acts that can occur, either individually or collectively, that are intrinsically concerned with shaping the society that we want to live in". (Vromen, 2003: 82-83) If we keep in mind such a broad definition that includes all forms of traditional participation like voting in elections, membership in organisations etc., as well as non-traditional participations like boycotting, protesting, expressing position through art or consumption, the majority of young people interviewed for this case analysis would still be considered rather apathic. This apathy is expressed in many ways. Some of the youth do not work or study. They do not have any clear goal in their life. They, as it previously described, feel alienated from the state and verbally express their desire to leave Estonia.

The things that I have been through, places I've been through. The way it affects my life right now. Just because it changed me as a person when it comes to way of thinking and desires. For example, if one have nothing to do, he's going to see what's in the theatre or he's going to watch a movie. I'm not going to go to the movies, it's so pointless. To these leisure and everyday activities, they have become boring. You go outside and you have nothing to do. You have a choice that you're going to sit in a bar with your buddies and drink two beers, but you're not bothered. It feels like this. (EE, 23)

For young offenders', even routine activities, everyday life like going to work, school, university, movie theatre or gym is already a big step towards participation in life. Accepting stigma, feeling worthless, powerless – all have a big impact on participation. Those young people who resist stigma, however, reported different kinds of participation. They overcome obstacles and go to study, they find a job or are dreaming about their own business. Some of them are involved in traditional forms of active participation –some do volunteer work, participate in youth exchange programmes, work as tutors for youth. TT, for example, is 19, works and as a volunteer and is creating a gym at the local youth centre. He also has participated in an international youth exchange. SE supports and advices youth who are in trouble with the law, and has worked as a volunteer at a support centre for victims of domestic violence. SAM is interested in politics, has his own political views and is ready to express them. When, on the day of the Photo Art course meeting, news were reporting a USA shooting, he expressed his feelings in an assignment:

KEN, on the contrary, defines himself in opposition with society. He has a strong position and expresses it through music and art.

I've been doing a lot of music from the point of view what is wrong in my eyes in this country or wrong in society in generally. I've done a lot of music on that... Some of the songs are on YouTube, too. We have a video single with seven of us singing. [...]The last, the seventh verse is mine. And this whole verse is about how I've been on parole for 2 years and for what, basically. (KEN, 19)

4. Conclusions

Entering the field work for this study was long and problematic. I would like once more to list the difficulties we faced entering the field. Now, looking back at the beginning of the field, I would claim that these difficulties are good indicators to describe the case and, interestingly enough, may serve as the conclusions for present analysis.

It was difficult to access young ex-offenders. The analysis demonstrated that the majority of young ex-offenders are excluded from society. Stigmatisation and its effect of a young person play an important role here.

The research team had to gain access to this group via probation. This decision seemed to be the only possible one, however, rather problematic. The role of probation as an institution is to control the behaviour of the offenders. On the other hand, probation officers do what social workers are supposed to do – they assist young persons to find a job or to go to study, they guide and advise them, they conduct social programmes. Those two roles are in conflict, and this conflict was well reflected in the interviews. While young people are not happy with their punishment and controls, when the probation officer is just and treats them with respect, young people appreciate it very much. In an ideal world, probation could be the bridge between young offenders and society, helping them to overcome difficulties and the effects of stigmatisation. A positive, respectful attitude of the probation officer could have a tremendous effect on how the young offender relates to the state.

Fewer youth than we expected expressed their interest in the course and even less showed up for the sessions. As we later learned from the interviews, many young offenders become apathic, disengaged and lost interest in life. This is how low self-esteem, self-confidence and efficacy are expressed. These feelings are real barriers for social engagement and the participation of young offenders.

To keep the course running, we had to make real efforts to keep young people engaged and ensure they would attend the course. The research demonstrated that young people need support when they start something new – a new job, education, or new life after the release from prison. Lack of confidence and lack of skills need to be overcome.

Participants of the course started to miss the session when they got a "big important final assignment". Ex-offenders are often afraid to fail in things that are new to them. Therefore,

they (as many of law-abiding citizens) refrain from trying new things. This may lead ex-offenders to try "old" ways and paths in their life that are familiar and, therefore, safe: alcohol, drugs, or crimes.

A photo elicitation approach was a good one but only worked for some respondents. A peer researcher helped to save the situation and complete the fieldwork. Actually, from a methodological point of view, both approaches worked quite well to produce good data. Contacts we made and relationships we established with youth during the Photo Art course allowed to collect very rich, informative data. Young people were ready to share very personal information. Two months were long enough to learn from each other, to get used to new people, and to trust them. It takes time to build the trust and the problem for the research team was that the approach we selected took too much time to result in very few interviews. A peer-research approach allowed to use relationships of trust already there and, therefore, this method was more productive for our case study. This issue of trust is of tremendous importance not only from the methodological point of view but as a conclusion of the whole analysis. For the group of young people, I analysed, trust is the key issue in participation. All dimensions of trust are important: trust towards other people in the community encourages to make new contacts and through contacts be more involved in social life. Trust towards state make young people to contribute, to pay back to society. Trust towards criminal justice system makes decisions and laws legitimate and encourages law abiding behaviour not because of the fear of punishment but because it is morally right (Jackson et al, 2012).

The qualitative analysis of interviews with ex-offenders helps to better understand what is behind the high rates of reoffending among young convicts. Youth is a period when people are looking for their path in life, connect to people and to society, create relationships and careers. For many of the young people, reasons for their criminal behaviour lie in the circumstances they have been through during their childhood. Troubles create troublesome youth and state reacts to these troubles with different sorts of measures. These measures are often stigmatising ones and, as was demonstrated in the analysis, often make the situation even worse. Young offenders often feel that to stay on the criminal path is the easiest way to live their lives.

5. Future analysis

It would be interesting to look to what extent factors contributing to stigmatisation differ in different countries. It would be also interesting to look more deeply into the context and to see what are the main issues that characterise how youth are treated by the criminal justice system in different countries, and whether this different treatment has effect on stigmatisation and re-offending.

One topic that is also interesting but did not fit the line of argument in this report is related to education. While participation in traditional education is problematic for ex-offenders, alternative forms and opportunities may be discussed (e.g., on-line courses etc).

Some ex-convicts take part in conventional forms of participation such as international volunteer work or youth exchange programmes. This is very positive from the point of view of integration and inclusion. However, how do these programmes deal with the fact that some participants have a criminal background?

A similar question goes with active protest. Only one of the respondents in our case was engaged in non-traditional participation activities like writing rap songs, recording them and uploading to YouTube. How do social protest movements feel about convicts? Embrace them? Exclude them?

For Estonia, we may look at the similarities and difficulties for youth engagement, participation but also apathy and disappointment for both case analysis (ex-offenders and youth from the Seto region), although these are very different groups of youth.

For the quantitative analysis, it would be important to look how trust is related to different forms of participation and whether this relationship is anyhow related to age. For example, whether trust is more important for youth then for older generations. Also, how self-efficacy, self-confidence, and self-esteem are related to different kinds of participation and, as an additional factor, add conflict to the analysis. There is no dataset available for cross-country analysis but may be on the level of one country, it would be possible to analyse data to answer such questions.

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Appendix: Table of respondents' socio-demographic data

Respondent	Gender	Age
AK	Male	26
AL	Male	22
AS	Male	25
BM	Male	27
DA	Female	18
EE	Male	23
ES	Male	24
IR	Male	26
IT	Male	28
JB	Male	24
JH	Male	23
JK	Male	21
KEN	Male	19
KT	Male	22
LAB	Male	22
LIA	Male	26
MG	Male	23
MS	Male	21
RLA	Male	26
RS	Male	24
SAM	Male	15
SE	Female	25
TJ	Male	17
TT	Female	19

CLUSTER 2: CULTURE / POLITICS

- ➢ Youth mobilisations of 'suspect communities' – UK

- ➢ No TAV: Stigma as a drive for social change – Italy

- ➢ The autonomists: Perceptions of societal change among radical left youth – Germany

- ➢ Not in our town - NIOT – Slovakia

- ➢ Struggling against hegemony: rural youth in Seto country – Estonia

- ➢ New pro-citizen activities of young Peterburgers for 'public morals and order' – Russia

- ➢ People living with HIV and HIV-activists in St. Petersburg & Kazan – Russia

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Youth mobilisations of 'suspect communities'

UK

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University of Manchester

Executive summary: This case study explores the stigmatisation associated with being a young Muslim in the UK. Rising anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant sentiments together with the securitisation of society, through counter terrorism legislation introduced amidst concerns about 'home grown' terrorism, have contributed to the construction of Muslim populations as 'suspect communities'. Young British Muslims are particularly affected by the UK counter-terrorism Prevent strategy, which brings them into tension with a range of institutional sites that have a statutory duty to deliver that strategy. The findings detailed in this report are based on fieldwork conducted over 11 months including 26 semi-structured interviews (four by peer researchers) and participant observation. The findings suggest widespread negative associations with Islam and Muslims, amplified by the implementation of the Prevent strategy, result in a sense among young Muslims that they are constantly surveilled, scrutinised and silenced. This significantly problematises already complex identity issues young Muslims experience. It also shapes their propensity to engagement and the types of activism in which they participate; it mobilises them to defend the right to express their British Muslim identities. Thus, while social exclusion in general acts to inhibit social involvement, some young Muslims feel their own marginality can *enable* civic and political engagement. Such mobilisations may constitute a positive response to stigmatisation in the short-term. However, this focus on a politics of countering Islamophobia ultimately constrains young Muslims' social involvement within a form of identity politics that fails to reflect their complex subjectivities and denies them the opportunity to make the broader contributions to politics and society that they desire.

Contents

1. Introduction

This case was selected because it captures a key site of stigmatisation and conflict in contemporary British society but also the potential for social engagement of those young people affected by it.

The identified stigmatisation relates to the experience of being a young Muslim in the contemporary UK. Islam is an established part of UK society and culture. Census data (2011) for the population of England and Wales show that 2.7 million people (4.8%) identify themselves as Muslims making it the second largest religious identification and Islam the fastest growing religion (Jivraj, 2013: 16). However, the intense political, media and policy scrutiny of Muslims has also become an established part of society and levels of anti-Muslim and anti-Islam sentiments have been steadily rising among the population. A meta-analysis of the findings of 64 opinion polls (2007-2010) on attitudes toward Muslims suggests that Islamophobia[1] is by far the most pervasive form of religious prejudice in Britain and is higher than it was in 2001-06 (Field, 2012: 158). According to Field (*ibid.*), depending on the specific question asked, between one fifth and three quarters of the UK population hold anti-Muslim or anti-Islam attitudes.

The generation of young Muslims that is the subject of this study has grown up in this climate but has been directly exposed also to events that have intensified expressions of anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiment. These are, firstly, the UK referendum on whether to remain or leave the European Union (23 June 2016) and a series of (both Islamist and extreme right inspired) terrorist attacks carried out in London and Manchester between March and June 2017. The research for this study was conducted from the autumn following the referendum through the spring when the attacks occurred and into the following autumn. This was a period of intense polarisation of political debate and strong emotions, around the referendum on EU membership and concerning the wave of terrorist attacks but also in response to the surge in verbal and physical violence towards immigrant and Muslim communities that followed both events. There has been intense debate concerning whether or not the referendum was responsible for unleashing hatred towards ethnic minority and immigrant groups. While we know that reported hate crimes increased immediately after the vote, it is less clear whether that spike has affected society in the longer term (shifting the threshold of what is 'acceptable' to say or do) and what other factors might be significant. A recent analysis of the daily and monthly data on reported hate crime immediately prior to, and after, the EU referendum and the terrorist attacks of 2017 shows two very clear spikes in such crime immediately after the referendum and after the terrorist events (Devine, 2018). Controlling for seasonal affects (reported hate crime figures always peak in June and July), other events at the time (e.g. the terrorist attacks in France) and the 'salience of immigration' among issues voters are concerned with, Devine nonetheless concludes that the evidence strongly supports the contention that the referendum led to an increase in hate crimes and suggests that the reason for this was the negative framing and focus on immigrants in the media during the referendum campaign (ibid.). Even such detailed analysis, however, cannot tell us whether such events are more significant than the underlying constant trends. Hate crime incidents

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[1] 'Islamophobia' is an intensely discussed and contested term (see, for example: Runnymede Trust, 1997; Halliday, 1999; Allen, 2010; Garner and Selod, 2015; Pilkington, 2016: 125-30). Given the constraints of this report, this debate is noted rather than reviewed and the following working definition of what is meant by 'Islamophobia' adopted: 'a set of ideas and practices that amalgamate all Muslims into one group and the characteristics associated with Muslims (violence, misogyny, political allegiance/disloyalty, incompatibility with Western values, etc.) are treated as if they are innate' (Garner and Selod, 2015: 13).

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have been rising since 2013, for example, and the spike in hate crime after the referendum was followed by a return to the same, or lower, level than prior to it. It is also possible that heightened sensitivity to hate crime due to the polarisation of debate had a significant impact on the reporting of incidents. Equally we know that even prior to the EU referendum, the media portrayal of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers was predominantly negative. A study of 58,000 news reports and other items carried in Britain's 20 main national daily and Sunday newspapers over the period 2010-12 conducted by Oxford University's Migration Observatory, for example, found the most common descriptor for the word 'immigrants' across all newspaper types to be 'illegal' (Migration Observatory, 2013).

A further factor contributing to a feeling among the Muslim community of being singled out for particular scrutiny relates to the implementation of the UK government's counter-terrorism Prevent strategy and Channel duty guidance in response to growing concern about 'home-grown' terrorist attacks. Significantly for our study, from 2015 the Prevent duty (Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015) has required that a range of social institutions give 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism' including 'non-violent extremism, which can create an atmosphere conducive to terrorism' where 'extremism' is defined as 'vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs' (HM Government, 2015: 2). This brings young Muslims into tension or conflict not only with the counter-terrorism agencies and police but also a number of institutional sites where that strategy is delivered, including schools, colleges, Further and Higher Education institutions, the National Health Service, local authority social and children's services and youth offending teams. As outlined below wider social prejudice combined with this particular securitisation of the political agenda has constructed the Muslim population – and especially young, male Muslims – as a 'suspect community' (Hillyard, 1993; Pantazis and Pemberton, 2009). At the same time, the very fact that this policy is implemented in educational institutions and affects not only multiply disadvantaged young people but also students and other young people with significant social and cultural capital, aspiration and networking capacity, led the researchers to anticipate that such stigmatisation and conflict might also generate social engagement in the form of critique, protest and mobilisations of resistance.

While this case has been identified through an inductive process – the observation of the emergence of campaigns and actions to challenge the construction of young Muslims as suspect communities – it draws theoretically from a number of key literatures, which help us to understand and explore: processes of inclusion and exclusion, specifically around religious, racial and ethnic markers; the relationship between structure and agency; and how, and why, young people become socially involved (or not). These literatures are not discussed exhaustively below but each is dealt with in so far as it frames the particular discussion here and illuminates the key findings outlined in Section 3 of this report.

1.1 Processes of inclusion and exclusion: Race, ethnicity and religion

The interlocking nature of ethnic and religious identities, and the fact that religious variables were not included in the census until the most recent survey (2011), makes the establishment of precise processes of social and economic disadvantage and exclusion for young Muslims in contemporary British society difficult. However, based on the 2011 census data, Stevenson *et al.* (2017: 5) conclude that 'Muslims experience the greatest economic disadvantages of any group in UK society.' This

disadvantage relates to all three key areas of social inclusion: employment, housing and education. Within the economically active population (aged 16-74 years), for example, only one in five (19.8%) of the Muslim population is in full-time employment, compared to more than one in three (34.9%) of the overall population (in England and Wales) while 24% of Muslims are classified as having 'Never worked/long-term unemployed' compared to just 6% for the overall population (ibid.: 6). In terms of housing, 46% of the Muslim population live in the 10% of the most deprived local authority districts (ibid.). In the sphere of education, there are positive findings in relation to educational aspiration and achievement of young Muslims; among the 16-24 year old cohort, young Muslims are no more likely to have 'no qualifications' than the population overall (Garratt, 2016: 3) while higher numbers of young British Pakistani men and women pursue higher education than their white peers (Shah *et al.*, 2010). However, while most data show an over-representation of Muslim students in UK Higher Education (HE), Muslim representation is not uniform: 60% of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) students study in the post-1992 sector and research into Muslim students studying in HE business schools found that 77% of Muslim students attended post-1992 universities while just 4% attended Russell Group institutions (Stevenson et al., 2017: 31).

These complex disadvantages are reflected in a disproportionate rate of poverty among the British Muslim community; in 2009-2011, half of Muslim households lived in poverty, compared to the national average of 18% (Garratt, 2016: 2). Moreover, Muslims of all ethnic groups face higher levels of poverty than for their ethnic group as a whole; this appears to constitute further evidence that ethnicity and religion can be unpicked in the analysis of inequality and there does indeed exist a so-called 'Muslim penalty' in employment disadvantage (ibid.).

As is noted in Section 3 (below), respondents in this case study often felt a strong intersectionality of both identity and disadvantage. This experience confirms emergent findings that seek to unpick the effect of different elements of individuals' backgrounds and their impact on life chances. Gender certainly intensifies disadvantage for the Muslim community in the UK, creating a 'double disadvantage' (Stevenson *et al.*, 2017: 6). However, it is also increasingly apparent that low socio-economic position ('class') adds a third. Testing the relative significance of gender, socio-economic position and ethnicity in terms of their disadvantage for young British Muslims, Stevenson *et al.* (ibid.) found that socio-economic position and gender both came ahead of ethnic identity in terms of affecting life chances.   However, it would appear that employment chances do improve over generations; thus second generation Muslims suffer a smaller differential (in relation to the population as a whole) in terms of unemployment rate and wage gap than first generation Muslims (Garratt, 2016: 2). Paradoxically, however, the proportion of British Muslims who reported labour market discrimination increased between the first and second generations (ibid.).

In addition to the range of structural disadvantages experienced by the British Muslim community, they are also subject to daily negative media representation. Research into the coverage of Muslims and Islam in the British media showed that over 90% of the coverage was negative; negative associations relate primarily to terrorism in Britain, and to military and political conflict with Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran (INSTED, 2007: 18). Alexander (2013: 5) summarises the dominant representations of Muslims as appearing in three main categories: gender (the hijab/forced marriage/honour killings triad); gangs and grooming; and terrorists/extremists. This, she argues, has the effect of generating a sense that 'the term "Muslim" is too often a code word for a series of pathologies' (ibid.). A significant addition to this discursive bombardment, of particular importance to the study

outlined in this report, is the distillation of these pathologies – through the funnel of the wider securitisation of society – into the representation of British Muslims as a 'suspect community'.

The term 'suspect community' was coined by Hillyard (1993) to describe the construction of Irish communities in Britain as 'suspects' and their criminalisation as a result of the terrorism prevention measures introduced to contain the political unrest in Northern Ireland. Subsequently this notion has been applied to Muslim communities in Britain and the role of both the media and counter-terrorism measures in forging Muslims as a 'suspect community' has been documented (Pantazis and Pemberton, 2009). A number of academic studies suggest that counter-terrorism legislation initiated and implemented in the wake of the 'war on terror' such as pre-charge detention, control orders, the glorification offense, and stop-and-search powers under the Terrorism Act of 2000 and Terrorism Act of 2006 has been targeted disproportionately at Muslim communities due to its extension (beyond acts of terrorism) to non-violent extremist ideologies (see, for example: Choudhury and Fenwick, 2011; Kundnani, 2014; Kapoor, 2018). Other studies have focused on the experiences of, and impact on, Muslim communities of the Prevent strategy (Awan, 2012; Acik *et al.*, 2018; Open Society Justice Initiative, 2016).

A fundamental critique of the 'suspect Muslim community' has been made by Greer (2010) who argues that UK anti-terrorism legislation does not specifically target Muslims or whole communities and that the notion of 'suspect community' has no empirical or analytical foundation since to talk about 'the Muslim community' is to essentialise and homogenise a very large and diverse population group. He explains the disproportional effect of counter-terrorism legislation on Muslims rather by the nature of the current terrorism threat emanating from Islamist groups. In response to this critique Marie Breen-Smyth (2014) draws on Anderson's (1991) concept of 'imagined communities' to argue that social and political discourses also contribute to Muslims being regarded (imagined) as suspect. She provides a definition of 'suspect community' that is constructed through both institutional and discursive practices:

> A 'suspect community', then, can be seen as a group of people, or a sub-set of the population constructed as 'suspects' by mechanisms deployed by the state to ensure national or state 'security' and reinforced by societal responses and social practices. These mechanisms are directed at one specific population identified by an ethnic, religious, racial, national or other marker and the threat to that security is seen as emanating exclusively or primarily from them. The nature of the marker is contextually determined. So accent or home address is the marker of Irishness during the IRA campaign whilst dress or appearance is the marker for being Muslim in the context of a threat from Al Qaeda or other violent jihadi groups. Thus, counter-terrorist operations, practices of surveillance, profiling, arrest, detention, exclusion, control orders and rendition, and media coverage of these practices, are focused on them. This creates in the public mind a suspicion of people apparently in that category and renders them as a 'suspect community', in some senses, creating bonds of understanding between people with a common sense of being suspect. (Breen-Smyth, 2014: 231-2)

Breen-Smyth's definition of suspect communities not only acknowledges the role of counter-terrorism legislation but also discourses of the nature of threat which profile Muslims as extremists and

terrorists contributing to the creation of the 'suspect' in the public imagination. Moreover, these discourses create a socio-political climate that tilts more towards security at the cost of civil liberties and human rights. It thus also has a significant impact on society and the quality of democracy, threatening to erode civil liberties and trust (Open Society Justice Initiative, 2016) and provoke forms of self-censorship especially in relation to political expression, with detrimental consequences for the possibility of participatory democracy (Breen-Smyth, 2014). This is a motif that emerges strongly in the findings of this study and is returned to in Section 3.

1.2 Beyond exclusion: structure and agency

A starting premise of this study is that we might anticipate finding, at the very site of stigmatisation, discrimination and exclusion, forms of social involvement. This hypothesis is underpinned by an assumption that structure and agency are interdependent. At the macro level, structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) understands structures as outcomes of accumulated practices and as not fixed but subject to change as agency is enacted upon them. We thus start from the expectation that structures - most notably in this case counter-terrorism/extremism discourse, legislation and surveillance but also those of race/ethnicity/religion, class, gender etc. – constrain the social involvement of those who are positioned as the object of surveillance. At the same time such structures may work to facilitate practices that contest, resist or challenge these discourses and, in this way, enable social involvement. It is important, therefore, to clarify our understanding of 'surveillance' in relation to 'agency'. When we talk about 'suspect communities' and the experience of young Muslims of being 'surveilled' we are drawing on Foucauldian understandings of society as enacting forms of 'disciplinary power' on subjects through its institutions – in this case intelligence and police institutions but also, through the extension of statutory duties of Prevent in 2015, to a much broader range of institutions whose rules and regimes young people are subject to on a daily basis. At the same time we recognise the danger of seeing all kinds of disciplinary power as deeply intrusive and controlling and of over-emphasising such technologies of social control at the cost of denying the capacity (agency) of individuals to resist dominant forms of social power (Elliott, 2001: 82).

Thus in the findings detailed below we isolate structural and individual factors which both 'enable' and 'inhibit' social involvement of the respondents in this case study. However, while these are dealt with discretely - in order to facilitate comparison across the different cases of stigmatised youth in the PROMISE project - we will argue that in the case of 'suspect communities' many factors identified in the narratives of young people appear as both enabling *and* inhibiting, reflecting the deeply entwined nature of structure and agency. Further we explore how particular structures – of race, class and gender in particular – intersect and act to constrain or facilitate social involvement. Finally we consider some potential longer term negative impacts of the counter-terrorism agenda. We suggest that it is experienced by respondents as a site of stigmatisation since it is felt to identify all Muslims as a potential extremism or terrorism threat. We suggest that this stigmatisation may in the short term be a motivating factor for social involvement; the Prevent agenda may provide a focus for counter-mobilisation and thus act, in some contexts, as a resource or enabling factor. However, this is only the case in the presence of other strong enabling factors; supportive family environments and education are crucial while gender and class may have varying impacts. Moreover, in the longer term, the Prevent agenda may work to solidify binding and disabling structures of disadvantage. Thus, counter-terrorism agendas that are experienced as identifying 'suspect' communities and subjecting them to surveillance, may, at the individual level, result in the over-determination of the production of 'self' by religion in response to the conscious and unconscious experience of feeling 'suspect' as a result of

Muslim faith or heritage. At the same time, at the level of collective identity, this construction as a 'suspect community' may lead to common interests becoming identified around faith and reified where previously ethnic, cultural, doctrinal differences across practices of faith mediated the identification of such interests[2]. In terms of the particular concerns of the PROMISE project – which seeks to understand and encourage the social involvement of young people – this is important because it means that even if in the short term social involvement may be facilitated in this way, in the long term, the securitisation of society acts as an inhibiting factor on the social involvement of those it constructs as 'suspect'. By focusing social involvement on countering Prevent, young Muslims – or those who feel identified as Muslims – may find their social involvement skewed towards a form of identity politics that is constraining in as much as it focuses on a politics of race, ethnicity or religion (countering Islamophobia) that does not reflect the complex ways in which they identify and the broader contributions to politics and society that they would otherwise make.

1.3 Social involvement

The discussion of young people's political and civic participation and/or engagement – or most frequently the lack of it - is well rehearsed (see, for example: Brooks and Hodkinson, 2008; Harris *et al.*, 2010; Norris, 2002; Pilkington and Pollock, 2015; Quintelier, 2008; Wattenberg, 2006). This debate is often concerned with disaggregating and defining different *types* of activities (conventional/non-conventional, formal/informal), spheres of their enactment ('civic', 'political', 'civil', 'social') and modes of interaction ('participation', 'engagement', 'involvement'). For the purposes of this report, we are interested in the widest possible range of responses to the experience of stigmatisation as 'suspect community', whether they might be considered, according to classic political science variables to be 'engagement' (interest or informedness about social and political issues) or participation (action or behavior e.g. voting, membership of political party, attendance at demonstration etc.).

Different positions are taken in the published literature to date as to the best way to broaden our capacity to capture all forms of involvement without losing conceptual clarity. For Vromen (2003: 82-3) 'participation need not be bifurcated into acts that are labelled "political" and those that are not; rather, participation can be seen broadly as acts that can occur, either individually or collectively, that are intrinsically concerned with shaping the society that we want to live in'. In contrast, Adler and Goggin (2005: 241) consider the term 'civic engagement' to have the most useful conceptual purchase, since it captures and describes 'how an active citizen participates in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community's future'. Berger (2009) strongly disagrees, arguing that 'civic engagement' as a term is conceptually stretched and unworkable. His resolution is to retain the notion of 'engagement', whilst distinguishing between political, social and moral engagements and between: *engagement in* (activity without attention); *engagement by* (attention without activity; and *engagement with* (attention and activity). While Berger, therefore, considers the notion of 'civic engagement' to be 'ready for the dustbin', Ekman and Amna (2012: 287-90) argue for its retention but for a clearer distinction to be made between the terms *political* and *civic* and between *manifest* (more obvious and traditional, formal political activities or protest) and *latent* (less obvious and more nuanced forms of civic engagement and social involvement) activities. A crucial insight here is the importance of latent forms of engagement as 'pre-political' or 'on standby' actions and activities, especially among marginalised or politically disengaged

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[2] On the difference between construction and experience of 'self' and 'identity' see, for example, Elliott, 2001.

groups in society; such activities 'may not be directly or unequivocally classified as "political participation", but at the same time could be of great significance for future political activities of a more conventional type' (ibid: 287).

The point of briefly summarising here what might appear to be a somewhat introspective definitional exercise is to ensure that we do not write off young people as 'apathetic' or 'disengaged' simply because we fail to recognise the activities in which they are engaged as part of the civic or political realm. Often the academic response to this challenge has been to blame our conceptual (the employment of a very narrow conception of politics and 'the political') or methodological (too heavy reliance on the survey method) tools (O'Toole, 2003: 45-6). Such critiques seek to avoid any simple dichotomy between participation and 'apathy' by paying more attention to a range of responses on the 'non-participation' spectrum. Young people, it is suggested, may not participate due to apathy, alienation, contentment or because they choose to participate differently, including in ways not identified by research (ibid.: 53-4). However, in the case study undertaken here, our concern is not so much to reclaim apparently non-political activities as to understand how stigmatisation or conflict may, in some circumstances, generate responses of social involvement, even innovation, rather than solidify into alienation.

Thus, for the purposes of this study, we understand *social engagement* in the widest sense and are concerned not only with manifest political participation or engagement but with a broader, and more nuanced, set of activities that comprise what Ekman and Amna (2012: 295) term '*social involvement*'. For Ekman and Amna social involvement is a latent rather than manifest form of participation and consists of *attention to—and interest in—political and societal issues*. It is the feeling or awareness of being a member of society and part of a political context that can be a part of your identity and can be practised on an individual level (taking an interest in political and social affairs, perceiving politics as important) but also on a collective level (identifying with a group, party or ideology, adopting certain life-style practices that identify you with a group, belonging to a group with a societal focus etc.). This does not preclude our interest in forms of involvement that take manifest - conventional or unconventional - forms also, but by drawing on this notion of 'social involvement', we broaden our capacity to recognise factors that enable and inhibit involvement of stigmatised or conflicted groups within society.

2. Methods

The PROMISE project adopted a shared research design and common research instruments for the collection and analysis of data (see Introduction to D6.1 for details). In this section of the report, therefore, we outline only the specific ways in which these overall principles and guidelines were implemented in conducting this case study.

2.1 Approach

This case study employed a combination of interview and participant observation techniques. In some cases, potential respondents were identified through attendance at events related to the case study theme while, in other cases, respondents were accompanied to such events after having been interviewed. Photo elicitation was not used in this case study although visual images taken by the

researchers or respondents themselves were taken or discussed where appropriate. Peer research was employed in the project and its purpose and form is discussed briefly below.

Peer research is situated within the participation action research tradition and gives members of the target group the opportunity to shape the research process and take part in the research as co-researchers (Ryan *et al.*, 2011). The involvement of *young people* in research seeks to both empower them and allow research to be informed by them. In practice, however, the level and form of involvement ranges from working with young people to gain access to a target group through to involving young people in all aspects - from design to analysis - of the research (Fleming, 2010).

In this case study the involvement of peer researchers started at the stage of fieldwork[3]; peer researchers were drawn from among our respondents. While peer research is commonly used to gain access to hard to reach groups, our primary motive for engaging in peer research was to 'give something back' (Bennett and Roberts, 2004) to the young people who agreed to take part in the study. Those young people who became involved in the project as peer researchers saw it as an opportunity to: be upskilled; gain experience in doing qualitative interviews, have an insight into how research is carried out; and build their CVs. Collaboration with a university led research project was recognised also by the community organisations and gatekeepers the researchers were involved with as potentially opening up opportunities for their young people. In the course of the research process, three training sessions were conducted for respondents who expressed an interest in becoming peer researchers in the project. The peer researchers were trained in the ethics of doing research and in how to prepare and conduct qualitative interviews. Five peer researchers were trained and, of these, two carried out a total of four peer research interviews and wrote brief reflections on the interview process. Peer researchers were not involved in the transcribing, anonymizing or coding of interviews.

The peer research interviews were generally shorter (45 min on average) than the interviews carried out by the main researchers (90 minutes on average) and the questions covered were more selective. However, the peer research interviews brought an important 'insider' perspective to the case study and provided insight into the 'interviewer effect'. The peer research interviews allowed the young people to take control of the interview and expand on issues they thought most relevant to them. Thus, during coding of data, it was evident that the peer research interviews tended to include more discussion of the experiences, benefits and effectiveness of respondents' social involvement. This suggests that being recruited and interviewed by their peers provided interviewees with a greater sense of anonymity and generated more confidence in 'speaking out' about their motives and experiences of engagement.

While the primary involvement of peer researchers was to carry out qualitative interviews with their peers, it was not restricted to this. Two of the peer researchers also took part in the UK National Policy and Practitioners Network (NPPN) in May 2018, where the preliminary findings of the UK case studies were presented. Two respondents also took part in a press interview on the experiences of the Muslim community in the wake of the Manchester Arena terrorist attack, which was published as an extended feature piece in a national news outlet in Ireland (Ryan, 2018). Peer researchers will be invited to future dissemination events also.

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[3] Peer researchers could not be involved in designing the case study or developing the questions for the interviews as this was determined in advance due to the requirements of the Horizon 2020 programme.

2.2 Data collected

Fieldwork was conducted from November 2016 to September 2017 by two researchers, who are also the authors of this report. Data were collected primarily using participation observation and interview techniques and the final data set is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Data set

	Number	Total length	Average length
Respondents	27	n/a	n/a
Audio interviews	26	2,049 mins (34.15 hours)	79 mins
Observed events	8	Events include: demonstrations and marches; national and local Islamic Society meetings, events and conferences; mosque youth sessions; local and national NGO events; and community network events.	25 hours
Images	10	Taken at group events and demonstrations including events organised by the researchers	
Group discussion	1	45 mins	45 mins

Of the 26 semi-structured interviews conducted, 25 interviews were with individual respondents and one was with a group of three close friends (one of whom was subsequently re-interviewed individually). Four of the interviews were conducted by two peer researchers (see Section 2.1).

A total of eight ethnographic observation events were recorded and analysed as part of the data set. These included participation in: ISOC events and one FOSIS event; community events discussing Islamophobia and counter-extremism; and a mosque youth group session. They also included observations during participation in a street walk by young people organised by a local youth organisation and a demonstration in the city centre to protest against the proposed prohibition of entry to the United States by people from certain Muslim countries by President Trump. Informal communications were maintained with 12 respondents beyond the interviews and observations.

One event was organised with a group of pupils at an independent Islamic school (for girls) as part of their extra-curricular events day. It was led by a professional theatre worker and provided an opportunity for the pupils to engage in a walking tour of the local neighbourhood focusing on their sensory perceptions of it. This was followed by a group discussion with the pupils in which they talked about some of the sensations and experiences they had during the walking tour as well as wider issues of perceptions of safety, threat, comfort and discomfort in the city and specific environments and contexts. The details of individual pupils who took part in this discussion were not collected but informed consent was taken, the discussion was recorded and the transcript coded and analysed. Where cited, data from this discussion is attributed to 'Group discussion'.

2.3 Access and researcher-respondent relations

Gaining access to the field for this case study took a considerable time and required the simultaneous employment of several community, organisation and individual starting points ('gatekeepers'). The two primary points of access were the Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND) organisation; and a local University Islamic Society (ISOC). In the case of MEND, an initial meeting with the regional organiser led to invitations to attend a series of events organised in relation to Islamophobia Awareness Month (November 2017). Activists and community and mosque representatives met at these events led either directly to interviews or to other networks and organisations where respondents were recruited. In the case of the University ISOC, attendance at a number of ISOC events led to the recruitment of around half of the sample. In addition, several young people who were still at college were recruited through a number of community networks and youth based advocacy organisations as well as through personal contacts.

The role of gatekeepers, as well as the researchers having been seen at previous events, proved important in securing sufficient trust for individuals to agree to involvement in the research. Indeed in one case - where agreement to participate was withdrawn after one of the researchers had taken up an initial invitation to attend a session with the mosque youth group – the fact that the initial access had not been facilitated by a key gatekeeper may have been the reason for the group's withdrawal. However, even where gatekeepers and potential recruits responded positively to our initial approach, at the individual level some young people were sceptical and hesitant about getting more involved. One respondent recruited through an ISOC event, for example, later revealed that they had been very apprehensive initially about the aim of the research and uncomfortable about the presence of an outsider at their event. In other cases respondents who were interviewed promised to put us in touch with other potential recruits, but did not respond to further requests by the researchers. Even one peer researcher struggled to recruit respondents among their friends. Thus, establishing trust and gaining access took a considerable amount of time, effort and persistence by the researchers.

In addition to the role of gatekeepers, another key factor in securing participation from young people was the framing of the research. When explaining why we had selected young Muslims as our target group, it was important to make clear that we did not seek to position them as a 'problem' group or even 'victims' of the government's counter-terrorism strategy. When we outlined the research in relation to the overall concern of PROMISE with how young people *respond to* a range of stigmatising and marginalising discourses, we found a more positive understanding of the aims of the research. This suggests also that the focus on agency within the project was important in ensuring that participation in the research reduced rather than enhanced respondents' sense of stigmatisation.

Finally, we encouraged participation in the research by setting out our aims as not being just to access and recruit individual young people but to build a mutually beneficial relationship with the organisations approached. One institution to take up our offer to contribute to their activities was a local high school for girls, with whom we organised an arts-based activity for a group of 12 girls, aged 14-16, as part of the school's extra-curricular events day, followed by a group discussion. We also offered training in peer research and inclusion in the project as peer researchers to individual respondents (see Section 2.1), making clear, however, that this was our way of 'giving something back' and that there was no pressure to conduct interviews and no obligations attached to the

training. Thus, despite the initial difficulties in gaining access, the fieldwork process facilitated the evolution of the case study into a mutually supportive and collaborative piece of research.

2.4 Ethics and research practice: managing positionality

Whilst adopting a participatory research approach and attending numerous relevant events and being visible in the field over a longer period helped solve the problems of 'access' discussed above, that extended interaction raised other questions of positionality, the relations that develop between researchers and respondents and of ethical practice. The formal issues around ethical guidance and process (e.g. of gaining informed consent) are outlined in the Introduction to D6.1 and no issues in relation to the taking of informed consent or risk to either respondents or researchers were encountered in the course of conducting this case study. In this section of the report, therefore, we provide a very brief outline of some of the practical issues encountered in the field.

The ethical and practical issues that emerged in this case study relate to the positionality of the researchers, one of whom was white British and the other of whom was of an ethnic minority background from the Middle East. On a practical level this meant that much of the 'access' and participant observation was conducted by the latter researcher, since she had better insight and more frequent contact with our target communities. However, the white British researcher also participated in recruitment via networks and events targeted at both Muslim and non-Muslim groups (e.g. anti-Islamophobia and counter-extremism events and meetings) and both researchers conducted interviews.

For the white British researcher, the lack of shared ethnic or religious identity was a cause for constant concern. However, lack of insider knowledge was replaced with the expression of genuine interest in learning about the respondents' experiences; the fact that the researcher had started to learn Arabic was often common ground for sharing experience. More interesting in terms of positionality, was the positioning of the second researcher as *both* insider (as a member of an ethnic minority group from the Middle East) and outsider (as she herself belonged to a religious minority group often treated as 'not Muslim' in Muslim majority countries). This dual positionality could be difficult to handle for the researcher; whereas, in one interview, when the researcher shared something about her own background it clearly made the respondent more relaxed, in another, the researcher noted in her field diary that she felt it had left the interviewee feeling uncomfortable. The researcher herself also experienced discomfort on occasion due to uncertainty about how she was perceived. Practical issues she had to address included knowing what the appropriate dress code and behaviour would be when attending events targeting mainly Muslims. At one of the first meetings she attended, for example, only after rushing into the lecture hall and taking a seat did she realise that she had disrupted the gender segregation of the audience; she was the only woman sitting among male attendees. In stark contrast, at another event, at which great care was taken that physical contact was avoided between men and women, a male attendee squeezed himself into revolving doors behind the researcher; apparently breaking every rule himself and making her feel extremely uncomfortable. At this, weekend-long, event, the researcher was also conscious that she stood out from other participants because she did not follow the unspoken dress code of covering her head. However, at different times over the course of the event, she experienced both being perceived more as a participant –albeit a non-conformist one – than a researcher but also feeling herself re-positioned by respondents as a white middle-class woman researching 'others'. The latter experience was

particularly disorienting since she was used to feeling herself to be part of a 'minority' community. These experiences raise issues not only of the positionality of the researcher(s) but the ambiguity of that positionality, the importance of how it is perceived as well as experienced and how positionality can change in different contexts and over the course of the research.

2.5   Data analysis

Interviewees were immediately allocated pseudonyms (chosen by respondents themselves in some cases) before the recorded interviews (and group discussion) were transcribed by a professional transcriber and then checked and anonymised[4] by the two researchers according to the procedures set out in the PROMISE Data Handbook (see Introduction to Deliverable 6.1 for a summary of this process). The observed events were recorded in a field diary by the relevant researcher and anonymised by them. Following anonymisation interviews, field diaries and a number of images were uploaded into the Nvivo database. Each 'source' was then coded using inductive coding but, at the axial level, employing the skeleton coding tree agreed by the PROMISE consortium.

In this case study, a total of just under 300 child (Level 1) nodes were created and two additional family (Level 2) nodes were created in addition to the Level 2 nodes imported from the skeleton coding tree. The additional Level 2 nodes were: 'Activities, effectiveness of'; and 'Organisations engaged in'. The introduction of these additional nodes reflected the extensive engagement of some respondents in this case study in Islamic Society and other community organisations, requiring a separate node to capture that experience as well as their reflections on the effectiveness of the forms of activities they were involved in. All the skeleton coding tree nodes were populated; 'identity' nodes on 'Muslim identity' and on 'Ethnic identity' were particularly rich.

The two researchers worked consequentially on coding, refining and recoding as the coding tree developed. A process of cleaning, merging and recoding was conducted following the coding of all documents.

Socio-demographic data were entered into the Nvivo database for each respondent and a broad profile of the respondent set by age, gender, educational level, occupation etc. produced from this (see Section 2.6).

Citations from interviews and field diaries included in Section 3 of this report are verbatim and not corrected for grammar or expression. 'Sic' is added in square brackets only where the verbatim speech might appear to be a typographical error rather than a true transcription of what was said. Where the meaning is not clear from the transcribed text (for example, due to a reference back to something earlier in the interview) clarification is added in square brackets.

2.6   Respondent Set

Respondents were drawn from across the target age range of the PROMISE project – the youngest in this case study being 14 and the oldest 32. The vast majority of respondents (78%) were aged

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[4] 'Anonymisation' is used here to refer the process of removing all material that could identify a respondent. The respondents themselves are given a pseudonym, however, rather than the data they provide being unattributed. In this sense the data were 'pseudo-anonymised' rather than 'anonymised'.

between 17 and 22 with the modal age of respondents being 22 (8 of 27 respondents). There were more male (55.5%) than female (45.5%) respondents although additional experiences of young women were gathered in the 'Group Discussion' which was with a group of students at an Islamic School for girls. Socio-demographic data for each participant in the Group Discussion, were not recorded, however, and the participants in the Group Discussion are not formally included among the 27 respondents in the study. 78% of respondents were born in the UK; respondents not born in the UK were born in Pakistan, Germany, Indonesia and Hong Kong.

The most notable skews in the respondent set emanate from the fact that this was a study of young people mobilising against stigmatisation as 'suspect communities'. Not surprisingly, given this, the vast majority (89%) are Muslim, of whom one was a white British Muslim 'revert'[5]. Two respondents said they had 'no religion' although both were from Muslim backgrounds. The majority of respondents (63%) declared their ethnicity to be Asian British, 4% were white British and the remaining respondents were from other BME background (see Figure 1[6]).
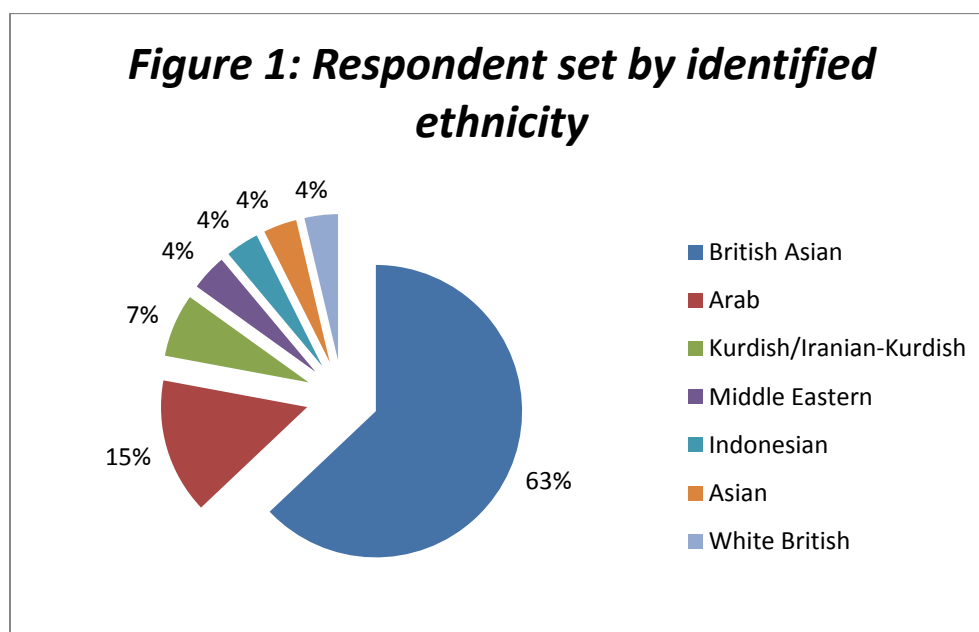

Figure 1: Respondent set by identified ethnicity

Another clear skew in the respondent set was that two thirds of the sample was in full-time education at the time of research. This is explained by the access points (including university Islamic Societies, colleges, schools and activist networks). The educational level of respondents is also high; 71% were either in, or had completed, higher education while just 4% had vocational education. As would be anticipated for a data set of this age range, the vast majority (89%) were single and 70% lived at home with parent(s) or other close relatives. This low rate of independent living (despite the high number of

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[5] The term 'revert' rather than 'convert' is used here as this is how the respondent described herself. Although 'convert' is the most commonly used term in English to refer to someone who adopts another faith than previously practised, or brought up in, some of those who adopt Islam prefer the term 'revert' as it reflects the Muslim belief that all people are born with an innate faith in God. Thus to embrace Islam (despite being brought up in another religion) is not to convert but to revert to that original, pure faith with which they are born.

[6] The percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding to the nearest whole number.

respondents being currently at university) is in line with wider evidence that students from ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely than white students to live at home while studying; data from the 2011-12 Student Income and Expenditure Survey showed that 61% of Asian and Asian British students lived at home, compared with 19% of white students (cited in Stevenson *et al.*, 2017: 31). The significance of these background data – especially in relation to the relatively high levels of education and low levels of independent living among respondents – are returned to in Section 3.3 and Section 3.4.

3 Key Findings

The rich data generated in this case study cannot be discussed comprehensively within the constraints of this report. The findings presented are limited to those that address the key question of the PROMISE project, namely how social involvement might be generated out of conflict or stigmatisation and the implications of this for promoting such involvement. To this end, findings are set out in four subsections which illustrate: the sites of stigmatisation and conflict experienced by young Muslim respondents; the activities engaged in which respond to it; the factors respondents identify as facilitating their social involvement; and the barriers to that involvement.

3.1 Sites of stigmatisation and conflict

Stigmatisation draws on Goffman's (1963) classic theory of social stigma to suggest the process by which individuals become categorised or perceived by others negatively due to an attribute, behaviour or reputation being associated with them and which is seen as socially discrediting or pernicious. While this socio-psychological conceptualisation of stigma focuses on the process of stigmatisation i.e. how the categorisation and labelling occurs, Link and Phelan (2001) suggest expanding the definition by making the issue of power central to the study of stigma. Unequal power relations, they suggest, allow stigma to unfold and discrimination to occur; thus to understand stigmatisation we need to study also the mechanisms and practices of exclusion and discrimination.

In the analysis of the findings of this case study, it follows, we are not only interested in how young Muslims are labelled and stigmatised, but how this is experienced as exclusion and discrimination and how it is facilitated through securitisation discourses and counter-terrorism policies. In this report, we therefore focus on three key sites of stigmatisation, raised by respondents themselves in interviews, that illuminate the mechanisms by which stigmatisation is intensified by counter-terrorism policy and increases a sense of discrimination or exclusion. The first site of stigmatisation relates to the negative connotation of Islam and Muslims. The second site refers to the experiences of racism and Islamophobia among respondents. The third site is connected directly to how respondents experience the part of the UK counter-terrorism strategy called Prevent. All three sites of stigmatisation shape the identity formation of the young people profoundly. For this reason, we preface this section with a brief discussion of how respondents reflect on their Muslim identity and when, and why, that identity became salient for them.

3.1.1 Muslim Identity

Young Muslims in this study talked about experiencing a number of stages of identity formation and, in some cases, identity 'crises. Given the focus of this case study, it is perhaps not surprising that 'Muslim identity' is the issue by far the most frequently talked about. The extent to which the issue of identity matters to young Muslims is, nonetheless, striking. Moreover, identity is a cross cutting theme; it was raised not only directly but also when talking about how it impacted on respondents' experiences of being young, ethnicity, contexts of conflict, their friendships and peer relations and feelings of stigmatisation. It should be noted here that not all respondents in this case identified themselves as Muslim; when asked about religious affiliation, two young people chose to describe themselves as having 'no religion' even though they came from a Muslim heritage background and referred to shared experiences of being an ethnic minority in the UK. One respondent was a white British revert to Islam.

The experiences captured under 'Muslim Identity' are very broad and, even when grouped, generated 27 different sub-categories. Given the complex and diverse experiences of respondents, therefore, this section focuses primarily on the process of identity formation and when being Muslim became salient in the lives of the respondents.

In the narratives of the young people, ethnic diversity was seen as a positive aspect of their growing up and their neighbourhood. Some respondents grew up in a predominantly Asian working class neighbourhood with very few white people. Others were a minority among a white middle class community. Yet, the friendships forged during childhood were not determined by ethnic and religious differences. Becoming aware of one's own religious and ethnic identity and feeling inclined to make friendships with co-ethnic and co-religious friends became more an issue in early adolescent years. Many respondents reported that when they moved to college at age 16 they began to hang out naturally with the few Muslim or Asian people there. For others this process happened when they moved to university. Reflecting on these processes of identity formation, many respondents described how they went through a period in which they were 'adapting to fit in' and attempting to 'integrate' with other, white, friends at school and college.

Khaled is of Libyan descent and describes how he tried to blend in at school only to realise later at college and university that he would never be accepted as 'white'. Being from North Africa, his friends at school had not assumed that he was Muslim and he avoided speaking Arabic in order not to be identified as such. He observes the same pattern in his younger brother, as well as among other young Muslims, and frames this as 'identity problems':

> So there's a lot of identity problems, I think, in young Muslims these days. And, like, I went through it myself. So people don't know... they feel like they don't belong either way. So they can try their best to disassociate themselves with everything that they, their family has and become white; but at the end of the day, they're never gonna be white. So they feel like they don't belong here, but then they also feel like they don't belong at home, because they don't speak the language, they don't know anyone, they don't know anything about their religion. (Khaled)

Khaled describes a common identity crisis young people from an ethnic minority background experience during which they reflect on feelings of belonging and loyalty towards the different cultures to which they are exposed (Phinney, 1989). For him this is a mutually exclusive process in which attempts to fit in lead to a neglect of one's cultural and religious heritage. He suggests that once young Muslims have come to the realisation that they will never be accepted as white, they come to embrace and explore their Islamic heritage.

Zuhair describes a similar experience. For him the process of turning to religion and exploring his roots began when he started studying at the university and he observed this process in himself and others around him:

> So I think there is a point throughout teenager-hood where lots of people do go through that wanting to distance themselves from their identity. And I think university, for many people, can be a turning point, if they find spaces and people that introduce them to either literature or theories or, or just have honest conversations with them which can get them to start reflecting and wanting to feel more involved in their culture and wanting to reconnect with their roots in that sense. (Zuhair)

As Zuhair suggests, the significance of university life as a turning point for young Muslims may be the academic environment and the social networks that it provides (Crossley and Ibrahim, 2012). This enables young Muslims to meet other Muslims from different cultural, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds and explore aspects of Islam that they have not experienced in their families or in the communities in which they grew up. The significance of such networks for young British Muslims in our study is also reflected in their narratives about peer relationships and friendships. Many respondents describe how they have developed deep friendships with other Muslims on their courses or through engagement with ISOC. For these young Muslims the campus environment and the intellectual stimulation provided by meeting other Muslims triggered and strengthened the process of embracing their Muslim identity.

While some respondents feel that they have been through a period of neglect or denial of their Muslim identity, for others such as Dmitri it is about developing 'a connected approach' early on to avoid any splintering or denial of identities. He explains how this was facilitated in his case by the presence of Asian role models and prominent figures who display this connected approach in public and in official capacities:

> And I feel just to match like leading political figures, like Baroness Warsi, like she may not be, obviously, same political views as me, but she's faced the same challenges as a young British Pakistani working-class person, in such a classist system. And she's sort of given me hope, because she wore our... my traditional Asian dress, a *shalwar kameez*, to Downing Street. Like who can say that she's a cabinet minister and she just came in wearing her traditional Asian dress, like it gave me hope that like you don't need to shun your identity to get by. You can use it to get by instead, and you can still be a proud young Pakistani. (Dmitri)

For Dmitri and other respondents, a key moment in their identity formation is the merging of their cultural and religious identity - the identity that has often been confined to the home and the private

- with other, more public, identities (as student or activist, for example). An important element of this process is to feel confident enough to appear with these intersectional identities in public. Thus being publically visible and standing by your identity as Muslim is a turning point in embracing emergent identities:

> […] Whereas now, like I feel like I can just say, 'I am Muslim.' And if anyone has an issue with that, they can say whatever they want, but I will challenge them on it. And I'm more comfortable. Comfortable in being Muslim, or being perceived as Muslim. (Meena)

These processes of identity formation are influenced and shaped by the socio-political context in which young people grew up. The securitisation discourse and the depiction of Islam as the 'new enemy within' is central to that context. It has contributed to the racialisation of Muslims, which is experienced by respondents as part of a stigmatisation they encounter in three main sites. These are addressed in detail below.

3.1.2 Negative connotations of Islam

In respondents' narratives the pervasiveness of stereotyping of Muslims and Islam is a recurrent theme. The most common association of Muslims and Islam is with terrorism. Other stereotypes relate to the association of Islam with gender oppression, grooming gangs, rigidness or dogmatism and with Muslims being aggressive and angry people. These associations are captured in the following excerpts from interviews with Aladdin, Jo and Ashraf:

> […] nowadays, you have like this negative perception where people are just, you know, just angry men, like when you think of the Middle East, you literally just think of like angry men shouting about stuff, and shouting at each other. (Aladdin)

> […] they presented Islam as being very, like... obviously the way that it's portrayed in the media as sort of, like, unwilling to bend, unwilling to be criticised or whatever. (Jo)

> Then you have like the women's rights, especially in, like the Middle East, Saudi and those things. A lot of people have questions as to whether that's what Islam teaches. Then you also have like incidents in the UK that have been, things like grooming gangs, which have been, a lot of the coverage have been on Muslim grooming gangs and things like that. And a lot of statements are made by the people in those gangs that attribute certain statements to Islam, but it's not really the case. So I feel like, at times, I do need to explain myself, my religion, and explain that this isn't part of that, yeah. (Ashraf)

The obligation felt by Ashraf to explain himself indicates the emotional effect these negative stereotypes has on individuals; he feels compelled to dispel such stereotypes through counter-arguments. While Ashraf at times responds to such prejudice by engaging in debate, a common reaction to such stereotypes is the engagement in benevolent activities to *re*-present Muslims in a positive light. Ameena explains that she is surrounded by 'so much negativity' that as a Muslim woman she feels it is necessary to be 'doing something' and utilising her 'skills in the best way possible to help as many people as possible'. Thus, in this context, being stigmatised enables young people to become socially and civically active.

Remaining silent to everyday encounters that stereotype, and feel discriminatory, on the other hand, can be unsettling for respondents. Fiza describes how her white English neighbour congratulated her for doing well 'for somebody from her community' thus associating Fiza with the Muslim community and not the local white middle-class community she grew up in:

> I should have said something to her there and then, but I didn't. But then now when I think about the story - and I tell that story a lot - I just think, 'What women in my community is she talking about?' She lives down the road from me. She is my community. (Fiza)

Experiences such as the above encounter with her friend's mother are common encounters that lead Fiza to the observation that the integration of Muslims is not welcomed and that they will always be constructed as 'others' who are incapable of integrating. Rafi, one of the oldest respondents in his late 20s describes how he grew up being called the P word and was perceived primarily as a threatening young Asian man especially when out and about with his Asian friends. Now, in contrast, he is perceived primarily as Muslim with all the negative associations attached to that label. Thus, for him, the same discriminatory mechanisms are in place:

> Muslims have been racialised in the same way that black people were, or Irish people were or people from the Indian sub-continent. (Rafi)

The association of Islam with terrorism and Muslims with the threat of terrorism is another prevalent form of stigmatisation that occurs in the narratives of the young people. Examples include experiences with airport security when travelling, terrorist jokes about Muslims and Arab respondents being called an 'ISIS supporter' or 'terrorist'. Abdullah describes how he was questioned extensively about his travel at the airport on his way back from his honeymoon. He felt he had been singled out due to his Islamic clothing, which is perceived as a sign of extremism and hence understood as indicating his support for terrorism.

> I trust the authorities [airport security and airport police] that they are just doing their job. But I don't, in a sense, trust their suspicion. A lot of people dress like me, with the Islamic clothing, the thobe. A lot of people have beards. A lot of people have my skin complexion... but we aren't terrorists. If you understand what I'm saying. We are just people who want to pray, worship God, live our lives according to the teachings of Islam. But I feel like, because of the media, because of what's going on in the Middle East, the authorities or people in power do associate us with what is going on in the Middle East. (Abdullah)

Patel (2012) refers to this type of suspect profiling as focusing on 'brown bodies' and argues that terror related surveillance singles out people of Middle Eastern, Arabic, South Asian and/or of Muslim faith and constructs them as members of suspect communities with serious consequences for those who are identified as such. The 'suspects' become particularly visible through their Islamic clothing and this image is reproduced and reinforced through media reporting on Islamist terrorism. For Putra such associations have allowed Islamophobic attacks to happen and made women in hijab a particularly easy target:

[…] the way how media play their cards sometimes. You know, they describe like the attackers, kind of with dress this way and you know. And then people are gonna judge everyone who dress the same way, will be the same bad person. I have, one of my friends told me that when he went to uni with that dress, you know, someone insult him or shock him, shouted at him in the bus stop in a very harsh way. So you know, those kind of... and especially the sisters. That'd be very difficult for them. With the hijab, they be more obvious they are Muslim, right. With a man, like they might not know, if I don't have like long beard and wear the... but with the sisters, sometime it might end up with the very bad... very risky to walk on the road after that kind of situation, with the identity. (Putra)

The strong association of Islam with terrorism has contributed to the creation of a suspect community that positions Muslims as a homogenous group which is collectively responsible for terrorist atrocities. This narrative legitimises the scrutiny of Muslims and treats them with suspicion.

Community organisations also face scrutiny. Nadira describes the difficulties she faces in her work for a community organisation when making public statements following a terrorist attack. She and her colleagues fear their views will be distorted in the media:

And like even if it, whether or not it's true, whether or not it's taken out of context and manipulated and warped into something else, the point at the end of the, the picture at the end of it is that we're seen as bad, we're seen as, you know, extremist or like retaliative to British society. (Nadira)

The powerful and dominant discourse on the association of Islam with terrorism is not peculiar to the media but occurs in everyday encounters. Ashraf describes how he risks facing abuse and hostility if he, as a Muslim, criticises the monarchy; a position many non-Muslims of his age can take without raising suspicion that they might be extremists. Meena, an activist within the Students' Union, also feels that she is denied the right to have a radical political view - an attribute that is usually celebrated among student activists. Thus, Muslim activists have to be more vigilant when making public statements or expressing their political opinion. These experiences of feeling silenced emerged as a strong theme across the respondent narratives and this is discussed further below (see Section 3.4.3).

Finally, it is important to recognise that negative connotations of Islam are not just discursive; they influence everyday practices. For young people they are materialised in experiences of racism and Islamophobia as demonstrated in the following section.

3.1.3 Racism and Islamophobia

The narratives of young people in this case study show that experiences of racism are intertwined with experiences of Islamophobia and that young Muslims experience racialisation as 'others'. Experiences of Islamophobia and racism reported vary from negative comments made to the respondent because of his/her religious identity to threats and physical attacks. Rafi, for example, describes how he attracts more attention when he is out with a group of male Asians and how they are perceived as 'threatening'. Nadira had experienced an incident when a male passenger had pulled off her headscarf while she was commuting to university on the local train. What shocked her most, she said, was the silence of the other passengers witnessing the incident. Aladdin describes how often

he gets approached and insulted by random people in public about his Arabic and Islamic background and how normalised such behaviour has become. Ruksana reports an Islamophobic incident that she describes as not being 'too dramatic' in which she was spat at and told to 'F off out of the country and go back home' by a man in public. She goes on to note the importance of reporting such incidents to the police and uses her experience as a positive example of Islamophobia being taken seriously by the police. Both Liyla and Fiza express concern about their younger siblings who go to a predominantly white secondary school where Islamophobic comments by other pupils are not dealt with appropriately by the school:

[…] And he [my younger brother] said he didn't want to go, because he didn't believe in the march [against the English Defence League (EDL)]. He said, 'I don't want to go. What they're saying is right.' I said, 'What, do you agree with the EDL?' And he goes, 'No British people want Muslims here. I've seen it all in school. I don't classify myself as a Muslim anymore. I eat what I want now.' And I was thinking... I said to my mum, 'It's okay what he does. He just needs to respect Islam. And he needs to stick up for us. And he needs to like be an ambassador. Because he goes to a Catholic school.' My stepdad and I, we both pressured my mum. We said to her, 'Don't send him to that school. It's full of white people. He's not surrounded by his own culture and he'll lose himself.' And that's exactly what happened. (Liyla)

This example of Liyla's younger brother, who is just 14 years old, illustrates how one response to stigmatisation is a rejection of Muslim identity. Liyla is concerned that her younger brother is internalising negative associations of Islam and that the rejection of his cultural heritage will have consequences for his self-perception and identity. Experiences of racism and Islamophobia can lead some young people to develop strategies that Zuhair and Khaled described as an attempt to fit in and adapt to mainstream culture in order to gain acceptance. These are the kind of experiences noted above that shape the identity formation of young Muslims and are influenced by racism and Islamophobia.

Young people also reported their fear of Islamophobic attacks following terrorist attacks. Several respondents described how their feared for their safety and avoided public places and transport particularly late at night. Meena recalls how her mum, and other veiled Muslim women, had had to take off their headscarves when getting on the bus in London immediately after the 7/7 terror attacks in 2005 in the city. At the age of 16, Ruksana was confronted by a member of the public on suspicion of being a terrorist as she was walking home following the same attack:

But then I remember, like a week or two later [after the July 2005 London bombings], I'd gone to PC World to buy a new printer, and walking back home, 'cause it was only about ten minutes from my house, with the printer in my hand and having a white van pull up next to me, and two men get out and demand that I open the box to prove that it wasn't a bomb. […] just members of the public, so they were essentially accusing me of carrying a bomb with me. And again, I had no idea how to react. I did, I, kind of, just did what they told me to and then I, kind of, I think I must have made a flippant comment about, 'I'm not a terrorist,' or something like that, but again, it's one of those memories that's quite vivid. I guess that's when I realised that things are changing. (Ruksana)

For Ruksana, this incident was a turning point in her life through which she came to realise that she is no longer perceived as Asian British but as Muslim British and which played an important part in her decision to study politics and engage in advocacy work to raise awareness about Islamophobia. Other respondents also described how experiences of stigmatisation and Islamophobia were a contributing factor in reclaiming their Muslim identity as observed below by Zuhair:

> And I think for, actually, for many second generation immigrants who are Muslims, being proud of the religion came into play even more as a result of the amount the religion was attacked. So as a result of the war on terror, as a result of growing Islamophobia and institutional Islamophobia and the persecution of Muslims and anti-Muslim rhetoric in the UK, many young Muslims immediately, like, came to the defences of Islam and immediately sort of became one of those front voices in the fight back against anti-Muslim rhetoric. (Zuhair)

These narratives show how the negative perceptions of Islam and Islamophobic attacks directly impact on how young Muslims understand their identities and shape them. Ruksana argues that it is more important than ever to wear the hijab and show publically that you are a Muslim in support of those Muslims who want to practice their religion publically. Thus, reclaiming their identity and reclaiming their space in public as Muslims is an important part of experiencing Muslim identity. All these statements demonstrate the importance of coming together with other Muslims and making the Muslim body publically and collectively visible in order to resist Islamophobia. Underlying these processes is the desire to challenge Islamophobia and be accepted as equal members of society:

> I don't want to be assumed guilty without having done anything. You know, so if I go on the street, I want to be treated as any other respected citizen of the country. You know, I don't want to be treated guilty without having committed anything. (Tariq)

The next and final part of this section turns our attention to the Prevent strategy and how such counter-terrorism policies are experienced by the respondents as stigmatising.

3.1.4 Counter-terrorism and the Prevent strategy

Prevent is a key plank of the UK Contest counter-terrorism policy which makes it a statutory obligation of social institutions, including schools, colleges and Higher Education institutions, to include in their 'safeguarding' duty an awareness of any student showing signs of vulnerability to extremism (of all kinds). Where such cases come to the attention of these institutions they must report individuals for possible referral to the Channel programme – a voluntary programme designed to provide early intervention to prevent radicalisation.

Respondents reported experiences with Prevent at different sites including school, university and the mosque. In most respondent accounts, Prevent was evaluated critically although a few respondents were indifferent to it and one stated that she actually welcomed the policy.

An ISOC organiser among our respondents talked about the problems the society encountered when inviting an outside speaker to an event on campus including the stringent risk assessment procedures they were subject to. These risk assessment procedures were introduced with the Prevent duty in

2015 and include the vetting of external speakers. However, it is often not clear to organisers why a speaker is identified as problematic. Shareef describes his experience with the procedure as follows:

> […] we have, like, sometimes trouble getting a speaker in because of Prevent. Like Hamza Tzortzis, for example. He's, he's on that SU [Students' Union] watch-list or something. So every time we get him, we have to, we have to struggle with the SU. They have to record the lecture and stuff. He's a really nice guy, but for whatever reason, however, they have this guy on this list. I mean, every time, they're like, 'Oh, this guy's really nice.' But every time we invite him, we have to go through the same thing. […] SU has to record the lecture. We have to... typically, what happens with our events is, like, we advertise the event. It's usually free, especially talks and things. So if you just walk in and sit down and... But with someone like Hamza Tzortzis, you have to, like, write down names of who came, and, like, was there an opportunity to ask questions and challenge the speaker, and things like this. (Shareef)

Risk assessment and prevention measures also include having security personnel at events, keeping an attendance list, audio recording the lecture and event and, if a speaker is flagged up as 'extremist' or controversial, the organisers are requested to bring in another speaker who will present an alternative view point and monitor any imposition of gender segregation. While this is a policy that applies to all student society events, Muslim students described their events as being subject to more rigorous risk assessment procedures than other student societies. At the same time, it is evident from the range of experiences captured in our study that there is significant leeway in how universities and Students' Unions (SU) comply with these policies:

> I think we've been lucky in that our SU has been against Prevent. [Name of university] SU. And so I think we really didn't feel its effects. But, like, certain other ISOCs have. Like, their prayer halls have been installed with, like, cameras and, like, recording... like, they're recorded twenty-four hours a day. Like, I think they certainly feel the effects a lot more. Like, they feel like being watched and, like, just for going and praying and stuff. And so I think it does certainly have an effect in certain, like, certain universities and things. (Shareef)

Effective negotiating skills with the university and the Students' Union are therefore seen as an important part of the toolkit for Muslim activists in order to mitigate the negative effects of Prevent on their capacity to organise events. Fiza describes how she managed to get permission for her event on Islamophobia but had been frustrated that security guards had been deployed by the university to the event despite her prior agreement that security was not necessary:

> […] I said to them, you know, it was [male name] is the head of, Director of Student Experience or whatever his name, whatever the role is. And he said to me, you know, 'Security have asked me these questions. Blah, blah.' I was like, 'Okay, feel free to ask them.' But I said to him, 'I don't want any security at my event. There is no...' I said to him, I said, 'There is no need for security at this event. There is nothing controversial being said here.' Literally I was like, 'We are discussing Islamophobia. That is it. That's the issue we're talking...' He was like, 'Okay, that's fine.' I feel he was like, with my answers he was like,

'I'm very happy that you're kind of sorted.' And we had the first event and we had three security guards outside the event. Three security guards, literally. (Fiza)

While these types of measures are open and hence visible to the organisers and the participants, there is also a sense among the respondents that they are being monitored by the intelligence services. For Ahmed this is a simple fact which he takes into account when planning ISOC events:

I've had personal confirmation from individuals that have, that have told me that MI5 is watching the Islamic Society. We, that, that has been personally confirmed to me. I don't need to think twice about that, which again, involves self-censorship. So we're careful about which speakers we bring onto campus, what they can and can't say. So for example, for example, stuff about homosexuality, you know, we can't. So the, the question as to why Islam prohibits homosexuality is a valid question, but we can't discuss that at university because of, you know being watched by MI5 and regulations and the Students' Union and the liberal society that we live in it doesn't, it doesn't allow us to, you know marginalise, which we're not. (Ahmed)

Respondents also described the effect Prevent has in their communities and in mosques. Samira explains that they are not able to utter the word 'terrorist' anymore in the mosque without being 'shushed'. She goes on to express a concern that mosques have become complicit in Prevent due to the fear of being shut down or being accused of not reporting a potential terrorist. Zuhair on the other hand argues that the leadership of mosques, which often consists of first generation immigrants, has become more vocal in opposing Prevent, although they are generally reluctant to get engaged in politics.

While community centres and mosques might feel the pressure to report any signs of extremism and radicalisation, there is no statutory duty to do this. Schools and other public bodies on the other hand are subject to the Prevent duty which makes it a legal requirement for them to comply with the Prevent legislation. This involves staff training, risk assessment policies, IT monitoring, and promoting British values to build resilience against extremism and raise awareness about the policy. Since the introduction of Prevent as a statutory duty at schools (September 2015) there has been a 75% increase in referrals in England and Wales, under Prevent and around 80% of these referrals were judged by the local authority safeguarding panel not to require further action, suggesting that what constitutes a real risk of radicalisation is not easy to discern for those statutory agencies required to make referrals (Acik *et al*., 2018). One of the respondents in our case study – Dmitri - reported having attracted the attention of the safeguarding officer at his school following his use of the Internet to research Nazi Germany. Samira who was at college at the time of being interviewed witnessed how Prevent made students and teachers more hesitant to talk about controversial topics and questioned whether Prevent was effective at picking up signs of radicalisation and extremism among young people. Instead, she argues, schools should focus on combating racism, Islamophobia and bullying, which were more prevalent on school grounds.

From 2015, the National Union of Students (NUS) has organised a campaign called 'Student not Suspects' to raise awareness about Prevent. This campaign was widely supported by Muslim student activists from within the NUS and local Students' Unions and Islamic Societies. Meena argues that Prevent has, on the one hand, mobilised many students across the country, but on the other hand, it

has contributed to Muslims being targeted as a security threat and made them subject to scrutiny.

> I think it's, in one aspect it gets people, it gets Muslims, it gets them to mobilise, I think. Especially the people who are more political, political Muslims in that sense, I think. But it also does this other thing of vilifying any kind of speech that a Muslim may say. So for example, like there's two ends to it, so like a double-edged sword, in the fact that yes, it's been able to mobilise hundreds of student activists across the country and to make sure that, you know, their universities have an anti-Prevent policy and that they're standing up to Islamophobia, institutional Islamophobia. But on the other hand, it's also made people very, very conscious of the Muslims around them. So like if a Muslim says anything, they, they... they will scrutinise that and they will, yeah, they will scrutinise it and they will treat it in a way that they would never treat it if it was a white non-Muslim counterpart. (Meena)

Engagement in the anti-Prevent campaign has mobilised Muslim students active in the Students' Unions and ISOCs across the country. Meena suggests that this campaign has been both an enabler and inhibitor of engagement; an issue that is returned to below. The direct experiences of respondents with Prevent policies will be discussed in more detail in the following section since Prevent constitutes a particular site of stigmatisation for young Muslim activists. At this point, it is important to note that Prevent procedures are perceived by respondents to reinforce the association of Muslims with terrorism and experienced as making them subject to securitisation practices that work to stigmatise them.

In the following section, the report explores how these experiences of stigmatisation have a considerable bearing on respondents' attitudes to engagement and the types of activism in which they become involved.

3.2 Activities engaged in

This case study targeted young people who were engaged in organisations or otherwise socially and politically active. More than half of the sample consists of students who were recruited through ISOCs. Three of the students were also active in the Students' Union and held positions within the National Union of Students (NUS). The majority of other respondents were recruited through various initiatives, and were involved in local and national youth justice and/or advocacy organisations and community networks. A small number of respondents were not involved in any organisation but were nonetheless, interested and involved in debates at college and had participated in some events or demonstrations.

These young people were engaged in a wide range of activities, which were coded into 26 different groups. The most relevant activities for this case study relate to Prevent; this activity is also the most frequently mentioned. Other activities that are frequently engaged in by respondents include: charity work, fundraising and volunteering; the propagation of Islam (*Dawa*); social media based activities; campaigning; participating in protests; and a range of social, cultural and educational activities (particularly within ISOC). In this section, young people's experiences of taking part in these activities are explored, focusing on their role in countering negative images of Islam, representing Islam in a positive way and challenging stigmatising practices.

3.2.1 Doing good deeds to counter stigmatisation: charity work

Doing charity work, such as working in the community, volunteering and fundraising emerged as one of the most popular types of activities. This involved, in particular, raising funds for humanitarian aid, as well as for local and national causes, such as for homeless people, cancer research and local schools. Engaging in charity work was something that respondents felt comfortable with; as Samira states, it is something she grew up with as she watched family members raise funds at various occasions. Giving charity (zakat) is one of the five pillars of Islam and is deeply rooted in Islamic traditions. British Muslims give more to charity per capita than any other group (MEND factsheet). Doing charity work is thus felt to be an important element of Islam although not exclusive to it, as Ruksana describes:

> And that's kind of why people would volunteer with us and come to this station in this community centre, 'cause it's kind of something that we all pride ourselves in, having that kind of mentality. So it's, I think that, I wouldn't say that's just an Islamic mentality. I think that's just a human mentality. But it's emphasised more for me in Islamic organisations than non-Islamic organisations […] all the ones I've worked at, let's say. (Ruksana)

Like Ruksana, many respondents in the sample pride themselves on giving up their time to help others. There was frequent mention of being grateful for the support they received from others and from their religion and the importance of reciprocating this by supporting others; to show their gratitude to the society that supports them, as well as the religion that gives them strength. By doing this, some respondents said, they better themselves as Muslims. Thus, while the respondents often refer to their religion to explain the motivation behind their altruistic and benevolent behaviour, it is not the only factor at play. Charity work and volunteering is not only motivated by religion or spirituality. For Yardan, 'giving back to the community' and doing charity work and fundraising 'helps dispel a lot of stereotypes'. He argues that whenever his religion gets blamed for something negative, he feels compelled to do more 'charitable stuff'. Charity work helps young Muslims convey a positive image of Islam and their Muslim identity. The following quote by Khaled reflects the hope shared by many respondents about the effects of their voluntary work with people in the community:

> So we [ISOC] have some projects which are, you know, open to all. So we have things like cleaning the park, you know, visiting care homes, giving out free hot drinks, for example. Just because, when you're giving out free hot drinks, people... especially if it's coming from a Muslim, you know, like a Muslim woman with a headscarf – if she's giving out a hot drink to someone, then they're not... people aren't gonna think, 'Oh, no, she's a horrible woman,' or... Just small things to show that, at the end of the day, we're normal people. (Khaled)

With these seemingly mundane activities, the respondents aim to destroy prejudices members of the public may hold about Muslims. By showing the caring and compassionate side of Muslims, they are enacting notions of a diverse and inclusive citizenship. As noted in the previous section, the stigmatisation of Muslims has contributed to a crisis of identity for some young Muslims while embracing their Muslim identity can be central to gaining public recognition of their different and contesting identities. Through undertaking good deeds in public and helping others, respondents find a way to reinforce their British identity and to claim their place as full members of the polity.

3.2.2 Political campaigning and *Dawa*

While the narratives of the young people in this study demonstrate an enthusiasm for volunteering and fundraising for charity purposes, political campaigns, protests, and demonstrations were talked about with less passion by a substantial number of respondents.

Most ISOC members interviewed for this study had experienced participation in some sort of campaign including those against Prevent and aimed at tackling Islamophobia and racism. However, these campaigns were often part of broader ISOC activities that were primarily charitable, social or educational. Thus, the majority of ISOC members had more experience of organising or taking part in social and educational activities than in political campaigning; indeed they were often cautious about the latter. Ashraf, for example, explains that he 'pulled out from the whole student politics' because '[...]I was never a fan of protests to be honest, but it was just, I thought I could help in different ways, so I, kind of, pulled away from the whole student politics.' (Ashraf). Other respondents also reported feeling more confident engaging with humanitarian aid and charity events whilst being concerned about the impact political campaigns might have on their career.

Respondents recruited from outside of ISOC were more inclined to engage in political campaigning. One respondent was involved in the protests against the student fees hike and in a community-based, police accountability and monitoring organisation. Two young college students were actively engaged in youth advocacy groups against social injustice. One respondent was working professionally as a campaigner for a national civic organisation and three other respondents were primarily involved in Students' Union politics (although simultaneously collaborating with ISOC).

For respondents who engaged in political campaigning, such as Fiza and Meena, politics was about giving a voice to Muslim students and making them visible in student politics. These respondents were often also critical of the level of activity of ISOC. Fiza, for example, observed a reluctance to continue the campaign against Prevent on the part of ISOC; indeed, she said, there was little appetite for engaging with any controversial political issues. Anas was also dissatisfied with the level of activism in ISOC. He expressed a desire to see an Islamic student society that was more religiously inspired and guided by the Koran and the life of the Prophet Muhammed. For him, this would provide a better platform for students to engage in action to bring about a better society:

> ISOCs like and their role, it's very, very bare and very, very limited and it could be something so much bigger. [...] Like if [...] you just inspire someone [...] They will eventually feel so motivated and they will realise that like their religion is something far greater to them than their university degree or just, it's something far bigger than just coming over to the mosque and praying five times a day. It has the solutions to the problems of society. It has the solutions to his own problems. It can give him hope like nothing else can. When you actually just show people [...] what like, the religion is capable of, then you could like, it's the best way to take people out of the streets and out of drugs and out of like extremism and make them productive citizens who will actually give to society [...] (Anas)

Thus, Anas sees the key role of ISOC as performing *Dawa*, that is the teaching and propagation of Islam. *Dawa* is undertaken by ISOCs in a range of ways - from organising public information stands to student study groups on Islam. A 'Discover Islam Week' to reach out to Muslim students on

campuses, as well as to non-Muslims, is a common form of activity undertaken by ISOCs across the country. While *Dawa* refers to the spreading of Islam and has a missionary side to it, according to Abdullah, the primary aim of *Dawa* in a non-Muslim majority country is to address misconceptions of Islam and to provide a context that allows for a more nuanced understanding of Islam:

> Mainly, in this country, it's [*Dawa*] about rectifying any misconceptions. Almost always when you try to spread the teachings of Islam, people always ask about terrorism. People always ask about the negative aspects of our religion. So one way of teaching is also about rectifying misconceptions about the religion. And I feel honoured that I am doing that. I'm telling people about the correct Islam. (Abdullah)

Ashraf confesses that he initially joined ISOC so that he could engage in *Dawa* but he soon discovered that 'preaching' in an environment where Islam was associated with terrorism and sexual grooming, is not the best way to reach out to others, or to convince others of the positive aspects of Islam. Shareef also describes how the 'Discover Islam Week' was difficult to handle; people got into heated debates, generating the opposite effect of that which they had wanted to convey. Like Ashraf, Khaled questions whether *Dawa* is the appropriate means of fighting against the negative images of Islam and Muslims. He suggests that it is better to do it 'indirectly' through deeds rather than words:

> And I always think... I call it, like, indirect *Dawa*. It's like, don't say, 'I'm a Muslim; I'm nice.' Just show that you're nice. You know, be yourself. So I always prefer events like, you know, the hot drinks or the cleaning the community, or just doing anything that our religion promotes in an event, with non-Muslims that people can see. Because then they see you for, you know, who you actually are rather than having to say, 'Oh, I do this and I do this and I do this.' People aren't willing to accept that. (Khaled)

Thus respondents disagreed on the meaning and importance of politics, whether ISOC should take a greater or lesser role in politics, and how best to practice *Dawa*. Across the many different positions taken by respondents, however, the common thread in their narratives was the importance of countering stigmatisation and negative images of Muslims, whether through engaging in debates and 'preaching', through volunteering and charity work, or by strengthening Muslim students' representation so as to fight Islamophobia and discrimination.

3.2.3 Social media and activism

Social media were used widely by respondents in this study in the course of their social engagement. A particularly important function of social media was its use as an alternative to the mainstream media. Carlito, for example, followed and shared news about Palestine or the Rohingya Muslims on social media. Ruksana, in contrast, consciously promoted her volunteering activities and that of the Muslim community on social media in order to provide an alternative to the purely negative associations with Muslims found in the media:

> And even like right now with the whole fire in London, you know, a lot of the headlines have been saying, 'It's Muslim young boys actually, who've gone around saving people because they were awake for, because of Ramadan.' And you've got a lot of people on social media saying, 'Oh, why are you bringing their faith into it?' And the standard

response is 'Well, when it's something negative, everyone's more than happy to bring their faith into it, but when they've done something good, why are we not recognising it and actually there's a much more causal effect here because they were awake because of their faith, it's not, it's not incidental that they were Muslim.' (Ruksana)

Not all respondents were confident about 'bringing faith into it' when Muslims point out the important work their fellow activists do in society. Khaled sees it as a religious obligation to do charity work and help others, not as a public relations exercise. Yet, social media is an important site for young Muslims to become visible and to counter the negative associations with their faith. It provides a medium through which they can challenge Islamophobic and stigmatising practices.

This site is not without contestation, however. Respondents reported being scrutinised for their social media posts in a way that other young activists are not. Zuhair was inundated with hundreds of hate emails for weeks, following his criticism of a police drill that simulated terrorist attacks (in a way that made clear the anticipated perpetrator was a Muslim). Meena describes the scrutiny she had to face for her tweets whilst holding a post within the NUS:

> […] like we had so much scrutiny. Like to the point where if I tweeted something, it would be picked up and there would be an article about it the very next day. Like even the most trivial things, that now wouldn't raise any eyebrows, then did. (Meena)

These experiences have led Muslim student activists in the Students' Union to offer training and guidance to activists on how to use social media and deal with public scrutiny and abuse. This led Ruksana to act with caution when using social media:

> I occasionally I would do media interviews or I'm quite active on social media. Sometimes you've just got to think about how things can be understood and so I think often as a, as a Muslim or within the Muslim community there are a number of frustrations that if you share publicly, aren't necessarily understood. And so it's about finding a way where you can express that in a constructive manner, without either feeding into the Islamophobes or putting people who are, who are understandably fearful and putting them, making them feel much more uncomfortable. (Ruksana)

Ruksana's concern about media misrepresentation does not relate only to her actions and statements; she is also worried that it will aggravate the misrepresentation of Muslims and further fuel Islamophobic sentiments. Muslim activists thus, feel the pressure to represent their greater collective appropriately and as Meena puts it, they 'have to maintain this polished image' to avoid being attacked publicly and in turn, inflict greater harm on the Muslim community. She notes that she had been very conscious about her tweets following a terrorist attack and made sure that she mentioned the great work done by the police and the Emergency Services; something she would not have thought of before. For others, such as Zuhair, the safest way to avoid being scrutinised is to avoid commenting on any political events, and to limit one's public postings on social media to comments about sport.

According to data from the British Household Panel Study and Understanding Society (2009-2011), Muslims have the lowest rates of civic participation of all religious groups (Garratt, 2016: 3). The

challenges of engaging in civic and political activities recounted by young Muslims in this study may provide some insight into why this is so. In this context, the majority of respondents emphasised the importance of maintaining ISOC as simply a social environment - a 'halal social club' – where young Muslims could feel a sense of belonging on campus and simply 'be' with other Muslims in a way that did not conflict with Islamic teaching. Thus although, as demonstrated above, stigmatisation, racism and Islamophobia play a significant role in shaping the Muslim identity of young people and the types of activities these young Muslims choose to engage in, they remain reluctant to engage in overtly political issues and prefer, instead, to promote a positive image of Muslims by 'doing good deeds'.

3.2.4 Mobilisation around Prevent

Engagement in Prevent-related activities was the most frequently cited of any activities reported by respondents in this study. These activities ranged from the experience of college students of receiving Prevent-related educational interventions through participation by university students in campaigns against Prevent to individual respondents who worked closely with local authorities and schools to clarify misconceptions about Prevent.

The 'Students Not Suspects' campaign (NUS Connect, 2017) became official NUS policy in 2015. It was a student-led campaign that consisted of a series of national tours to raise awareness about Prevent and to call for its repeal. The campaign received widespread media coverage and respondents who were involved argue that it was a great success as they managed to mobilise support across the country from academics, student societies and Students' Unions. Activists who mobilised against Prevent described the initial difficulties they experienced in getting ISOCs on board. Meena noted the hesitancy of ISOCs when asked to support the campaign, due to fear of getting into further conflict with the universities and reluctance to get involved in controversial political issues. Fiza also recognised that 'Prevent is not something that sells that well' in her attempt to get her local ISOC committee involved in the national campaign. Yet, this initial reluctance was overcome as the scale of Prevent became apparent for many ISOCs and they became aware of how they might be impacted by the new regulations.

Students' Unions are registered as charities and, unlike universities, the Prevent duty does not apply to them. In other words, they are not obliged to report signs of radicalisation among the people who use their services. However, most of the events organised by student societies are held on university-owned premises, which means that the event organisers are still subject to the Prevent policy and procedure. This includes, filling in a risk assessment form and the vetting of external speakers. The anti-Prevent campaign organised by Fiza's university included a series of events in which lecturers, local MPs and student activists were invited to talk about Prevent and Islamophobia. Fiza explains how the duty impacted on their ability to hold events and how she had negotiated with the university and the Students' Union, in order to get permission for their planned event. Having experienced how Prevent was enacted in practice, Fiza argues that many younger and inexperienced ISOC members might be intimidated by the level of scrutiny:

> […] So, having experienced that [going through the vetting process] […] I realised that actually being in this position, even there's only one year between me and the students, […] I was in a much better position than them [ISOC committee members]. Because, just because I filled in these forms, I got called into that meeting. Had ISOC filled in those

forms, ISOC would have gone to that meeting. And would they have had the confidence that I had because of... just because luckily I'm in this role, I meet with [name of head of risk and compliance] every few months. I know him really well, I'm really honest, you know, we have open discussion. But ISOC would be so scared, you know, you got an email saying the Director of Students... he's like one of the top guys at university, and moving on to the example I gave relating to Action Palestine, when they got called in. They were so worried, you have no idea. I had to, I had to like calm them down. They're like, 'They're gonna cancel all our events. Oh my god, why did they want to meet us? Blah, blah.' And I was like, 'Oh guys it's standard. They're just gonna tick box you.' And they were getting so, so worked up. And I just thought, 'Wow. It's like I'm just lucky that I happen to be in this position where I can just walk into these meetings now and go – what even is this?' But actually, it's affecting students because they're genuinely... because they're getting called the day before an event. The day before an event, and they've put like months of work into. And then they're thinking, 'My event is gonna get cancelled.' Like all this work, you know, all this publicity and it's gonna get cancelled. [...] technically, if you don't submit a speaker form, you're not allowed to have an event. And one of the girls that I work with, like English white girl, she forgot to submit a speaker form, and her event went ahead. And I just said, 'Imagine if I had done that. Imagine if I'd forgotten.' She had genuinely forgotten. But imagine if I'd done that. Can you imagine the scrutiny that I'd come under? (Fiza)

This lengthy quote summarises the scrutiny and the feelings of insecurity and intimidation caused by being subjected to Prevent and the related risk assessment procedures on campus. Effective cooperation between Students' Unions and ISOCs is needed to comply with the Prevent procedures without compromising their activities and engagement at the university. For this reason, Meena and Zuhair emphasise the importance of having Muslim representatives in Students' Unions, on the local, as well as national level and the importance of collaboration with ISOCs to mobilise against Prevent or other policies that affect Muslim students. Having organisational representation allows you to voice your criticism and to be heard more effectively. For Ashraf, being part of an organisation makes him more confident to talk about Prevent:

I feel like I did for a while, but I always did that as part of an organisation, so I was never by myself. But now, if I was just to go out and have a conversation with someone, I wouldn't bring that up at all, and I wouldn't, I'd stay clear from that topic. I feel like when you're with an organisation and you have that cover, but when you're by yourself, I wouldn't bring that up, yeah. (Ashraf)

The hesitation to bring up the issue of Prevent is not only felt among students on campuses. Zuhair describes how in his local mosque, an open discussion about Prevent had been silenced by the mosque management and the elders. This is in contrast to his experience in London, where young people are more involved and have a greater say in the running of the mosques.

Respondents who were still in college experienced Prevent as delivered within the classroom environment. In the case of Dmitri, the safeguarding lead in the college had been alerted because he had been seen to be accessing websites about Nazis in Germany, but no further action was taken against him. However, Samira argues that pupils are subject to Prevent way before any individual is

flagged up or referred under Prevent. To support her case, she described arguments in the classroom following a terrorist attack in Paris in which students were arguing that the victims of other terror attacks in the Middle East did not get as much attention as victims of terror attacks in Europe. The pupils from different ethnic minority backgrounds felt that the teacher could not relate to their experiences of Islamophobia. Heated argument between them ensued. As a result of this debate, Samira felt the school tended to avoid discussing controversial issues that questioned British foreign policy and other sensitive topics that address the injustices experienced by Muslims:

> Because they [the teachers] didn't want that conversation. They didn't know how to handle it. And more and more terrorist attacks are happening and more were being, more was being questioned, and we started seeing more sort of like the rise of sort of like Islamophobia and like, like that sort of, that sort of bigotry. And it was being questioned more by kids in school and we couldn't do it anymore. And so we had like Buddhist Monks a few weeks later come into school to teach us about Buddhism. And this is a highly, like there's a high Muslim, like a huge Muslim like population within the school. And someone asked about the, the massacre of Muslims, and like they stopped inviting people to the school like that. Like we have, we had some, a lady who was an Aboriginal poet from Australia, who came to our school to speak to us, and we were speaking to her about colonialism and how the British were wrong to do what they did. We never had her come back again. […] I didn't even notice this at the time. I was just like, 'Oh, it's like the school's funding's probably run out and they've just stopped paying them to come in and stuff. Or like people don't care about our school anymore and it's not important.' But it was literally like systematic like, they were literally stopping us from having access to these things because they didn't want us talking about it, because it got sticky for them. It's so ridiculous. (Samira)

The Prevent duty emphasises that Prevent is not about shutting down debates in schools (HM Government, 2015) but research conducted among schools on the effects of Prevent has identified trends that confirm Samira's experience. However, in some other cases, the antagonism caused by Prevent was put down to the over-reaction of teachers and schools towards the strategy, as well as a lack of effective training (Acik *et al.*, 2018). Indeed, in some schools, it has been found, the focus on Prevent has meant that more resources were dedicated to discussing controversial topics (Busher *et al.*, 2017).

Ruksana recognises that Prevent has been perceived negatively by many people in Muslim communities and she has worked with local authorities, schools and Prevent panels to make sure that they identify correctly, children and young people who are at risk of being radicalised and see this as an important aspect of safeguarding.

> So something like Prevent, rather than actually trying to tackle it as a national issue, I've worked with some young people to go to their local authority and be like, 'Look, you know, we, we want to be part of a Prevent Advisory Board, let's, let's better understand how it's implemented, let's see if we can maybe get an Imam in to do some religious sensitivity training for you, to make sure we're not conflating religious conservatism with potential non-violent extremism.' […] I think the council were very, very receptive, quite surprisingly. […] But […] they [the local councils] are more than willing to engage with the

community and I think they actually quite value the participation of young people who, who know what they're doing. So as long as you're not simply going in there and criticising everything, but you're saying, 'I wanna work with you to create something, you know, let's co-create something,' there is that reciprocity. (Ruksana)

These narratives demonstrate that young Muslims have responded in different ways to the Prevent agenda. Although the student-led campaign has called for a complete repeal of Prevent, Fiza (who supported the campaign) discovered that negotiations with the authorities who implement Prevent can also be effective in mitigating its negative effects. Similarly, Ruksana prefers to have a local approach and work with the relevant bodies to ensure that Prevent is appropriately implemented as a safeguarding policy. Responses to Prevent have also mobilised ISOC members, who, as Meena and Fiza described, were hesitant to address such a contentious issue.

Perhaps most interestingly for this study, Ruksana, whose advocacy work takes her to various Muslim communities across the country, observes that Prevent has politicised young Muslims:

But I think over the years more and more people have gotten involved either through, kind of, like their Students' Union or through actually secondary school. And I know, for example, like the Prevent agenda, has really politicised a lot of young people because they wanna campaign against that. I know also, like the Iraq War politicises a lot of people, so it's about finding that key issue or event at times that can galvanise. (Ruksana)

Thus, Prevent, and the discourses of war on terror, are, on the one hand, felt to be a contributing factor to the stigmatisation of young Muslims. On the other hand, responses to it have activated young Muslims' potential to be active citizens. This is one of a number of enabling and inhibiting factors for social and political involvement to which discussion turns in the following sections.

3.3 Social involvement: Enablers

One of the key concerns of the PROMISE project is to understand better how social involvement[7] might be generated out of conflict or stigmatisation and, in the light of such understanding, to identify channels to promote such involvement. As we have seen in Section 3.2, respondents in this case study were engaged in many activities including those that might be classified as primarily social (Islamic Society social events) through civic or pre-political (anti-Islamophobia awareness raising) to formal or informal political activities (elected positions and protest). In this section we consider those factors that appear in young people's narratives as *enabling* them to take up active positions. These factors emerged in the course of respondents' reflections on agents and sites of support for their positions and also in the discussion of how their ethnic or religious identity or other experiences of marginalisation (such as class) inspired their activity.

3.3.1 Family: 'there for us'

The single most frequently cited factor enabling young people's participation among respondents in this study is 'family'. This is notwithstanding what is said below about family also being the most frequently cited inhibitor of participation. The salience of family in both capacities is, in part, pre-

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[7] See Section 1.3 for a brief discussion of this concept.

determined by our respondent set of which 70% were still living at home with parents rather than independently (see Section 2.6). What is interesting about the data from this study, however, is that this prominence of family for respondents suggests that family might be a more independent factor than sometimes assumed. In general family is viewed as important in so much as it is a proxy for social inclusion or exclusion since it is the primary site of the experience of young people of low income, poor neighbourhood and low social capital (supportive ties and networks) and human capital (qualifications, work history) which influence the capacity of young people to be socially involved and engage in a range of civic and political activities (Brady *et al.*, 2012: 20-21). It has been seen as playing a role also in influencing the kind of activism in which young people engage; those living at home are more likely to be enabled to participate in 'safer' activities such as volunteering than riskier activities (Bynner, 2001). However, as will be seen from the discussion of findings below, the data gathered for this study suggest the family has a distinct *emotional* influence also that can have either an enabling or inhibiting function beyond that explained by socio-economic status or even social and human capitals.

'Family' is cited by 19 respondents as a source of support for their social involvement or political activity. While each family situation is, of course, specific, two common themes run through how respondents talk about the support received from family. The first is a general sense that parents are 'incredibly supportive' (Ruksana) at an emotional level. Khaled notes that 'My parents have always been there for us. [...] even, like, when I wasn't appreciative of my parents, they were, like, there to help.' It is important to note that this is cited in Khaled's case, and in other cases, even when the respondents acknowledged they were not achieving in the way their parents hoped. The fact that parents continued to believe that their children would 'turn things around', or provide emotional support through difficult periods is recognised and appreciated by respondents. The second is that parents are aspirational for their children and prepared to do all they can to help them realise their ambitions. As discussed in Section 3.4.1 (below), this can sometimes be experienced as pressure and become a site of conflict in the family. For many respondents, however, it is a positive enabler in terms of their own ambitions and engagement. Thus Maria even notes that she feels sorry for her white British classmates whose parents do not encourage their children in the same way, leaving them low in aspiration:

> I think my English friends, a lot of them, find themselves demotivated and a little bit complacent because their families are so relaxed. But they don't, even they don't like it. Like my friends, they get upset, they're like, 'I went out for three days yesterday and my mum didn't even ask me one time where I was.' They want some sort of caring shown. I'm not saying that they don't care about their kids, but I'm also saying that sometimes too much freedom can also be sometimes, perhaps, be an issue because I've personally seen it affect my English friends. Where, for example, my closest friend, she came round one night when it was GCSE time, for the first time to my house, and my mum gave us revision cards. And she was like, 'Come on guys, your GCSEs are soon, let's revise together.' And my friend said to me, 'Oh, my God, you're so lucky to have a mum like that. My mum never tells me to revise, like, or pushes me to do anything.' (Maria)

This confirms the finding in other published studies of consistent patterns of strong support amongst Muslim parents in relation to their children's education and employment outcomes (Stevenson *et al.*, 2017: 13). Shah *et al.* (2010), for example, find a particularly strong emphasis on higher education and

high career aspirations among British Pakistani parents and refer to this as a form of 'ethnic capital'. Their suggestion that these attitudes are embedded within parents' own experiences of the labour market - which lead to higher education being viewed as a route to upward social mobility (ibid.: 1115) - is also confirmed by respondents in our study. In many cases, respondents explained this concern and aspiration as, at least partially, connected to the fact that their parents had not had the opportunity themselves to study, for example, or had sacrificed their own self-fulfillment in order to secure the future of the family. In our study, however, there is a strong emotional dimension to this influence that exceeds its status as 'capital'. The recognition of their parents' own frustration mediates what might otherwise be experienced as parents being too demanding of their children and means their own achievement carries an additional emotional responsibility.

With regard to their family's attitude specifically to their social involvement or political activities, family concern or pressure is the most frequently cited inhibiting factor (see Section 3.4.1). However, many respondents also commented positively on family support for their social or political engagement. Ameena, who calls her parents 'literally my best friends', notes that she had talked to her parents about her involvement in the University Islamic Society (ISOC) and that they were wholly supportive:

> […] with regards to ISOC, they see the changes in me, they see how it helps me. And we discuss this as well actually. And yeah, they're absolutely fine and they're supportive. My parents are amazing in the sense that like even with ISOC, if ISOC ever needed anything, I would happily tell my parents and they would help out when they could. (Ameena)

Meena even notes that parents' aspirations for their children might be beneficial in this regard: 'I feel like with my mum, because she just wants something to be proud of. And you know, politics was something that she really, really did want us to go into.' (Meena).

Other respondents express ambivalence on the part of their parents about their social involvement. Khaled, for example, had not told his parents about running for election to the national Federation of Islamic Societies (FOSIS) but once he had been elected he had informed them and reported that they had been happy about it. Yardan is also aware there are limits to his family's endorsement of his extra-curricular activities (which included socially engaged spoken word performance and blogging); it was accepted as long as it 'didn't affect my studies':

> Because they've invested a lot of time and money into giving me what they never had, which was a good education. So, as long as it didn't jeopardise that, as long as I'm doing something that would be helping other people, that won't be detrimental. (Yardan)

This pattern of parents encouraging 'safer' forms of youth activism such as volunteering rather than riskier practices such as protest (Bynner, 2001) is not peculiar to Muslim families of course, but it speaks very clearly to the notion of 'ethnic capital' (Shah *et al.*, 2010).

A number of respondents, moreover, put down their own engagement in social and political issues and activities to having become interested in politics first at home through family discussion. As Fiza puts it: 'I think from a very young age, it was reading the newspapers, my dad just speaking to us about politics and that kind of stuff. So that was definitely the start of it all. Just that's where your

interest begins.' The importance of discussion of politics in the family environment for future development of political engagement and participation is established in other studies which suggest that political discussion both in the family and with peers is positively related to young people's civic engagement and political participation. Family political discussions allow parents to share political knowledge and beliefs and convey the message that it is important to be engaged in the world in which they live. Dostie-Goulet (2009) (based on a panel study of 500 teenagers followed over three years in Quebec, Canada) suggests that family has the greatest influence on political interest; analysis of the findings confirmed that parents who often discuss politics have children who are more interested in politics and who are more likely to develop a political interest. Allen and Bang (2015), however, find that discussion with *family* is related to higher commitment to political activities for males, whereas discussion with *peers* is significantly related to greater unconventional participation for females.

The finding by Allen and Bang is interesting in interpreting another tendency among respondents in this study; reference to a gender differentiation in familial support. Although both female and male respondents noted positive support from parents and wider family, including for explicitly political activities, for some respondents mothers and fathers play distinct roles. This is how Rafi sums this up:

> I mean, both of my parents are very supportive. My dad was kind of, pushed me to be like, ambitious. And my mum was always there as a kind of, you know, you know, playing the kind of comforting role and just saying like I was kind of capable of doing this, that and the other. (Rafi)

A number of respondents also talk about being inspired by their fathers who had achieved a lot despite poor backgrounds:

> I think my dad had a very, very, very rough childhood. Like, he faced a lot of challenges and a lot of difficulties. So I always like to go to him for experience, 'cause he's a very, very experienced person. So he has, like, like, a fountain of knowledge that, you know, is always applicable. He's always giving good advice. So whenever I need, like, actual genuine advice, I'll speak to my father. (Khaled)

It is far from the case that only fathers are role models for our respondents. Liyla, for example, expresses deep admiration for her mother's strength in resisting narrow and constrained roles for women in her ethnic community. Nonetheless, this gendered inflection of relationships with parents cannot be ignored. Particular constraints experienced by female respondents are discussed in Section 3.4.1 below and it might be tempting to explain this differentiation in relation to conservative gender norms within the ethno-cultural communities to which respondents' parents belong. However, Allen and Bang's finding, which is based on the study of young people's political and civic engagement in Paris, points also to the greater significance of family discussion for young men than young women. Moreover, a similar conclusion is drawn by Levinsen and Yndigegn (2015) based on a study among young people in the city of Odense, Denmark conducted as part of the cross-European MYPLACE project. They find a significant gender difference between the roles of parents, with fathers appearing to be the most frequent political discussion partners (Levinsen and Yndigegn, 2015: 78). However, combining the findings from both survey and interview data from the study, they also find that while fathers are more engaged, they may often also be more prone to disagree or adopt a polemical tone

in discussion, leading young people to avoid discussing politics with them (ibid.: 79). This suggests that it is not only the presence or absence of political discussion in the family that enables or inhibits future social involvement but also its *quality* or tone.

Finally, although the vast majority of our respondent set were single (89%), in a small number of cases partners were mentioned as important supports in respondents' lives. This was the case, in particular, for Jo who was a revert to Islam. She noted that her boyfriend significantly helped her acculturate to his family (he was of Pakistani background). Maria also said that her boyfriend was the only support for her when she had major conflicts with her parents and constantly encouraged her to achieve educationally.

3.3.2 Significant 'others'

Family is one of 16 contexts of support for social involvement referred to by young people. Thus, although family may be the single most important factor, respondents mention a relatively wide range of contexts in which they feel supported. In this section, 'significant others' providing encouragement and support are discussed before, in the next section, organisations, services or institutions facilitating social involvement are discussed. It should be noted, however, that in some cases it is also individuals in particular organisations or institutions who are experienced as supportive rather than the institution itself.

Family friends or neighbours are 'significant others' for some respondents. This is mostly in those situations where respondents had problematic relations within the family (see Section 3.4.1) or lived in single parent families where significant non-family relationships had proved important at key moments. For example, Shareef noted that a neighbour was able to advise about university since his own parents had no experience of higher education; without this widening of his horizons, he says, he would have remained oblivious of the possibility that he had other options than to seek a job straight after school. This differential ability to actualise 'ethnic capital' (understood as a shared aspiration for your children and a belief in the value of education in enabling social mobility) to assist children in achieving these aspirations was identified by Shah *et al.* (2010: 1116) in their qualitative study (2004–2006) of the relationship between educational attainment and ethnicity among British Pakistanis. Nadira also notes that her social involvement had been facilitated by neighbours who had organised together a rota to clear litter from the neighbourhood streets. Four respondents also mention the Muslim community more generally to be a site of support. This is particularly important for Jo who, as a revert to Islam, relies on the wider community to help her: 'Muslims are always encouraged to be there for reverts, to be friends with them, to look after them'. She goes on, however, to note the limits of that support and acknowledge that it is really her partner who provides most support. This wider Muslim community support is recognised to be politically important too since, in student politics, the Islamic Societies were important in mobilising support for Muslim candidates:

> And that's why ISOC is a huge voting body. So any candidate that runs will always rely on ISOC, will always ask for ISOC endorsement. So this year, every single person I think who was elected... every single person, well... first of all, every single person was elected by [names own university] Students' Union was Muslim. So all six of them. But also all of them, majority of them, had been, had been endorsed by the ISOC. (Meena)

'Non-Muslims' were also said to be supportive by two respondents. Specifically this was noted in the context of working together in inter-faith civic initiatives (Ruksana) and a personal incident when an elderly white couple protected the respondent from an encounter with an English Defence League demonstration (Nadira). However, it is important to note that in both cases – that is, among the citations of both 'Other Muslims' and 'Non-Muslims' as agents of support to respondents - there were references also to having experienced the *absence of support* from those groups when needed.

A key group of 'others' supportive to respondents was said to be other political activists. Other activists in a number of organisations – including the Students Union and Citizens UK – were cited as having facilitated respondents' own activism. The closeness between activists is partially – although not exclusively – attributed to the feeling that activists shared a commitment to social justice borne, often, of their experience of coming from minority communities themselves. This is expressed most directly by Fiza:

> I think they [other political activists] care more about social justice. I think that's a big, big difference. And most of the time, they probably fit into a minority group. So it might not be BME; it could just be like LGBT, it could be disabled, it could be... and I think that's how you can spot them. Because I think sometimes the reason that you're... not forced, but the reason that you go into these political activism and achieving change is because it's affect... some part of your life has been affected by the fact that you are whatever minority you are. So you then want to create change, and change that. But if you've never felt to be a minority, you've never felt […] marginalised or anything like that, well then you don't feel the need to create change. Because you don't need anything to change, because actually none of these issues are affecting me. (Fiza)

Important to respondents is the emotional support they gain from sharing commitment and positivity with others; this encourages them to continue their activism. Friends become co-activists and activists become friends:

> Because I have been friends with them for a very long time and so when they get into things it is a case of we pull each other up. Like, if I get on to something that I know will be good for them, I will pull them up with me. And if they get on to something that they know would be good for me, they pull me up with them […] they'll call me and be like, 'Hey, we're gonna have this event now, are you down to come?' Or I'll like call them and be like, 'Hey, I'm gonna do this now, are you okay to come like?' (Samira)

This reflects a growing acknowledgement in social movement literature that the affective dimension of activism may be as important as the cause or ideas the activism promotes (Crossley, 2002: 50; Goodwin et al., 2001; Jasper, 1998; Juris, 2008; Pilkington 2016: 177-202).

However, respondents also point to the need to have inner strength and develop a certain 'emotional resilience' at an individual level to maintain commitment to activism because 'when you raise your head above the parapet, you are putting yourself out there to also be attacked' (Ruksana). The formation of such emotional resilience may be one aspect of the emotional dimension of familial support that is not yet acknowledged sufficiently in the literature on what facilitates and inhibits young people's civic and political participation.

3.3.3 Organisations and institutions of support

Respondents in this case study talked about organisational or institutional support for their involvement primarily in relation to mosques or prayer halls or the classes they attended and individuals they encountered there. There was, in particular, frequent mention of a Muslim chaplain based at one of the prayer halls of the university attended by respondents. However, other local mosques were also praised:

> One of the mosques that I go to concentrates heavily on how the youth are doing. They have a youth committee. The president of that youth committee is a young individual. This particular mosque does quite a lot for the young Muslim youth, to get them off the streets, to get them off anti-social activities, into the mosques. They educate them. So I feel like, from my experiences, yes they are doing their job adequately. (Abdullah)

It is important to note though that respondents were not unreflective about the role of these organisations or institutions. A number of respondents compared what they considered positive, progressive and community-oriented institutions to more 'traditional' ones which were less able to offer support and direction to young people. This is captured in the following comparison made by Anas:

> Technically speaking [names prayer hall] is not a mosque, it's a prayer hall, but I'm gonna take it as an example of a good mosque in some aspects […] it's very inclusive in that like there's not just one sort of group of people that pray there. You don't just find Arabs there or Pakistanis. […] And it's kind of like, with regards to the youth, most students would tend to be youths and youngsters. So this is a very good thing and also how it's a very relaxed place, like mosques should be like, to some extent social places for Muslims in the UK. I'm not saying that you just talk loud in, in the prayer room. I'm saying like, you can, if you wanna relax you could go to the mosque and rest, like spiritually or mentally or physically you could, you could rest. So [names prayer hall] you could say to some extent it's, it does this. If I go to, if I take another extreme, for example, [names mosque], which is, it's a very culturally dominated mosque, so it's an Indian Gujarati. So there like, you'll find people who will come and pray and it's very good. Like, people, like you have a lot of people that pray there also in the community and stuff. But like kids are not allowed in it, for example. […] And also the mosque is strictly limited to just praying and, you know, Islamic rituals. There's not really a social aspect to it […] (Anas)

One respondent (Ruksana) reported that she herself had become head of the youth group at her local mosque and, in that capacity, had started mentoring young people.

Other organisations in which young people found support included community centres where youth workers and community leaders were praised for putting on activities for young people. Nadira, for example, talked warmly about local youth workers who 'will always be the ones that were making sure all of us were, like, not on the street corners, like in the community centre doing something'. Respondents also noted that youth work was not valued enough (Carlito) and that youth centres in the area had been closed leaving little provision for young people (Samira). In the case of Samira, this had inspired her to want to get different sorts of organisations and groups together and start a

community project. Other respondents had been active in the local youth council and a local youth organisation designed to promote activism especially among disadvantaged young people and spoke warmly of the support they had received there. One respondent also mentioned the Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND) organisation as having been successful in galvanising young people into activism (although recognising it had a particular political agenda that did not work for everyone).

Of the institutions, statutory agencies or services referred to as supportive, the most frequently cited are respondents' school, college or university. Perhaps the most striking case here is that of Samira who talked at length about her positive experience of an innovative community citizenship course set up by a teacher at her school, which inspired her to become active. The teacher, who had asked the students to go out and conduct real projects and campaigns in their local area, had given Samira a sense that she could really effect change, despite the disadvantages she experienced structurally:

> Yeah, like I think the thing is what puts a lot of people off, especially like people from my background, is the idea like, 'What can I do? Like I'm useless, basically like there's not much influence you can have.' But then when you actually do it and you realise that there's that possibility, that kind of like, that sort of… that ignites something that sort of like pushes you further on. (Samira)

In two cases Social Services and in two cases the police were said to have been supportive. It is worth noting that the references to the supportive experience with the police relate directly to the response of the police to the Muslim community following the Manchester Arena bombing. Finally, one respondent even mentioned the counter-terrorism Prevent programme as potentially a source of support for young people:

> I actually applaud the Prevent agenda. Like, I'm of the minority of Muslims who are, like, happy about it, that believe it's doing a good thing. […] I feel like it will be very beneficial for some young people. Because I grew up in a very, like, isolated, narrow-minded small community. I didn't have much awareness or, like, or, like, exposure to different, like, opinions, viewpoints. (Aisha)

Aisha here recognises both the consensus that the Prevent strategy has been problematic, and possibly even counter-productive, in that it has stigmatised entire Muslim communities (Thomas, 2016: 172) but also that, when implemented positively, the Prevent duty is a proportionate response to a clearly identified problem (Busher *et al.*, 2017: 60).

3.3.4 Marginality as enabling

It is axiomatic that social exclusion is a critical factor in closing down opportunities for participation; people with lower income and education levels are found to be less likely to take part in voting, volunteering and other participatory behaviours (Brady *et al.*, 2012: 20). In this context, a significant finding during the analysis of data in this case study was the unprompted mention – in six interviews – that having a marginalised subject position acted potentially as an *enabler* to social involvement or activism. This was expressed at a personal level – for example, by Dmitri who talks about how his poor, working class background, and struggle with serious illness in the family, had motivated him and his sisters to achieve:

Yeah, like my mum and my dad, they both didn't go to university. And my sisters have been through so much like hardships like when we were kids, and I have as well like, it's all motivated us like. We said, 'Enough is enough' like. We can't, in not the nicest words, fuck up our lives and just end up in this regressive class system. Like our focus was [...] and we were like, 'We want to have this. We want to have a degree. We want to be, in the nicest way, like the white kids off [sic] the school. (Dmitri)

This is reflected also in Samira's explanation of how her frustration that those young people elected to represent other youth tend to be privileged themselves had motivated her to be active. As noted above (see Section 3.3.3), respondents felt that activists are often inspired to act by their own marginalisation and this was demonstrated in the case of Dmitri and Samira who were both active in a local organisation providing a dedicated space for working class young people's social and political involvement. Specifically in relation to ethnic minority communities, Meena, said that she had been motivated to become active in the National Union of Students in order to 'do more for black and brown students. And do more for Muslim students.'

Of particular interest to this case study is the suggestion by two respondents that security responses to Islamist terrorism – such as the War on Terror – as well as growing Islamophobia had directly motivated their activism. For Ruksana, who had experienced a rise in Islamophobia following the 7/7 London attacks, this had been decisive in shifting her own future professional direction from medicine to politics. After 7/7, she says, she 'became much more politicised' and wanted 'to better understand what the current structures and systems were and how I could then work within that framework to create the changes I wanted to see in the world, and to, kind of, support minority communities predominantly' (Ruksana). Zuhair also makes a more general connection between the securitisation of politics, Islamophobia and the mobilisation of young Muslims:

> [...] as a result of the war on terror, as a result of growing Islamophobia and institutional Islamophobia and the persecution of Muslims and anti-Muslim rhetoric in the UK, many young Muslims immediately, like, came to the defences of Islam and immediately sort of became one of those front voices in the fight back against anti-Muslim rhetoric. And I think it was almost the fire that came from that lent itself to many people then wanting to defend it as much as they could. (Zuhair)

At a more personal level, Nadira reported how, at school, she had found her ethnic minority background meant she could bring something new to creative projects. Later, while working as a teaching assistant in a difficult school, she also used her knowledge of what she terms 'Asian swearwords' to help her motivate, and control, pupils who often used racist terms out of ignorance or because they had heard them at home:

> Like, with one of the kids, I had... to keep their attention span in, I used to tell them, 'All right, listen, kid. Smash out these ten science questions. Easy peasy. And I'll teach you Asian swearwords.' And then they're like, 'Yeah, miss, go on, then.' And they smash it out super-fast. They do it in, like, ten minutes flat. And then I just teach them random Bangla words, just like for chair or table. And the best ones were when... you know when you sneeze and you say, 'Bless you'? In the Muslim culture we say, *Al hamdil'a.*' Means the

same thing, like God bless you. And they'd be like, 'What does that mean, *al hamdil'a*?' I'm like, '*Al hamdil'a*?' They're like, 'Yeah.' I go, 'It's a sick word. It's like such a new slang word you'll never hear it. Like you could be the first to say it.' And they go round saying, 'Miss, *al hamdil'a*.' And it's like, 'There you go.' That's extra blessing for me. Things like that. They just don't know any better, so it's like, you know, if it catches their attention and it cheers them up and it, you know, helps, eases my job as well, so it's, it's all good. (Nadira)

The connection between the Prevent agenda, the securitisation of British society and the stigmatisation of Muslim communities is relatively well established (Thomas, 2016: 172). This study of social involvement of young Muslims may show something new; that these processes can be taken as the starting point for positive social and political involvement by those they stigmatise.

3.4 Social involvement: Inhibitors

As noted in Section 3.3, one of the key concerns of the PROMISE project is to understand and promote social involvement among marginalised or stigmatised young people. Crucial for that is of course to understand what prevents young people from such groups becoming socially involved. For this reason, references to 'barriers to social involvement' were coded in all the ethnographic case studies conducted for the PROMISE project in order to capture directly the range of factors cited by respondents that inhibited their (or their peers') social involvement. In this case study, barriers to social involvement was an issue mentioned in all but one of the interviews and, across the whole data set, a total of 89 references were made to such barriers. Young people's discussion of these barriers was collated under 18 different experiences or 'factors' preventing or inhibiting the social involvement of respondents. These factors are illustrated in Figure 2 (below) where their relative density (number of references in each category) is reflected in the hierarchy chart.
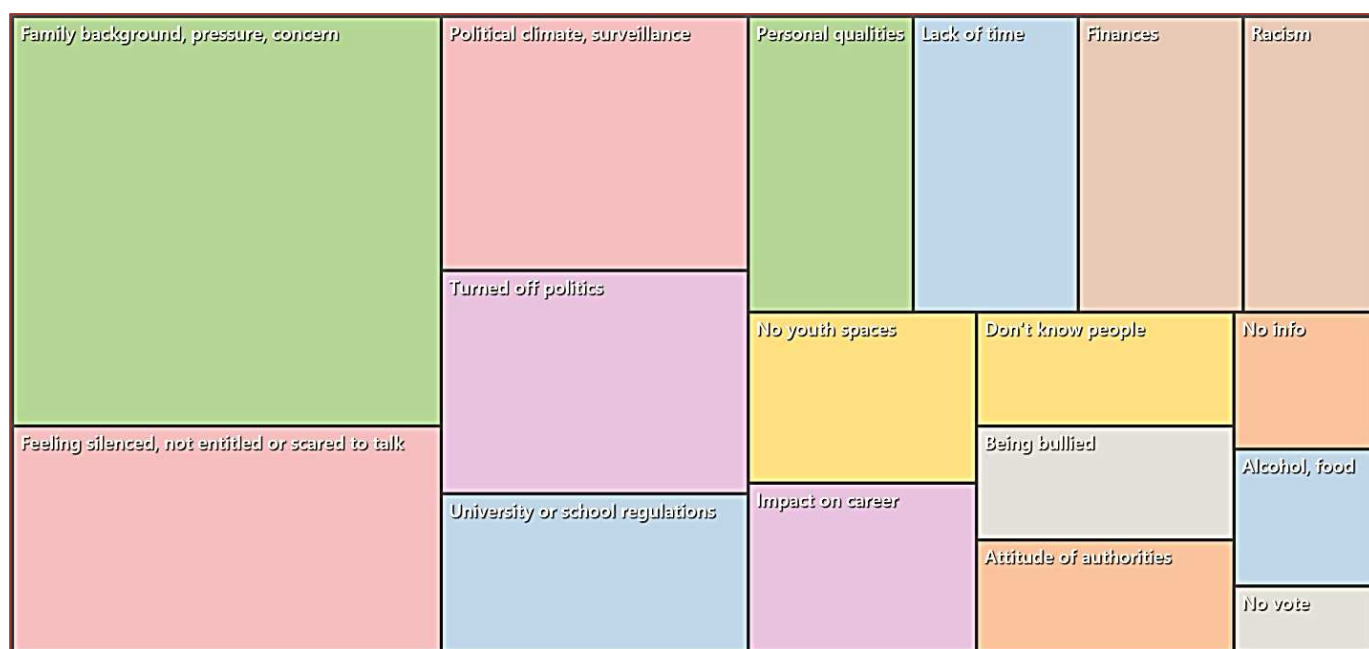

Figure 2: Barriers to social involvement cited (by number of references)

It should be noted that while mostly these factors are cited because they are experienced by the individuals themselves, in some cases interviewees were commenting on what they believed inhibited other young people from participating. In the discussion of findings below, it is the respondents' own experience that is referred to unless explicitly stated otherwise. In this section, the single largest inhibitor to social involvement – family concerns – is considered first. Thereafter factors are grouped and discussed as 'individual barriers to social involvement' followed by 'structural barriers to social involvement'.

3.4.1 Family concerns

As evident from Figure 2, the most frequently cited factor inhibiting social involvement is family background. Most usually this reflects the experience of young people of feeling pressure from family not to get involved or concerns of parents about involvement; 11 respondents cited such pressure or concern. These concerns were in some cases related to the prioritisation by family (usually parents) of education or work over political or civic engagement or even leisure activities. Dmitri, for example, reports that his family is 'really negative' about his political activism because 'of the financial and the time constraints' (that is that it takes time away from study and he spends his own money on such activism). In other cases they reflected more specific concerns about participation in particularly 'risky' activities. As noted above (see Section 3.3.1), the preference of parents for their children to engage in 'safe' activities such as volunteering is not unusual. Among our respondents, however, there was a particular inflection of this concern related to the wider securitisation of society and the positioning of Islamic faith as 'risky' in this regard. Thus, for example, participation in a university Islamic Society (ISOC) might raise concern among parents that their son or daughter was becoming 'too religious' and thus might appear more 'suspect' to agencies of surveillance. Or, as Ashraf recounts, parents felt being politically active made you more visible in a political/security climate that made that undesirable:

> But also, in terms of getting more politically active, it was something that my parents and family weren't too keen on at the time, especially with like Prevent coming out and things like that. So just on the advice of everyone, I just, kind of, gave it up. (Ashraf)

The majority (more than two thirds) of the references to family pressure or concern inhibiting social involvement are found in the narratives of female respondents (see Figure 3).
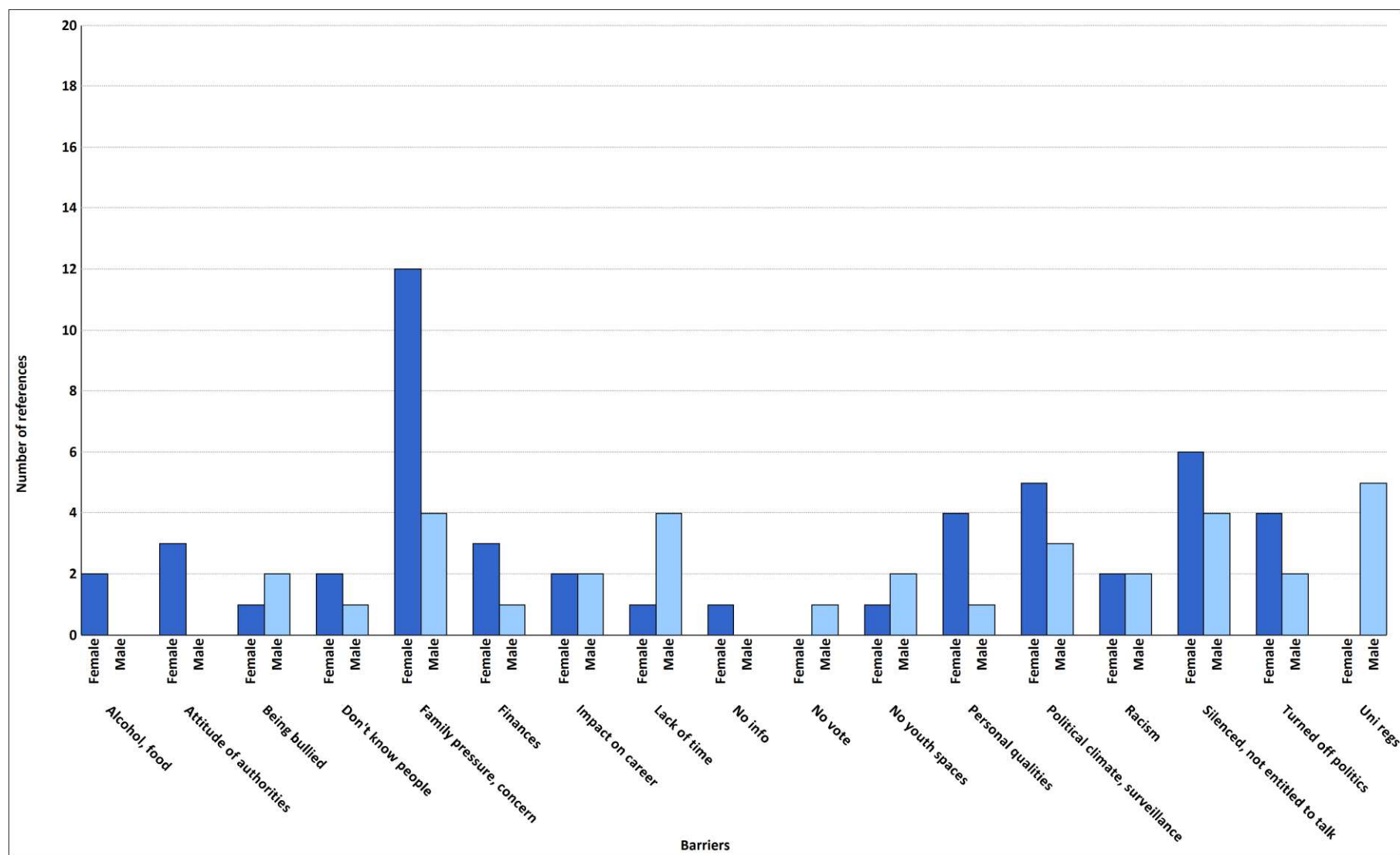
Figure 3: Barriers to Social Involvement by Gender

Female respondents frequently reported constraints on them going out or participating even in routine extra-curricular activities after school or college. Liyla recounted repeated constraints on her development. She had had to fight to be allowed to pursue drama at GCSE level, had not been allowed to attend an open day at Cambridge University organised by the school and had been prohibited from getting a part-time job in a bookshop in the city centre. This is how she explains a particularly painful prohibition on her social involvement when she was forced to give up sporting activities that she loved:

> I always loved my stepfather as my normal father. But as soon as I went to high school, the game's changed, the rules changed. Everything changed. And I was thinking, 'Why?' Because in primary school, in my last year, I did lots and lots of sports, because my teacher said I was really good at it. And in high school, I was trying to carry on with it. In Year Seven I did fine. In Year Eight, I wasn't allowed to go to certain ones. And in Year Nine, I was like forbidden to go to them. […] because they said 'it's not for girls'. (Liyla)

For another female respondent – Maria - the oppressive nature of these familial concerns (in this case the struggle is with the respondent's mother) were expressed as an almost existential struggle to 'be':

> I want to go out, I want to explore, I want to be around people. They make me, you know, to make me happy, to get some free time to myself. That's how I like to spend my free time - to go out, but it's like she has to put me in a position that I don't wanna be in all the time and change me and I don't wanna be changed; I wanna stay as who I am, but… (Maria)

However, male respondents also report parental concerns about them being out late or attending social events where there is alcohol and mixed company. Dmitri, an 18 year old student between college and University, for example, noted that he was required to be home by 10pm if he attended events as his mother was concerned for his safety; she felt young Muslims were particular vulnerable to attack. Ahmed also felt that his mother did not understand how important it was for his future career to be visible at social events after work:

> […] so, for me for example, my mum would have a problem with me going out to a work social if there were drinks involved. Whereas, from my perspective I don't really have a choice, because if I don't go then I, it looks really bad and there's Islamic opinions that say that it's okay within certain limits to go to these sort of events. And obviously you know you need to boost your career. But then my mum doesn't understand that. (Ahmed)

While the absolute number of respondents and references to family imposed constraints on social involvement is too small in a qualitative study of this kind to draw meaningful conclusions, the combination of references to the gendered nature of support (see Section 3.3.1) and of constraint is indicative of a question worthy of future research and analysis.

3.4.2 Individual barriers to involvement

The imprint of what Beck calls the individualised society in which 'the individual must therefore learn […] to conceive of himself or herself as the centre of action, as the planning office with respect to

his/her own biography, abilities, orientations, relationships […]' (Beck, 1992: 135) is clearly visible in some of the individual factors respondents say inhibit collective action, civic engagement or social involvement. Thus respondents see 'personal qualities' such as being shy or lacking confidence as being an important inhibitor. Aisha, for example, describes herself as 'a very uninvolved person'. Comparing herself negatively to her friends at school who were much more 'on the ball', Aisha recognises her own shyness as a constraint upon her agency; alongside others at school who were much more confident, she says, 'I felt a bit of obstruction in my capacity to act'. Other respondents (who are themselves highly active) reflect that 'others' – especially 'traditionally Asian Muslim girls' according to respondent Ruksana - lack the confidence to get involved in politics. In one case (cited by the respondent himself as well as his sister) being bullied had inhibited the respondent from taking part in sporting activities that he enjoyed and led to his further social exclusion. Other respondents describe themselves as being inhibited from participation by their lack of sufficient passion to maintain what is required to be seriously involved in politics or recognise this trait in other people (especially if they have not been brought up to be interested in politics). Respondents also blame themselves or others for not having found out about particular events or groups earlier or not knowing enough people in the right places to get elected to positions.

The individualisation of responsibility to make your own biography is evident also in reference to a number of inhibitors that reflect the pressure young people feel to be successful in multiple ways. Respondents talk about the lack of time for social involvement due to work or study commitments or long periods of time commuting between study place and home. This is recognised by Carlito to have affected his own and others' social involvement:

> I think some people are more passionate about it. And some people don't have the time for it. They've got a lot going on themselves. […] I think it's normal to get involved. But it's not normal not to get involved as well. Just like I say, young people I think are quite pressured a lot to expectations nowadays. (Carlito)

These pressures to succeed, one respondent noted, meant that many young people came to university to get their degree and then to get a job and that is all they cared about (Fiza). Others were inhibited from running for office in student politics or gave up political participation because they feared the exposure they would get from this would negatively impact on future job prospects. This is exemplified by Meena's explanation of why she chose not to run for office in the National Union of Students (NUS):

> […] so right after national conference this year, I was asked to run for president of NUS. But I turned that down because I can't, I can't... yeah, once I leave student politics, I need to have an actual career, and I can't take that hit of like going through what [names earlier NUS president] did or going through what [names another activist] did. You know people do Google searches now when you're going for a job and I don't want something coming up. So yeah, even though, even though I really did want to consider that at least the position of vice-president at NUS, I don't think that will be happening […] (Meena)

This scrutiny to which young people are subjected, particularly via social media, is discussed also above (Section 3.2.3) and is an important barrier to involvement that disproportionately affects young people since they were born into the age of social media and their footprint is relatively greater as they use these media more than older generations.

3.4.3 Structural barriers to involvement

Inhibiting factors to social involvement can take the form of more structural or institutional barriers to participation. As discussed above (Section 1.1), British Muslim communities experience the greatest economic disadvantages of any group in UK society and suffer a disproportionate rate of poverty. In this study, financial barriers to social involvement were noted by a number of respondents. These include the fact that young people in general, or they themselves in particular, do not have money to travel into the city or get involved in social events. Samira expresses her frustration that well-off young people are able to participate in activities organised by a group dedicated to promoting participation by working class young people just because they can afford to:

> It still does frustrate me when like we do get like, like, like private school, rich kids that it, it happens a lot. We get a lot of them, 'cause obviously they can make it. It's easier for them to get there and it's easier to, for them to invest that time and have that time to go to those things and have the money to get there and stuff. (Samira)

Financial barriers to involvement sometimes intersect with religious identity in an exclusionary way. Two respondents, for example, mentioned that taking student loans went against Islamic principles (because you were required to pay interest on the loans) and made study at university particularly difficult.

Inhibiting factors intersect with the experience of being young to compound exclusion; one respondent noted his frustration that attempts to get a private member's bill on lowering the voting age to 16 had been thwarted. Social involvement is also restricted, according to respondents, because of the failure to provide youth-oriented infrastructure. Respondents were frustrated that there were not community centres or leisure spaces (such as affordable gyms or milk bars) for young people just to hang out at (Samira) and that any youth provision that did exist was designed primarily 'to keep young people out of trouble' rather than facilitate young people's political engagement (Rafi). Local mosques were also criticised for being too 'traditional' and not community oriented enough and having youth groups that were youthful 'in name only' (Anas).

It is recognised in the literature on youth participation that a key challenge to the civic engagement of young people is 'adultism', that is 'the tendency of adults to control the nature and content of young civic engagement activity' (Brady *et al.*, 2012: 22). In this study, attitudes of those in authority are cited by a number of respondents as inhibiting involvement. Liyla, for example, found that suggestions and initiatives she took in one organisation in which she participated were ignored by the organiser. Institutional – school and university – rules and regulations also inhibited social involvement or political participation. A particular source of frustration were university regulations that monitored invited speakers and insisted on bag searching at Islamic society events (see Section 3.2.4). These were experienced as a form of surveillance that made respondents feel as if they were being watched until they made a mistake. This is how Khaled describes the impact of one of these regulations:

> And another thing is, like, when we have our welcome day, for example, there's several events that happen in Academy where people come in with their bags. When we had our welcome dinner, everyone's bags had to be searched before we went in. And I think it makes Muslims feel victimised. (Khaled)

The most frequently cited structural barriers to social involvement, however, were related to the security-focused 'political climate'. This securitisation of society and politics made respondents nervous about what they said; this was a particular anxiety for respondents who were engaged in public dissemination such as Nadira. Respondents also mentioned concern that organisations they participated in might be infiltrated (Rafi) or the fear amongst the community that if they were to get involved in community counter-radicalisation work, they themselves would be accused of being extremists. The intrusion of security into activities – even Muslim worship – is described by Meena as one of the reasons young Muslims do not get involved in politics:

> I think you have a clamping down on like, on Muslims who are involved in political, politics in general. Like for example, I feel like they were already having issues. So for example like they have issues with you know, institution maybe wanting to install cameras, you know, with the institution sending in people from... we have like a chaplain service. And they would every once in a while send in someone from the chaplain service to check if everything was okay. And they would like randomly show up to the prayer room to, I don't know, check. So they knew that they were... there was already that culture of suspicion that existed. (Meena)

In some cases this is experienced directly as racism. Thus the abuse received by politically active people on social media was reported to be much worse for Muslim activists than others. One such politically active respondent described how his personal capacity to act 'democratically' had been questioned because of his Muslim background:

> As a Students' Union representative who's Muslim, yeah. So I've had my ability to represent students be questioned. I had my ability to follow democratic procedures be questioned because of who I was. (Zuhair)

One of the impacts of feeling targeted as a security threat was a sense of being silenced, excluded, not entitled to talk or afraid to talk. This feeling was mentioned in six interviews. Ashraf's experience of feeling silenced because of his ethnicity and faith is cited at length below as it captures the vicious circle of stigmatisation and exclusion experienced by respondents:

> But I think, also with this, with the whole media thing about Muslims, it makes you hold your tongue a lot more. Like you want to talk about an issue that doesn't really affect Muslims or doesn't really have anything to do with Muslims, but you know the fact that you're a, like a Muslim immigrant that you're not allowed to say certain things. Like for example, with the monarchy. You have people, you have like a legitimate debate on people who don't believe there should be a monarchy. But suddenly if you're not a white British, and you say something anti-monarch, about the monarchy, but about a negative way, suddenly you get all these comments about, 'Oh, go back to your own country,' things like that. […]So one thing I've found is like when you're talking about the whole ISIS thing, of course, we don't agree with them, but I think it's important to have, like a frank discussion as to where they started from. And you have a lot of journalists, you have political commentators who will tell you that it started after the Iraq invasion, and things like that. But suddenly as a Muslim, if you try and put the blame on the Iraq invasion,

you're suddenly apologising for what ISIS are doing, when it's [...] you're suddenly like an ISIS supporter or something like that. So it becomes a very tight ground to walk, even with the whole anti-terrorism thing. (Ashraf)

Respondents also expressed fear of talking about particular topics – such as Islam or jihad – while one respondent who worked as a presenter at a Muslim radio station noted that sometimes she was 'too scared to say anything' in case it reflected badly on the whole station (Nadira). In two cases respondents said that they felt negative media coverage of Muslim student activists or social media abuse of them were consciously designed to deter Muslim students from becoming politically engaged. This is how Meena articulates her experience:

> I think a lot of people are aware that Muslims are becoming, a lot of Muslims are becoming increasingly political, particularly within the university spaces. And they're occupying positions that are of importance. So the reason they run these stories, and run these relentless stories about one person or the other person and so forth, is because... is to scare people. Is to scare people into silence. (Meena)

If the aim of extending the Prevent agenda into broader social institutions and spaces has been in order to encourage open discussion and community ownership of the safeguarding of young people and safety of communities as a whole, it appears at the moment to be having the opposite effect.

In the Introduction it was noted that although factors that 'enable' and 'inhibit' social involvement are discussed separately in this report, in practice many factors identified in the narratives of young people appear as both enabling *and* inhibiting, reflecting the deeply entwined nature of structure and agency (see Section 1.2). While these processes generally take place outside the consciousness of individual actors and are normally discussed at an abstract level, in the following example the process by which constraining structures invoke agency, which then confronts, and impacts on, those structures is laid bare. In the interview excerpt below, Rafi, who had been (wrongfully) arrested following a political demonstration, describes how the overwhelming sense of powerless he felt had been transformed into agency:

> I managed to interpret the feelings that I had as powerlessness. And that was kind of a common theme that a lot of people who have police contact have, is that sense of powerlessness. And I was like, 'That's really unfair, you know. We have these rights, that are meant to protect us from like police abuse and stuff. But why do people continue to feel powerlessness in the face of the police?' So part of me was thinking about how can we organise round that. And you know, the thing that resulted from that eventually was the [names regional police monitoring project]. (Rafi)

Rafi was not only wrongfully arrested but had to spend some months fighting prosecution and extremely negative exposure in the media due to the arrest. In his narrative we see how structures of race/ethnicity/religion, class and gender constrain the social involvement of those who are positioned as the object of surveillance but also how the practice of confronting those structures - and the institutional powers that support them - itself produces agency that acts back on those very structures and institutions.

4 Conclusions

This report presents the provisional findings of a study of the responses of a group of young Muslims to the stigmatisation, and conflict, they encounter as a result of their construction as a 'suspect community' in contemporary British society. The case study is an example of a group of young people whose stigmatisation is not rooted in troubled family, education or employment trajectories nor early criminalisation. On the contrary, the respondent group in this study is predominantly well educated and aspirational, mainly still living in the parental home and well supported by family. However, at the structural level, as young Muslims, respondents in this case study experience the greatest economic disadvantages of any group in the UK (Stevenson *et al.*, 2017: 5). This is confirmed by the descriptions of many respondents of their family backgrounds, material circumstances and expressed, by some, in strong working class identities. Moreover, and critical to this study, respondents experience stigmatisation through belonging to what is constructed as a 'suspect community'. Drawing on Breen-Smyth (2014: 231-2) we understand a 'suspect community' to be a sub-set of the population - identified by an ethnic, religious, racial, national or other marker - constructed as 'suspects' by mechanisms deployed by the state to ensure national or state 'security' and reinforced by societal responses and social practices. In this case, those state mechanisms relate to a series of legislative responses, specifically the Prevent element of the UK counter-terrorism Contest strategy, to concerns about the threat of, predominantly Islamist, 'home-grown' terrorism. The societal response to this has included the daily reinforcement through media reporting of associations of Islam and Muslims with terrorism, oppression (especially relating to gender and sexuality) and dogmatism as well as the constant feeling of being under surveillance and scrutiny. This feeling among respondents in this study of 'being watched until they made a mistake' is due, not least, to the consequences of the implementation, since 2015, of the Prevent duty across a range of social institutions such as schools, colleges and universities with which young people have daily contact.

This report starts by presenting findings that confirm that young Muslims experience a strong sense of stigmatisation due to: the widespread, negative connotation of Islam and Muslims; personal experiences of racism and Islamophobia; and their interactions with the Prevent strategy and its implementation. While this is far from the first study to document the impact on young Muslims of negative representations of Islam and Muslims and the rising incidence of hate crime, two important findings emerged. First, the data from this study suggest that Prevent procedures are perceived as reinforcing the association of Muslims with terrorism and experienced as making them subject to securitisation practices that work to stigmatise them. Secondly, this additional stigmatisation problematises already complex and sometimes troublesome identity work that young Muslims face. Getting to the point of feeling 'comfortable in being Muslim' is already a struggle for many young British Muslims; the depiction of Islam as the 'new enemy within' makes that challenge harder.

The report proceeds to consider how these experiences of stigmatisation shape respondents' attitudes to engagement and the types of activism in which they become involved. The data from this study demonstrate that respondents are engaged in a wide range of activities including: charity work, fundraising and volunteering; the propagation of Islam (*Dawa*); social media based activities; campaigning; participating in protests; and numerous social, cultural and educational activities. However, the most frequently mentioned activity is that which is Prevent-related. This includes both the experience of college students of being on the receiving end of Prevent-related educational interventions and participation by university students in campaigns such as the NUS 'Students not

Suspects' campaign, which aims to get the Prevent duty repealed. It also includes the close collaboration of individual respondents with local authorities and schools to clarify misconceptions about Prevent. While it is impossible to discuss in this report the meaning, experience and effectiveness of the wide range of activities in which young people are engaged, one important conclusion emerges from the provisional analysis set out here. While Prevent (and the wider discourse of the war on terror) contributes to the stigmatisation of young Muslims, it has, at the same time, encouraged young Muslims to be active citizens. In the words of one respondent, 'it gets them to mobilise'. While for some respondents this might take the form of participating in targeted 'prevent Prevent' campaigns or protest actions, for many more it is expressed in charity, volunteering, educational and social activities which aim to counter negative images of Islam and represent Islam in a positive way. For young Muslims 'doing good deeds' can be a powerful weapon in the fight against stigmatisation.

Thus, in the short term, stigmatisation might appear to be a motivating factor. For some young people, the Prevent agenda provides a focus for counter-mobilisation and acts as a resource or enabling factor in social involvement. The findings of this study on what enables and inhibits young people in becoming socially involved provide some confirmation of this proposition. While it is well-established that social exclusion in general acts to inhibit social involvement, some young Muslims in this study felt their own marginality *enabled* their civic and political engagement; it was what inspired them (and their peers) to seek social change. This finding stands in stark contrast to existing data on the relationships between socio-economic disadvantage, Muslim religious background and low levels of civic participation (Garratt, 2016: 3). It may be that we are seeing here a generational shift between first and second generation Muslim populations in the UK similar to that already identified in the spheres of employment and education (ibid.: 2). It is possible that an 'ethnic capital' (Shah *et al.*, 2010) has accrued among second generation Muslims that facilitates not only their educational achievement but also access to the social networks and organisational resources that impact positively on young people's propensity to participate (Soler-i-Marti and Ferrer-Fons, 2015: 110). Whatever the explanation, it is important to recognise that the mobilising power of the stigmatising effects of the Prevent agenda only holds in conditions of a range of other supportive contexts for social involvement experienced by young people.

Of these contexts, the role of the family is the most intriguing as it is the single most frequently cited factor both *enabling* and *inhibiting* young people's social involvement. The salience of the family is not unexpected given the age and ethnic backgrounds of the young people taking part in this study. However, studies to date tend to understand the importance of 'family' primarily in relation to socio-economic status - as a kind of proxy for class, neighbourhood and access to social networks and capitals. The findings of this study suggest that the family plays a more independent and active enabling and constraining function: in the (gendered) socialisation of young people into social involvement (inter alia via political discussion within families); through setting limits and priorities with regard to the balance between social involvement and 'real' life (study and employment); and by guiding young people towards, and away from, certain types of social involvement. In considering this more complex role of the family, this study also identified an important emotional dimension of support or constraint on social involvement emanating from the family. This manifests itself in often contradictory ways. The high aspirations of parents encourage educational achievement but may constrain extra-curricular activity thought to endanger future career plans. Close parental involvement in young people's lives is experienced in some cases as unwavering support that allows

the fulfilment of potential but in others as a constraining force that prevents them being who they are. Parental narratives of self-sacrifice (not having had the opportunities they wish to give their children) are inspiring and motivational but, at the same time, constitute an emotional pressure to provide a return on the, profoundly personal, investment. This emotional dimension of family support and constraint might be considered alongside other emotional or affective factors mentioned by respondents such as the emotional impact of constant exposure to negative representations of Islam and Muslims or the importance of 'emotional resilience' and being together with other activists who share their commitment for sustaining their participation. Taken together, these findings suggest the need for greater attention to emotional factors facilitating and constraining young people's social involvement.

Finally, we turn to the equally ambiguous role of securitisation of society, and the construction of young Muslims as 'suspect communities'. In the short term, the stigmatisation experienced by respondents constructed as objects of surveillance appears to enable social involvement by 'mobilising' them to counteract the negative associations with Islam and Muslims. However, in the longer term, by focusing social involvement on countering this discourse, other aspects of structural disadvantage go unchallenged and many young Muslims are left feeling silenced and unentitled to speak, not least on matters that are important to them (foreign policy, the appropriation of Islam by terrorist actors, and everyday British politics). This, in turn, reinforces their identification (by others) first and foremost as Muslims whether or not they themselves choose the primacy of this aspect of their identity and despite the fact that they are acutely aware of the importance of the intersectionality of privilege and disadvantage. Thus while, mobilisation against 'suspect community' status may constitute a positive response to stigmatisation in the first instance, in the longer term it may constrain young Muslims' social involvement within a form of identity politics that fails to reflect their complex subjectivities and denies them the opportunity to make the broader contributions to politics and society that they desire.

5   Future analysis

5.1 Themes for cross-case analysis

An interesting theme emerging from this case study is the strong awareness of 'stigmatisation' among respondents. This exists notwithstanding that many of respondents were extremely successful students and many were actively engaged civically (e.g. in youth councils or NGOs) or had gained elected office in organisations (ISOC or the NUS). It is also manifest in, as one respondent puts it, 'feeling victimised' by regulations (such as the security screening of bags) that are universally imposed but are experienced as targeted at the Muslim community. The question then arises of how to understand this 'stigmatisation' and how it works to inhibit their involvement. Can we distinguish between 'objectively existing' and 'subjectively experienced' stigmatisation? If we can, do these two forms of stigmatisation work in the same way? And do they have the same effects on young people? Does this stigmatisation reproduce across generations? And, if it subjectively experienced rather than objectively present, how can it be tackled? It would be useful to explore this theme across other cases where young people articulate a strong sense of stigmatisation.

A second theme warranting further investigation is whether the kinds of social involvement of stigmatised and marginalised youth conform to, or resist, classic typological distinctions around forms

of 'civic', 'political', 'latent' and 'manifest' engagement/participation. This could provide a useful multi-case and transnational contribution to the attempt to rethink our categories of 'participation' in a way that captures what young people *do* rather than what they do not do.

A third questions arises from this – and potentially other – case studies as to what it is that fuels the social involvement of stigmatised or excluded young people in the absence of many of the socio-demographic characteristics   with which propensity to participation is associated? The notion of 'capital' – social, cultural, economic, 'ethnic' – as a crucial factor is worth further investigation. As discussed above, however, this study also identified emotional support and 'resilience' as important factors that do not appear to be recognised in the existing literature and the presence of which it would be useful to identify in other case studies in the PROMISE project.

5.2 Questions for further investigation (through triangulation)

This case is unusual in that it presents the experience of young people who clearly articulate a sense of their own stigmatisation in contemporary society; there is also reason to propose that this would be a shared experience for young Muslims across many European countries where they constitute a religious minority usually of (first, second or third generation) immigrant background. At the same time, the young people in this study are strongly aspirational and have high levels of education and 'ethnic capital'. They are also very socially involved and politically engaged, in some cases, they are politically active also.

One question that could be usefully explored both across qualitative cases but also using the quantitative data gathered relates to the key variables that might explain why some young people who are stigmatised respond with non-activism while others become engaged and active assuming, as this case would lead us to believe, there is no straightforward correlation between socio-economic status and levels of activism. The key variables that might be tested, which appear significant in this case, include: religion; level of education; immigration experience (in family or self); and 'ethnic capital'.

The question posed might be: *In the presence of similar levels of socio-economic disadvantage, does i) religion; or ii) level of education; or iii) immigration experience determine propensity to become socially involved?*

The reason for testing this also across other qualitative case studies is that the key variable may be subjective, or captured better through interview than survey data, e.g. 'aspiration' or 'ethnic capital'. For example, it may be the aspiration of parents which, first, orients young people towards higher education and thus opens networks and capitals to them, rather than the higher education level itself, that is the key factor in them becoming active.

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Appendix: Socio-demographic data of respondents

	Age	Country of Birth	Education	Employment	Ethnicity	Family status	Gender	Religion	Residential status
Abdullah	22	UK	Currently at university	In full-time education	British Asian	Married or living with partner	Male	Muslim	Lives independently alone
Ahmed	22	UK	Completed postgraduate education	In full-time employment	Arab	Single	Male	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)
Aisha	19	Hong Kong	Currently at university	In full-time education	British Asian	Single	Female	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)
Aladdin	17	UK	Currently in general academic secondary education	In full-time education	Arab	Single	Male	No religion	Lives at home with parent(s)
Ameena	22	UK	Currently at university	In full-time education	British Asian	Single	Female	Muslim	Lives independently with friends
Anas	22	UK	Currently at university	In full-time education	Arab	Single	Male	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)
Anastasia	17	Germany	Currently in general academic secondary education	In full-time education	Middle Eastern	Single	Female	No religion	Lives at home with parent(s)
Ashraf	22	UK	Currently at university	In part-time employment	British Asian	Single	Male	Muslim	Lives at home with other relatives (brother)
Carlito	21	UK	Completed university	In part-time employment	British Asian	Single	Male	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)
Dmitri	18	UK	Currently at university	In full-time education	British Asian	Single	Male	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)
Fiza	21	UK	Completed university	In full-time employment	British Asian	Single	Female	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)
Jo	20	UK	Currently at university	In full-time education	White British	Married or living with partner	Female	Muslim	Lives independently with partner

Khaled	20	UK	Currently at university	In full-time education	Arab	Single	Male	Muslim	Lives independently with friends
Liyla	17	UK	Currently in vocational secondary education	In full-time education	British Asian	Single	Female	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)
Maria	18	Germany	Currently in general academic secondary education	In full-time education	Iranian Kurdish	Single	Female	Other: Spiritual	Lives at home with parent(s)
Meena	22	UK	Other On one year sabbatical year from University	In full-time employment	British Asian	Single	Female	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)
Nadira	24	UK	Completed university	In part-time employment	British Asian	Single	Female	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)
Putra	32	Indonesia	Studying for postgraduate education	In full-time education	Indonesian	Single	Male	Muslim	Lives independently with friends
Rafi	28	UK	Completed postgraduate education	Working and in part-time education	British Asian	Single	Male	Muslim	Lives independently with friends
Ruksana	27	UK	Completed university	In full-time employment	British Asian	Single	Female	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)
Samira	17	UK	Currently in general academic secondary education	In full-time education	British Asian	Single	Female	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)
Shareef	24	Pakistan	Completed university	Unemployed	British Asian	Single	Male	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)
Tariq	22	Pakistan	Currently at university	In full-time education	British Asian	Married	Male	Muslim	Lives independently with own partner/children
Valentina	18	UK	Currently in general academic secondary education	In full-time education	Kurdish	Single	Female	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)
Waleed	14	UK	Currently in general academic secondary education	In full-time education	British Asian	Single	Male	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)

| Yardan | 18 | UK | Currently at university | In full-time education | British Asian | Single | Male | Muslim | Lives independently with friends |
| Zuhair | 22 | UK | Currently at university | In full-time education | Asian | Single | Male | Muslim | Lives at home with parent(s) |

PROMISE

promoting youth involvement and
social engagement

PROMISE: Promoting Youth Involvement and Social Engagement: Opportunities and challenges for conflicted young people across Europe.

WP6: From Conflict to Innovation: Ethnographic Case Studies

No Tav: Stigma as a drive for social change

Italy

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Executive summary:

This report presents the findings of a research carried out amongst the young activists of the *No Tav* social movement in Italy. Despite being strongly stigmatised by the mainstream media and the national authorities as highly conflictual youth, they engage positively in society and they become interpreters of instances of social change. The hypothesis that lies behind our research is that the young activists, despite the strong stigmatisation they are subjected to, succeed in interpreting instances of social change by borrowing from the overall movement they belong to the key features that allow them to turn stigma into a positive value. Our theory is that the intergenerational dimension is key to the innovation process the young activists are bringing about. Through the conscious adhesion to the community and the relationship of trust and solidarity established with its members and particularly with the elderly, the young activists are able to convey their innovative potential. They convert such potential into actions that point at consciously boosting a social change, with a view to gradually investing not only in their individual life but that of an entire community – a community whose boundaries start locally but stretch out to reach national and even European ones.

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1. Introduction

This report presents the findings of research carried out amongst No Tav young activists between May 2017 and February 2018. The No Tav is a social movement that has opposed the construction of a high-speed railway (the TAV, in Italian) between France and Italy for over 25 years. The protest gathers the great majority of the population of the Susa Valley, an alpine Valley situated not far from the city of Turin. As it addresses an infrastructure of high national interest, the No Tav protest has rapidly captured the interest of politicians and mainstream media and it has increasingly turned into a national case over the years[1]. Over the years, the No Tav movement has expanded its scope and incorporated new issues, creating national and European networks with similar social movements. As a result, 'The Susa Valley has left the local borders to become a national case' (Diamanti, 2012).

While the No Tav movement has been, and is still being, widely researched both from sociological and political perspectives, no research studies have specifically targeted the young sector of the movement yet. Nevertheless, the youth participate very actively in the movement and their role is regarded as of strategic relevance to its future development by the older generations within the movement itself. In this perspective, they place themselves within the frame painted by Della Porta and Piazza (2008, p. 53) in their study on protest campaigns against large-scale public works, who suggest that 'mobilization is produced by multiple and (both socially and ideologically) heterogeneous actors. These become 'networked in action' (and) extend vertically from above (activists) to below (citizens) as well as along the generational dimension (young and old)'.

Additionally, the young No Tav activists are also targets of a strong stigmatisation process brought about by national authorities and mainstream media. In fact, images widely conveyed by the media about the No Tav movement are usually associated with clashes and guerrilla-like sceneries where young people are often on the frontline and they are portrayed predominantly as hostile and violent towards law enforcement agencies (Askatasuna, 2012; Senaldi, 2016).

The public discourse on the No Tav in Italy depicts the activists alternatively as anti-progress 'primitives' (Senaldi, 2016) or as Nimby (Not in my Back Yard) (Roccato and Mannarini, 2012) unable to look beyond their own garden or – particularly when referring to the young portion of the movement - as black-blocs, terrorists and 'professionals of violence' (Senaldi, 2016, pp. 22-23). This kind of narrative practice seems to conform to Goffman's (2003, p. 171) elaboration of the social function of stigma, where 'the stigmatization of those who have a bad moral reputation may serve as a social control device on a formal level'. As Senaldi puts in regards to the process of criminalisation that targets the No Tav movement: 'Beyond the distinction between the good and the bad guys, as one can infer, the goal is unique - namely, create a monster of which the 'normal' person should be afraid and fearful' (Senaldi, 2016, p. 85).

Interestingly, while the young No Tav are represented as highly conflictual by mainstream media and national authorities, they are, at the same time, perceived as potential agents of innovation to look up to by large social sectors. This holds particularly true for the activists of similar social movements against large-scale public works in Italy, but also for many young people all over Italy

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[1] The main reason behind the movement is that a new high-speed railway line in the area is not truly needed, its only purpose being the profit of the many private companies that have shares in it. Additionally, the construction of the new line would destroy a huge part of the Susa Valley, causing not only an environmental but also an economic and social damage that would affect severely the local population. The No Tav activists propose, instead, their own development plan for the area, which must be based on the principle of social and ecological sustainability, and includes supporting the production and consumption of local products, enhancing low-impact transportation, and promoting eco-tourism, among other issues.

who sympathise with the themes pushed forward by the No Tav movement even though they are not activists.

Contemporary studies on the young generations in Italy tend to represent them as 'self-centered, less idealist, [overwhelmed by] a transformation that pushes young people into a condition of isolation, disorientation and uncertainty and drives them to distance themselves from traditional politics which does not represent them at all' (Savonardo, 2013, p. 19). As a result, 'in the last years, it seems that young people have lost their political and social subjectivity', thus, gaining the label of 'invisible generation' (ibidem). In this perspective, the No Tav youth seem to be following a completely different path - a path of social participation and visibility – and this is achieved in harmony with older generations, as the findings presented in this report will demonstrate.

The case study presented in this report proceeds from the inherent contradiction between the above mentioned representations of the young No Tav. Research findings depict a scenery of pro-active young people who, thanks to their enriching interaction with the older generations within the movement, succeed questioning themselves socially as well as in their individual lives, always looking ahead to the future. In doing so, they propose concrete actions, aimed at consciously activating social changes that can gradually invest not only their life but that of an entire community, whose boundaries start locally but may encompass the national and even the European ones.

The hypothesis that lies behind our research is that the young No Tav activists, despite the strong stigma they are subjected to, succeed in interpreting instances of social change by borrowing from the whole movement the key features that will allow them to turn stigma into an asset. Through the conscious adhesion to the No Tav community - and the relationship of trust and solidarity established with its members and especially with the elderly - the young No Tav are able to convey their innovative potentials, transforming them into concrete actions for the benefit of the whole community. Our theory is that the intergenerational dimension is key to the innovation process the young No Tav activists are bringing about.

2. Methods

Due to the interest in capturing the insiders' points of view, and, in particular, the youth's own perception of their own agency, the research adopted an ethnographic approach in agreement with all project partners. The ethnographic methodology led to the use of semi-structured interviews as the primary means of investigation. The interview outline developed in agreement with the partners of the PROMISE project served as the basis for a new outline developed to better suit the case-study on No Tav youth. The outline acted as a 'guide', providing cues to encourage discussions pertinent to the research. However, it did not exclude the possibility of asking unforeseen questions that proved useful to the researcher during the course of the conversations, adding context to the study. The case-specific interview outline identified five main subject areas (motivations; youth and intergenerational relations; participation and agency; stigma and conflict; social change and future) within which the interviewer pinpointed specific issues to be addressed. Conducted in this way, the guided narrative interview was sufficiently malleable and adaptable to the context and the interlocutor's specific needs.

From this point of view, that is, to underline that the abovementioned case study required a considerable amount of preliminary work due to positioning of the object of investigation. The No Tav movement arose, and is still today, in Susa Valley – a valley located in the north-western part

of the alpine arc near the Italy-France border - the area which is mostly affected by the construction of the high-speed railway (TAV). The field research area is about 700 km from Rome – location of the IPRS, the research centre conducting the study for the PROMISE project – and the field work preparation required an extremely accurate preliminary work phase aimed at arranging the subsequently necessary details for the permanence in the valley. The preliminary phase lasted for about 2 months and included getting in touch with potential privileged witnesses as well as phone conversations with *gatekeepers* who provided additional information on the context and, at time, helped in facilitating contact with the locals. The first stay in the field (beginning of June 2017) lasted one week; it was a full-immersion in the Valley, rich of conversations and encounters with the locals of every age range. The external researcher experienced a surprising feeling of inclusion and trust along with the perception of a very unite and strong community. During this first stay, 7 semi-structured interviews with young activists were conducted and audio-recorded. The stay in the field also allowed for the observation of various events related to the research topic, which contributed even more to improve the understanding of the social environment and the dynamics of the relations of young people participating in the research.

Due to the political implications of the case and the overall complexity of the context, the need for more frequent and longer visits emerged in order to fully understand it, therefore, the collaboration of a local, very close to the movement was sought. Therefore, the research team in the fieldwork phase was assisted by a local researcher. Although not falling within the category 'peer' and because of her being of an age slightly higher than the research target, her participation 'on the research side' has been a decisive factor and contributed extensively to the quality of the research outcomes.

This methodological strategy enabled the development of more specific topics and more accurate and appropriate questions based on a deeper, long-standing and practical knowledge of the topic. Moreover, it contributed to widen the research team cognitive horizon, being it external to the No Tav movement and at the same time, to the geographic area of the research. Finally, it has definitely facilitated the fieldwork phase with regards to logistics, reducing all difficulties usually associated to the research of contacts and to the access of external researchers in a given community.

The pairing of the internal-external researcher showed to be an extremely valid method especially concerning the accuracy of the collected data as well as the subsequent analysis, creating the opportunity to incorporate in a single interpretative frame both the outsider and the insider point of view. This is a methodological approach we mean to keep on experimenting in future ethnographic research and which we endorse because of all of the aforementioned reasons.

Overall, the field research methodology comprised the following techniques and resources:

✓ *Semi-structured interviews*: 20 semi-structured interviews with 20 young No Tav, 9 females and 11 males, were conducted and all were audio recorded and lasted on average one hour each. The age of the interviewees ranged between 18 and 27 years, with the exception of 3 interviewees aged between 30 – 34 years. Their participation was crucial to enriching the historical dimension of the collected interviews. Seven (7) interviews were conducted by the 'outside' researcher in May-June 2017 and 13 more interviews by the 'inside' researcher between January and March 2018. Outside of the recorded interviews, many informal conversations took place with the young activists, adding fruitful information to the data gathered through the interviews. Many informal conversations took place with the elderly, too.

✓ *Participant observations* - this included participation in informal meetings as well as in leisure opportunities and events, both with young people and with the elderly. In particular, observational work has included, among others:

- o Attending meetings of the No Tav Youth Committee;
- o Attending informal meetings of other No Tav members;
- o Having lunch/dinner with various NT members, including with the elderly;
- o Visiting and spending time at cafès and other key-meeting sites to observe daily interaction between NT members of different ages;
- o Visiting some of the main sites of conflict (e.g., sites where the pre-construction work is being carried out, sites of serious clashes between the police and the NT in the past, sites that are presently fenced and guarded by the police and the army).

✓ *Field diary*– this was written by the 'alien' researcher only, while the local researcher was asked to describe by voice all major facts and events observed and participated by her.

✓ *Collection of secondary data*: various forms of documentation (e.g., social media, pictures, newspaper and online articles) were collected in order to support and enrich the data resulting from the interviews.

✓ *Photo elicitation*: The young interview participants were told about the opportunity to provide pictures taken by themselves and showing their own perspectives of the NT movement. Many seemed enthusiastic about the idea but did not provide any picture in the end, possibly due to judicial concerns (see below paragraph on Ethics).

Following the field research, all audio interviews, field diaries, and ethnographic notes were transcribed and coded using Nvivo. Text coding involved two steps: first, text extracts were identified and 'labelled' in accordance with case-specific criteria (Level 1 labels/nodes); subsequently, all Level 1 nodes were grouped within broader labels (Level 2) that had been previously agreed within the Consortium. The analysis presented in this report is based on the data coded with Nvivo.

2.1. *Notes on the conduction of the interviews*

Differently from other cases in PROMISE, the young participants in this case-study are charachterised by a high degree of awareness of the reasons lying beyond their agency. They are also used to debating about and reflecting on the stigmatisation process that targets them – a core issue in our research. While on one hand such awareness has certainly represented an asset to the conduction of the interviews, on the other hand, it sometimes stood as a constraint to obtaining information that would not just reproduce preconceived thoughts. This forced the researchers to adopt alternative strategies (questions or topics) in order to obtain accounts that would truly recall their personal experience. For example, it was necessary to ask many 'Why?' questions at the end of an account; or ask about personal emotions in regards to specific events; or ask 'Who says/said so?' when the interviewee's speech sounded very theoretical. However, even in the few cases where the interviewees were less likely to speak freely, they would drop such an attitude after the first 20-30 minutes of their interview.

All the young participants have expressed lively interest to our research, with many among them explicitly asking to read the outcomes of the research once they are ready.

Finally, it is important to highlight that the presence of the 'alien' researcher was accepted at once with an attitude of openness and inclusiveness, not only by the youth but also by the elder members of the community. This contributed largely to facilitate the conduction of the field research, in addition to providing for additional opportunities of observation and informal interaction.

2.2. Ethical issues

As previously agreed within the PROMISE Consortium, all interview participants were asked to sign informed consent forms for their participation. Prior to this, the researchers presented the project and provided clear and detailed information about the research, its purpose and the possible uses of the information received. This was done individually with the first interviewees; later, it was decided to inform about the project and the research at one meeting of the Youth Committee. Researchers ensured that each participant fully understood the aim of the research and its implications. Although the young participants had no objections in participating in the interviews, they showed concern about having the collected data circulating out of the project Consortium. Such concern is due to the juridical situation of many of them. In fact, some NT young activists (and even elder activists) are presently prosecuted under criminal law as a result of their participation at demonstrations and protests and other young activists, who are not under prosecution, have raised concern that their declarations might be used against them. A deeper concern regards the circulation of pictures that may be out of their concern and for this reason, they refused to take part in the photo elicitation proposed by the researchers, although they expressed great interest for it and did not exclude the opportunity to adopt it in future projects or activities.

3. Key Findings

3.1. Engaging factors/Turning points

Many amongst the young interview participants grew up in the Susa Valley in an already full-blown No-Tav protest. Almost all of them tell how the NT movement during their childhood was already present in their families. They still have a live and intense memory of the first demonstrations they took part in with their parents, describing it as a joyful image where a key factor for the children's appreciation was the feeling of a 'family-like' environment.

> I started taking part in bigger activities when I was a kid, and to be honest without asking myself too many questions (...) When you are a child you just tell your mum, Let's go to the march, Let's go to the march, and yes, this is beautiful, like in a big family. (Francesca)

> I was already in it as a child and I had to experience it as something positive because when you are a child you take part anyway, it was a serene environment, and the demonstrations and the whole context felt very homely. (Piero)

> I remember when I was a kid, I was going to primary school and for my first one, my parents took me.... (Giulio)

For what concerns young activists who grew up in the Valley, the deeper motivations of the protest can be traced back to their family cultural climate and social surroundings they have lived in since their early childhood. From their words, a kind of personal growth path strongly emerges which led them to start reflecting on their participation in the movement:

> Then I started asking myself some questions, why not, I mean I started to get informed, I didn't take it for granted… (Piero)

> …And then I started asking myself questions… (Francesca)

> Let's say until I was 15, 16 years old, yes, I went to the demonstrations because my parents took me there, then since I turned 15, 16 I started going because I wanted to go. (Paolo)

They also express a sense of gratitude towards their parents (and often the whole community) who charted a course which eventually became their own path and their own choice:

> I have to thank my parents because they let me know this reality and….growing up to continue with this background idea became my own choice. (Giulio)

There are also young people who arrived in Susa Valley as adults, after having had initial contacts with the NT movement away from the Valley, sometimes through participation in other movements or contexts that share a common political perspective with the No Tav movement. The curiosity to get to know better the No Tav reality stemmed from such situations as well as from the news watched on TV:

> It's by watching these videos and reading some interviews that I started to be interested in it and discovered what the No Tav movement was. (Clara)

Because of how the mainstream media handled the news about the No Tav movement, confining its existence to the chronicle pages, it was very hard for this young activist to get a clear idea of such a lively and heartfelt protest. Likewise, images of clashes between protesters and police did not explain anything about the dynamics which led to the clashes whereas it seemed they simply aimed at suggesting a closed interpretation of No Tav activists as terrorists and black-blocks, in addition to being anti-progress and nimby:

> It was mostly about how the No-Tav were described at that time, like terrorists, black-blocks… it was something that even if you were outside of it (…) if I had to trust in the public opinion, possibly I would have never understood anything of the No-Tav movement, what it really was…(Clara)

In other cases, it is the urge to ask oneself questions to answer to the stigmatisation that becomes one of the triggering factors to join the protest. Francesca, for example, who grew up in the Valley with her mother who sympathised with the movement, experienced the stigma as soon as she left the Valley to attend high school in Turin:

> I really was in trouble there, I mean, I felt as though I was living in two different worlds, when I talked about the TAV they all looked at me as though they were saying 'Noooo, such a thing is just not true (…) It's you people in Susa Valley who are crazy'. (…) I

wouldn't say justify myself, but I had to give them good reasons. Since then I started to get informed to be able to give a detailed account so that I could also answer (…), attending events on my own will, and that is how it all started. (Francesca)

3.1.1 Feeling of injustice

According to the data gathered from the interviews, one of the major motivations pushing young people to embrace the protest is the need to oppose the feeling of injustice. This motivation is shared by both young people from the Valley and those who arrived as adults:

> Q: Looking backwards, if you had to explain what attracted you the most?
>
> A: Definitely in the beginning, I felt a strong feeling of injustice about what was happening to the people there. (Clara)

> …That the police beat up the elderly or some people we knew. That is… possibly beating up a neighbour whom I knew was a very good person… This messes you up… What did they do wrong to get beaten up… (Alice)

> Since I was a child, I was always upset by injustice and the like and I always experienced it almost personally (…) I studied law, I studied, and seeing the discrepancy between what you study and what actually happens… It really made me question myself, wondering 'shouldn't they (the police) protect the citizens, make sure rights are implemented and respected? Why instead of having people respect those rights they breach them?' (Francesca)

> Seeing how people got beaten up, I couldn't understand how they (the police) could be possibly right. I mean, if someone is right there's no need to show it like that (…) Considering that my mum too was beaten up then... well, the 'well, maybe they are right' was discarded at once. (Piero)

The feeling of injustice recurs in all the interviews and it is strongly felt by the young activists. It appears to be a decisive factor leading young people to engage and participate more actively in the movement. Within this topic, personal experience and injustices perpetrated by representatives of institutions intertwine; they especially connect to the injustice of the cause, namely the construction of TAV, at the root of the movement which keeps on growing. In this sense, Clara's words are enlightening:

> You say: I wonder why they want to build something like that which should be of European interest but nobody is happy about it. I mean, if something is beneficial then the people should be happy. If the people aren't happy, then why is it like that? And then if you consider the repression, you say: ok, even if they were right, and obviously they are not, there's such a strong repression, and if it doesn't even come up in the news, not once, well then something doesn't add up. (Clara)

3.1.2 Sense of community

There is not only the will to fight the feeling of injustice to push these young people to actively take part in the protest. As emerging from the tales of the interviewed youth, there is also a sense of community meant as a positive collectivity of individuals sharing the same reasons and values:

I like to be with my comrades, with people from the movement, because I really feel to be part of a community, a family, I feel good as well. (Alice)

It also emerges how individuals are aware of belonging to this community and contribute, together, to creating a new cultural system. The strength of this unity origins from the very fact of belonging to the No-Tav community, as explained by one of the gatekeepers who helped us in better understanding the internal dynamics of the movement before starting the fieldwork: 'I welcome you as a No-Tav, because you are in the right. Because the No-Tav movement is not only a protest against a train, it is the sharing of a set of values which makes you one of us.' (Gatekeeper 01)

From the point of view of a young NT activist, the feeling of belonging to the No-Tav community can be explained as such:

> ...I mean one's own feeling of belonging to a community and the idea that we are all small pieces of it, right? It's together we can get results and (…) when someone leaves it is an important part of it that goes, and when a new one arrives, it's an important one that joins us. (Roberto)

Considered as such, the added value of the No-Tav community lies in its being a collection of 'small pieces', so that 'even people coming from outside, when they come here they feel part of something which is bigger than the total sum of its parts, its people.' (Clara). Each little piece has the same value as any other one by virtue of the belonging criterion. Only joining the other ones can one give sense and meaning to the actions of the whole community. Moreover, the positive function of the community on single individuals belonging to it, also consists in the principle of solidarity regulating relations between its members. In turn, the principle of solidarity results in the sharing of responsibilities and the need to protect each community member:

> For example the community gives me (…) a good level of serenity which makes me feel protected, so that I know that if something happens to me, the community is with me. (Roberto)

The feeling of being part of something bigger giving protection but at the same time, benefitting from the contribution of every single piece, and the feeling of belonging stemming from it, reinforces the young people awareness of having a reference group which they share values and actions with. As we will demonstrate in the following pages, being able to rely on a reference group is crucial, not only in favouring the youth's active participation, but also in the subsequent transformation of the stigma they are subjected to into an effective means of social change.

The perception of a sense of inclusion and cohesiveness charachterising the No Tav community is also shared by those who grew up elsewhere and came to the Valley as adults, such as Clara. The impact with the No-Tav community was intense, immediate and it led her to confront with her own context of origin, namely the city of Turin; she identifies in the absence of dialogue and sense of belonging the major constraints to building a 'community' as the No Tav one:

> There are actual bonds…with the place, the valley, the people… and in my opinion this is the heart of this struggle. There is this sense of belonging connecting everyone (…)

Something I believe is missing in an urban context. Because possibly there is not as much dialogue and sense of belonging, even. (Clara)

3.2. Belonging and trust

The interviews carried out indicate that the young NT activists are very aware of the existing connecton, linking their sense of belonging to the No-Tav community to their identity as young adults, as the below excerpts indicate:

> If I hadn't lived in Valsusa, I wouldn't be the person I am now. (Piero)

> I don't feel different just because I pose myself certain questions, but I do believe my experience in such an environment contributed to it. (Francesca)

> When thinking about what I experienced in general I say… How good that I was born in the Valley! (Roberto)

> Well, let's say that if I am what I am it's because of training, education and my parents and a lot of other things but it's also thanks to the NT movement. Definitely. (Luca)

In the youth's perception, the No Tav community mapped the way for them and the young activists are ready to pick up the baton and carry it further. They do so by actively participating in the movement and committing themselves, in turn, to pass this baton on to a public of younger people, as we will explain in the below pages of this report. The very idea of social engagement, of the need to act even individually for the sake of a common end, is inherited by the movement and it became part of the youth's own life path:

> I really like the idea itself of movement, of people who are not 'one' anymore, who don't act only for themselves but jointly with others, in friendship and harmony with others. (Michele)

The heterogeneity characterising the movement itself also contributes to support the idea of participation being a value and also leads the youth to consider diversity as an added value and a strength:

> You get the old man and the baby in the pram, the anarchist, the communist and the catholic, absolutely in a non-conflictual manner… There is no difference between the black block and (the old lady) who goes to a demonstration… (Piero)

Regarded as a resource, diversity is converted into a further push to act in society. The recent commitment of the No-Tav Youth Committee to the migrants' issue (see below) is an example. Heterogeneity as a key feature of the movement also allows young people to provide the interlocutor with a different key to read the conflict:

> There's no difference between the guy removing a barricade and the old man taking part in a demonstration, because it has always been said within the movement that each person contributes according to its own means, to what they feel like doing, giving what can be given. (Piero)

Another major key value that the young interviewees regard as having a crucial role in shaping their identities as well as determining their overall agency within the movement is trust - which the young people acknowledge to have been passed on to them since they were children:

> This way of thinking, the trusting other people, I learned it when I was a child and my parents gave me a flask and told me 'Go' when there were the blocks on the highway (…) It makes you trust people you don't know, so....you are more familiar with the idea of being able to change things you don't know and open up, let's say so. (Piero)

Trust seems to be the common thread in the growth of young activtists growth and it becomes almost a reference point to guide their choices. As a positive value as well as a negative one: the lack of trust seem to be pivotal to the conflictuality expressed by the youth. So, on one hand, trust acts as the glue that binds the community together and traces the path of an opening towards change and all that is new. On the other hand, the youth refer to their relationship with State authorities as marked by a lack of trust:

> I'd say over the years I've started losing trust in the State in general, in the institutions in general, meaning I don't feel protected, neither as young person nor as citizen, meaning that I don't feel free to think, mainly to have my say without being afraid of consequences. (Francesca)

> I don't feel the Italian state is on my side... (Piero)

> I don't like to be represented by this State, I don't feel represented, got it? (Roberto)

Following on, the young activists seem to place conflict within an imaginary space created by the lack of trust that marks their relationship with State institutions, including law-enforcement agencies, and mainstream media – namely, all the actors identified by the youth as producing the stigma they are subjected to:

> An act of sabotage such as removing a fence, yes I completely agree with something like that and I think these acts are a consequence of the total indifference of State institutions. (Piero)

The youth's word seem to suggest that stigma is thus accompanied, if not produced, by a lack of trust and that is precisely where conflict may arise.

> You cannot be a terrorist just because you have different political ideas. (Roberto)

> I know people who have been accused of terrorism whom if I'll ever have a child I would gladly entrust for a day (to look after the child), because they are really good people. (Roberto)

> When they stop me at a roadblock I always wonder 'Do they stop me because I have the (No Tav) sticker on the car or because they are really doing random stops?' (Francesca)

The urgency to respond to the stigma they experience and the awareness of being able to rely on a cultural system (the community and the relationship with older activists) supporting them will be

pivotal in understanding the reasons that lie beyond the youth's agency, as we will try to clarify in the following pages.

3.3. Agency and activities

> I believe young people really want to get out of their hideouts and say, well, we are also here and… We want to take part in it, in this process of change! (Pamela)

The participation of young activists in the No-Tav movement takes place on three levels: in their individual life; becoming members of the No-Tav Youth Committee; and taking part in activities in the overall movement, where the generational dimension is cross-cutting.

3.3.1 Individual level

All interviewed young people have explained how their enegagement with the movement has led them to adopt life-style choices that are in line with the motives of the movement itself:

> …To follow some kind of line of thought in the daily life, the fact that a person can fight for it day by day, simply by discussing with one's own friends or families, trying to lead a life more coherent with nature. (Piero)

Within this perspective, they highlight the need to consume products respecting workers' rights and dignity, and the need to reduce all that can damage the environment – thus, giving preference to the consumption of local food products, and reducing waste and the use of polluting vehicles, among other options. Some young people even made a life choice out of this awareness. Such is the case of Luca, who moved to the Susa Valley soon after his first casual contacts with the movement. He applied for a loan and set up his own farming project, which he sees as his own contribution to social change. More specifically, he points at opposing the TAV construction by proposing an alternative way to value what the Valley has to offer. His words provide a clear example of the close attention the young activists pay to issues linked to the concept of development and its implications:

> Revolution, or any change, can be also brought about by going shopping (...) You can always choose to buy from me... to support me and the land, in order to add value to the whole area, so that it is cared for, monitored and it doesn't fall apart (...) Another kind of development is possible and it could imply that no other train as fast as TAV should transit. (Luca)

3.3.2 The No-Tav Youth Committee

In 2010-2011, some of the young activists of the Valley, who were already active in the movement, gathered together to create a committee with only young people, the so-called No-Tav Youth Committee. The Committee stems from the need of the youth to cut out a specific space within the movement that be *for* young people and *by* young people:

> It's something I feel that makes me say, do participate, it's ok to keep asking questions, it's ok to work on big issues but do take part actively in everything, it is important! There's the need of something made out of younger people, and it is important that everybody makes an effort to do something, even in one's own small way. (Francesca)

When the Committee first came to life years ago, 'It was a very hot moment and there were events continuously', as Roberto, one of the main promoters of the Committee, recalls. Back then, the Committee 'had a moment of very intense activity and then it kind of got a bit lost', thus, reproducing the internal dynamics of the wider movement which in the last two-three years, experienced a decrease in the activities as well as, according to some people, in the ability to attract new people. Young people abandoned by the Committee then, moved on to feed the ranks of other Committees that are always active in the Susa Valley and are open to activists of any age. Therefore, the participation of young people in the movement did not stop; what was missing was the specificity of the youth issue. More recently, however, due to the boosting out of events that were new to the overall movement (e.g., the migrant issue), a renewed need for a specific youth component in the movement led the young activists to form again the Committee, in September 2017:

> It's been some years now that young people do not question themselves anymore and I think this was what was missing in the network. (Pamela)

As mentioned, the aim that the youth assign to the new Committee conforms to the historical moment of the whole movement:

> It is now a different time, a time when we demand less. Therefore, this is the perfect moment for us to create an idea, or even only inform young people about what is happening in Valsusa, but not only about that: about all that is happening in general concerning young people and not, which can be relevant for us. (Roberto)

The Committee embraces a wide range of activities - from organising cultural events and debates on current issues (e.g., women's issues, migrant issues, school-work alternation); to setting up a film club; to claiming from local authorities (many of whom openly support the movement) the availability of public studying and socialising spaces for young people in the Valley; to sensitisation events in schools, etc. Additionally, some of the activities of the Committee address a wider audience than just young people – examples of these are the organisation of dinners that are open to everyone; and the activities linked to the consolidation of the national and European network of the movement. There are a great variety of activities, nonetheless, all of them are aimed at sensitising, raising awareness, particularly among the youth, on issues that are usually presented though the mainstream media only. The youth's major purpose is to contribute to raise critical thinking and aim at social change starting from the bottom of society:

> The aim is to engage young people and make them interested in the issue. (Roberto)

> I'd like to see a part of the movement to be made out of young people, it has to be thinking as well. (Clara)

> I'd like to enter the conscience of all these young people. (Giulio)

> We created this group to get closer to younger people and ask them questions, on the situation in general (...) To provide information, to say, oh well, I packed your suitcase more or less, now it's time for you to go on your own journey and form your own opinion! (Francesca)

Shaking the youth's consciences is not always an easy task though. The accounts of the interviewed youth reveal that they reckon that the younger generations who are external to both the Valley

and the movement are often uninterested in the issues linked to the movement. Speaking out to them can, thus, prove to be a frustrating experience:

> Well there are many who are not interested in it (the movement) or who are not willing to participate (…) I mean, I may be 5, 6, 7, or 8 years older than them and they would look at me and say: Mhmm, and then? There's an inherent difficulty in not being able to pass on the message. (Francesca)

> Well, we are especially concerned with the youth world, to understanding the reasons why young people are not able to get interested, to take position even... (Giulio)

Stemming from the assumption of the scarce attention paid by average young people to the social topics that should be of high relevance, the young activists who joined the Youth Committe have set as their main aim that of informing and raising awareness on various issues beyond the very No Tav protest:

> We not only try to push forward the reasons of the movement, we also try to raise awareness among young people who may experience it a bit from the outside, trying to engage them with political issues as well as non political ones… Let's say get them have a taste of reality, because at times young people live in their own world (…) It's not their fault though, there's a whole society leading them not to care about such topics. (Giulio)

With these premises, the Youth Committee's main attention since it was restarted focused on the situation of migrants in the Valley. Many people of all ages living in Valsusa engaged in forms of active solidarity towards migrant women, men and children, who in 2017, arrived to the Valley in a desperate attempt to cross the Italian-French border on foot and in extremely adverse weather and environmental conditions, often risking their own lives. In open contrast to the national Government and the scarce attention paid to this issue by the media, the young members of the Committee called for the support from all local inhabitants of the Valley, who responded positively offering clothes and food as well as accommodation in their own houses in some cases. As in the case of the injustices perceived on many occasions of the No Tav protest, the young Committee members were particularly struck by the injustice suffered by the migrants who were not allowed to cross the borders, while most people in Italy would not even show any interest in them:

> Even though migrants are out of the world for some people, I cannot understand how something like this is possible... And many people, you know, do not wonder about that at all. (Francesca)

Many young interviewees talked extensively of the migrant issue and explained how being in direct contact with them turned to be an extremely enriching experience for them, both personally and politically. An example of the great attention paid by the Youth Commitee to the migrant issue is the petition promoted by them in order to get signatures in favour of migrants.

> It's quite a while that the Susa Valley is experiencing the problem of migrant fluxes on its own land (…) Our land has always been a transiting and welcoming land. By collecting signatures we reiterate the Valsusa community shared feeling - according to which it is not acceptable that on our mountains, young people and even children, have to put their life at risk in order to move from one place to

another one (…) We want to conclude by asserting that the Susa Valley, besides being the land we know, is also a way of thinking and acting, a system of values which can be joined and shared by anyone. We are on the migrants' side (Youth Committee)

Beyond the specific focus on migrants, the text of this petition is particularly interesting to us in that it clearly reveals the connections linking the Youth Committee agency with the No-Tav movement. Most importantly, it reiterates the relevance, in the perception of the young activists, of their sense of belonging to the wider No Tav and Susa Valley community. It is thanks to this culture - this 'way of thinking and acting' and 'system of values' that is characterised by openness and inclusiveness since it 'can be joined and shared by anyone' - that the young people of the movement feel motivated to mobilise on the migrant issue, as well as on other social issues, and ultimately strive to achieve social change.

3.3.3 Youth in the overall movement

Besides the activities presented by the No-Tav Youth Committee, young activists directly take part in the other activities of the movement such as assembly and decision-making moments, or in the organisation of events on local or National scale. Among those events, one of the most renown recently is the *Festival dell'Alta Felicità*[2] that takes place in mid-summer and offers music and live-shows. In its second edition, in 2017, the Festival had an extraordinary success, with as many as 100,000 people, mostly youth, who attended it:

> I think the best thing we are doing to engage young people is the Festival dell'Alta Felicità. I understand that the Valley is not easily accessible to everyone. (Clara)

Considering the size of the Festival, its organisation is very complex and based on the synergies between several committees that take care of logistics and communication. Young people are very active in the various committees, working very closely with activists of every age, in the preparatory phase as well as when managing the festival and in the final phase of dismantling and cleaning. As written on the dedicated website, the festival is 'completely free, supported by the strength of the No-Tav movement' and it entails the participation of 'dozens of actors, writers, artists and people from all around the world (…) contributing in their own way (…) and taking back home some more reasons to support a popular protest such as the No-Tav.' The aim of the festival, as mentioned by the promoting committee, links back explicitly to the motives of the protest and to the values rooted in the whole No-Tav community:

> In the very valley where they want to build something useless and devastating, we want to create a different world. We can do it together and we know that all together, all according to one's own possibility, we are invincible. (Festival promoters' website)

3.4. *Intergenerational relations*

> One of the beautiful aspects of the movement is its being cross-generational (…) Diverse people who, differently from most (...) other cases in this country, succeed in gathering with an aim, with a purpose. (Michele)

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[2] The name *Festival dell'Alta Felicità* (High-Happiness Festival) is a word pun, as it sounds in Italian like *Alta velocità* (high-speed), thus, directly recalling the No Tav protest.

The interviewed youth told about their relations with the elderly people of the movement with great emphasis. They identify the intergenerational relation as one of the main strengths of the movement itself, in addition to being of great significance to their personal and political growth. Intergenerational relations are presented in the words of young people as a sort of unwritten agreement based on trust and mutual respect:

> When we do things as young, even within the No Tav movement we are recognised, we are stimulated, because then even having a feedback is important you know (...) It is important what comes back, and if what comes back is more than what you put, it is a stimulus to do something else... (Roberto)

Relations with the elderly also provide for a source of knowledge deriving for their lived experience which the youth are happy to be allowed to access. For this reason, many of the interviewed young activists expressed a great sense of gratitude towards the elderly people of the movement:

> They literally walk with us, point the way out for us basically saying that they will come with us up to a certain point so that then we can continue on our own (…). They are holding out their hand, let's take it! (Francesca)

The youth acknowledge that the strength of the whole movement lies in the intergenerational relationship and they seem to be perfectly aware of its extraordinary nature - a trait that, according to them, contradicts the average intergenerational trend in the country:

> You get to spend a lot of time with people even older than you (…) and it's not something that happens in a normal life (…) This being cross-generational of both interests and relations (…)Also on a personal and individual level, hell you are in a situation where everyone has been interested in a certain series of topics, have done years of reasoning, of struggles and then, hell, for us it is, in short, a huge opportunity , more unique than rare, I'm very happy to be born in Susa Valley [smiling]. (Roberto)

Young people admit elderly NoTavs have great listening skills and 'they take good care of speaking or using a common language which is understandable by the youth (so that) young people simply let themselves get involved in that' (Stefano) and this is a valuable contribution to the creation of a climate of trust and mutual respect. Based on the interviews done during the research, the awareness of how distinct the two different approaches are – the approach of the youth and the one of the elderly - also emerges, along with the need for the adoption of both points of view within a comprehensive approach that makes the struggles of the movement more effective:

> Maybe the older adults aim at… I don't know, more peaceful actions, more thought out and better analysed, instead we simply go (…) So we do this, then that and then maybe we look back at what we have done and think, and this means that maybe we can make the two approaches go together, because... Well, it is not just a mere doing, there's also more work behind it. (Francesca)

Among the young people, those who are a bit older describe a sense of evolution whose origin is implicitly attributed to the movement: 'I remember well how it was before and it wasn't like that at all, (…) now (…) it became something absolutely equal to to the (relation) you can have with your peers.' (Stefano). Some of the younger activists recall how relations with the elderly are one of the reasons which pushed them to join the movement in an active way:

The very fact that I felt involved when I was among people who were older than me, who trusted me. I mean, they wanted me to feel involved and they made me feel as their peer (...) I believe it is like that for all younger people, for all those living here, and this is the starting point...(Alice)

The protective attitude towards young people runs deep: the elderly are ready to bring both material and emotional solidarity, as well as solidarity in the case of the many judiciary proceedings involving young people from the movement. A very good example of this protection mechanism emerges in a specific event which has been reported many times during our stay in the Valley, by young people and less young people, always with amused tones. The fact dates back to one night in September 2015. A few evenings earlier, a group of young activists assaulted one of the pre-construction work sites for the TAV – massively patrolled by the police and the army day and night. The group threw 'fireworks and much more in the construction site and then ran away, there may have been two or three who got arrested (...) but on the news it read that the black blocs (...) assaulted the building site.' (Piero). The story goes on like that:

Some days after this 'terrorist attack', as it was called by the police, there was another terrorist attack carried out by people over 70s who did exactly the same thing but did not run away and got themselves caught. When their balaclavas were removed, it became evident that they were 70 years old or more, and this fact did not come up in the news. (Piero)

The denial of the arrest of those who are jokingly called 'old block' or 'grey panthers' by the movement itself, became the symbol of youth stigmatisation caused by media and State authorities. A stigmatisation against which older activists feel compelled to respond even through the use of sense of humour and irony: 'Our aim was to end up in the police station. They didn't want to take us there.' This episode demonstrates how the efforts for the deconstruction of stigma are shared by the whole movement, as it appears in the description of the website which, more than others, voices the requests of the movement:

The group of dangerous 60 years old, like all grandparents, have teachings to pass on, in this case they showed how the opponent is deeply troubled when facing the 'NoTav enemy' who cannot be stigmatized with the characteristics useful to create the monster to slam on the front page in order to create tensions and fears. (notav.info)

The young ones understand the meaning of the action of the elderly. Their words reveal how aware they are of the effects of stigmatisation produced against them and how important it is to adopt a communication strategy based on counter-narration:

To show a 70 years old person throwing a stone or fireworks against institutions, clashes with the imaginary of the black block, of the anarchist. (Piero)

Even though they are often presented as conflicting youth, the relation they have with the elderly within the movement and especially the over 70s, shows that the young No Tav do not fight authority as such but those institutions representing the State. A State that in their view is not willing to listen to them and which they perceive as not representing them. In this sense, the strength of intergenerational relations has a double effect on the younger ones because it also outlines a frame of belonging – the community – which becomes a reference group to identify with and to make them feel recognised and fully supported:

I don't know if that happens because of the movement or because of their awareness, but they got to know many of the problems we face as young people and thus we feel very supported by this generation here, whereas in other contexts (…) the contrary may occur, often presenting an antagonistic position between the youth and the elderly (…). We actually feel very cohesive. (Giulio)

The fact of having a reference group, to share ideas and values with, makes the difference in managing stigma. Within the community, young people acknowledge and respect the authority represented by older generations, because of the very respect they show them; outside of the community, young people are in conflict with the authority of the State, as much as the older activists. The awareness of this shared external hostility, makes the community even closer and enables young people to feel better understood, supported, and as many underlined, 'aware of being right'.

One of the more relevant aspect of intergenerational relations within the movement is generational replacement. The movement has lasted 25 years and many of the first promoters of the protest in its inception are now old while most of today's young activists were either too young or not even born then. Therefore, one of the biggest concerns of the elderly nowadays is the 'after us' issue. This is a concern that the young people of the movement show to understand and share, and with respect to which they are already activating:

I believe that (…) there is a big problem of transmission of values from one generation to the next one (…) Which does not necessarily mean that you'll have to stay in the Valley for the rest of yur life, nor that you'll have to be forever part of the NoTav fight (...) It means that while you are staying here, there has to be a sparkle, something (…) A baton which fell on the ground for future generations to pick up and take over from there. (Roberto)

From the informal conversations held with the elderly in the course of the research, the sense of a negative evolution has emerged in regards to the interest of local young people towards the roots of the protest. School, which once acted as an active interpreter of the demands of the movement, would seem today to be more difficult to approach, and so are the very young students. In the last few months, though, the call for activities aimed at raising the awareness of the young ones has been answered by the Youth Committee which made youth awareness its priority. Once more, the young activists seem to work towards the shaping of this baton, while the elderly openly show their support to the Committee activities:

Yes, I believe that now as a Committee we are treated a bit like the little grandchildren, yes, because everyone looks at us with shining eyes…I mean they try to help us on this journey and it's a beautiful thing, in my opinion, in the sense that they involve us, they ask us, they make us publicity... (Francesca)

4. Conclusions

The concept of the PROMISE project stems from the idea according to which the effects of stigma and marginalisation reduce opportunities for young people to engage positively in social action and that much of the innovation potential is lost as a result. The case study presented in this

report demonstrates that stigmatised young people have the capability to counteract such negative effects by using stigma to their advantage and, thus, turn it into an asset - a drive for (positive) social change. To achieve this goal, however, it is crucial to consider the key role played by other factors – the community or group they feel they belong to; and the relationship established with the elderly. In the case presented in this report, both the community and the elderly are supportive of the youth's agency and this is key to transforming stigma into a positive value.

Young No Tav activists are heavily stigmatised in Italy as violent and anti-progress because of the protest they are part of. Additionally, they are also stigmatised as young adults and, thus, perceived as inactive and lacking initiative, passive and disengaged from society. Given these premises, the research presented in this report has aimed at exploring the following issues: i) The effects of the stigma produced and reproduced through the mainstream media on the young No Tav and the modalities through which they manage it and respond to it; ii) How the young NT perceive themselves and the overall movement, how they perceive their agency within the movement, the specificities of their relationship with the other generations of the movement and that with the young people who are not part of the movement; and iii) How the movement has changed their lives and how they intend to change society through movement.

Some authors identify *uncertainty* as the main characteristic of today's society, where uncertainty is regarded as the *'non erasable fact'* (Savonardo, 2013, p. 21) that younger generations, differently from the previous ones, have to confront with. Rosina (2013, p. 8) stresses that '*The high rate of change and the degree of complexity that characterizes modern advanced societies projects young people in a context of uncertainty regarding risks and implications of their actions, something never experienced by previous generations*'. Our research findings suggest that it is precisely the strong intergenerational partnership established within the No Tav movement that can represent a valid response to the uncertainties that seem to undermine the innovative potential of today's young people.

Research findings outline a completely different scenario with regards to the No Tav youth. They firmly believe in values such as justice and social equality which are the background of the protest. They are socially very active and their outreach embraces, on one hand their individual daily practices, on the other hand, the envision of a 'fairer world' where sustainable development is the core. Their actions are not limited to the local context and the need to inform and raise awareness on such topics is of paramount importance and reaches out to get in touch with the wider population and other groups and movements in Italy and Europe. In so doing the stigma, far from having negative effects, becomes an opportunity for change.

Furthermore, our research findings indicate that having a reference group – the 'Community' in the No Tav case – for the young activists to identify with and by which feeling supported and protected – is crucial in devising effective strategies to manage stigma. Far from being only endured, the stigma can be overturned into a value. In so doing, the young No Tav activists seem to be well aware of Goffman's (2003) view according to which stigmatisation results from 'the need to control information'. In this process, the certainty and the awareness of having a system of values and social norms and standards to refer to has been pivotal and goes against the system represented by institutions. The relationship with the elderly - where trust and mutal respect constitute the preconditions and the backbone of this social and cultural community – represents maybe a true 'cultural revolution' in contemporary Italian society.

5. Future analysis

Within the framework of the PROMISE project, the findings of our research have highlighted the following themes that can be regarded as of particular interest to cross-case analysis:

- Youth who are in conflict with the State and institutions but at the same are in synthony with their group of belonging and the older generations within it;

- Youth able to transform the stigma from a negative label into positive value;

- Youth participation in 'local' social movement protest;

- In youth's perception, the relation between *sense of belonging* (to a community or a reference group) and social engagement; and

- In youth's perception, how intergenerational relations impact on their individual and social agency.

Additionally, research findings suggest some hypothesis that could be usefully analysed through triangulation with quantitative data:

- The attention given by the youth to certain specific topics (e.g., solidarity, sustainable development, social justice) may be an indicator of active participation in society and/or of the capability to be promoters of social change/innovation; and

- Having a good relationship with the community of origin and the older generations may be an indicator of the capability to be promoters of social change and innovation.

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7. Appendix: Table of respondents' socio-demographic data

Name (fake)	Interview date	Age	Gender	Education	Employment	Family status
Roberto	22.01.18	23	M	Attending University	Occasionally with his parents	Lives with parents
Giulio	23.01.18	22	M	Attending University	Occasional jobs	Lives with parents
Francesca	24.01.18	23	F	Attending University	Educator	Single; shares flat with friends
Piero	29.01.18	18	M	Attending University	Occasional jobs	Lives with parents
Paolo	02.02.18	22	M	Attending University	Waiter	Lives with parents
Martino	06.02.18	18	M	Attending high-school	NA	Lives with parents
Anna	06.02.18	18	F	Attending high-school	NA	Lives with parents
Luisa	07.02.18	20	F	Attending University	NA	Lives with parents
Clara	30.05.17	24	F	BA degree	Baby sitter	Single; shares flat with friends
Alice	30.05.17	27	F	Almost MA	Occasional jobs	Lives with boyfriend
Fulvio	31.05.17	25	M	High-school	NA	Lives with parents
Camilla	31.05.17	19	F	High-school	NA	Lives with parents
Andrea	31.05.17	23	M	Attending University	NA	Lives with parents
Valentina	31.05.17	27	F	High-school	Bar woman	Single; lives on her own
Luca	31.05.17	25	M	Attending University	Farmer	Single; lives on his own
Davide	07.02.18	23	M	Attending University	NA	Single; lives on his own
Michele	17.02.18	26	M	BA degree	Physiotherapist	Single; lives on his own
Pamela	19.02.18	31	F	High-school	Bar manager	Cohabitation
Stefano	23.02.18	34	M	Attending MA	Eco guide	Has children
Simona	05.02.18	33	F	BA degree	NA	Cohabitation

PROMISE: **Promoting Youth Involvement and Social Engagement: Opportunities and challenges for conflicted young people across Europe.**

WP6: From Conflict to Innovation: Ethnographic Case Studies

The autonomists:

Perceptions of societal change among radical left youth

Germany

Eckart Müller-Bachmann

Executive summary:

This case study tries to summarise perceptions of societal change among a group of young people that, despite being referred to in this report as 'the autonomists', cannot be easily categorised as a single homogeneous group. The focus of study in fact combines a number of scenes and structures of youth and adolescent groups (which include also adults) from different parts of Germany that can be categorised – in accordance with interviewees themselves -- as 'antifascists', 'squatters', 'autonomists' or 'post-autonomists', 'communists' or even simply 'left-wing", 'extra-parliamentary left' or 'emancipatory left'. All of them are in deep conflict with societal norms and values.

The gap in research on the autonomists arises from their portrayal 'as quintessentially violent or ready to use violence as part of a strategy to criminalize them' (Scherr, 2015). Correspondingly, there is still no research on the autonomist or the extra-parliamentary scene which does not prejudge the outcome or are multiperspectival. Almost all academic studies focus on aspects of militancy and violence. This is always the point of departure of extremism research on politically left-wing scenes.

In contrast the key interest in this study centres around: a) contexts of individual motivation or rather socialisation into the formations; b) contexts of conflicts experienced and collective reactions to these in the form of actions and the associated issues of stigmatisation and criminalisation; c) innovations and the effectiveness of personal and group-specific engagement or rather political actions; d) `questions of meaning' with regard to the individual and group-specific added value of the actions and the engagement.

Contents

1. Introduction

In this report, the term 'the autonomists' is used as a short hand. Many of the young people presented here would distance themselves immediately from such a classification and that is recognised and respected. This short hand is adopted because it is considered important to write about the issues, aims and views of what is, in practice, a heterogeneous group of politically engaged (young) people who are active in a broad range of scenes and movements of the 'left. These young activists might be described most broadly as 'the extra-parliamentary left', or more specifically as 'radical left-wing', 'extreme left-wing', 'autonomous', 'post-autonomous', 'anti-fascist', 'emancipatory left' or simply 'left-wing'. One respondent in this study, for example, described the extra-parliamentary left as a:

> […] heterogeneous construct that people place under the left-wing scene […] And that's what makes it so difficult. Because the left-wing scene just isn't an organisation. Because it's made up of such a lot of different groups, perspectives, factional disputes, ideas about the future, societal models. It's so diverse. (Heike)

It follows that whenever the term 'autonomists' is used in this report, what is referred to is, in fact, individual scenes, partial scenes, groups and structures as well as associated individual activities and actions that must be set in their own respective settings and used always in the plural.

This clarification is particularly important given that mainstream discussion in the media is quick to subsume such left-wing oriented demonstrators as 'autonomists', as soon as the form of their demonstrations moves away from customary marches. Moreover, the history of the 'extra-parliamentary left-wingers' or the 'radical left-wing movement' is almost always seen in the context of alliances, networks and interdependencies with *Antifaschistische Aktion* (Anti-fascist Action) groups (Langer 2015), themselves constantly changing in response to national, regional and local changes in society.

According to Farin (2015: 19) the majority of autonomists view themselves as 'particularly resolute radical elements of other social movements' (Anti-Nuclear Movement, neighbourhood initiatives, anti-fascism, anti-racism etc.) that are also prepared to take illegal action. The fact that the majority of 'autonomists' today are perceived as younger people associated with the anti-fascist action, or 'antifa', groups (cf. Langer, 2015: 12; Farin, 2015: 16), is a result of right-wing radical movements becoming stronger since the fall of the Wall. Moreover, following the influx of refugees to Europe and Germany and the subsequent increase in xenophobic demonstrations and other activities in the whole of Germany and Europe there were counter reactions from the anti-fascists against the right-wing popular movements. If we are to believe what we read in the barely objective scientific literature on the autonomists, their internal debates and discussions are centred around anti-nuclear policies and issues such as globalisation, racism, neighbourhood policies, gentrification, anti-fascism, militancy and, in particular, around gender relations (not only) in their own scene (cf. Haunss, 2013: 31). These are the ever-present burning issues of autonomist debate. A common view within the scenes and structures is that the inequalities and discrimination at various levels are brought about by the capitalistic social system and its balances of power (Elias 1969):

> It's basically all about power relations, that's the point. […] the people have always been ruled by the few. Whether in feudal society or the Church. It's really all about

power relations. I mean, it seems so abstract, but capitalism was also created by people. And capitalism is simply an existing, self-reforming system. (Ulrike)

The battle against the structures of inequality is fought within in the scene. The aim is to lay the foundations for everyone to live without existential worries, in freedom, autonomously, and free from discrimination against skin colour, gender, sexual orientation, religion or lifestyle etc.[1]

In Germany 'the autonomists' can probably be understood at the moment to be one of the few scenes of (in particular) young people who, in conflict with the political and economic order, are overtly politically engaged and protest against them and are consequently exposed to serious criminalisation and stigmatisation. In this empirical report, we interviewed activists from the various scenes described above, such as the antifa, about the issues concerning 'autonomous, self-governed' living, self-governed cultural creation, political theory circles, the fight against social injustice, work with refugees etc.

The origins of the autonomists go back as far as the 1970s and the differentiated discussions of the subsequent years within the movement have been clearly documented by activists from a historical perspective (cf. Geronimo 1994; Langer 2015). Hitzler und Niederbacher (2010: 152) avoid any clear statement about the social origins and educational milieus of the supporters of autonomism, but do state that there is a clear predominance of male activists who determine the gender relations within the scene.[2] Farin (2015: 22-3) doubts that the autonomists are a youth movement or youth culture, stating that membership reaches into advanced adulthood. At the same time, the scene is strongly characterised by youth culture and mirrors the differentiation of current youth culture styles.

Due to the extreme difficulty of access (see below) the intended inductive approach to the topic had to be adapted to a partially deductive, partially inductive one, i.e. a great deal of information on groups and scenes was gathered from internal media, observations as participants at events and the compilation of research journals and from other secondary sources. It can be said that almost as a matter of principle there is a refusal to provide information for research and to the media or there is a logic of exploitation and the relative scepticism towards further contact with the outside world and cooperation with civil society institutions and actors and this has resulted in a paucity of research on the extra-parliamentary left. The reasons for this are relatively easy to discern and were very clearly communicated by the statements of the interviewees (see Section 3). First of all many

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[1] At the end of one group interview, three interviewees expressed a desire for 'world peace', 'justice' and 'independence from power relations'. The Free Workers Union (FAU), which has close links to the scene, described the inequalities and explained that they exist in their own structures: 'in exactly the same way as capitalistic exploitation, homophobia and sexism, racism and anti-Semitism, nationalism and social stigmatization are all constituents of a network of diverse power relations which form part of our lives. They're also to be found within […] movements that view themselves as emancipatory. Freeing ourselves from these types of power relations is a task that begins among us and in the immediate environs' (https://fau.org/ueber-uns/).

[2] The number of anti-fascists and autonomists in Germany is estimated to be around 6,000. With regard to the growth in numbers it can be assumed that the number of new arrivals roughly equals that of leavers. According to these estimates, most activists are aged between 16 and 30 (Eichholz under jugendszenen.com; as of 4.1.2018). The same figures are quoted by Hitzler and Niederbacher (2010: 151-2). The current Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution (2016) of the Federal Ministry of the Interior (2017) refers to an increased number of 'left-wing-extremist-oriented persons', estimating these at approximately 28,500, but without giving a more precise definition.

activists distance themselves from clearly definable categorisations (see above) and proclaim their individuality and autonomy, which can be interpreted as serving to underline their own political position and the distinction between them and outsiders and other political actors and groups. This individual application of political persuasions to their own actions – also called 'first-person politics' (see below) – makes it equally difficult to speak from the individual perspective about others, or groups of others and their political foci.

Additionally, they are opposed to any research into their own structures for fear of being observed and under surveillance and ultimately also for fear of being criminalised by government police forces. Finally, the aims specific to small and local groups and the methods of their activities are always designed to prevent easy access from outside. This means that many of the groups organised at the local to regional level refuse to cooperate with civil society organisations and parties. If there were still national networks in their own ranks a few decades ago, this is no longer the case. The political aims and methods have been differentiated and political action is now taken locally and regionally (Keller *et al*., 2013: 126-7).

The issue of surveillance and spying has a prominent position within the scene. Attempts at 'chatting up' by 'spies' of Office for the Protection of the Constitution and by the infiltration of informants into their own structures[3] make it in principle always possible for internal matters to come to the surface that could lead to prosecution. On the one hand, this permanent fear of being observed (which actually still takes place today) makes it very difficult for people entering these structures for the first time to be accepted into the scene and, on the other, makes it virtually impossible for empirical researchers to gain almost any kind of open access. This situation applies to all local groups and scenes. In this context, some expressed a fear of being criminalised, which could result from the surveillance described above; but also from bugging, from the reading of non-encrypted internal communications, or alternatively, from the undercover surveillance of offences or even from the incitement by undercover investigators to commit an offence during demonstrations.

This mistrust appears in a context whereby many politically active groups belong to the extra-parliamentary left, who, unlike the so-called rest of the population, carry out (albeit non-programmatic) 'educational work' which opposes the repressive logic and repressive dynamics of the system. The forms of this educational work are multifaceted, but also ultimately give rise to feelings of being constantly observed and criminalised. At the same time, this conspiratorial view of the outside world promotes the solidarity of the In-Group. It is an almost foregone conclusion that belonging to the In-Group has to be achieved through long and continual involvement.

In this way almost all research is accused of reflecting the logic of exploitation of a social system which is perceived to be repressive and therefore also to duplicate this and thus to serve the Office for the Protection of the Constitution and the police surveillance authorities. Accordingly, the '*Antifa, Kritik und Klassenkampf*' ('Antifa, Criticism and Class War') in Frankfurt took an intensive and critical look at an excellence cluster researching 'International Dissidence – Rule and Criticism in Global Politics' at their own university. The participating '3rd generation of the Frankfurt school' – which with its prominent

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[3] Several of these 'spies' have been uncovered in Hamburg in the past few years. Following this, research was carried out within the scenes and the actions of the undercover police officers described. For details go to https://enttarnungen.blackblogs.org/ .

representatives Horkheimer and Adorno (1969) contributed significantly to theory formation and a critical consciousness within the scenes which still endures today – was also accused of serving state exploitation logic[4]. The study of the topic area left-wing militancy at the University of Göttingen, which has been running since 2017, also met with strong resistance in the left-wing radical scene, which countered with a protest under the slogan 'Abolish the Office for the Protection of the Constitution' against the investigation and its alleged use by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Paul, 2017)

The empirical work presented below also suffered greatly from these instances of suspicion towards the intentions of research work[5], for example, when making contact with one activist he remarked that he would never support a project financed by the EU: `I prefer to do real politics rather than say anything to people from the European Parliament´ (Fieldwork diary, No. 3, 15 June 2017).

The gap in research on the autonomists is particularly due to 'portraying the autonomists as quintessentially violent or ready to use violence as part of a strategy to criminalise them […]' (Scherr, 2015: 348). Correspondingly, there is still no research dealing with the autonomist or the extra-parliamentary scene which do not prejudge the outcome or are multiperspectival. Almost all academic studies focus on aspects of militancy and violence. This is always the point of departure of extremism research on politically left-wing scenes, which is then also received by police forces and the Office for the Protection of the Constitution. The functions and roles of researchers partially overlap, when some of the researchers are (getting) employed by the intelligence service (cf. Farin, 2015: 24).

The G20 Summit, a major event for the extra-parliamentary left in Europe, took place in Hamburg at the beginning of July 2017 – right in the middle of the empirical phase of this project. This was accompanied by large-scale protest by approximately 20,000 people. The media reported a violent escalation by some groups of protesters as well as the police. Before the summit, the left wingers had taken many preparatory measures and held meetings to plan their action at the protests (see Fieldwork diary, No. 7, 15 June 2017). Following the event many demonstrations were held in protest at arrests, and the arbitrary and violent actions of the police during the G20 summit, demonstrations which still take place today.

There was a period of about five days after the event where all large formats of the national media contained relatively one-sided reports about the radicalism and militancy of the protesters and the corresponding reactions by the police. In addition to numerous arrests of protesters, the most wide-reaching consequences for the left-wing scene were the prohibition or rather switching of the Internet platform 'indymedia.linksunten', which was a central information portal. Moreover, a public, nationwide internet manhunt for a number of protesters by the Hamburg-based police unit '*SOKO Schwarzer Block*' (= Black Block) was installed. Both were met with vehement criticism in the left-wing political camp. The ongoing public discourse in the mainstream media about militancy and violence from the

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[4] see (http://akkffm.blogsport.de/2016/12/01/zur-debatte-um-unseren-text-achtung-exzellenzcluster-will-linke-strukturen-ausforschen)

[5] A very large amount of time which had been planned for the empirical work was spent on the mostly fruitless search for interviewees. Approximately 45 different groups of left-wing radical activists, antifas, experts and propagandists in the scenes were contacted via contact forms in their own forums, via Facebook and by e-mail, and approx. 20 individuals were contacted personally and motivated to take part.

left and the feeling in the left-wing scenes and groups of repression and criminalisation made it even more difficult to gain access to them and to carry out the empirical work.

Through the inductive approach to the topic of the extra-parliamentary left and their predominantly young protagonists, including participatory observations, participation at events, the study of internal publications and communications, attempts at establishing contact and finally by means of open interviews, the key interest to emerge centred around: a) contexts of individual motivation or rather socialisation into the formations; b) contexts of conflicts experienced and collective reactions to these in the form of actions and the associated issues of stigmatisation and criminalisation; c) innovations and the effectiveness of personal and group-specific engagement or rather political actions; d) `questions of meaning' with regard to the individual and group-specific added value of the actions and the engagement.

In this way, we were able to address a number of fundamental characteristics and issues of interest of the scene-specific structures, which came up repeatedly and were dealt with or discussed in the various settings at different levels of intensity and from different perspectives. These include, for example, the interdependencies of theories and activities, public relations organs of the scenes or rather resp. their openness to outsiders, and also discussions about methods and mode of operation. It was also possible to derive individual points of view about belonging to the group and the level of personal engagement.

2. Methods

During the phase of empirical data collection, we conducted semi-structured individual and group interviews, undertook participatory observation and analysed secondary sources. These included 16 interviews with 22 scene members, two expert interviews with a lawyer and a filmmaker, and 14 research diary entries that were written during the research and participation in various events. In addition, we wrote two memos and made records of participatory observations of scene-specific events as well as during occupations of properties and during one major and one smaller demonstration. A radio broadcast by an Antifa group was also included in the analysis. Furthermore, we considered a programme broadcast by the German TV channel ZDF, which reported on the militancy of the autonomists in the wake of the G20 demonstrations; a film about anarchistic projects in Europe and a film on the topic of militant antifascism. Finally, photographs taken by the interviewees on the topic of 'political activity' and a few photographs taken by the author of housing projects visited were included in the analysis and coding of the data. The same applies to flyers made by scene members in preparation for the G20 summit, for an event to commemorate anti-fascists murdered in the Third Reich, a flyer for International Women's Day, a flyer for the occupation of a property by an autonomous trailer group and a flyer on a long-standing trial about racist murders in Germany (NSU). Additionally, although not documented as such, we regularly took note of blogs, home pages, Facebook pages and tweets of various activists and groups on issues relevant to our research for information purposes and used them only in part for documentation purposes.

All of the interviews were conducted with the aid of the interview guide in face-to-face situations and an audio recording made. In total we recorded 2081 minutes of interview material, which we transcribed and analysed, resulting in a text of 289,877 words (approx.

1000 pages). The written material – research diaries, interview transcripts and flyers – were coded using the NVivo software and clustered according to topics. The material was coded into a total of 201 thematic nodes. The participatory observations and participation in events accounted for a total of 20 days of fieldwork.

The age range of the protagonists we interviewed was extremely large and reflects the heterogeneity of the scene: the youngest interviewee was 15, the oldest 42; the median age was 25.8 and is lower than in Farin's interview recording (37), which also criticises a youth culture perspective in the analysis (see above; 2015, 22). The interviews were conducted in Northern, Southern and Eastern Germany. Its explorative character, the ethnographic-qualitative methodology, the choice of the interviewees and the analysis of their statements mean that this study cannot claim to be a representative portrayal of the extra-parliamentary left in Germany, but it is an attempt to describe situational areas of focus and some characteristics of the political and social engagement of the protagonists.

The reasons for the extraordinary difficulty in gaining access to the area of the extra-parliamentary left has already been described above, the access that we did manage to gain to perform the interviews was achieved through professional networks of social workers involved in open advisory work against right-wing extremism, through personal sources and disseminators in the scenes, by asking people who had already been interviewed about accessing fellow campaigners and through open enquiries with individuals and groups.

All interviews had been planned ahead and appointments were kept by both parties. Some interviews were carried out in the homes of the protagonists, some in the interviewee's office and some in public buildings. Almost all of the interviewees agreed at the end of the interview to discuss the findings of the study. All interviews took place in an air of mutual sympathy and respect, with some interviewees taking part in lengthy discussions about issues relevant to the study either before or after the actual interview. We still have loose contact with one group of activists and we attended this group's events even outside of the empirical phase.

When establishing contact, the researcher introduced himself as sympathetic to their activities and spoke about his own involvement as a youth in the Punk scene. Although the involvement of the researcher in similar political activities has never been as strong as that of the interviewed protagonists, and his belonging to relative similar scenes and groups is more than 20 years ago, he had no problem in establishing first contact and he knew about the types of events and most of the political ambitions that have been communicated in the empirical material. Nevertheless second contacting and further communication was not that easy. This might also be explained by the age difference between the younger activists and the older researcher. The researcher has been influenced strongly by his own youth cultural involvement and supports the protagonists ideologically with their antifascist's ambitions. Furthermore he has a strong sympathy for their reflection on all forms of social inequality. Nevertheless the researcher tried to organise and describe the empirical material as neutrally as possible, also taking into consideration that he does not agree with a number of methods of the political activism and that he dislikes some of the In-Group characteristics mentioned by the interviewees and that are described below.

For the most part the informed consent of the interviewees to take part in the study was gained verbally before the appointed date for the interviews and also recorded at the

beginning of the interview. Issues which would have led to ethical or moral conflicts for the interviewees and the interviewers were not broached in the interviews.

3. Key findings

3.1 Social Demographics

All 22 of the interviewees were young people from educated backgrounds; the gender ratio - 12 men and 10 women - was almost equal. Some of the interviewees spoke of having politically interested parents, a number of whom were politically engaged or positioned explicitly on the left. In Eastern Germany some also characterised the anti-fascist attitude of their grandparents or a few older teachers as influencing their socialisation. All of the interviewees were German nationals; none had an immigration background. Three of those questioned were already parents, the others childless and all but one had gained the '*Abitur*' (University entrance level qualification) or were aiming to achieve it at grammar school. Those who were in work worked mainly in social professions, such as in (socio-) pedagogical areas. Other interviewees were at university or, as mentioned, were still at school. A smaller group was unemployed. A number of these young people still lived with their parents, the rest in shared accommodation, flats or in their own property. No-one commented voluntarily on religion or religiosity. It may be presumed that many would regard themselves as atheists.

3.2 Settings

The interviewees were members of different types of groups. The groups and scenes can be classified using terms such as anti-fascists, anti-racists and activists involved in refugee support, (post-) autonomists, house and land occupiers, members of alternative lifestyle groups, feminists and producers of alternative cultural forms. In the local context, each of the interviewees resided in certain alternative 'cultural centres', self-managed cafés, housing projects and information points, or alternatively, felt they were part of them. In regional and national contexts they were very well networked by means of similar projects and organisations, with some networks crossing the border into other (EU) countries. Visits by comrades to France, Palestine and Turkey were mentioned. In addition, there were, and still are, wide-ranging and national networks that report on their own activities, in particular via their own websites, blogs, tweets and to some extent Facebook postings. Additionally, the news and comments of many other activist friends are multiplied via twitter, links on their own websites and Facebook. Inside the groups, internal communication is usually via mail distributors, newsgroups and twitter. E-mails are encoded with a pgb key, so it would only be possible for outsiders to approach the groups using an E-mail encryption programme[6].

3.3 Socialisation

The interviewees clearly described socialisation into the groups and scenes and the motives for being politically engaged respectively to be included in the activities. Almost all of those

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[6] While setting up the interviews, many groups were contacted via unencrypted e-mails, Facebook and the contact forms (not always available) on the respective websites – for the most part without reply.

we questioned made contact with the scenes via their peers not without having political interests beforehand.

> I'd already been interested in politics for a long time, even at school. And then I made contact with people in groups through friends. The main reason was that I had grown up in the neighbourhood where a lot of Nazis lived and I just didn't like the idea of my friends being attacked by them. And what do you do, when your friends get attacked? You defend your friends. And what's the best way of doing that? By getting organised, because you won't get anywhere on your own. And that's sort of how I found my way in. [...] Yeah, that's how. (Bernd)

The influences of youth culture also play a role in political socialisation: 'I started to listen to punk rock pretty early on, German punk, too, which was, of course very anti-establishment [...]' (Gustav). What is more, some made reference to experiences while doing (volunteer) work with refugees and youth work organisations. Here they came across structures of social inequality, xenophobia, marginalisation and discrimination. Some of these experiences made a great impression on them with regard to their political views and motivated them to take part in political activities.

> I found the hate that people feel and clearly express towards refugees, for example, shocking. So, as this so-called wave of refugees came in 2015, how many right-wing-minded crimes were committed against those people, against their accommodation. How much hate there was, it really shocked me. And we gave support in [name of city] to this initial accommodation where the people had arrived and were completely exhausted after an incredibly long journey. [...] But in any case, right-wing-minded people had been there before us and run around and verbally abused, insulted and spat at these people who were completely exhausted from fleeing their own country, some of them not even knowing where they were. I've rarely [experienced] such terrible things, so I really found it shocking. And that's not the only thing that happened. There were a lot of people who set refugee shelters alight and accepted that people would die, just because they think that they and their country are something better, I don't get it. It shocks me over and over again. (Tatjana)

The massive flow of refugees since 2015 helped to increase the number of members in the groups and scenes. For the most part locally organised groups of helpful young people wanted first and foremost to help the refugees. They often operated under the slogan 'refugees welcome', organised themselves independently, outside of civil society or Church-run assistance structures, and took action in solidarity under the banner 'direct action', for example by 'standing at the station at night giving out hot drinks' and 'organising ferry tickets and letting people sleep here' (Gustav).

This readiness to help was given additional impetus by xenophobic groups being organised at the same time, some of whom were openly racist both verbally and in their actions. They helped the scenes of autonomous and anti-fascist groups to grow in numbers:

> But just after the wave of refugees after 2015 there were many young people about to do their Abi [school-leaving exam at age 19] , just before, just after, aged 18 to 20, who got involved, went to the station and collected donations, bought stuff, helped with the language and so on. Young people came along and

they're still taking part. All as a result of the anti-racist network in [city]. [...] It was just set up at that time. And that was just a breath of fresh air. (Anton)

These anti-racist networks cooperate(d) very closely at the local level with the anti-fascist groups, for 'Antira always creates Antifa things anyway' (Rosa), and couple(d) their activities with a genuine criticism of the capitalistic system. EU foreign policy in particular together with its member states was (also) heavily blamed for the misery of the refugees. Two protagonists went firstly along the Balkan route and the second time to Greece to provide on-the-spot help. They paid for the travel costs with donations raised at a party they had organised themselves.

I said, we couldn't sit here in [city] and give them something to eat here, we have to go to them. And then Josef set off a week before me and I went a week later and we travelled around the various borders. [...] there we were [...] in the plane to Thessaloniki and we spent three weeks in the camp. And there we cooked food and served it up to the people, played with the children stuff like that. And everything alone, without the group, just us two friends. [...] This camp survived because of us and continues to exist today, because we fed the people there, because we gave them back a daily routine. (Ulrike)

3.4 Solidarity

A cross-cutting issue that appears implicitly and is mentioned explicitly in all interviews is solidarity. Within the groups and scenes solidarity is lived, experienced and praised as a counter measure against a society characterised by the erosion of solidarity together with its' capitalistic and consumption-oriented social order.[7] The dichotomy of community vs. society, as already described by Tönnies (initially in 1887) is very clearly understood in large parts of the left-wing scene and communicated as such. Politics, the economy, the media and advertising (re)produce – in the view of many of the interviewees – a competition which at the same time causes and reinforces social, ethnic and gender-related inequalities and therefore also entails the erosion of solidarity with the socially more deprived, with marginalised groups, ethnic minorities, refugees, people whose sexual orientation differs from heterosexual norms, and with many other groups. On the other hand, in the respective scenes, groups and politically-oriented networks relatively like-minded people live together in solidarity within a community:

If everyone has the chance to develop freely, of course without restricting anyone else and if everyone shows solidarity to each other, then many problems would be solved, because there wouldn't be a capitalist system like the one we have today. That's not based on equal rights and there wouldn't be any right-wing extremists or Nazis, because they aren't based on equal rights either. That is the maxim by which I deal with many things. (Lothar)

In order to counter the subjectively perceived individual sense of powerlessness in the capitalistic system or neo-liberal economics system – such as being socialised and 'sandwiched' in a consumption-oriented system – and to confront the impotence felt by the

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[7] For example, 'our alternative is called solidarity' was (and still is) the slogan under which the extra-parliamentary left protested against the federal party conference of the AfD (Alternative for Germany) on 1 December 2017 in Hanover (cf. https//: unsere-alternative.org).

individual, people living together in solidarity, which encompasses as many aspects of community life as possible, such as living, consuming, producing and distributing goods, cooking, and taking part in discussions, to name but a few, is proclaimed as an alternative small-scale social plan:

> It's more a question of creating an alternative. So many people don't know how to realise their full potential, or just how much power they have regarding their own actions and when they plan to do something. [...] it's about promoting this self-determination and saying, I have an idea, normally I wouldn't be able to put it into action, because I haven't got the financial means, but there's a place where I can put it into action, simply creativity and the will to live and the ability put things into action and also to be able to be at the disposal of other people (Frauke).

Accordingly, in some autonomist houses and cultural centres there is the maxim that guests do not have to consume anything in order to participate at events and `people with meagre financial means shouldn't be excluded. Everything we have comes from donations' (Steffi). A central role of this alternative is the idea of realising an autonomous way of organising leisure time, which includes personal consumption patterns, cultural production and information transfer – as an alternative plan that is as independent as possible and stands in partial opposition to conditions in which (youth) leisure time, culture and the media operate and disseminate relevant information. In addition to the solidary pursuits of these aims, the 'uncapitalistic' DIY maxim also plays a role. Implicitly it is always about `guidance on self-help and having given the people the opportunity to be in a place which is as non-capitalistic as possible' (Frauke) and for them to produce culture, organise leisure time and acquire information about social developments themselves.

In effect, the forms of interaction characterised by solidary behaviour are seen as a small-scale alternative against individualisation and competitive thinking in the system. This behaviour is deployed as a pattern for interaction forms outside of the groups, in order to show that it is `possible to do things differently. And so I think of events at schools, or I run a holiday camp, always in the summer [...] I try to set an example. That we are always there for each other, regardless of what or who the other person is' (Lothar). The idea of realising alternative, solidary behaviour forms is also always associated with concrete action and follows the maxim `set an example on a small scale'[8]: `That's to say, not just talk about it, but actually set an example and work together with people' (Frauke). Moreover, solidary behaviour is linked to rules and codexes of `political correctness': `For me, `correct' means that you show solidarity. That you don't laugh at people because they live on the streets. That you don't wolf-whistle at women and that sort of thing [...], but that you take care to show solidarity' (Bernd).

On the site of a former factory that was occupied in order to create a space for young people in accordance with the aforementioned ideals of autonomous leisure time organisation, cultural production and knowledge transfer, the following behaviour guidelines were formulated and publicised:

> The basic principles that we follow: pro do-it-yourself, pro solidarity, and the pursuit of openness in the sense of participation from outside are things we

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[8] From an historical perspective, it is the Hardcore Punk movement of the early 1980s, amongst others, who initially proclaimed similar maxims and also the DIY concept in the USA (Büsser, 1995).

strive for and encourage. Anti-capitalistic, cost-covering economic activity, anti-profit driven, ecologically sustainable. In order to protect the free space, the following views are neither desired, nor tolerated here. People exhibiting the following behaviours that we find intolerable and transgressive will be asked to leave: racism, sexism, anti-semitism, right-wing populism, profit orientation, sexism, disrespectful mocking, patriarchy, homophobia, verbal abuse without subsequent apology, physical abuse against people and animals. Furthermore, there are no special rights for individuals or groups. (Frauke)

These written rules represent a code of behaviour 'of political correctness', which could be valid in nearly all organisations of the autonomous, self-governed houses, info points, bars and event centres. Solidary and respectful forms of interaction can therefore be described as generally observed behavioural maxims in the groups and scenes, and in their organisations, and should represent constants that can be relied upon by the members.[9] The concept of grass-roots democratic decision-making within the almost hierarchy-free community is lived, communicated and defended outwardly and inwardly: 'If someone wants to get rich or become the boss, it doesn't work that way. And when people begin to feel under pressure from others, then they close up pretty quickly. Because everyone insists on their own freedom'. (Frauke)

The experience of solidarity and the affirmation of belonging to a community increase the feeling of attachment to this In-Group:

> And you gain from it, because you experience an intense kind of solidarity. I don't think I've ever been part of such solidary organised groups, not in my entire life, [...] which also gives you a strong sense of unity, which is nice. (Tatjana)

At the same time, there is an increased feeling of individual well-being. This is experienced within the respective community, but also contributes to having this sense of well-being outside of the community, too:

> Then I was there and life was great fun and had a real meaning. And even in times of stress and when it was exhausting, we enjoyed a kind of freedom that I had previously never felt. And community and emotional security, that I had never known. It was like therapy, doing something I love and sharing it with others [...] I still feel it in my heart and I want to experience it again. Above all this idea of solidarity. (Frauke)

The solidarity experienced within the community also then functions for the interviewees, as a motive on the one hand to continue to be active within the group and on the other to conceptualise solidarity as an alternative plan, starting point or method of social change:

> Then I said: 'Okay, they just stand-, they practise just what I imagine, that we stand by each other and are there for each other, somehow.' And that somehow led to me saying: 'Yeah, with the group we can somehow bring about change in the structure of society. Because somehow they're already living it to an extent.

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[9] None the less, continuous discussions and theoretical arguments in particular about sexism, racism, anti-semitism etc. within the groups and scenes themselves are part of the discursive development of autonomous left-wing groups (Keller *et al.*, 2013; Langer, 2015).

And simply put things into action, as far as possible.' And essentially that led to me staying. (Lothar)

However, some also expressed criticism of the principle of unconditional solidarity within their own scenes. On the one hand, this maxim can be accompanied by a certain group pressure, to which not necessarily all involved want to be subjected. On the other hand, solidary human relations are an aim which, in the mind of some, has not yet been achieved within their own groups:

> I would only say that we're not doing it yet, I mean, not within the left-wing scene, the extra-parliamentary left. I believe that we always act as if we'd found the philosopher's stone and our relationships were oh so solidary, but ultimately that's not the case, because many in our circles are lonely, many have financial problems to deal with. And this happens again and again, because it's so often there in society as a whole. And so this idea of solidarity means now having a common subculture, or getting together in housing projects, yeah, I'd say that, but that's just what I think. So therefore I find that should also be possible for people who don't want to live in solidary relationships and for me, there's always too little of that in my own environment. (Criz)

3.5 Structures, Theories and Actions

Theory and practice in extra-parliamentary left-wing politics are mutually supportive components of autonomist motives for, and structures of, their actions, though there does not seem to be a rigorous logical sequence from theory to practice (and back). One doctrine of autonomist left-wing politics states more or less that all actions have a political meaning and effect. This applies equally to social contexts and micro-social structures. The individual is also affected by this, for `Private matters are political' (Bernd). This viewpoint embraces reflecting on one's own (privileged) life circumstances, such as members of the white urban middle class with a particular educational biography, which together with a large number of other variables should always be open to consideration and reflection. In particular gender relations, feminist viewpoints on these and sexist forms of behaviour and images of women are a constant topic of discussion and dialogue within the scenes, which concentrate not only on relations in their own structures, but also in society as a whole. An older scene member spoke of a certain redundancy of the dialogue in their own structures: `At some point, after about two or three years, I became frustrated by the repetition of the topics, like discussing sexism for the third or fourth time' (Jonna). From a long-term perspective of their structures, however, she later put things into context and mentioned positively, that the quality of internal dialogue and critique had improved:

> The left has changed, too, now we have such things as wide-ranging discussions about internal sexism, anti-Semitism - also really serious, racism, and looking back over the years a lot has been done about and what I have previously said was impossible [laughs]. They are always small steps, of course, but now things are happening… (Jonna)

Feminist views of autonomous left-wing and anti-fascist politics have had more prominence in the scenes since at least the 1990s and manifest themselves, for example, in the establishment of queer feminist groups, the LaDIY festival culture queer feminist groups or of feminist Antifa- (FANTIFA) or Female-Antifa groups (herausgeber_innenkollektiv 2013;

https://fantifafrankfurt.wordpress.com/; see below). The battle against sexism and the inclusion of feminist perspectives with regard to the internal structures mirrors the development of the general feminist women's politics that look into external micro- and macro-social structures. Feminist perspectives are a central component of extra-parliamentary left stances and analyse, criticise, and fight against the power mechanisms in society that repress and constrict people, and force them into conventional life patterns and biographies, in order to then once more reproduce these power structures. These societal power and repression relationships must be fought against and the genuine lack of power of individuals in this system removed: `I feel mega restricted and powerless [...] against major powers, large entities, which tell you how to live and only if we really do something can we lose this feeling of powerlessness' (Frauke).

The interviewees see these repressive power structures in, for example, not just social differences and in gender-specific, ethnic-related and origin-related discrimination, but also in the unequal treatment of homosexuals, in all forms of xenophobic structures and systems, in the administration of justice and in the very justice system that criminalizes them; they criticise the social capitalistic system in all of the forms mentioned above. The political actions that characterise the struggle are justified by these perceived areas of conflict. Ultimately, however, the capitalist economic system consists entirely of subsystems that cause discrimination and inequality, from which the individual and the collective objective of political work are derived. Significantly, the interviewees also spoke of `political work', `neighbourhood work', `work with new recruits', and `refugee work' when describing their activities.

For the purposes of systematisation, the political and scene-related activities of the interviewees and the people we contacted when arranging the interviews can be roughly divided into three areas:

(1) *The establishment and maintenance of their own infrastructures*: including alternative living in vehicles, the occupation of houses, factory sites and properties, and the concurrent fight against house-building policy and gentrification in the respective city, the mail-order delivery of their own music, clothes and accessories, the organisation and running of informative and cultural events, programme planning in autonomist housing, working with the Rote Hilfe (legal assistance for victims of arbitrary police and judicial action, and threats), technical support at concerts, communication with representatives of the city in matters pertaining to their own structure, the collective renting and self-administration and organisation of programmes for info-centres, alternative cultural and events centres and bars. For many activists, the first visit to these houses was their entrance into the scene:

> (I thought) what kind of a house is that and was interested in it and got to grips with how it all hangs together, I mean, not just seeing the events area, but the whole thing and what's behind it all, politically and so on. [...] and then it just happened that at 15 I got in to a whole lot of left-wing projects through music. (Anton)

Most of the organisations are – at least at the local Level – closely networked and familiar to each other, so that contact with and entrance into one area often entails entrance into another area. The character of events, excluding concerts and parties, is very structurally similar in the scene: `at the beginning of the year, for example, we held a number of events [...] a bit like Antifa-Cafe [...] each one with food, vegan food, that we cooked ourselves and brought to the events' (Jürgen).

Plate 2: An activist decodes messages from the local neo-Nazi scene (permission to use this photo was granted by the photographer, a member of the activist group)
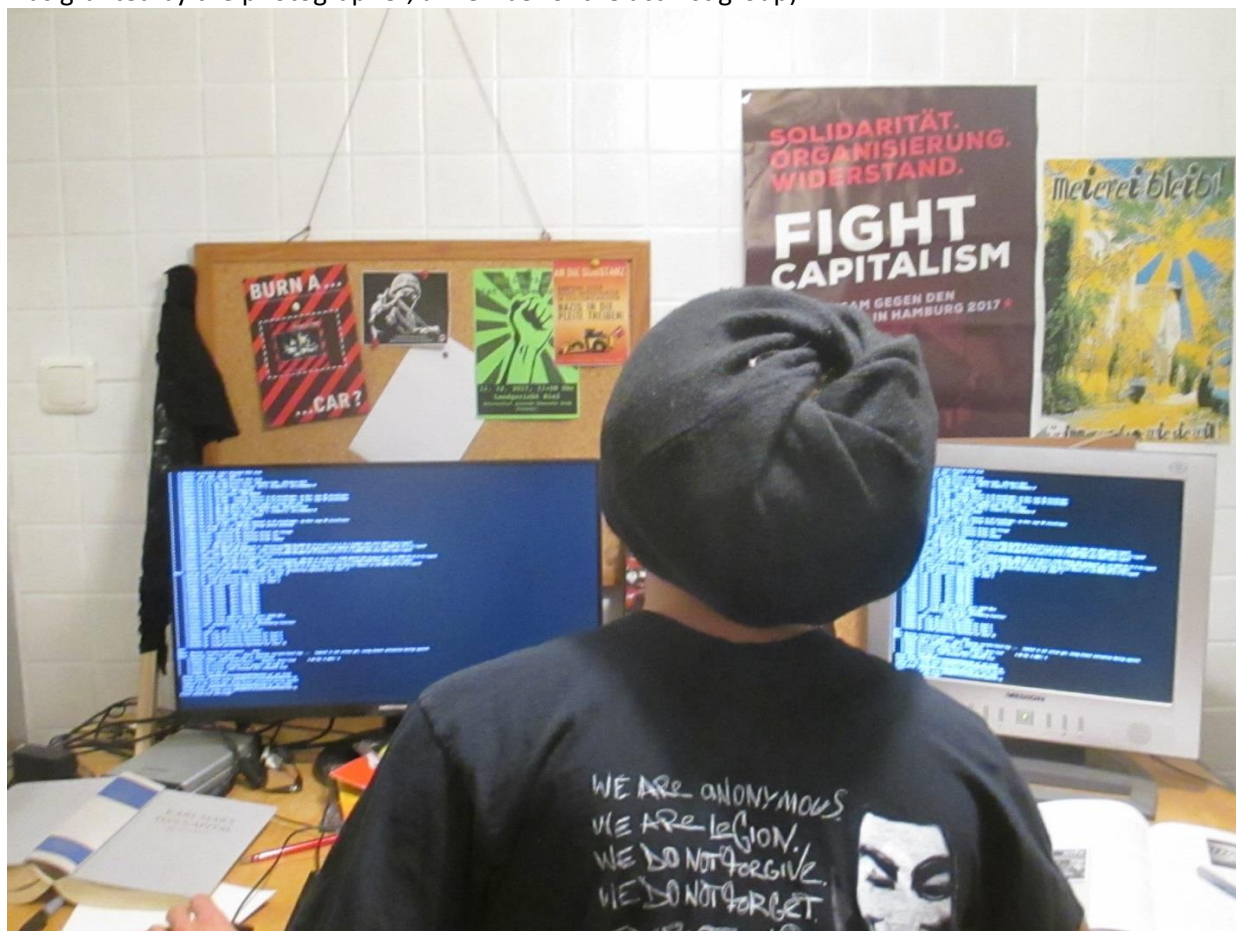
(2) *Local and Regional Actions:* The struggle and the work against `the right' or against `Nazis', against political parties, events, individuals or groups of a right-wing extremist or xenophobic nature are important areas of activity. These take place both in the office and on the street. An activist of the Antifa described his work as an educational task:

> Gather quite a lot of information about Nazis and then just to pass it on, and publish it, as required, when something urgent crops up somewhere. And of course, get out onto the streets and make sure that Nazi propaganda is removed. We understand it as a bit of an educational task, too. We go on air with Antifa-Radio, and now and again we also make speeches. And now these *Stolpersteine* (art project by Gunter Demnig in memory of Jewish citizens murdered by the Nazis), it's not just a matter of cleaning the stones, but also of raising awareness about what happened. (Ferdi)

In particular the desk work, the investigative and extremely dangerous research into structures and members of the local neo-Nazi scenes, right-wing populist parties, and racist groups together with their supporters are all activities that are often completely overlooked in the public eye and in the media. The results are brought to the public's attention by the local media or by the police:

> If you have an insight into the work of the OPC, you see that they really do acquire a huge amount of our information. [...] Their work's alarming and dilettantish. I mean, what the police and the VS do. When you see what kind of money they have available to them, that they're also covered legally, when you then compare, we do it all

voluntarily and if anything we get hassled for it [...] and in their case, that's simply a disgrace. Some put their hearts and souls into it, and for those who get paid for it, for them it's just a job. We do it out of conviction, our lifeblood is behind what we do (Peter).

Plate 3: Graffiti against Nazis (permission to use this photo was granted by the photographer, a member of the activist group)

Other anti-fascist and anti-racist actions at the local level include not just (over)painting and spraying of graffiti, removal and application of stickers, support and cooperation in local `associations against the right', the observation of xenophobic developments at schools and the contacting of fan groups in the football stadium, but also organising autonomist structures to help refugees and holding benefit- or solidarity events for (e.g. the Kurdish) freedom fighters abroad. At the same time, youth work is carried out in the local neighbourhood:

> We do a lot of our work on the street. There's a lot of Nazi propaganda, such as swastikas daubed all over the place or different kinds of right-wing stickers and so on. [...] and then part of it is of course to go off and get rid of them somehow, and then put our stuff up around the neighbourhood. Whether that's graffiti-based art, or street art, we make our mark. But that's just one thing. The other is regularly talking to people in the local area or immediate neighbourhood, communicating, talking about sport, there where you just meet up with people. [...] it's important to me to have conversations with people who live in the same area as town as me. Where am I supposed to do it if not there where I live? There, where I know about the problems, there, where I know, the people are at

tipico [betting office] or at the mosque, yeah, where do I go to hand out flyers? At the bookie's or at the mosque. (Bernd)

Recruitment work is also part of the neighbourhood actions described above, i.e. through discussions and through `solidary' and empathetic interactions, members of the scene attempt to get young people on board and convince them `that [we] chase Nazis out of the area' (Bernd) and that ideally they could be interested in their political work and become actively involved. This goes hand in hand with the prevailing sense of mission within the groups and scenes and the conviction that they are `doing the right thing', as young people when they take up a position against misanthropic ideologies and groups:

If you find it somehow stupid, when you think something's stupid, then speak up, plan it, do it. Because if you just stand around for thirty or forty years and then think: `Ahh, I should have done it back then.' Then you kick yourself and think: `Yep, shite! And somehow we now have the AfD [Alternative for Germany – populist party from the far right] as the strongest party' or something like that. (Lothar)

At the same time, approaching youths and other younger people in the neighbourhood in view of the currently perceived lack of interest in political and social issues is regarded as extremely difficult: `Luckily, I haven't got any Nazis or anything or any other kind of idiots in my class, but there's a total lack of interest in politics' (Peter). Attempts to motivate and raise awareness among young people are not always easy tasks, even if the conditions for a low-level approach are in place: `Even if there are now and again people at concerts who actually seem to be a bit more open, it's still difficult to motivate them to anything more than just going to a concert' (Susi). Recruitment work is also necessary in smaller towns and cities, and in rural areas that are characterised by out-migration,[10] also to maintain the size of the group.

Most people move to [city B], very few still live in [city A]. This means, even when we have active people, at some point they move away as well. The age at which people start to take in interest in politics is usually around the 14, 15, 16 mark and this is the time when they could get involved, relatively minimally, this means we have the problem, which we need to address, of ensuring that enough people stay, so that we can continue to be active. (Ferdi)

Other actions in local and regional contexts are the production of posters and banners, the organisation and holding of demonstrations against neo-Nazis, right-wing extremist political parties and their structures, against police brutality and the arbitrariness of the justice system, and demonstrations for the creation and maintenance of areas and structures of alternative forms of living: `First I go on a "vehicle pitch" demo and tell the mayor he should move himself [...] do something (sic) for people living in vehicles, for alternative living in general' (Anton), then a few days later in a smaller, neighbouring town I'll demonstrate against the recently empowered AfD party:

It's not a whole lot different in [city B], [...] there was a refugee shelter, initial reception or something and then the AfD [...], mobilised itself and they demonstrated against it and as a [person coming from city A] I had to go there

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[10] With a partial growth in the population as a result of the temporary influx of refugees and partial and parallel growth in xenophobic movements and the corresponding increases respectively growth of political parties of the politically extreme right spectrum.

again and demonstrate against them and somehow air my views against them, or just show the normal population they were in no danger from the refugees, that we could sort of be cool with them, that we don't need to go around shouting hate slogans, but that we can somehow get along with each other. But then it started up again, there were preparatory meetings, they mobilised themselves again, there were massive demonstrations. (Anton)

The protagonists also mentioned activities such as the active participation and cooperation in programme planning and content planning of the programme and concert groups, in the design of Antifa-Cafes and info centres and the cooperation in theory and reading circles and archives, as well as in the design of workshops or participation in national congresses. In addition, activists in Eastern Germany decided to take the initiative and rent a public building for use as a youth club and to run it as a registered society. Other protagonists started a neighbourhood project in a deprived suburb; the aim here is to raise the awareness of the entire population and provide information to them on the subject of housing policy as the cause of inequality. Ultimately, both initiatives are based on the idea of `bringing a bit of substance into the left-wing extra-parliamentary scene' (Gustav), and not just to cover the youth phase [...] but also to include the problems of older people, where it's often to do with health problems, but also loneliness and care, but also paid work' (Criz).

Furthermore, one activist also mentioned her engagement with animal rights and explained that she took part in the liberation of animals from mass slaughterhouses. Finally, she described `skipping', the use of food that has been thrown away but is still edible, as a form of first-person politics: `I often go skipping and I think that, too, is a political thing. Absolutely. And it should be raised politically, too' (Steffi). Another activist in the sample commented as an individual in his own name on the postings of supporters of racist parties and groups on their personal Facebook pages.

(3) *national actions, networks, and communications:* as already mentioned in the introduction, one event that took place during the investigative part of this study, which involved national protests and the corresponding communication and organisation structures, was the G20 summit of the leading industrial nations in July 2017 in Hamburg. Reference was made to this in many of the interviews, with the participants focusing in particular on police brutality, or the arbitrary actions of the police, or the massive police presence and the criminalisation and stigmatisation of the protestors by the justice system and the media: `The whole thing was a state anti-terrorist exercise, of that I'm sure' (Ulrike). At the same time, militancy and the sense and purpose of causing damage to (private) property were the topics of discussion.

Both the meeting of the politicians and the massive protests together with the damage to property and the in some cases brutal treatment of protestors by the police, as well as their militancy produced a wide range of different realities in the media – in particular in hindsight[11] - and left residents lost and perplexed regarding the sense of and the location of

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[11] E.g. `ZDF Zoom: Autonom, Radikal, Militant', was broadcast on 21.08.2017, a few weeks after the event, and promoted stigmatisation on the subject of militancy and propensity to violence in the left-wing scene (cf. under: https://www.zdf.de/dokumentation/zdfzoom/zdfzoom-autonom-radikal-militant-100.html
A later film portraying the demonstration from the perspective of the protestors `Ein Festival der Demokratie' (A festival of Democracy), and financed by crowd-funding, deals mainly with police brutality during the demonstration and suggests that the confrontational methods of the police led to an escalation of events.

the events (Fieldwork diary, No. 10, 20.07.2017). The interviews evaluated the protests very differently from each other: many of their views revolved explicitly around the response of the media:

> At some point I spoke to a friend. [...] 'er, what actually came out of the G20 summit?' He replied: `No-one heard anything about it in the news at all. You just saw a few pictures. But what they actually discussed, well you really have to look quite hard, [...] and there are one or two pictures that'll probably ensure that such a thing never takes place in Hamburg again'. (Lothar)

> It's just a case of who, who wins the battle of the pictures and of the street. Er, it's pure muscle flexing [...] the G20 riot was also muscle flexing on both sides (Gustav)

Other national activities include international collaborations and congresses that exist in the scenes and are sought after. Interviewees told of visits to activists in Kurdistan, in Turkey, in Palestine and in France. One house occupier spoke of visitors from all over the world in her (cultural) project.

Moreover, of particular significance is the information exchange via social media within the scene about political developments and news, which are usually local or regional, but which are acknowledged nationally. These include the continuous updating of their own websites and blogs and linking these with issue-relevant tweets (blogs, websites and Facebook postings etc.) from associated scenes and structures. Facebook and in particular Twitter are important real-time forums for providing information about current developments or demonstrations. The protagonists also explained how they created and edited online radio programmes that broadcast relevant information.

3.6 Theory and Practice

The extent to which the described activities are founded on and justified by socially critical theories and utopias was interpreted and communicated by activists individually or from within local scenes and circles. The sequence of personal political actions, which are mostly carried out in the local context, are in many cases viewed and substantiated against the background of developments in society as well as in foreign policy. Many believed that improvements needed to be made with regard to the theoretical basis of their activities: `I'd somehow like to have the whole thing about our self-image put into concrete terms a bit again really. But we will do the whole thing again as part of a bit of theoretical work, because that's important to us' (Emil). The organisation of groups and circles that offer theoretical work and corresponding events is regarded as in need of improvement, and the demand for theoretical work within the scene, according to one estimate, had dropped off:

> But I think it's dying out already. Anyway, we had almost exclusively young people in the autonomist centre between, say, 18 and 30. But I think it's starting to die out. Because in the beginning everyone is there, and then somehow, half way through hardly anyone comes anymore, because for many it's too complicated and no-one can be bothered anymore. And everyone has something better to do, and so on (Josef).

There is a relatively low demand for theoretical work particularly in university towns, where on the one hand there is more emphasis on theory in some scenes and groups, but on the

other, there is less thirst for theoretical knowledge due to course content: `If I already have to read Marx at uni, then I have no desire to do Marx here in the circle. Or if I already have a seminar on masculinity at uni, then the last thing I want to do in my spare time is think about masculinity theory' (Criz). All of the interviewees found the circles in which theory work is practised to be strongly male dominated and entail a new kind of machismo within the scenes: `These days macho blokes are really frowned upon. They still exist, but in a different form. They're not so much the muscle-bound types any more who come out with the cool quips. They're more likely to be the sort that has read a particularly large amount of Adorno' (Rosa). In a number of statements, the communication style at these reading circles was regarded as problematic for new members and described as male-dominated: `It tends to be men who have the opportunity to grapple with theory, or the confidence to communicate it, perhaps because they're, I dunno, not so knocked back by things that happen to them' (Criz). On the other hand, getting to grips with political and social theories is described as a task for the individual that can be performed alone and not necessarily in a group context: `That's something I always do for myself and on my own' (Ulrike). At the same time, tackling theories is accompanied by individual self-authorization and personal self-empowerment (see below): `I think that every Adorno text that I have read with someone else has taught me a lot. Made me smarter, the poetry, the language, absolutely, I would never deny that' (Jonna).

The majority of the issues and theories discussed relate to society as a whole. It is anti-fascism in particular which, for various reasons, forms a central point of reference and constitutes an 'overlap' (Benjamin) of engagement in the scenes. This may be understood as a reaction to the global emergence of right-wing populist trends: `Well, at this very moment in time, in view of the swing to the worldwide right, this simple connection of anti-fascist and autonomist groups through the social media is necessary of course, because this reaction just has to take place everywhere' (Josef). For many, getting to know local antifa organisations is their gateway to the formations: `Antifa became important relatively quickly' (Gustav) or: `in the beginning I naively went on a few antifa demos' (Benjamin). The types of actions are attractive in particular to younger, and not just male, sympathisers: `when I was on my first demo, and ran for the first time, I thought, "wow, great, I want to do this for the rest of my life". And then the big boys, who wear masks and don't give a shit, just pile into the cops' (Cora). Some also felt that left-wing extra-parliamentary politics are often, and too quickly, reduced to anti-fascist actions: `left-wing means anti-fascist. Well, that's also a good start, I think, but for some reason it often doesn't go any further, so that the only thing that really [qualifies as] left-wing or where you feel you sort of have a common identity, is the hatred of Nazis or the German mob' (Benjamin).

Marxism and Feminism are also important theoretical reference points. Ultimately, it is just as important to pay attention to the development of different political trends and objectives into genuine extra-parliamentary left-wing politics that unite them. The issues of these politics were presented as interdependent. Their common perspective focuses on the capitalistic economic and social system:

> I really do find it extremely important [...] with the connections. I think that at some point it plants itself firmly in your head. In the beginning you do a bit with human rights, and a time comes when a lot of people assume that capitalism is the be all and end all and that it no longer makes any sense at all to tackle separate problems, because capitalism has to be fought and in the end everything else drops out of the picture. I am critical, but somehow there is

something to it. When I think about the exploitation of animals, for example, that's connected with capitalism, as well. Everything's got to be bigger, got to have more; it's all part of the same thing (Steffi).

As outlined above, the primary standpoints of the criticism of this system are antifascist, Marxist and feminist in particular, all of which have their own separate movements and supporters, so the challenge is to combine them.

> One of our biggest challenges is of course to unite these various struggles. It's a mistake just to swim around in your own little pool. And when you look around now and see all the things that need to be done. That's the LGBT movement, that's the refugee movement. Of course the anti-fascists etcetera here in Germany, too. We've got to try to unite these struggles, so that we can generate as broad a base as possible, as well. That's not always easy, of course. Two different groups have two different approaches and opinions and so on, which is why there are so many different groups (Josef).

The political activities, which are based on theoretical knowledge, initially have the abstract aim of improving the life circumstances of many people in general. In this way, the protagonists become implicitly involved in the improvement of the situations locally and therefore of their own situation: `I don't just fight for others, but for myself, too´ (Criz). Explicit reference was made to the balance between theory and practice.

> For a while I just did theory, and then I noticed of course that I was just going round in circles. And, you know, Marx and Feuerbach's theses, philosophers and so on, the thing is, we have to change things and at some point I noticed, you can read all you like, but if you don't have a connection with things, in truth you can still learn a lot from it. [...] Just practice alone, that doesn't get you anywhere, but when you you're very well versed in theory, but don't do anything, that doesn't get you anywhere either. (Peter)

> But it's equally wrong in my opinion, when people turn up to every demonstration and just start shouting their heads off, there's not a lot of theory involved in that. I therefore believe that both are very important. (Steffi)

It is not easy to apply the theoretical work to the subject matter, however, and some respondents commented on the problem of production and communication of knowledge in social theories: `And then you sit in one of those sessions and try to do all the things you learned at university, apply it to the subject matter for once, and it just doesn't work, so you ask yourself, 'What's the reason for this?' Perhaps they teach you the wrong thing at uni' (Criz). The synthesis between both poles seems easier when `practical experiences' are sought and made abroad in an `independence movement'[12]:

> And I actually met people over there, who either used to be, or still are, active in the PKK. A lot of people. And I was very happy to. I don't mean I wanted to go into the mountains and take active part in the fight, but just experience it, see it. And maybe also to look at how solidarity works, is possible, from outside of Germany (Rosa).

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[12] Four of the twenty-two interviewees had been to Kurdistan, Palestine and Africa for these reasons.

Finally, there was criticism within their own ranks of the relatively unchallenged reception of anti-globalisation theories - also supported by US president Donald Trump:

> And it's often the case, especially with left-wing people too, where you think they're actually okay, that they fall into conspiracist milieus because even they can't put events into context and don't understand anymore. For example, people who very quickly cross over into right-wing conspiracy theories. Take the anti-capitalistic criticism of large concerns for example. Take the Rothschild family as an example, who are held responsible by right-wing propagandists for everything that goes wrong. Those who sit with their finger on the money printing machine and so on and so forth. (Josef)

3.7 Against Capitalism and Globalisation

There is a pervasive awareness within the groups and scenes of social inequality, discrimination and unequal treatment on the basis of skin colour and gender. The inevitable result of this is the guiding principle of solidarity with the disadvantaged and the repressed. These disadvantages are understood in exactly the same way as the state forms of repression, which are often quoted in the same connection, as causal phenomena that are inherent in the capitalist system or in the individualistic and `solidarity-eroding' `dog-eat-dog' society' (Tatjana).

> So, first of all everything's really great in my life, I've got medical insurance, my mum might be a single mother, but she earns enough money so that I have enough to eat. I'd say that this place is pretty good for young people, if they don't think too much. And that's the problem, I'm 16 and I know I don't want to stay here. It's unfair that things are so good for me, because I live off the back of millions of other people. (Cora)

As already mentioned, the basic idea of solidarity with repressed and disadvantaged people or the battle against the causal structures is essentially connected with self-reflection on the individual's privileged circumstances. These include, for example, a person's level of education, their own economic situation, place of residence, skin colour and other variables. Many of the protagonists therefore felt duty bound to become politically involved or to speak out against causes of the inequalities: `For me, as the great grandson of Nazis, who has had a privileged upbringing here, [I felt a sense of] responsibility to open my mouth' (Bernd). Primarily in anti-fascist oriented formations, the duty to become politically active is a response to Germany's Nazi past: `it is not embarrassing to be antifascist, on the contrary, it's actually embarrassing in a country like Germany, with its history and the current shift to the right, if you don't hold anti-fascist views and are not correspondingly (politically) active' (Ferdi). This moral responsibility is accompanied by a mission: `those who at least are generally speaking on our side, we have to reach out to them, we have to win them over, enlighten them' (Rosa).

The level of personal involvement in the respective political and scene-specific activities is a yardstick for others and for self-positioning within the scene. At the same time, it flags up less politically-active (young) people: `They [the non active] wouldn't risk suing someone for criminal damage or trespassing, just somehow to keep up the squatted area for the trailers. They'd find that a bit too much' (Anton). In- and Out-Group(s) are often separated by political attitudes and opinions: `At some point I started to think less of people on my list of

friends who didn't share my opinions' (Cora). These separations are often intended and result in the mission to become actively involved in politics and society, and to voice their opinions about them. The responsibility for airing their thoughts is also justified as being necessary for social development: `What really gives me complete satisfaction is the fact that I know, when in 200 years someone takes a retrospective look at our era, we'll be the ones being talked about' (Ulrike). For some of the protagonists, the strong connection of the political activities of individual groups with the personal analysis of socio-political issues results to a certain extent in self-empowerment and self-aggrandizement: `You feel a bit morally superior; you shouldn't though, because no-one has a right to universal morality' (Steffi). At the same time, the individual view of the political activities – the `politics of the first person/the personal is political' – is meaningful for many protagonists:

> Some day when I'm old and someone asks me: 'Well, what did you do there?', I don't just want to say I read the papers and got a bit wound up. I want to be able to say: 'Yeah, I just went onto the street.' And at least be able to say: 'I gave everything I could', (about) what I saw at that time, did what anybody could, to try and somehow change it' or at least to say that I don't agree with it, even if it was most likely not to change anything (Lothar).

It was also mentioned that they had a harder time than other people in their daily, active involvement with social problem areas (the out-groups): `Because there are a lot of people who don't get involved with the issues at all, sort of close their eyes to them. I think that they have an easier time of it than someone who gets involved in such things' (Tatjana). The intense individual involvement and the continual examination of inequality issues was described as being part of their lives; `it's our life' (Steffi); `yes, our hobby, I'm not interested in anything else' (Ulrike). However, the impairment of personal well-being also plays a part: `I recently found myself at half six in the morning being sucked in by a video about a hospital that had been bombed, because I'd been watching the news, and then I thought `wait, get up first' (Ulrike). The objectives of political engagement – according to the interviewees – vary between system upheavals in the direction of a communist, anti-fascist or anarchist social system that functions without power-based exploitative pressures and does not repress people.

> I'm an anti-capitalist and I believe that capitalism has to be defeated, only I think it's important what you said, with these power relationships. Just because we don't have capitalism anymore, it doesn't mean that everything's cool. Because communism was crap and the feudal system was crap. I believe that it just doesn't work when people rule over people, rule over them as they do. I dunno, perhaps we need a council democracy or anarchistic communism, something like that. You could talk about it for weeks on end, about the possible alternatives, but these power relationships per se. People rule over other people, more or less. That's the problem, whether it's capitalism, communism, the monarchy, whatever. (Ulrike)

At the same time many interviewees expressed reservations about whether these system upheavals could be achieved: `my secret aim, which I will surely never experience, is that we no longer need state structures, because we can sort everything in the community' (Rosa). Achievable changes can be found, however, in small-scale, local and in personal contexts: `This striving for a better society [...] if we just try it on a smaller scale' (Emil). Some believed they should also consider micro-social contexts outside of their own formations: `Society

[...] cannot be changed *against* people, but only *with* them and we have to begin on a small scale' (Criz).

3.8 Gender and Feminism

(Queer-) feminist perspectives and discourse about gender, gender categories and gender images, sexism, transphobia and also homophobia are – as already indicated at various points – core fundamental areas of autonomous or extra-parliamentary debates, which relate not only to developments in society as a whole, but also to ones in their own formations: `My impression is that feminism and the autonomous scene are inseparable. So much so that it would be unthinkable to imagine them apart - a scene that is finely sensitized to the issue´ (Heike). A great deal of importance is attached to these perspectives and issues within the scenes when, for example, evaluating sexist behaviour in their own groups, dominant vocabulary used by men in the groups, or male-dominant behaviour at demonstrations: `I wouldn't say just now that the left is any more sexist than the rest, not at all, and still a lot of people get worked up about it´ (Jonna).

The belligerent behaviour of a lot of men at demonstrations also leads to rejection in their own formations: `it's the classic antifa-macho type who [...] estranges a lot of women with antifa connections´ (Rosa). The way these male actors interact with others in the scenes is seen as hierarchical dominant behaviour and therefore evaluated negatively: `the blokes who talk to you when you've got some info or other, but otherwise they don't wanna know you. It's not a nice way to treat people´ (Rosa). The internal arguments also lead to bigger conflicts that can even lead to the dissolution of entire groups: `the biggest was the antifa-group which broke up recently because of internal struggles. Mostly it was a case of dealing with sexism´ (Benjamin). Questions about what is defined within their own formations as sexual violence and who is revealed as the violent aggressor in particular, lead to arguments about who has the power to define this. Negotiating this territory generates, in some cases, significant demonstrations of solidarity on both sides, but also

> to massive fights which go all the way up to a house meeting of autonomous centres. And everyone has to decide whether this person can still continue to be part of things or not. And this is done without due process [...], because a lot of people don't trust the state and so this kind of thing doesn't go to court and we try to settle it internally (Heike).

Another current development in the formations was described as a `very, very, radical form of queer feminism´ (Rosa). This was not free of conflict either, since it reflected the fact that `there are simply very, very complex conflict situations´ (Rosa), which equally lead to inclusions and exclusions. `And then come the trans people again and they say `hey, we want our own lavs, as well´ (Jonna). Some of the protagonists remarked that there was a strong reference to the sensitivities of some individuals to be seen in the current trends of queer feminism that would lead to discussions and exclusions. The discussions and exclusions are centred on gender categories, positions of power within these and also precisely these individual sensitivities: `That's a direction that I don't like much. All of my sensitivities are always a little bit everyone's business and all I ever experience is trauma and violence. And everything is sort of rolled out into the tiniest detail and talked about´ (Rosa). Ultimately, the gender categorisations determine both the (queer) feminist perspective of their own group and the affiliation to it:

And then it was about someone that was supposed to be excluded - by this plenary assembly. Because all over the place they don't want to accept that feminism and transgender are also part of it. Because there's the opposing movement again, you see, who call themselves radical feminists, who say `just because we do feminism, it doesn't mean that we have to declare our solidarity with every Tom, Dick and Harry. What we do, want to do is politics for women. Because they still do exist - they're still around, those women. We're part of it, we're affected by it, and we have different problems to trans people. And we don't want everything we do to have to be opened up, for trans. What we want to do is pure feminism.´ And that is a position that we find almost untenable, unless we want to be lynched. [...] in the meantime, both have to go hand in hand, so to speak. Because the political position is always to oppose exclusion and oppose marginalisation as well. And we don't want to create shelters that do just that. (Heike)

The exclusions, arguments and divisions of individual groups within the scene also came to light, for example, at a national congress of the FANTIFA (see above) in 2016 and flared up over the congress topic of `masculinity´, but also over the opening of the congress to `all genders´, over accusations of structural racism and the alleged pedagogical incompetence of some workshop organisers and the organising team.[13] However, at the same time inclusive projects are being initiated and practical ideas generated elsewhere, that do indeed attempt to bring together the various gender categories:

We do FLIT, women (F for *Frauen*), Lesbians, Inter, Trans [...] Without cis-men[14], really. Football [...] that was launched by two women, I think. Who came from the... , at least one of them came here from the women's team, from a club in the city. And couldn't be bothered anymore with the performance thing. And so she said: `I just want to play football, with nice people.´ And now it's a mixed team. That really is all we want, not to have blokes standing around on the pitch, or blokes that go to boxing. And the women do the administration work, or stuff like that. We don't just want to have our aspirations on paper alone. (Rosa)

An apparent contradiction between aspiration and reality in feminist perspectives appears in the dealings with and the partial and indirect exclusion of mothers with children in some scenes. Mothers with children are tolerated in the scene's structures (`there's even a child in our shared flat´- Jonna), but there seems to be little understanding for mothers and their everyday burdens and also little practical and moral support: `there really is a lot of hostility towards children, you see it, too, that people drop out when either a job comes along or children. Because it simply can´t be done´. (Rosa)

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[13] For information about the programme go to https://fantifakongress.noblogs.org/programm/; an interview with the organising team, go to
http://www.univie.ac.at/unique/uniquecms/?p=5392 and on criticism of the criticism at the congress go to https://de.indymedia.org/node/9712

[14] Cis (= the here and now) stands for 'those who identify with the gender they are born with and also live by it' (Rousparast, 2017).

3.9 Criminalisation, Stigmatisation and the Legal System

As already outlined in the introduction, it may be said that there is a high risk of `criminalisation' as soon as (young) people actively take part in actions and demonstrations in the so-called `left-wing radical' spectrum. There is widespread fear within the scenes of being spied upon and/or criminalised by the police and intelligence services. These fears, justified on the grounds of verifiable first-hand experience[15], are accompanied by the extremely dangerous possibility of being observed and, at worst, intimidated and attacked by right-wing extremists:

> Criminalisation, exactly [...] because that's also a threat to my existence. I mean, I've been doing the work for a good 12 years and I'll continue to do so. But this fear, you know, it's with you all the time. So, on the one hand it's the fear of personal persecution by Nazis, that's why I moved out of [Name of city], because they really did stand outside the front door, drive by and threaten us, set light to a friend's car, smash the windows, stuff like that. [...] and it's the anti-fascist structures that get criminalised in such a big way, and sometimes you just have to belong to an anti-fascist group for people to complain to the police about you. (Fred)

This is the reason for the relatively clear-cut refusal to communicate with outsiders, albeit the degree of isolation varies from scene to scene. Incidences of repression and attempts at criminalisation that had already been experienced, reported by comrades or featured in internal scene publications[16] trigger a general and deeply anchored mistrust of methods employed by the and the legal authorities: `so if I kinda shove a policeman, I get three months in jail. If he shoves me, I hold out my hands, I get done for resisting arrest. Again I get three months in jail, minimum sentence' (Bernd). All of the interviewees had been subject to unjust, partly brutal treatment by the police and the legal authorities. The actions of the police appear to be arbitrary at demonstrations in particular:

> On the other hand, there are also things where I just think, I just don't understand it, because it's always our side that gets criminalised and I've also been on Nazi demos, where we've had stones thrown at us and the police Anti-Conflict-Team has said: `Just move away a bit from here, because they're throwing stones.' And then I said: `Then you just go in there and sort out the people throwing the stones.' If we'd done it, we'd have been arrested straight away. (Tatjana)

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[15] See the documentary 'Im inneren Kreis' (In the inner Circle) directed by Morar and Obens (2017) and funded through donations ; cf. also footnote 2.

[16] Within the formations people try to arm themselves against this kind of criminalisation, preventively, and through intervention and rehabilitation. The *Rote Hilfe* (Red Aid) is a national association which provides legal and financial supports to activists and political prisoners (cf. Fieldwork diary, No. 2, 18 March 2017; Fieldwork diary, No. 7, 15 June 2017).

Numerous demonstrations take place at regular intervals against repression. One demonstration, for example, was called: 'United we stand! Together against Repression and authoritarian Formation!' The aim here is to express solidarity against repression 'around "Political Prisoner Day". We will show through the demonstration that the state calculation of criminalisation, intimidation and separation will fail." (https://unitedwestand.blackblogs.org/)

This kind of injustice felt and experienced by the interviewees including judicial hypocrisy and unequal treatment[17], police brutality, spying, surveillance, observation, criminalisation and attempted criminalisation, but also negotiations with local authorities, as well as entire policy areas and topics at the local, regional, national and international Level[18] creates, as such, a large gap between activists and the democratic social system or rather system of values. Once sensitized in this way, the protagonists very critically observe and evaluate the activities of the police and their investigations into activists: `the police moved in really heavily and penned them in and frisked them, some as young as 13 or 14, and [made them] strip (sic) down to their underwear in the rain and in below-zero temperatures. So yeah, really hard repression' (Rosa). Police operations are always placed in the context of (local) politics: `the state authorities do everything they can to remove young people from public areas [...]. If young people hanging around in town becomes a problem to which the only answer is heavy police intervention, we ask ourselves absolutely seriously: in which city do we want to live?' (Emil) In the interpretations of the respondents the police operations also reflect capitalistic exploitation interests, as they protect the properties of large concerns and companies and, particularly in the local context, are identified as `this gentrification thing' (Rosa).[19]

The stigmatisation of activists by the media can be described as relatively explicit. The image projected by the media, particularly in reports about demonstrations, is one of stone-throwing, militant and masked anarchists, who stand in the Black Block, among like-minded anarchists, behind banners dressed in black, their heads and faces covered so as to hide their identity. As a consequence, `it's often the case when you go to a demonstration as an anti-fascist that you are immediately judged to be part of the left-wing violent mob that's come to trash the place' (Tatjana). Moreover, many of the activists are troubled by the bias of media reports, especially when they report on the protests, but not the reason for them:

> They talk about the future in African countries and not a single African country was present. And instead of feeling outraged about it and instead of the media [...] being outraged, they're outraged about someone setting light to a car. You do all you can for a better and fairer world, and then you see the word 'Riot-Barbie' in the BILD [tabloid newspaper]. (Steffi)

The cliché of the violent left-wing mobs is gladly employed and also leads to conflicts between the generations in families: 'My gran is quick to think that I run around in a mask and beat people up and stuff, or I dunno. Load of rubbish' (Ulrike). The lack of

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[17] A lot of (inter)national attention is still received today by the NSU trial about the murders of migrants by an extreme right-wing terror group and the cooperation of this group with intelligence organisations of several federal states.

[18] Amongst other aspects, the interviewees mentioned gentrification, housing policy and the lack of infrastructures for young people at the local level, as well as the lack of resources at schools at the regional level and refugee policy at the (inter)national level. The common view on political phenomena – as already outlined – is one of social inequalities and their causes. Causes are ubiquitous racism and fascism, which on the one hand perpetuate social and ethnic inequalities, and on the other, also has its breeding ground there.

[19] We reject a city development policy that ignores people, has been privatizing the infrastructure and municipal buildings for years, has closed allotments and swimming baths and therefore taken them out of public usage. Instead, we want an increase in the number of free spaces (…) made possible. There must be places where alternative ideas, self-governance and political autonomy can be made possible' was how a group of vehicle-dwellers expressed their demand for free spaces and their conflict with local authority housing policy (cf. schlagloch.blogsport.eu; Field Diary No. 6, 02.05.2017).

understanding about other people's perspectives and the mainstream reporting in the media about the activities and protests is deeply rooted and is criticised in the conviction that they are taking the right approach:

> When you have to listen to what a lot of people understand left-wing and radical to mean! Well, I believe what we are really all about is completely normal human understanding. For me radicalness might begin with the ideology that I follow, but not when I stand up for people and stand up for everyone being treated equally, without separating them by skin colour, by appearance, or by sexuality. This strange understanding that so many have. (Josef)

> Being left wing is anti-authoritarian. Being left wing simply means fighting for justice, for a free society, and that should be a matter of course. But it's somehow not the case and I don't know why. Beats me. (Ulrike)

The conflict-ridden relationship with the media is a continuum within the scenes, because a large proportion of the mainstream media promotes normative moral values, serve capitalistic exploitation interests resp. criticizes them per se in the rarest of cases as such and therefore also reproduces structures of inequality. These perceptions of the respondents are mirrored in their understanding of a similar role played by the legal system: the intelligence services, police, laws and their interpretation, courts and prisons are all under general suspicion of criminalising activists and repressing the extra-parliamentary left-wing, and playing down or ignoring their own shortcomings and mistakes. This misconduct is supported to a great extent by the media and the prosecution in particular of offences[20] committed by activists at demonstrations and other actions are perceived as excessive, unjust and pointless: `even on reflection, I still think that most of the repression of left wingers is totally absurd and totally over the top, I can't get my head around how they arrive at some of their decisions' (Jonna). The perceived focus of the legal bodies on left-wing extra-parliamentary structures was also admonished: 'Intelligence services, hmm. Well, hmm. That's such a double-edged sword, too, so no way, you think, it's about time you did something about the AfD or at least some of its people' (Emil).

3.10 Isolation vs. Openness

The relatively strong solidarity of the individual scenes and formations has already been dealt with in detail in the Introduction. Cooperation and communication with external institutions or with municipal organisations has in some cases been categorically refused, but in others there has been contact with local associations or discussions held with representatives of the respective local authorities. There are many different reasons for this isolation which range from the fear of criminalisation and state repression in the form of spying and surveillance by government authorities, through to observation and physical intimidation by `enemies' from the right-wing extremist camp[21]. The way in which these

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[20] Militant clashes with neo-Nazis at their demonstrations and marches and at similar actions are justified in the scenes as necessary and as the (self) defence of the population and are also documented (cf. Jirát, 2018 and the documentary `The Anti-fascists' (Öberg and Ramos, 2017), which looks at the situation in Sweden and Greece).

[21] One activist reported that a few years ago there had been a `quite active, crazy Nazi group' roaming around his city, that `did some sharp-shooting' on an occupied house, which is also the cultural and events centre of the local Antifa group (Gustav).

serious fears should be dealt with is coordinated in discussions and is not always undisputed by the protagonists:

> But I believe a lot of it is also a kind of power fantasy, that you feel more important than you really are (laughs). I think you have to remain realistic and such things often shut new people out, such as when you only ever meet up in a plenum where everybody knows everything about everybody else, how are you supposed to bring in new people? And then everyone complains about young people being so crappy, they're no longer interested in us. Yeah, and then I also think you really have to be realistic and be open and have open meetings, in cafes, as well, you just have to live with the fact that the police have spies, but that's better than scaring off young people. You just can't afford to do that, either. (Jonna)

On the one hand it is very difficult or even impossible for outsiders to gain access to the scenes or groups, on the other the groups and scenes have a great sense of mission and are correspondingly able to communicate a lot of information and distribute products about their respective political concerns and planned activities. This contradiction between aspirations and reality is a subject of deliberation in the scenes and raises criticism of their own `public-relations' methods:

> That is also my biggest criticism of the extra-parliamentary movement, that they cut themselves off from those that they are actually trying to convince, and in such an identity-centred way, I mean that also rejects them, because 'they're the bad ones now' or 'they're the ones that haven't checked it out or don't do things right'. And even if that were the case, the rejection approach wouldn't be the right one. (Criz)

This internal criticism was formulated similarly in three different cities by three different group members and follows `post-autonomous' (Gustav) ideas of reaching the broadest possible segments of the population with one's own policies and educating them about structures of social inequality in present-day society.

> We try over and over again to make more contact with normal people in inverted commas, which is something that to my mind the extra-parliamentary left has failed to do in the last few decades. It's up to us to pull ourselves out of it and say goodbye to ideas like 'we are the autonomous left and everyone's got to do what we do' (Criz).

In the broadest sense, the described methods to achieve openness are those of neighbourhood work, which supports the effort to raise residents' awareness of their own political concerns by means of speeches and proposals that are of interest to them. By setting up permanent services - such as social advice and assistance services, exchange platforms or courses and sports activities - support and assistance as well as information and leisure time services would be made available to interested residents of the respective neighbourhoods.

A further internal point of criticism of the external representation and communication of their own concerns, which was described as being `difficult', is their social, and for the most part, academic origin. This can lead to messages also being expressed in the academic language employed by the majority of the protagonists, who, it was also felt, only organised

people like themselves. The character of the outwardly communicated anti-racism and anti-sexism, moreover, also failed to connect with those outside their 'bubble':

> I don't think we'll come out of the bubble like this, always organising the same grammar school kids and students, because there's no connection at all to the level of consciousness of the class; it's so crap, the majority of Germans are simply racist and have images of women in their heads that are just not cool. (Benjamin)

The issue of what possibilities and strategies could be developed within their own structures, e.g. contacting young people living in precarious situations or with an immigration background, was broached openly. There was also a lack of ideas about `actually how to deal with the problems that these young people are faced with objectively here' (Benjamin). Additional difficulties were evident in devising suitable ways of accessing persons in precarious situations and overcoming `the fear of crossing the threshold'. As in conventional areas of politics, there is a gap between the politically thinking strategists and a large proportion of the population, which – as stated above – also has education, milieu and habitus-related causes:

> But the other major problem, I think so too, is that it's exactly this comfort zone that actually shouldn't be violated. And that we sit down and say yes, it's really important for us to reach other people and it's really important that we organise other people. But when it comes down in concrete terms to which people that could be and what problems they could bring with them, then it's better to say, okay, no, it's probably better that we have fewer people, because it could become really hard work. And that leads to new problems that we couldn't have envisaged until now. And above all, it also means that with what we've achieved, I dunno, with standards, like we don't tell sexist jokes, maybe we need to broaden our horizons a bit so that we can integrate new people. (Benjamin)

Others, however, said explicitly that people who did not share the same world view would be excluded from events and discussions and ultimately also from participation in the group's or scene's formations. This applies in particular to issues, topics, questions and attitudes with regard to religion in general, Islam and anti-Semitism, which apparently are not afforded open discourse at their own events and in their own ranks:

> We've then, of course, excluded them [headscarf wearing Muslima] when we've had critical discussions about Islam, we don't want anything to do with Muslims then, I mean not with devout Muslims. So when we talk critically about other religions, people are simply excluded who are believers, their background of course is irrelevant. But when someone still says, I believe in god, then there's really no hope for them in our group (laughs). So it's often very thematic of course or we talk about anti-Semitism, then a lot of groups are excluded. (Jonna)

This diversity in the attitudes to questions of openness and reaching out to people outside of their own structures ultimately also reflects, however, the heterogeneity of individual autonomous groups that act on their own behalf (as outlined in the Introduction). Across many local borders there does appear to be a significant need for improvement with regard to external contacts and reaching out to outsiders. Many events and actions only reach like-minded people and remain, so to say, in their own ranks; it's a case of `preaching to the converted':

Recently, a couple of us held a (talk on the) Basics of Criticism of Religion [...] It was great to be invited. But it all just stays among the lefties. I don't know what it'll be like when in thirty years' time people look back, if it'll be a bit more pluralistic. Regarding ethnicity, origin, social class, or whether it will be just the same (Jonna)

At the same time, hierarchical structures – which in accordance with the scene's self-image should not really exist - were clearly identified by the interviewees – and the experience-based knowledge of older activists seems in some cases to complicate equal communication with outsiders.

A lot of people are very confident and very sure of their ability to take action and that makes it difficult to arrive at and gain entry and also to be accepted there [...]. It really is like that, not just for outsiders, but among us, too, to some extent. (Frauke)

Moreover, some of the interviewees hypothesised – independently of each other – that individual or psycho-social aspects, such as fears, feelings of insecurity and powerlessness, could play a role in the isolation of outsiders from local structures:

At a psycho-social level it has a lot to do with insecurity, I think. I don't believe that people who are on the move and active are absolutely stable, I think they're just as insecure as everybody else, I'd say. Perhaps they're even a little more insecure and that could be why they've chosen to seek refuge here, [...] I'm glad that such a place exists where they can maybe somehow feel a bit more secure, but that's exactly why the isolation is so big, because it's some way to being a refuge from the load of crap that's happening elsewhere. (Criz)

3.11 Empowerment and Involvement

The individual benefits that the interviewees generate from their social commitment and political pursuits are clearly evident. All of those we questioned spoke implicitly or explicitly about their individual learning process that resulted from their activities and interactions both within their own structures and with people and institutions outside of them, and about how their experiences have empowered them personally: `And everything I learned in the time I was there, you couldn't learn it in ten years at university' (Frauke). This `personal further development' (Rosa) comes, for example, from managing pragmatic and organisational tasks, from reflecting on occurrences and interactions within their own scenes and from analysing historical and everyday political events in local and (inter)national contexts, but also to correlate these with (system) critical theories:

I believe that I've learned more in the left-wing than I did in my two periods of study, stays abroad and everything put together, so I believe that what I can do today, what I can do at work what kind of person I am to my friends, I learned it all in the left. (Jonna)

The interviewees referred mainly to the experiences they had had which had afforded them a lot of `self-reflection and self-criticism' (Jonna), making some feel `more aware of what I want for myself and what goals I want to achieve', but additionally, that they `could learn about the political work too, how society functions' (Criz). This individuation is regarded as something that is only possible from a privileged situation: `that also backs up my theory

that politics is also simply a luxury [...] I thought, okay, I'm well off enough, now I can get involved in saving the world [laughs]' (Jonna). Another, male, activist expressed it in a different way:

> I could also take the time – and that had a lot to do with the privilege of studying, as well – to think about what I actually want and what I enjoy, what interests come from inside me, and exactly, that's something that political work helped me with, to understand a lot of things, but also about myself, I don't just mean the self-reflection thing alone, but also to understand myself. (Josef)

The deep involvement of the activists in their areas of activity and formations entails a strong identification with the political subject matter, which is then pursued further in private contexts that are so to speak outside of the scene. In the history of ideas, the concept of `the personal is political' (see above; Haunss, 2004) is based on the feminist movement of the 1970s and describes in radical left-wing contexts a strong relationship between the prevailing political issues and topics and the individual. Analysis and change are seen as being equally important for both the individual and society: `For me, it's also politics to say, I'll take a look at myself - myself, and not just them over there, or them out there. But to look at what's happening with me. For the private is political' (Bernd). Correspondingly, a few men spoke of how they actively analysed gender roles privately or in groups:

> [...] to look at the social position actually determines how I think and feel. So for the most part it was an analysis of my own masculinity. And so we (formed) a group – which still exists – where we just got together once a month and took a bit of a look: what problems have we got at the moment with our masculinity? What holds us back? How do we hold others back? (Criz)

The results of this kind of self-reflection are then taken back into the scenes so that the issues can then be addressed collectively:

> So, it's a lot to do with changing yourself, too, the broken authority in ourselves. I don't think it can be disclosed and defeated in this society, but at least to the level where we don't get in each other's way with it, sort of within our own movement I mean. That's it, [...] to take a look at the sexism in your own movement. (Criz)

Individual empowerment is not only based on self-reflection, but also on the exchange of ideas with kindred scenes, including those abroad: `of course we know about various projects in various countries and have possibly also been there' (Frauke). Ideas are exchanged on different topics in organised workshops, meetings and congresses, other forms of interaction include online and face-to-face in local contexts. The latter also promote the individual sense of well-being of the protagonists and are simply fun: 'I really enjoy it. Firstly, to work together with people who want the same thing. To realise that whenever we do something, we can learn from each other' (Josef). They learn from each other in the group, but also from interaction with others:

> I also came into contact with refugees, we hung around a bit and also had a drink [laughs], [...] one group I'm in contact with, realises that someone is looking out for them, that they can also join us in a game of football, you know, that someone can show they care now and again, and chill with them, it's fun. (Jürgen)

In general, the older ones are duty bound to keep an eye on the younger ones, assume responsibility and take on the role of mentor. It is highly probable that the `young generation' will grow with the challenges:

> Especially at the beginning, when they are still new and also a bit hesitant, but the longer they're there, yeah, exactly, the more responsibility they take on. Yeah, the more confident they are, and it's great to be able to really teach them something, [...] and I somehow always feel like I'm a bit of a minder. On the one hand that's a bit to do with my age, and also because of [...] my self-image. (Emil)

The motivation for being engaged in the groups and scenes and being politically active is also linked to thoughts of personal learning and empowerment. The activities and abilities demanded by everyday working life are felt to be unfulfilling: 'my present job is not intellectually satisfying, so I always find it cool if you can let off steam with an issue. Yeah, it really is cool when something works at some point and you achieve something for somebody or other' (Ferdi). The examination of (system) critical issues is perceived to be important. There do not seem to be the same possibilities for examining (system) critical issues with the corresponding thematic focus at the same depth outside of their own scenes and groups:

> It also really means a lot to me, to keep my mind active. I am curious about stuff and why things are the way they are. Why do young people go to IS? Why do they do that when they live in a society where they could have everything they want? Why are such religions on the rise? But that doesn't really take the world any further forward, of course, it's more a case of individual education, and of course enjoying a culture of discussion [...] (Jonna).

Individual involvement and engagement in the specifically developed political areas of action and projects is for some so strongly pronounced that they renounce a classical working biography:

> And so we start, but we're also aware that it's a longer-term project and for the last few years our planning has revolved around the search for a real strategy for changing society, so, five to ten years [...] and it's clear to us all that this form of politics is not just for show, something we do every two or three days, but a large chunk of our lives [...]. Unfortunately, I have little experience of feeling effective and receive little recognition, so I can't say that I pursue this or that career and sort of do this or that for society and… Well, when I'm talking to people and I say I do political work, I find it difficult to put it across, or I feel the urge to sort of sell my contribution, what I do, although I actually find it stupid (to do that). (Criz)

All the activists who are so deeply involved in their projects unanimously expressed the feeling that they enjoyed these activities and that the activities gave them a sense of individual fulfilment and purpose.

4. Conclusions

The empirical insights outlined above have given us numerous points of reference for deeper analysis. Primarily these are the individual access paths, socialisation patterns and also the motivation for young people to join formations of left-wing autonomous groups and become active in political and social issues, articulate alternative plans and ideas in order to further developments and changes in society, i.e. social transformation. These micro-social perspectives on the scenes and formations of the autonomists or the extra-parliamentary left fill a gap in research (Haunss 2013, 40; Gross 2015, 367); the initial findings, which are to be explored more deeply, are presented in this report. In this context, individual empowerment comes from active participation in the various activities in the groups, which for some activists can indeed be a foot in the door to (alternative) gainful employment. The individual connection to, and benefits of, their own political engagement was emphasised clearly – in hindsight, too:

> And no-one can take that away from me, regardless of what I do in the future, I´ll always be able to draw on these experiences and this strength. Everyone should do it; somehow kick out this powerlessness and then feel what strength you get from that. That was cool [laughs]. (Frauke)

The research material also indicates which micro- and macro-social phenomena are experienced as conflicts and therefore also entail reactions in the groups. These include the empowerment of right-wing populist movements and crimes committed by right-wing radicals as a result of the influx of refugees[22]. Finally, relatively detailed references are made to the formations and group-specific conflict situations in individual scenes. The actions and demonstrations that take place there, take place simultaneously in various cities and in a very similar form. These inside perspectives coming out of the groups also provide a clue as to why the extra-parliamentary left receives only passing attention in many places regarding their political intentions and their `penetrative power´. The almost total lack of communication with outsiders, the meagre links to `bourgeois´ and civil-society organisations and actors can be traced for the most part back to external sources of danger; this was substantiated by the statements of the participants. Additionally, the formations in small groups and the doctrine of `the personal (or private) is political´ play a major part in the low level of public perception:

> It does actually have a lot to do with the attempt to politicise the private that some have got a bit carried away with, and we´ve lost sight of some things. I believe that the attempt to politicise the private is necessary, important, and it should also be done, but I get the impression that in the meantime, every practice that there is there, stands for its own [...] Thus there´s no longer such a mediating authority in your own thinking. (Criz)

The protagonists in this study outlined their individual acquisition of knowledge about political and macro-social relations, their knowledge of social theories and theories of social upheavals, and their learning of left-wing-autonomist political practises and methods. At the same time they can be read as evidence of the individualisation theorem of lifestyles together with their multitude of options and individual life decisions, and attitude patterns

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[22] The former must therefore be the reason why the offences which appear in police statistics under the rubric of `left-wing extremist´ crimes and acts of violence have risen since 2009 (cf. Glaser 2013).

in adolescence towards daily life and politics as discussed in the social sciences by Hitzler and Niederbacher (2010) and critiqued by Helsper (2012). This `scene-internal´ individualisation and gathering of knowledge – of the mostly academically socialised and `privileged´ (Bernd) activists – is also the reason why the `first person (the private)´ - the individual – cannot and does not want to speak for all in their respective very heterogeneous group. For this reason also, the impact on public perception remains so minimal. At the same time, however, and paradoxically, these individualisation tendencies are read as a phenomenon of capitalistic society which is characterised by social inequality and are also criticised as such.

The focus in the social sciences and in the media on forms of militancy and the violent nature of left-wing groups which has prevailed hitherto (Glaser, 2013, 12) obscures the thematic diversity in the scenes. It was only possible to take a cursory look at the diversity of political issues and positions in this study, but it does, nonetheless, attempt to look at the extra-parliamentary left from a different angle. The hitherto and also current focus of the social sciences (see Introduction) on militant phenomena in radical left-wing contexts reduces the extra-parliamentary left to only a few attributes and reproduces a `constructed truth´ (Berger and Luckmann, 1969) that already exists in the media and in public perception. In the self-perception of the autonomist scenes, violence and militancy are far less important than they are in the perception of the public (cf. also Haunss 2013, 36). The views outlined in this document paint the picture of decidedly reflective individuals, scenes and groups, who intensively, discursively and actionistically, grapple with their own (internal) and external (in society) structures. At the same time, these groups see themselves subjected in varying degrees to strong stigmatisation, clear risks of criminalisation and also to attacks from the extreme right-wing camp. Violence[23] and militancy against individuals was rejected by the majority of the interviewees. Structural violence within their own scenes, which manifests itself in unofficial hierarchies and dominant behaviour, is also being refused. In the `militant left´ segment issues are examined discursively using their own methods and justify their own readiness to use violence by arguing that they are only as violent as the rest of society:

> Especially in the militant left, of course, the debate is always about violence. And intentionally so, in order to decide when to use it, and when not to use it. But it´s a more critical debate [...] And that´s the big difference [...]. Take football, for instance, there it´s hoards of men who get drunk every weekend and let off steam and are clearly inherently violent. Hoards of drunken men, and unfortunately, it´s the same every week in night clubs. (Gustav)

Finally, the findings outlined here also highlight the `the self-evaluation´ of the protagonists´ own activities. None of the protagonists believes in a social upheaval, a revolution, or `some sort of alternative system, […] there are still groups who are pro communist, yeah, I still like the idea, but no-one believes in it anymore, not really, our issue is capitalism and it will stay that way until society falls apart´ (Jonna). If anything, the interviewees were reluctant to speak about their participation intentions, as in the contexts of the street-based social work

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[23] Violence – not only in the left-wing scenes described above – also serves individual self-discovery and self-empowerment, as a test of one's own limits or to satisfy the desire for adventure. Pertinent youth studies point out that politically motivated violence is only exercised by a very small minority of young people. In the majority of cases violence is not the consequence of intentional action, but the result of interaction between demonstrators and the police (cf. Kühnel, 2015).

and the autonomous project work outlined above, where the protagonists are more concerned with reaching a wider segment of the population: `in the meantime, I don´t really want expand the scene any further [...], I really just want to do politics, yep, do politics [...], the problems this world is faced with, just sort of be involved in the discussions, tackle them, and, of course, simply to make the world a better place´ (Gustav).

5. Future Analysis

Future analysis with a cross-case perspective across the different groups in the Culture and Politics cluster within the PROMISE project can be viewed as an attempt to investigate common frames and patterns (contexts) of individual motivation or rather socialisation to join and engage in different youth groups with their different – and common - political intentions and societal targets. This micro-sociological perspective could help provide indications about which variables are supporting individual political engagement. In the case presented here, information about the influences and stimuli of the autonomists can be grouped together and were communicated explicitly or implicitly through:

- Peers;
- families - including parents and grandparents;
- school curricula;
- media reports about social developments (in a positive stimulating manner);
- media portrayal of youth groups (in a negative, stigmatising manner);
- youth cultural styles, codes and messages.

This perspective must be accomplished by a macro-sociological approach that takes into account societal and political developments and structures which affect young people either directly (e.g. at the local level) and/or indirectly (e.g. at the national or transnational level). By making a cross-cultural analysis from a macro-social perspective it is possible to identify and cluster (patterns for) contexts of conflicts experienced and to filter collective reactions to these in the form of activities and engagement. One of the key moments that made young people become aware of the case of the autonomists and get into conflict (again) was the empowerment of right-wing populist movements and crimes committed by right-wing radicals as a result of the influx of refugees. The same holds true for the widespread and organised racial hatred towards foreigners, and especially refugees, that seems to have been rising ever since then.

Looking from this cross-case perspective at the effectiveness of personal and group-specific engagement (or rather political action) and their potential and perceptions of social change, it is possible to investigate where the young people from the different cases (try to) form an alternative to the existing social order. This research perspective should focus on the methods of the different cases, their means of communication and ways of addressing others, including their expressed willingness to participate, questions of the inclusion and exclusion of others, the formulation of alternatives and the level (local, regional, national, global) they are targeting.

A hypothesis that might be explored - and which combines the micro- and the macro-sociological perspective whilst being induced from the empirical material gathered - might

be formulated as follows: young people with a stimulating and positive educational background experience key moments of conflicts and social change intensively and both feel a need and the urge to fight the cause for minorities as a result of their own privileged situation (i.e. their social and educational background).

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Appendix: table of respondents´ socio-demographic data

Respondent pseudonym	Age	Gender	Education	Employment	Family Status	Ethnicity	Country of birth	Religion
Anton	25	M	High school	yes	relationship	German	Germany	-
Bernd	22	M	university	yes	relationship	German	Germany	-
Lothar	26	M	university	yes	relationship	German	Germany	-
Tatjana	28	F	university	yes	relationship	German	Germany	-
Jürgen	19	M	High school	no	single	White	Germany	-
Susi	18	F	High school	yes	single	White	Germany	-
Ferdi	29	M	university	yes	single	White	Germany	-
Jonna	34	F	university	yes	relationship	German	Germany	-
Frauke	25	F	school	no	single	White	Germany	-
Emil	22	M	university	no	relationship	German	Germany	-
Cora	15	F	school	no	single	German	Germany	-
Criz	29	M	university	no	single	German	Germany	-
Rosa	33	F	university	no	single	German	Germany	-
Steffi	18	F	High school	yes	relationship	German	Germany	-
Ulrike	23	F	university	no	relationship	German	Germany	-
Josef	23	M	university	no	relationship	German	Germany	-
Heike	40	F	university	yes	relationship	German	Germany	-
Ulli	18	F	High school	yes	relationship	German	Germany	-
Heiko	29	M	university	yes	relationship	German	Germany	-
Peter	29	M	university	yes	single	German	Germany	-
Gustav	29	M	university	yes	relationship	German	Germany	-

Not in our town - NIOT

Slovakia

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Executive summary: This PROMISE case study documents the story of the Not in Our Town (NIOT) grassroots movement in the Slovak city of Banská Bystrica that originated as a protest movement against the results of regional elections in Banská Bystrica self-governing region in 2013 when a Neo-Nazi governor was democratically elected. The development of the movement shows various levels of youth engagement in the period from 2013 to 2017. It demonstrates that civil participation can contribute to breaking civic apathy and motivate the wider local/regional community to engage in resistance activities against fascism, racism, antisemitism, xenophobia and any kind of intolerance. NIOT is a good example of informal grassroots activism strengthening civil society in a postsocialist city. It can serve as an example of civic self-organisation consisting of collective action mobilised without the involvement of a formal organisation and with more individual civil engagement that constitutes one of the common types of activism in Central and Eastern Europe. The study focuses on the analysis of key findings based on face-to-face interviews, participant observation, and textual analysis of media articles as well as action research carried out by two authors of the case study. The interviews were conducted with young activists who openly presented their negative attitudes against any type of radicalisation and extremism in the society (in this case mainly far right extremism) and actively joined the NIOT movement to combat these societal challenges. The study demonstrates the profile of these young people, their motivations and experience. It also describes activities of the NIOT movement in the 4-year period, which resulted in a positive outcome – the defeat of the Neo-Nazi governor in regional elections in November 2017. The story demonstates the importance of civic/youth engagement in contemporary society and its potential to achieve social change.

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1. Introduction

Numerous scholarly articles and books on youth claim that youth can be seen as a social construct because the ways in which societies divide up the life course vary significantly across different time periods and cultural contexts. Also, within contemporary Western societies, many of the meanings that are associated with youth are undoubtedly changing; and the period that is encompassed by the term youth itself seems to have become ever-more elastic. Thus, on the one hand, it can be argued that childhood seems to be blurring into youth (e.g. see the sexualization of childhood debate, media and popular culture as the destroyers of childrens innocence, childrens growing access to consumer culture, etc. Yet, on the other hand, we also witness an extension of youth, or a blurring of the boundary between youth and adulthood. Youth appears to be lasting much longer and ending much later than it used to do. Young people are leaving the family home at an older age, and settling down in terms of stable jobs and relationships at a later point. Indeed, the lack of stable jobs or affordable independent housing means that settling down is hardly a prospect for many young people. Some psychologists argue that this period of emerging adulthood now continues well into the thirties; while in a different way, sociologists confirm that the transition to adulthood has become a significantly more unstable, precarious process (Buckingham and Kehily, 2014: 5-7).

The fact that young people experience a world that is significantly different from the world their parents knew as young people is even more valid for former communist countries in which the expansion of higher education, fast integration into the global economy and changing possibilities for relationship and family formation create even more rapid changes in the lives of young people than in the lives of their Western counterparts. Although impacts of these changes are not limited only to the young, young people are most affected by labour market changes, and most likely to be experimenting with new ways of living and to be pushing for social change (Woodman and Wyn, 2015: 1).

Slovakia and, previously, Czechoslovakia have had numerous experiences with an active involvement of young generations in movements and events pushing for social change. When The Velvet Revolution of November 1989 ended the 40-years period of communism and brought freedom and independence to Czechoslovakia, it was students, mainly those from universities, who became the key promoters of social change, with the assistance of artists and representatives of civil movements and initiatives. The break-up of Czechoslovakia and three terms of Vladimír Mečiar as Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic (1992-1998) brought difficult times for civil society and its organisations in Slovakia. Before parliamentary elections in 1998, more and more people were aware of the need to change the government and, therefore, extensive pre-election campaigns were launched, with significant participation of young people. Therefore, the 1998 parliamentary elections were marked by extremely high voter participation (the turnout was 84.24%) and the participation of young people and first-time voters was also exceptional. Young generations took these elections as a referendum on the political future of the Slovak Republic. The 1998 elections created the image of a progressive and pro-European young generation in Slovakia whose activities could push the whole society towards 'European values'. Similarly, young people took part in various mobilisation activities before parliamentary elections in 2010 in order to divert the country from the national-populistic course of politics during the government led by Robert Fico as Prime Minister in 2006-2010. And although young people in Slovakia are seen (and also quite often present themselves) as politically apathetic, reluctant to join organised and more permanent structures, these examples show that under some conditions when the country faces undemocratic tendencies, they are willing to organise and take care of public issues. Their political

involvement in such situations has been presented also by unconventional forms – according to Martiniello (2005), who distinguishes between conventional and unconventional forms of political involvement. The latter includes participation in protests, strikes and demonstrations, the power of which, is hugely dependent on collective action, while the former refers to running for election or voting.

Analyses of rich empirical material from representative sociological surveys conducted from 1994 to 2010 in Slovakia demonstrate that active citizenship is more frequent amongst individuals who have a stronger interest in politics, who generally, are more trusting, and who identify more strongly both with the goals of deliberative democracy and the economic and political changes after 1989. Civic participation is more widespread among individuals associated with various types of voluntary organisations (Gyárfášová and Bútorová, 2010: 465-470).

It is the active involvement and civic participation of young people that is under focus in this case study. The main objective of PROMISE is to explore the role of stigmatised young people in shaping society and address their engagement with social, environmental, cultural, and political issues as well as the challenges they face that affect their participation in society. We decided to join the PROMISE project just for the reason that we were aware that in our city Banská Bystrica, there is a civic platform consisting of mainly young people protesting against local self-government authorities and that investigation of its activities can provide opportunities for positive social engagement which is another objective of the PROMISE project.

This case study has been devoted to an urban grassroots movement called Not in Our Town (NIOT) that was born in the city of Banská Bystrica, Central Slovakia, in early 2014. The civic movement has developed as a reaction of local citizens to the results of regional elections – the victory of an extremist Neo-Nazi candidate as governor of the Banská Bystrica Region.[1] The NIOT movement is a civic platform that aims at combating any expressions of extremism, intolerance, fascism, racism, antisemitism or xenophobia. Because the object of the study is primarily connected with a particular city and is publicly recognised and referred to in the media, we decided not to anonymise the name of the city and the movement. Nevertheless, all names of the interviewees have been anonymised.

Banská Bystrica is a medium-size city of 80,000 inhabitants. According to Pink, studies of urban activism and movements focus on big cities and megacities and very often neglect smaller cities and towns, although it is particularly smaller settlements that offer good data for the analysis of global issues through the study of small places (Pink, 2009: 452). That is one of the reasons why we chose a smaller city as our research setting. The NIOT movement and public engagement of young people who are in conflict with extremism and fascism demonstrates quite a unique case study - at least in the Slovak context. From comparative surveys conducted during the first decade of the new millennium, we know that citizens of postcommunist countries including Slovakia differ from citizens of Western democracies by lower civic and political participation (Vráblíková, 2009). Lower civic participation in Central and Eastern Europe during the first few years following the end of state socialism was, to a great extent, a consequence of strong distrust of the people in public

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[1] The regional self-government as a separate 'meso level' of government began to operate in the Slovak Republic after the first regional elections held in 2001, while local self-government was introduced immediately after the change of regime, in 1990. It is one of three key levels (central, regional, local) of public administration with elected bodies in Slovakia. However, regional self-government seems to suffer from various contradictory developments that make it less influential than originally expected, compared for example to local self-government (Buček and Plešivčák, 2017: 601).

institutions and public affairs, and can be considered one of the major legacies of communism. This legacy seems to have a long-term impact on levels of civic engagement and the ways people get involved in public affairs in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Bitušíková, 2015). Even after almost 30 years after the fall of communism, there is still lower civic participation and activism in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe than in older European democracies. NIOT as a civic movement is an exception and worth further research.

2.   Methods

In the case study, we followed a qualitative research approach with two main methods of data collection: participant observations and face-to-face interviews (structured, semi-structured and informal), which means that we used ethnography as our principal methodological approach. We understand ethnography in line with Brewer´s definition:

> Ethnography is the study of people in naturally occurring settings or 'fields' by methods of data collection which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally. (Brewer, 2000: 6).

In addition, both researchers carrying out this case study empployed engaged, participatory and activist research. According to Charles Hale:

> […] activist research: a) helps us better to understand the root causes of inequality, oppression, violence, and related conditions of human suffering; b) is carried out, at each phase from conception through dissemination, in direct cooperation with an organized collective of people who themselves are subject to these conditions; and c) is used together with the people in question, to formulate strategies for transforming these conditions and to achieve the power necessary to make these strategies effective. (Hale, 2001: 13)

The authors of this report have been involved in the NIOT movement from its beginnings (2014), first, and primarily, as active citizens, and later, also as researchers-activists. As doing fieldwork in an urban setting is always rather challenging, being part of the core NIOT group helped us to better understand the development of the movement, its problems and challenges, and to build mutual trust.

On the other hand, we have been aware of the risks connected with activist research, especially those related to ethical issues. All key members of the movement (object of the study) were informed about our research in advance.

In the period of 2014-2016 (before the start of the PROMISE project), we were involved in the NIOT movement mainly through common activities such as meetings, educational events, workshops or conferences, being both active participant observers and co-organisers. After the beginning of the PROMISE project, we introduced the project to the core members of the movement (approximately 20-30 members), informed them about the objectives, and asked them for permission to continue being active in the movement and at the same time, conducting participatory and activist research. The NIOT members did not raise any objections to our research outline. After this introduction, we were able to start more focused participant observation including writing field notes, collecting visual material and doing interviews. Over the course of

2016-2018, we participated in 36 meetings and 8 events of the NIOT movement (approximately 95 hours of participant observation) and conducted 19 interviews.

The interviews were conducted in the Slovak language, usually in an environment familiar for the respondent e.g. a workplace or a public space (such as a café or a restaurant). The respondents were young people from 18 to 35 years old. These young people were activists in the core group of NIOT or those closely collaborating with NIOT in some selected activities (such as an antifascist march in October 2017). Other activists involved in NIOT activities during the research period belonged to the age category of between 35 and 60. They were also partly an object of the participant observation because generational transmission and collaboration has been a very important part of the NIOT movement development.

We interviewed 19 respondents – 10 males and 9 females. As previously mentioned, they were aged 18 to 35 years old – of which 3 were in the age category 18-20, 9 were in the age category 21-30 and 7 were in the age category 31-35. 14 respondents have completed their university education, 2 respondents are university students, 1 respondent has reached secondary education and the two youngest respondents are currently studying at grammar school (gymnázium). Of all the interviewed young people, 17 were single and 2 were married (1 male and 1 female).

During the period of writing this report (March 2018), the situation in Slovakia has dramatically changed after the murder of an investigative journalist, and many more young people have started to be engaged in public events organised by NIOT.

All interviews were conducted in one sitting. Where further questions arose, subsequent NIOT events were used as a good opportunity to follow up informal conversations. The interviews usually lasted between one and two hours, with an average length of one hour twenty minutes. We followed a semi-structured interview schedule prepared on the basis of the PROMISE project objectives. However, all interviews were rather informal and open-ended, and allowed the interviewees to express their opinions freely.

The interviews were recorded, transcribed, coded and stored according to the PROMISE guidelines and ethical codes (see Introduction to D6.1 for details).

In addition, we collected approximately 25 newsletter articles, press releases, programmes and a large number of visual materials (mainly photos). We also followed social media discourses. For the analysis of the collected data, we used textual analysis and computer-based qualitative analysis, namely NVivo software – a purposely built tool for categorisation, classification and analysis of qualitative and mixed-methods data.

3.   Key Findings

It was February 2014 when I was invited to a meeting of several active inhabitants (about 15 people) of the Banská Bystrica city who decided to develop community activities against intolerance and extremism as a response to the results of the regional elections (the victory of a Neo-Nazi governor). At the meeting, representatives of the local Centre for Community Organizing introduced the idea of 'Not in Our Town', based on a U.S. model of a grassroots movement. After a passionate discussion, we agreed to form a Slovak version of Not in Our Town (NIOT) in Banská Bystrica. We decided to

build it as a grassroots activity based on positive values such as tolerance, friendship, respect and love, and not as political battle against the new regional governor. Our first activity was formulation of the NIOT key statement called 'Breaking the Silence. (Field diary of A.B., February 2014)

The NIOT Statement:

> Nie v našom meste (Not In Our Town) is a platform that was established in Banská Bystrica by people who support tolerance in the city. We believe that Banská Bystrica is a place whose inhabitants share and protect values of humanity from violence and hatred. While respecting the diversity of opinions, we support collaboration and community building through strengthening the following values: solidarity, responsibility, loyalty, tolerance, respect, honesty and wisdom...

> We do not agree with silence as a response to the present political and economic situation. We do not agree that extremist opinions should become tolerated and accepted by society. We believe that silence is not the right response to hatred and violence. Sometimes, it is enough to break silence and start talking. We invite everyone to support this initiative.

The initial core group of the NIOT movement consisted of about 15–20 people (NGO activists, academics, artists, religion, church and minority representatives and committed individuals). Within the following few months of 2014, the NIOT expanded and organised several public events (including educational events about the Jewish and Roma Holocaust, multicultural festival Embargo and a conference Human Forum). The NIOT movement continued to grow in the following years although not so much in terms of the number of committed people, but mainly in terms of the quality of its activities (particularly educational activities at primary and secondary schools).

The turning point in the development of the NIOT movement was the election year 2017, when the core group of the movement decided to mobilise inhabitants of the region to participate in the regional elections (November 2017) and not to vote for Neo-Nazi leader Marián Kotleba (or any other member of his Kotleba-ĽSNS party). This more pro-active and mobilising approach attracted new, mainly younger people to the movement. It is particularly these people who we interviewed in the period between August 2017 and January 2018. Most of them were not at the birth of the NIOT movement, but joined mainly in the election year 2017 in order to participate in the mobilisation against the Neo-Nazi regional governor. They brought a new, more open, courageous and 'revolutionary' attitude to the movement. This has become an example of intergenerational conflict – a source of a small tension between the 'older' (in terms of age and 'membership') and new, younger members of the movement. The older members insisted on an 'apolitical' approach to mobilisation. They wanted to build the campaign on emphasising positive values such as tolerance and respect and did not want to express direct support to any candidate.

> We are a platform that from the very beginning stands for positive values, ´for´ something good, not ´against´ something. We should remember our statement. If we start being seen as connected to a particular candidate and openly support him, we might lose our credibility.(C.D., Field diary of A.B., 16 October 2017)

Young members disagreed and wanted to fight openly against the Neo-Nazi governor and to support a democratic candidate with the best chance of being elected (according to opinion polls),

using various strategies (from happenings to social media activities to a public anti-fascist march and a concert). In the end, a compromise was found. Most (not all) of the older members accepted the arguments of the younger ones and agreed to participate in an open campaign supporting a particular democratic candidate. The next month showed the power and courage of the younger generation to change the course of history because in November 2017, the Neo-Nazi governor was roundly defeated in the regional elections. Numerous NIOT activities definitely contributed to this result.

3.1 Activists´ family background

When studying people who are in a way 'different', not like 'the others', representing a specific interest group, etc., researchers quite often want to know whether there were any common or significant moments in their past that could contribute to their present opinions, values, lifestyles. Because of the fact that we study young people, we asked them some questions on their family origin, family background or significant childhood experience.

We can say that basically all young NIOT activists come from middle-class families; the majority of them spent their childhood with both parents (only four of them experienced the divorce of parents and one respondent lived from 12 years of age with his mother after his father died). Almost all of them had siblings and five respondents were from families with at least three children: Well, family matters, it has a strong influence, for sure… I had three brothers, I was the oldest, so there are some norms about what is expected from the eldest (R.S., male, 27).

The majority of the interviewed young people grew up in Banská Bystrica or some other middle-sized cities in Slovakia; some of them had experience of living in both urban and rural environments during their childhood, but all respondents with 'mixed' urban-rural experience claimed that urban life suited them better than life in villages.

> I really hate village life, I would not live there any more, for sure. Although I grew up in the village, I consider myself to be completely a city person, the village is not for me, really... It is strange mentality there, everybody knows everybody, old ladies from the church are chasing you about whether you said good morning to them. And generally they are stubborn people there, grumbling about everything. I hate every aspect of village life, honestly... (M.D., male, 25)

Three respondents mentioned their nuclear family environment as open to discussions about public issues, but respondents generally did not indicate their parents to be people interested in politics or very active in civil society. However, a quarter of interviewed young people stressed their grandparents had had a formative influence on their personalities and attitudes.

> [...] because my grand-grandfather was cooperating with the Czechoslovak resistance in Yugoslavia and gestapo caught him and he ended up in the concentration camp, so my grandfather who died five years ago was always against uniforms, he had bad memories since he was a child. So I am involved in all this also through my family. (O.D., male, 27)

More than half of the respondents (11) said that they had experience of living abroad. Such experience probably helps young people to be more open in their attitudes to political issues, more aware of cultural differences and more sensitive to extremism and radicalism.

I travel a lot in fact, just recently I came back from the US after a four-month working stay there. Some time ago I worked in Sri Lanka as an English teacher. As far as activism is concerned, I was in Madrid at the conference in Madrid organised by the European Commission focused on radicalism prevention, this year we want to repeat this conference in Budapest. (M.D., male, 25)

Well, my parents have been divorced since I was four, I take it as it is... I keep contact with my father, we visit each other, I regularly see him in Cyprus. iI fact I am lucky that I can see such different cultures, because his culture is completely different, they did not experience such regime as we did here in Slovakia. (A.T., female, 18)

3.2 Is it good to be young in Slovakia right now?

In the introductory part, it was mentioned that the contemporary situation of young people is different than in the past; their transition to adulthood is more unstable and precarious and they have to face various labour market changes and experience new ways of living. Having an opportunity to interview young active people involved in public issues, we wanted to know what they think about the situation and perspectives of young people in the country. Do they think that it is good to be young in contemporary Slovakia?

All respondents see mostly positive aspects of being young. They strongly believe that they have better opportunities than previous generations in the country.

It is nice to be young nowadays. We should be thankful for what we have here and for our future prospects. It's much worse in many other countries. Many things must be changed, for sure..., but generally, it's really fine here. (A.C., female, 20)

Generally, respondents highlight opportunities to study and freedom to choose any school and any discipline, opportunities to choose place and type of work, freedom to travel, opportunities to get an experience of some kind abroad (working, studying) and to be mobile, freedom of speech and expression and opportunities to learn languages. Some of them also emphasise unprecedented opportunities to get new information, to communicate on the Internet and via social media, although they admit that it has also some drawbacks. Globalisation is mentioned as a positive phenomenon bringing new opportunities just for the young – at least those who are prepared and educated.

We, young people, have a chance to cross borders without any problems, to travel wherever we wish, we've been learning languages for years so we can go and work abroad, we can study there – so globalisation is really very good for us (E.Š., female, 32).

Nevertheless, our respondents are aware of the ambivalent situation of young people nowadays. Atlhough their possibilities to study are much more extensive than in the past and borders in Europe are open for them, there is not so clear a relationship between obtaining education and having a proper job.

It was never, or at least within the last 50 years, so difficult for young people to find a job. On the other hand, it's very easy to get education, but afterwards it's really tough to get a job. (A.T., female, 18)

One of the main negatives is a long-lived idea that education guarantees you a good life. Our society still makes people believe that it´s necessary to study at university or acquire a good education in order to live a decent life, but this doesn´t work any more, I think. It happens quite often that education doesn´t advance you. There aren´t enough opportunities and this is a big problem, really. There is disillusion among many young people whose first steps after graduation lead to the job centre. (R.S., male, 27)

Problems with getting a job produce other consequences that have negative impacts on other spheres of life, for instance, family, friends, intimate relationships: After graduation a young man or a woman believes that s/he will find a job. It doesn´t happen, so s/he leaves the country. What happens then? Relationships, friends, family... are only at distance, some partnerships dissolve or a partner has to accept the situaton. Basically only negatives come from it (R.S., male, 27).

The above-mentioned opinion is quite widespread among our respondents but there are also alternative views that see the situation in slightly different colours.

Slovakia is a country with high standards of living. I don´t understand why people here are so frustrated. To be honest, I don´t understand at all if a young person says – I am moving to Western Europe because there is no job here for me, because I don´t have a proper salary, because there is not much to do here… When I talk with entrepreneurs or look at our NGO, it is still difficult to find high-quality people. I know from my experience that when I wanted a job, I got it within a month… I believe that young people have wonderful opportunities to create things that are missing here right now. (V.S., female, 31)

Regardless of whether our respondents adopted a more pessimistic or more enthusiastic approach to job prospects in Slovakia, they usually admitted that the situation of youth nowadays is less certain than it was before. On the other hand, they also acknowledged that the situation in other countries is very similar. Even our respondent V.S., criticising widespread frustration of Slovaks in the previous paragraph, at the end claimed:

There are many uncertainties connected with the satisfaction of basic needs such as housing and employment. Well, mortgages is one thing that brings insecurity, jobs is another one because even if you have a job contract it doesn´t mean that you will be allowed to work for a long period of time, which is quite different from the situation of previous generations. But I don´t think that this is some special Slovak trend. Our job environment is very similar to environments of other countries in the region. (V.S., female, 31)

In a similar way, Z.G. highlighted problems with finding proper housing and more stable work as primary sources of young people´s precariousness.

I guess it´s mainly insecurity regarding economic and social issues, well, if you travel you see it everywhere... While our parents´generation acquired housing after they finished school and lived on their own, nowadays young people stay much longer with parents. They have just short-term contracts, so they are much less secure socially. As a result they don´t get bank credit and mortgages and so on. (Z.G., female, 30)

Three respondents also pointed to problems of intergenerational relations. From their perspective, older colleagues are often afraid of losing their positions and instead of transferring their experience to the younger generation, they are afraid of them, do not allow them to realise their capabilities, and prevent their creativity.

> As a society, we don´t trust young people, we can hear very often that you are so young, you can´t know anything about that, just wait twenty years or so and then, maybe… This is a very negative feature of our society. But why should a young person waiting so long? Very often s/he is much more capable than many of those who are older. If we don´t give them a chance, we kill their creativity and other good things in them. (M.L., male, 32)

3.3 Sources of extremism

Because of the fact that our respondents belong to a platform that was born as a reaction to the victory of an extremist Neo-Nazi candidate in regional elections, it is quite understandable that manifestations of radicalism, extremism and intolerance are considered the key problem of Slovak society by young people from the NIOT movement.

> I think that it is increasing extremism and radicalisation that is most visible right now. Of course, we have some other big problems like poverty, or quite a lot of people living below or near the poverty line. However, my argument is that poverty doesn´t inhibit the others´ existence while extremism means that one group believes that the existence of some other group prevents them realising their own life interests. Therefore, they go against such groups (M.Z., male, 35).

People from NIOT offer their explanations on extremism and its sources. They find them in intolerance, widespread stereotypical attitudes to minorities – One respondent, for example, noted that People don´t consider as an extremist opinion that Roma people live at the expense of us, the majority, from our money… Such a view is considered as a common standard (V.S., female, 31). Corruption is also blamed: Corruption and unequal treatment are crucial motives of increasing extremism and radicalisation, people are aware of what has been done for them and what hasn´t, they blame corruption, they know that it is present at the top levels and they are dissatisfied (Z.S., female, 26). Other cited causes include: greater acceptance of racist attitudes; lack of critical thinking; and frustration of people living in economically and socially disadvantaged regions. Some respondents also stressed apathy and ambivalence to public issues andpeople´s disinterest in what is going on around them.

> I think that racism is much more tolerated now than it used to be. People with racist attitudes are not afraid of public denouncement any more. I dont think their numbers have increased, in my view there are more or less the same number of racist… However, what they dare to say loudly, on microphone, on the main square is something everybody would have been ashamed to say 5 years ago, except for some lunatics. (M.D., male, 25)

> People are seeking simple solutions, solutions that you can accept without thinking. We don´t like some EU regulation, so let´s leave the EU, it´s just so simple. Traditional political parties would discuss it all endlessly; they would bring many arguments for and against. That´s, of course, very democratic, but people don´t want to hear it all

anymore. It´s quite complex issue, not a simple one. People are tired of traditional political parties, they see corruption everywhere, and Kotleba says that he is not going to steal money and again it is so simple… And this is the problem, people don´t want to think nowadays. (A.T., female, 18)

The statements above seek to explain the general sources of extremism in Slovakia. It is well-known that, when in the 2016 Slovak parliamentary elections the far-right political party Kotleba - Peoples Party Our Slovakia led by Marián Kotleba gained 8.04 % of votes and obtained 14 seats in the Slovak Parliament, it gained the biggest support from young people who were first-time voters (22,70%). Therefore, our respondents, young NIOT activists, were also considering reasons why especially young people are so vulnerable to extremism.

One type of explanation points to the situation of those who are, in a sense, disadvantaged, who live in a socially and economically excluded environment. One of our youngest respondents explained why Kotleba´s party is so successful in capturing young people:

> Because here we have a group of youngsters which has much worse chances, much lower education, they are much more frustrated, they live in bad conditions, they belong to nowhere, and that´s why extremists succeed to get part of them, because they gave them a feeling of belonging somewhere, something we can´t give them… If there is a group of young people that belong to nowhere and somebody shows them that they could belong, they go there, it´s natural, we can´t blame them for that. (J.R., male, 19)

Similar views – that extremists can be attractive for youth giving them the feeling that they can be useful – were also shared by four other NIOT respondents. M.Z. highlights sources of motivation, both material and non-material, that make extremists very effective in attracting young people:

> Young people are seeking heroes, examples, leaders… And those young people who are stuck in the valleys,[2] with no chances of getting a decent job, try to find somebody who can be blamed for their difficult situation. And when such a group as Kotleba´s party appears which gives them some work, a team spirit, ideas, sufficient motivation, that´s a way extremist groups are able to find quite substantial support among youth. (M.Z., male, 35)

Another frequent explanation that appeared in interviews was the traditional rebellion of the young (against parents, authorities) intertwined with new phenomena: popularity of anti-system opinions; and conspiracies on the Internet:

> It´s quite common nowadays that if something appears on the Internet which is 'anti', it has a real success. If somebody says that the system is bad, it´s cool. To be against something is always more attractive than to be for something. In fact, the success of radicals in this region is always ensured on topics like problems with the Roma population, measurements against this and against that… there is nothing positive or constructive. Being against, against migration, it´s always oriented in an anti-system way, it´s something which really attracts youth, even if it´s combined with conspiracies and similar 'bestsellers'. (L.D., male, 23)

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[2] The respondent has in mind mainly Horehronie (Upper Hron region) which is an Eastern part of Banská Bystrica self-governing region and Gemer, which is located South-East of Banská Bystrica.

Kotleba is something like a fashion, fashion for rebels. Maybe it´s silly, but I feel that it´s the fashion for teenagers like long hair or some music bands used to be fashion for kids before. It´s cool to be for Kotleba when you are young, it´s something with which you piss your parents off, something that the majority is against. (M.D., male, 25)

The third frequent reasoning of young people´s inclination to extremism is viewed in a lack of critical thinking and deficiencies of educational system:

Partly [young people´s support for Kotleba] it was a bit of fun, but what is more important and dangerous is lack of critical thinking, vulnerability to manipulation and a fact that our society, our education doesn´t lead children to the acceptance of difference and diversity. Diversity generally is not tolerated in our society (V.S., female, 31).

The fact that education is viewed as a key problem of contemporary Slovakia will be considered further in Section3.6. Some respondents connected educational limits also with indifference of young people and a general lack of interest in public issues.

The problem is that young people are not at all value-oriented, they don´t follow what is going on in politics, they have absolutely no clue how economics works and all these things because schools don´t teach them any of these things. (E.Š., female, 32)

3.4 Beginnings in NIOT – beginnings of activism

In the interviews with young people involved in activities of the NIOT movement, we were interested in the reasons why these people became activists and got involved in the NIOT movement, and particularly, what the turning point was for getting engaged. For the majority of respondents, it was the result of regional elections or the following events that were a turning point.

For me, the fact that Kotleba won the elections in 2013 meant we had a big problem – not all votes were counted yet, but it was clear he won. So several friends – it was between midnight and early morning – met in a flat of one activist (now a MP) and started to discuss what we were going to do... NIOT was formed a bit later, but its beginnings started that election night. Some people just knew immediately it was a big problem and as time went on, it was clear we needed a long-term strategy how to fight against these things, and NIOT somehow articulated this need. (R.S., male, 27)

In 2013, when Kotleba was elected the governor. I was 15 and started to be slightly interested in politics. And I asked people who they voted for, and many said they voted for Kotleba 'just for fun' – they did not really think he could win. At that time I did not see it as a big problem yet, yes, not good that he was elected in Banska Bystrica, but I thought it was just a mistake. I did not think he could succeed in parliamentary elections – and he did. And then I realised this was a big problem and I do realise it more and more because his preference votes are growing. (A.T., female, 18)

I remember first only some events that were organised by NIOT in 2015-2016 when something happened, then I started to be involved through the Human Forum conference and and some activities - e.g. when Kotleba – the governor stopped performances and funding in several theatres [because they supported multiculturalism or LGBT community] – through these activities I got involved. I was then leading discussions with students organised by the Puppet Theatre – they had a project aimed at education against extermism (a performance 'Letter to a black son' and further discussion) – that is how and why I got engaged' (L.K., female, 35).

Our interviewees talked also about their general attitude to activism and engagement and the reasons why they became activists. There were either some external political or other societal events (such as victory of a Neo-Nazi regional governor and his discriminatory practices or corruption cases that remained unsolved) or influential people (it could be a parent, a teacher, a schoolmate or a friend) that inspired and motivated them to become more interested in public affairs and engaged in public events.

For me, it was quite natural to be active through the topics such as discrimination and social injustice... I was at a bilingual secondary school with a British approach, it was amazing and quite liberal. They led us to free critical thinking, invited various interesting personalities to school, I grew up in this freedom... and maybe also the fact I belong to the LGBT community contributed to my activism, but I really started to be fully engaged only when I came to Banska Bystrica and started to create a cultural centre. (M.Z., male, 35)

If I have to identify who had the key influence on me, it was definitely my history teacher. Then my grandmother, grandfather, and then during my first activities a lot of other people, for instance a doctor from Bangladesh who has been living in Slovakia… We met in Amnesty International – an amazingly inspiring man, despite his demanding profession he is all the time active and engaged… (R.S., male, 27)

For some (at least two people from our research sample), the main reason for becoming active was personal transformation from being a Neo-Nazi supporter to a fighter against fascism and Neo-Nazism.

Many things happened in my life that have changed me, it was mainly travelling and meeting people who were of different sexual orientation - I found out these were people like any others. I was always interested in public affairs, even when I was 15–16 and defined myself as a fascist – I could explain fascist ideology from an economic point of view because I had read many books about it... And now when I have more life experiences, I can see that I was wrong in many things. And I try to be active and engaged maybe also because I feel remorse for being the idiot I used to be. (M.D., male, 25)

Political activism can also be a route towards civic activism (although they are closely connected). Some respondents started first working with political parties and this experience brought them also to civic activities.

I first co-organised a protest against the government with a political party, then I started to cooperate with (politically) independent members of the City Council and

with the anti-extremist group of people, and then I got closer to the NIOT during the election year 2017 – and together we developed the idea and the project 'Spolu je nás viac' (Together we are stronger) – a campaign [to mobilise people to take part in the elections]. (J.R., male, 19)

For at least four respondents, the involvement in NIOT was a step towards a more focused approach to activities aimed at deradicalisation and even to international activities and engagement:

NIOT was also an impulse, a motivation for me to start to be more active, and through NIOT I got to an international group Radicalisation Awareness Network and its programme RAN YOUNG, which wants to create a platform, to share information among young people from Europe that relates to fighting against extremism and deradicalisation. It is based on the peer to peer principle – the young ones to the young ones. The voice of the young ones is relevant in these processes – it is different if it is a peer who discusses problems with me or an authority from a different generation. (L. D., male, 23)

As previously mentioned, most of the interviewees (11) had some international experience before (they had either studied or worked abroad for some time), which also had an impact on their attitude to be more active and involved.

For me (after living abroad some time) it was obvious, it was a must to start doing some public activities and lead an active life in the society in order to help to form and change it. (V.S., female, 31)

3.5 NIOT activities: Prevention against radicalisation

A set of questions in the interviews was devoted to youth activism – activities that aimed at the prevention of radicalisation and extremism typical for voters of the far-right Neo-Nazi governor and his party in the region and in Slovakia. The party rhetoric has been based on hatred to 'any others' (mostly the Roma, the Jews, Muslims and LGBT), denying the Holocaust, anti-EU and anti-NATO and often pro-Russia. According to an opinion poll from 2017 organised by the Institute for Public Affairs, about 69% of young people (18 to 39) consider the growth of extremism a serious problem in society. On the other hand, more than one third of young people in Slovakia sympathises with opinions and activities of the Neo-Nazi party (Kotleba-ĽSNS) and many of them would vote for them in the elections. The highest support comes from the group of young people between the ages of 18-29; it is higher among men, people with lower education and who come from smaller places (Velšic, 2017: 8-14).

Respondents in our interviews considered lack of education to be the biggest problem and reason for the growth of extremism; mainly lack of education about modern history and prevailing teaching methods based on memorising information that do not lead to critical thinking. For this reason, most activities developed within the NIOT movement were focused on education, using various forms from the systematic educational work at schools (informal teaching), cultural events and festivals, community work and an annual conference Human Forum. The NIOT activities could be organised at a professional level, not only thanks to many volunteers, but also because of an umbrella non-governmental organisation Centre for Community Organising (CCO) that could devote part of their staff work time to the NIOT.

Of all the activities undertaken, at least two long-term activities might be mentioned: Schools for Democracy; and Human Forum. Schools for Democracy is a programme initiated by the NIOT and run by the CCO and a number of NIOT volunteers. Fifteen schools (primary and secondary) in the region of Banská Bystrica are now involved in the programme, although it was difficult to start cooperation with them during the tenure of the Neo-Nazi governor as all secondary schools operate within the purview of the regional government and most schoolmasters were afraid of organising any anti-extremism education. The programme includes critical thinking workshops, a pilot project on values (measuring values before and after educational activities) and 'living libraries'. Living libraries is the most successful form of informal education when a NIOT volunteer from a marginalised group (a Jew, a Roma, a LGBT representative, a former Neo-Nazi, etc.) visits a class and tells the students his/her own life story. This proved to be a very effective way of changing opinions and attitudes of children and young people towards 'any others'.

> We try to organise educational workshops at primary and secondary schools, aimed at the development of critical thinking, reading with understanding, media literacy education – how to read the text or the pictures... And then living libraries – meeting the people whom students have never seen – such as a real Muslim, or a Jewish woman whose parents survived the Holocaust, or a person who used to be a drug addict, or a Roma woman or Roma man who are employed, or a young man who used to be a fascist - we want the students to meet a person about whom they have never heard anything nice, and suddenly they see a 'normal' person like them... (Z.S., female, 26)

> I am part of the Living libraries project. I visit classes and tell them my story – as an idiot, a former Nazi supporter who used to fight against anyone; who went through various stages and now has completely different ideals. I must say, I had excellent feedback from the children I talked to. We were in a class in Brezno, I think they were in the last year of a primary school or first year of a secondary... The majority of them were total fans of Kotleba (Neo-Nazi governor at the time), and I told them my story that I did know Kotleba, he was my teacher, I used to go out with him... I could see that my personal story, my transformation had some impact on these young people. I really like this. (L.D., male, 23)

Human Forum (see Plate 1 logo) is another important NIOT educational and public event – it is an annual conference organised since 2014 at the Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica by the NIOT volunteers in close co-operation with the University and the municipality. The event is open to the public for free and aims at connecting all sectors of the society. It usually attracts about 150 to 200 participants. Primarily, it wants to attract teachers who can learn about human rights education from different perspectives; however, this seems to be the most challenging task. Only a small number of teachers take part in the conference despite a massive promotion and an attractive thematic programme. The excuse is lack of time, or schoolmasters who do not allow the teachers to participate.

Plate 1. Logo of the Human Forum

For me the most questionable challenge (of the Human Forum) is the totally passive attitude of teachers and schoolmasters, I cannot understand it... If we cannot get teachers to a workshop on how to teach critical thinking, I do not know how much more we can do... We do not need to persuade ourselves.... I do not think it is fear that stops them coming. It is more unwillingness to do something extra, something more, I don't know. (Z.G., female, 30)

The most important NIOT action in 2017 was the election campaign, noted above, with a number of activities, which attracted new young members to the movement. NIOT got fully involved in the 2017 regional election campaign under the slogan *'Spolu je nás viac'* (Together we are stronger, see Plate 2). The campaign started in spring 2017. A number of activities were organised during the campaign, starting with the formulation of a manifesto in spring 2017:

Hatred makes headlines. But people in this region make a different story. Common people make stories full of positive activities that stand against intolerance or corruption.

We want to live in our region and to enjoy it. To have a good job, a happy family and space for personal development. We do not want to silently tolerate any iniquity that some people living here have to face. We believe that no person is alone, but part of a community that cares about him/her and about the whole region. We do not need to have same opinions, but we are unified in the statement that no one can be persecuted.

We believe that change can be done where people of the region live. Together with you we want to stop hatred, the growth of radical opinions, discrimination and corruption and to create a safe and open place for living.

Regional elections are the moment when we make the future of our region. We decide about who (and how) will govern schools, hospitals, culture and roads, and work on a good and safe life for the people in the region.

You are the ones who can make a difference. Vote for change. Together we are stronger.

Plate 2. Logo of the campaign Together we are stronger

An important part of the campaign was to mobilise voters from small villages and towns of the region. Two volunteers – 'A Little Cynic' and a cameraman made a journey of more than a month across the region called (Ne)tárajštreka and created 13 videos from various, often the most marginalised, parts of the region, which were made public on the campaign website (www.spolujenasviac.sk).

The campaign culminated with an anti-fascist march on 10 October 2017, prior to the November regional elections (See Plate 3 and Plate 4).

Plate 3: Picture from an anti-fascism march, October 2017. Photo: Alexandra Bitusikova

Plate 4: Picture from an anti-fascism march, October 2017. Photo: Alexandra Bitusikova

Its motto was: 'Let us show together that fascism does not have any place here!' and symbols used in the campaign clearly labelled its agenda as anti-Nazi (see Plate 5).

Plate 5: An anti-fascism sign used in the campaign

The regional elections on 4 November 2017 brought victory of a democratic candidate and caused a total defeat of the Neo-Nazi governor (although he is still a MP). Respondents felt that the actions of NIOT had been important in bring this about:

> I think that NIOT did excellent work in the mobilisation campaign before the elections – I think it was one of the main reasons why so many people came to vote... At the start of NIOT I had a feeling that it was just activities for us, we met with friends and talked about what we knew, but now I can see that the community of the people more or less involved is growing and is very diverse... (Z.G., female, 30)

3.6 Conflicts: barriers to activism

The interviews carried out with young people also revealed some barriers that might prevent young people from becoming interested and active in public affairs. Two main reasons were usually mentioned: a general lack of interest among the public and deep distrust in formal institutions (including lack of interest within the family); and education.

> I would say that the main barrier to activism is lack of engagement. Oeople are losing hope. They say nothing will change. They do not trust anyone in politics, in media.
> And if I address someone – 'come and help', the answer is 'why should I?' (A.T., female, 18)

> I think the vast majority of people do not care, they are totally indifferent. They show some interest before the elections and they make decisions (who to vote for) following their emotions, but not rational facts. And that´s it. (M.D., male, 25)

Some respondents stressed an intergenerational conflict and claimed that lack of interest among young people comes from the family and home. They pointed out apathy especially in the age category of their parents and grandparents which may be explained as the legacy of communism ('why should we be active? Nothing will change anyway').

> I think apathy comes from home... and then young people have many other opportunities for spending their leisure time today...People are not interested in

politics, it is their last preference, they would rather do something else, more entertaining. (A.T., female, 18)

The generation of my parents... they usually want to have 'peace', they experienced various coups, went through it themselves and now if they want to talk about it (extremism), let us discuss it in a pub, but otherwise leave me alone... (M.C., male, 31)

I think older people do not trust anyone and have given up on social change. As they grew up during the former regime, they are conformists, they were used to speaking differently at home and in public..., it is a sort of hypocrisy which still exists here. (M.Z., male, 35)

Education or problems in education were identified as the most important challenge in combating extremism, radicalisation, racism, antisemitism, xenophobia or intolerance by the vast majority of respondents. Several points of criticism were mentioned frequently: lack of critical thinking and an old fashioned way of teaching, based on memorising; unpreparedness of teachers to reflect on the realities of today (including poor understanding of social media); or history education that stops in the period of the WW2.

I see the biggest problem in the area of critical thinking. Students – including university students - accept the first information they read as the only one and the true one. (L.K., female, 35)

Young people are used just to taking what is offered to them by school. They are taught how to learn, but not how to think – education and critical thinking go in totally different directions... (D.I., female, 20).

I think education is a problem. I do not remember having any lessons on the history of the last 50 years, which is a big mistake. Why should I know about every day of Lenin´s life or Hitler´s if I do not know at all what was happening in the 1990s, all those awful things during the Mečiar´s government... I have to study about it myself, but not everyone wants to do it... (D.I., female, 20)

4. Conclusions

The story of the 2013 regional elections in the Banská Bystrica region show that long term unresolved socio-economic problems specific for a region can contribute to social tensions. Consequent frustration of the public also expressed in electoral apathy gives opportunities for the success of radical right-wing political parties (Buček and Plešivčák, 2017: 627). Moreover, according to the index DEREX (Demand For Right-Wing Extremism) constructed by the think-tank Political Capital Institute and based on the international comparative European Social Survey in 2013, 13% of Slovak respondents could be considered as potential supporters of right-wing extremist parties. This number was the highest from neighbouring Visegrad countries (it was 12% in Hungary and 8% in both Poland and the Czech Republic in 2013); the same index for Austria and France in 2015 was 5% and for Germany only 2%. Slovakia belongs to those European countries in which the demand for right-wing extremist politics seems to be an important factor in political arena (Velšic, 2017: 5-6).

This case study documents the story of the NIOT platform in the city of Banská Bystrica that originated as a protest movement against the result of regional elections in the Banská Bystrica self-governing region in 2013. The story of NIOT from its inception at the beginnning of 2014 until subsequent regional elections in 2017 show that civil participation can contribute to breaking civic apathy and motivate the wider community to engage in resistance activities against intolerance and public silence. NIOT can serve as an example of informal grassroots activism strengthening civil society in a postsocialist city, and as an example of civic self-organisation consisting of collective action mobilised without the involvement of a formal organisation and with more individual civil engagement that constitutes one of the common types of activism in Central and Eastern Europe (Bitušíková, 2015: 127).

In our case study, we concentrated on young people involved in the NIOT platform. These people are very active and aware of the importance of civic and political engagement. We are aware that they are not representative of all young people in the country or in the region, and their interests in and engagement with public issues are not common for majority of citizens incuding young people. In the 1990s, Lijphardt pointed out that although political equality and political participation belong to basic democratic ideals, political participation in reality is very unequal which, consequently, leads to unequal influence of social actors and an erosion of participatory democracy (Lijphart, 1997: 1). From various theoretical and empirical studies, we know that unequal distribution of civic participation has negative consequences for politics and reproduction of social inequalities. Gyárfášová and Bútorová stress that the problem of Slovak democracy is not only unequal involvement of citizens in public issues but also negative trends in civic participation. Based on data from representative surveys from the years 1994, 2004 and 2008, they claim that over this period, the circle of active citizens actually narrowed and, by the end of this period respondents declared less aspiration to participate in public issues than at its start (Gyárfášová and Bútorová, 2010: 484).

However, the short history of NIOT from 2014, the defeat of right-wing extremist Marian Kotleba in regional elections in the Banská Bystrica self-governing region in November 2017, but also successful civil movements, pre-election campaigns and various mobilisation activities prior to parliamentary elections in both 1998 and 2010, demonstrate changing forms of civic participation. Although young people in Slovakia (and citizens generally) are reluctant to join political parties and more permanent structures, when the country faces undemocratic tendencies, they are willing to organise and engage in public issues, albiet preferring to do so through unconventional forms (participation in protest, strikes and demonstrations, activism via the Internet). This proposition is being tested in reality right now; in the course of writing this report (March-April 2018) many thousands of Slovaks were marching across the country 'for a decent Slovakia'. The protests were prompted by the murders of a journalist Jan Kuciak, and his fiancée, Martina Kusnirova, both 27. Ján Kuciak investigated ties between top politicians in Slovakia and Italy's Ndrangheta organised crime group. The demonstrations rapidly swelled into mass protests against the corruption and arrogance of the government ('Young Slovaks Show Extremism in Europe Can Be Defied') and forced the resignation of Prime Minister Robert Fico and Minister of Interior Robert Kaliňák.

The examples of civic and political participation discussed above and its shift towards unconventional forms also demonstrate the fact that civic participation is, to a large extent, situationally conditioned. It is probably the price we are paying in the situation when competition between ideas and solutions have practically disappeared from political life.

5.   Future analysis

We identified a few themes encountered during our analysis of the NIOT movement that could be of interest to some other case studies within PROMISE WP6 clusters. These are mainly topics of education and low-quality of education, educational programmes emphasising positive values, tolerance, diversity, respect and preventing extremism and intolerance, civic activities, intergenerational relations and conflicts, sources of extremism, activities against radicalism and extremism, youth mobilisation (also mobilisation through social media), youth identity, critical thinking, cultural differences, intercultural experience and living abroad, impacts of globalisation, job perspectives, problems with corruption, etc.

Regarding the analysis of quantitative data sets, for our case study, we found as very useful, a substantial proportion o of the variables for country reports based on Eurobarometer, specifically the variables from the Perception of opportunity/constraints part including: satisfaction with democracy satisfaction; expectations regarding the economic situation, employment situation, marginalisation of youth due to crisis, education system and its adaptation to labour, directions things are going in the country and EU, perspectives for the next generation, variables on personal situation like life satisfaction, personal expectations regarding life in general, job situation, financial situation, confidence in future). All the variables describing trust in institutions, and also variables mapping civic engagement (memberships), formal political participation including electoral participation, and activism in non-formal political activities were also useful and merit further attention in conjunction with findings from the qualitative reports.

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Appendix: table of respondents´ socio-demographic data

	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Ethnicity (self declared)	Educational status	Employment status	Family status	Place of residence
1.	A.C.	F	22	Slovak	Secondary (grammar school)	Freelance photographer	Single	Bratislava
2.	L.K.	F	35	Slovak	University (PhD)	University teacher	Single	Banská Bystrica
3.	J.S.	M	31	Slovak	University	IT sector	Single	Banská Bystrica
4.	Z.S.	F	26	Slovak	University	NGO	Single	Banská Bystrica
5.	M.C.	M	31	Slovak	University	NGO	Single	Banská Bystrica
6.	M.Z.	M	35	Slovak	University	Self-employed	Single	Banská Bystrica
7.	A.T.	F	18	Slovak	Elementary	Student (grammar school)	Single	Banská Bystrica
8.	R.S.	M	27	Slovak	University (Bc.)	Self-employed	Single	Banská Bystrica
9.	O.D.	M	27	Slovak	University	PhD student	Single	Banská Bystrica
10	E.Š.	F	32	Slovak	University (PhD)	Self-employed	Single	Banská Bystrica
11	A.M.	F	22	Slovak	Secondary (grammar school)	University student	Single	Banská Bystrica
12	J.R.	M	19	Slovak	Elementary	Student (grammar school)	Single	Brezno
13	V.S.	F	31	Slovak	University (PhD)	NGO	Single	Banská Bystrica
14	L.D.	M	23	Slovak	University	Unemployed	Single	Banská Bystrica
15	M.L.	M	32	Slovak	University (PhD)	University teacher	Married	Banská Bystrica
16.	M.D.	M	25	Slovak	University	Banking sector	Single	Budapest
17.	M.B.	M	27	Slovak	University	Graphic designer	Single	Banská Bystrica
18.	D.I.	F	20	Slovak	Secondary (grammar school)	University student	Single	Revúca
19.	Z.G.	F	30	Slovak	Completed university	City council	Married	Banská Bystrica

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Struggling against hegemony: rural youth in Seto country Estonia

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Executive summary:

The young people in the Seto ethnic region in South Eastern Estonia experience conflicts in relation to the hegemonic role that Seto culture has taken in the region and that is felt to have superseded those for whom Seto heritage is secondary or unimportant. The political, cultural and social rejection that the young people report has framed their lives in ways that make them feel unwelcome, and labels them as less valuable, even celebrating their migration. The division between those locals supporting Seto heritage and those indifferent or opposed to its centrality in local life has effects in the economic opportunities (funding and employment) and cultural choice (most, especially the more visible events are Seto heritage related), and the latter choices, in particular, feed into the social division and emerging class lines. The lack of willingness to participate, partly deriving from lack of choice, is carving out a new lower class identity to which the Seto activists allude when explaining the non-presence of many young locals.

For the local youth, the choice is one of non-involvement and removing their more sought after free time activities, and, later, migration. Those who have stayed do make an effort to carve out their own opportunities but have experienced rejection and appear to have resigned to this reality. Together with recent changes and liking the region for its peace and quiet, the potential for retaining the local connections, including with the more Seto-minded peers and sparking a light that would force the Seto heritage activists to reconsider their exclusive policies and discourses, is still there and could possibly increase with the new amalgamated Setomaa municipality even though this could also simply increase the power of the heritage-based Setoness. Awareness arising from this project might, however, gently coax the key decision makers towards a more inclusive approach.

Contents

1. Introduction

The group of young people chosen for this case study lives or is related to the South Eastern corner of Estonia on the border between Estonia and Russia. As their conflict arises from the specifics of the local history and socio-politics, it warrants a brief overview of the background and sources of this divergence.

The region has over the last 25 years become recognised as the indigenous area of the Setos, a historically unique ethnic group with notable history between the two countries. The Seto, historically seen as backward, uneducated, un-Estonian, overly religious (and Orthodox[1]) etc have become highly celebrated in the country for their difference but also for being one of the few remaining groups with clearly unique local living customs. However, its success today also has political beginnings: the Seto movement (Jääts, 1998) started from the movement to reinstate the Tartu border agreement which Russia unilaterally rejected after 1991, turning the borderline created in the 1950s between Russian and the Estonian Soviet republics into a *de facto* border between the two new countries.

As the political hopes of restoring the original border crumbled, the unity that this aim had created amongst the Seto and the rightfulness of their claim (and its significance for the rest of Estonia) for the part of their territory now in Russia along with the ancestral graves and property, had brought the Seto to the centre of attention of the rest of the country. Their pride grew, having suffered from derision and ridicule throughout the 20th century due to their perceived backwardness, and relatively lower levels of education and poverty. The region, along with the rest of peripheral South East Estonia, is still relatively poor with higher than average unemployment and high rates of subsistence benefits per inhabitant - currently even higher than ever before during the independence, in contrast with the country's average (SW42, Statistics Estonia, 2017). Differently from many other peripheral regions, however, the Seto culture was seen to potentially provide an income to the region, which, along with the rest of rural Estonia, had lost the vast majority of agricultural jobs. The Seto started receiving state support for their cultural activities under the auspices of the Setomaa Cultural Programme. In addition to the locally substantial funding received from this body, local governments were often focussing their financial attention on various Seto-related activities and constructions, and local businesses oriented themselves to products bearing either some sort of links to local traditions, or at least, insignia of the Seto culture. Other recent funding bodies such as the Setomaa Development Programme and Piiriveere Leader, whilst mostly supporting simply local entrepreneurial initiatives, have also demonstrated to either fund initiatives that can be presented as relevant to the Seto culture (half of the projects SDP supported in 2015 were directly related to the Seto traditional culture) and/or have allegedly been acquired by the relatively limited active Seto 'elite' – people representing, working on, or protecting the Seto heritage culture.

The Seto cultural elite comprises of by far the most visible people in the area enjoying a considerable symbolic and social capital (see also Bourdieu, 1986), as well as various perks that come with this status. Their presence is visible in the public arena, for example the local and national media[2], and in

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[1] The specific kind of religion is in Estonian case less important than the fact that religiosity has much capture at all, as Estonia has, over the 20th century, evolved into one of the least religious countries, especially amongst the young people (80% of the 16-29 year olds declare 'no religious affiliation' in the European Social Survey 2014-2016, Bullivant, 2018).

[2] See, for example this front page from a recent newspaper reports on a Seto traditional Easter event.: https://www.setomaa.ee/kogukond/docs/file/ajalehed/Setomaa_ajaleht_341.pdf

terms of a more general national reputation, for example, the Seto representatives are invited to nationally prominent events such as president's receptions events to entertain international and national dignitaries and frequent events across other Finno-Ugric countries (primarily in Russia) funded by various grants. Whether or not this also means economic advantage in any other ways is less obvious, however, their assumed access to various funds is perceived as problematic. Some of the members of this group are the *nouveau* Seto; people who have moved to the area because of the appeal of this traditional culture, folk music and customs, and the idea of wholesome rural idyll, and have not grown up there or have no earlier links to the area.

From this focus on the Seto cultural activities arise several issues to which local people respond according to their structural position, and which have triggered various social categorisations that impact different groups differently. The inhabitants of the region are far from homogenous ethnico-politically, and the increasing dominance of the Seto culture is not welcomed by many locals, no matter whether they consider themselves Seto and practice some of the Seto customs, or not. They have grown unhappy with the presence and centrality of this in their lives and do not recognise the rural idyll that appeals to some of those who have moved to the area more recently.

Politically, the area has been prone to rather vocal and angry rifts between political allegiances, with fighting within the local governments for power and accusations of corruption as well as evidence of inability to cooperate within as well as across various divisions. Furthermore, the Seto activities, called *setotamin*e (a neologism roughly translatable as Seto-making) by some of the critics and disgruntled locals, are often seen as interfering with sensible decision making by the local politicians, and, in some cases, can be demonstrated to challenge the range of available local activities (e.g., Annist, 2011). 2017 was a particularly tumultuous year because of the national municipal reform. Postponed over several decades, it was then that the changes were finally pushed through. Until 2017, the region was split into four rural municipalities and two counties. During the negotiations of amalgamations that the municipalities had to go through, two of the councils preferred the option of joining with larger or more urban municipalities outside of the Seto region. As an example, the Karitsa[3]. municipal council split unequally between those wishing to join the neighbouring non-Seto municipality and those who wished to stay with other Seto municipalities. As nationally the idea of Seto unity has been highly appealing to the government and parliament which includes a number of Seto activists and lobbyists as well as other sympathisers, after several rounds of failed negotiations as well as a curious variety of local referenda, the councils wishing to join municipalities outside the symbolic Seto borders were defeated and the Setomaa municipality was born. It is now led by 15 councillors, most of them from the same electoral union (local party) *Ühine Setomaa* (United/Joint Setomaa) with not just political unity but the Seto culture and heritage at its heart.

The political changes and the position of the culture locally run parallel to socio-economic processes. The local facilities have been in flux over the last decade; nurseries and schools have given way to care homes for the elderly. The main reason for such changes include on the one hand the declining and aging population and slow reduction of local inhabitants as opposed to summer dwellers, and secondly, various state level reforms which have pushed for the amalgamations of municipalities and schools in particular. The age group 15-29 comprised of about 650 individuals out of a 3,600 strong population. Migration from the region has been notable for many years, and Võru county, where

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[3] Names of the municipalities and villages in the Seto region are anonymised to protect the identity of the respondents.

most of the data for this case study comes from, leads, in particular, to the numbers of people who have left the region for work abroad (43% of the pendulum migrants from there go abroad, 41% work elsewhere in Estonia and only 16% go to Tallinn and the surrounding county, otherwise a great draw for such migrants from most of the rest of Estonia (Tiit and Servinski, 2011).

The division between the Seto activists, sympathisers or simply those proud of their heritage and unbothered by its increased visibility and centrality on the one hand, and those resentful, disappointed, indifferent or perturbed by its role in today's Setomaa on the other, have an undercurrent of stratification running through them. Whilst Estonia has only recently started seeing the emergence of classes (see also Helemäe and Saar, 2012), this division has become part of the rearrangement of the symbolic, cultural and partly also economic capital. Whilst such losses can be conceptualised as a form of economic dispossession (Harvey, 2007, pp. 159-65), the Seto case could answer whether this might also combine with cultural dispossession (Creed, 2011) and social dispossession (Annist, 2015).

The region has also been symbolically divided according to its loss of heritage, and in contrast to traditional Seto homesteads, prayer houses and churches stand Soviet period buildings, both large scale state or collective farm constructions, mostly abandoned and towering the landscape, as well centralised villages built to house the workforce for those farms. These villages include 2-3 storey apartment blocks with roughly 10-20 apartments in each; some villages would have just 2-3 houses like that, but larger villages could have 8 or more. A centralised village would often include shop(s), a nursery, school, doctor's office, municipal offices and other conveniences. These buildings as well as their inhabitants are seen to epitomise a type of hybridity considered by the local Seto 'elite' to be the sites of a problematic lack of Seto commitment where a non-Seto new generation is raised.

Combined with the overall picture of disappearing jobs and services in the countryside and emerging class-relations, permeated with assumptions about cultural activities, the region has experienced tensions between the culture-centred Setos and those distancing themselves from this or even opposing it. In this context, the youth find themselves categorised according to not only their own preferences and judged against the regional identity politics, but also their family's social position. Whilst still forming their own understanding of where they belong, the youth are at the receiving end of negative identity politics which 'purifies' a region symbolically for a local minority group. The Seto case study can, therefore, be expected to offer some insight into a particular kind of cultural conflict, the creation of identities as a minority or a majority, and its juxtapositions with class-making amidst national discussions about the role of culture and the economy. The following research questions will be addressed in the following analysis:

- What kinds of stigma are created in the conditions of new and celebrated cultural minority hegemony?
- How do the non-minority young people experience these stigmata and how do they rationalise these?
- What kinds of obstructions and loss of opportunities do they consider to have been triggered in this process of stigmatisation or have experienced personally to result from this?
- What are their own responses in practice or in attitudes to living with such reality and what meaning do they see these responses to have?

2. Methods

The Seto case study was based on the recorded and/or noted semi-structured interviews with young people primarily in Karitsa. municipality but also in Tartu and Tallinn where some of the young people had moved. Further, context of the case has been obtained during long-term participant observation in the Seto region and from background interviews with older individuals in Saadoja municipality and in Karitsa municipality. Conversations and interviews with key players in local life, participating in meetings discussing youth related issues, and observations in relevant Facebook groups were another data source for contextualising the situation and/or the opinions of the youth.

The conversations were recorded whenever possible but in many spontaneous situations, they would have been hindered by such interventions. Those conversations were reconstructed afterwards from memory. Some pictures were taken during the participant observations of the youth, but some of these situations were awkward: some young people did pose for pictures during the activities but glanced uncomfortably when I took out my camera any other time. Therefore, additional pictures have been obtained from Facebook posts to clarify presence or absence of some individuals but not used otherwise in the analysis. The fieldwork for contextualising the issues in the studied municipality and gaining access has taken about 90 days between March and July 2017; fieldwork specifically focusing on the youth lasted 35 days between June and August 2017, in October 2017 and in January 2018, in addition, specific Facebook groups have been followed since March 2017 but due to the sporadic nature of such research, it is hard to put these into numbers. Observing the Facebook groups was useful to provide information both about the types of events the youth participated in as well as the topics that appeared to trigger interest and conflict.

The interviews were carried out with 20 individuals (between 14 and 29 years old, see Appendix) that can be divided roughly to two groups – those under 16 and those over 25. It appeared that the 16-25 group, possibly for educational reasons, was the least attainable locally: local schools are all for up to 16 year olds, after that age nearly all children join schools away from the area and their friends groups and activities appeared to have also shifted. Those over 25 seemed to be in a different place in their lives and were far more approachable and willing or able to be interviewed. . Had more in this age group been willing to be interviewed, more substantial and further ranging information might have been obtained. However, more than half of those approached, whilst agreeing first with the mediating acquaintance that they were interested, did not, in fact, return emails or calls and, thus, it was eventually not possible to get more interviewees from this group.

The interviews lasted between 15 minutes and 1.5 hours, with the average of 38 minutes. All the interviews with younger youth were less than 35 minutes long, and two were very brief: one young man who I thought to have actually created more of a rapport already during the participant observation clearly disliked having to give answers to any questions from the start, and no matter which topic I tried to introduce, his replies were one syllable. Another young man, although not trying to make a point of derailing the interview, also did not expand on any topic. Many of the youth gave "I don't know" replies to questions that had nothing to do with knowledge, and perhaps the set-up at school was contributing to this. All the interviews with the older youth lasted an hour or more.

Originally, I had hoped that the youngsters were accessible via the Karitsa municipality youth centre, the head of which was supportive of the research and suggested it would be easy to get the youth to

talk. She proposed to conduct group interviews. Before taking this any further, I suggested to get to know the youth during a day out with a fun activity they might enjoy, and the youth worker identified a 'survival course' as something the youngsters would be more interested in than, for instance, a photography course. During the course, which lasted a day and a half, it became very clear that a group interview would not offer any results as the main form of communication in group situations was mockery and even confrontation of the adult leading the survival course, plus mild bantering with the youth worker. Whilst I was not seen to be a similar potential target and during various games, I felt that I was seen to be part of the group; I was certainly also treated with cautiousness. Similar trips away might have had the effect of allowing me to get closer to the youth but nothing else similar was organised during the time I was there. In group situations, the youth's main bonding strategy was teasing each other and "taking the mickey" out of any serious topic – something which convinced also the youth worker that finding a way to interview the youth separately might be a better approach. We advertised a photography competition with prizes to various free time activities that the youth worker suggested would be popular, and were hoping for active participation. Only two youth participated and were also interviewed at the youth centre. It was also expected that not all youth go to the youth centre, and indeed, two of the youth at school reported that they never go there. On the other hand, neither the youth centre nor the school were providing access to those youth who did not participate and did not go to school in the centralised village where the school was located. This was an important consideration as the choice of school has been a contentious issue and partly reflects the different attitudes towards the municipal leaders that parents hold.

Further interviews were eventually secured when the youth worker came up with the idea that the youth will certainly be willing to be interviewed if they can miss school. With the approval of the director of the school and the teachers, I interviewed another nine local teenagers (aged between 14 and 16) at school during the school hours, in an empty classroom. Some of the interviews were unexpectedly short and taciturn, and with one of the boys turning to the strategy of one-syllable answers clearly to make a point that I cannot make him say anything and/or that he is not interested in any of the questions, despite the fact that these were about him. This age group, therefore, proved to be quite a challenge both for creating rapport and for interviewing. During participant observations, light-heartedness and ability to tease on the one hand, and to take a joke on the other, were very central in their conversations and mutuality, making it difficult to approach any topic of problems and dislikes they experienced as a group or as individuals.

The remaining interviews were carried out as follows: three in other places in Estonia (Tallinn and Tartu) with young women who had moved there to work or study and two young women and three young men were interviewed in a café in Atsi village (on separate occasions). One interview was carried out over Skype as the person was not available any other way.

One of the main ethical issues was receiving consent from the parents as the children were either not interested enough or their relationship with the parents close enough to approach them with this request. This was eventually overcome with the help of the youth worker. The other potentially problematic issue was the location of the interviews with the older youth in the South East of the country - they all agreed to meet in a café in the centre of one of the most actively Seto villages. The café itself is run by two Seto activists and in many ways, represents the problem that those young people perceived to be central in Seto country. However, as they themselves suggested this location (it is, admittedly, one of the only, if not the main public meeting place and they might have perceived

it as such rather than as the 'enemy base'), I did everything to ensure that we were away from the earshot of the staff or other guests – three of the interviews were carried out in a separate room with the door closed and two outside. The interviewees did not appear to be inhibited at all by the fact that they shared this space with people whose likes they criticised, which may suggest that the animosity is greater in words directed at a stranger such as a researcher than how it is presented in daily interactions. In order to make sure that the interviewees were aware of the potentially problematic situation, I did raise this with them at the beginning of the interview but this was met with indifference or even certain giggling, suggesting, and perhaps, that they were perfectly aware of entering 'enemy' territory but possibly saw this as a challenge to the opponents, or an opportunity to make their views known indirectly, without confronting the other side. In the case of at least one interviewee, the hosts were aware of their critical stance but did not show their unease in any way; on the contrary, they mentioned that they had been repeatedly approached by one of the hosts who is also politically active to join their party.

The period of fieldwork was possibly one of the most volatile and confrontational of many years, as the push for amalgamation triggered both high attendance and interest as well as (verbal) conflicts during Karitsa municipality's council meetings. People came together also for protests and participated in a number of referenda and other surveys organised either by the state or by the councils. It is, therefore, the most likely period to have surfaced polarisation in ways that would not have been obvious and may have aggravated some people's opinions. On the other hand, methodologically, this is hardly a problem as it is the nature of the case studies to concentrate on the specific and unusual cases to highlight particular human interactions. This reality, however, may have also had the opposite effect in some cases and might have potentially made some people tired of the topic and defiantly disinterested, which could affect the data. The older youth were clearly engaged and interested in the topic. Only the younger group were deeply disinterested, and it is unlikely that they had more exposure to those topics than other groups. Considering that this is exactly the opposite to the current regional climate and expectations for the local future, both discursively as well as in various practical steps taken, this disinterest in itself constitutes a stigma that these youth are identified with.

The interviews were transcribed and analysed with NVivo and the following themes emerged as most central: distancing from the Seto culture; unfairness of the funding decisions/access to opportunities; obstructions to involvement; lack of interest; migration. The fieldnotes were scanned with such keywords as "funding", "*setotamine*", "youth/young", "opportunities", "centralised villages" etc as well as the names of some places, events and individuals to provide context and links to other topics to form extended cases with greater analytical power.

3. Key Findings

3.1 Sites, agents/agencies and forms of conflict in Setomaa

3.1.1 Conflict and hegemony

The Seto represent a curious example of a minority that has become so successful and dominant, and so central in building the local identity that it has created a new minority within. It has become a central identifier in the region in a uniform way locally, but perhaps more importantly nationally and symbolically, it has become a hegemony; furthermore, a hegemony with which some - estimated half

of the local people – identify their disgruntlements. It has also and crucially for this study, taken on the function of a tool to restructure the society in the situation of new class emergence. This is further aggravated by the institutional support the Seto culture has received over the last 15 years. As Fischer (1983) points out, funding bodies are the key institutions in both, the reproduction as well as the production of cultural hegemony. The awareness, but also dislike of such reality, documented for example in Annist (2009; 2013), has been present for many years, trickling down from families to the young people. Not only do such families, left aside in this restructured society, see this to epitomise an unfair and undeserved capital acquired by some Seto, they also recognise that it has deprived the rest of the region and population of something important; and has switched the local focus politically from local people to only select people or areas which have associations with Seto activities.

> …there was this support for the large families – we knew that parents do the Seto things [get it]. Who sang in the [Seto] choir – then that family got [the money]. Then you could just see why and where the money went. (Siiri, older youth)

> See, it's different in Kõrbõ village. There is nothing here. This is why we have been given the role of an orphan. When they build a bus stop house in [Atsi village], ours can leave as it is as not many tourists come there. Like I found recently that there are these new village signs, with Seto pattern. They could have done that in Kõrbõ village too, why not? Would be nice, right? But no. So such small details that no one else notices, but [I] myself look and see how Kõrbõ village has been left aside. (Meeli, older youth)

> Seto is for them, well, they see this as a source of income and how to get by here in the periphery. I have nothing against this, each can find a way to cope, but there is a limit to this. You cannot impose that this is the only way to get by. So this is why certain groups here cannot get along here… (Marko, older youth)

The sites for such conflicts have changed over time. One of the earliest examples of this I encountered in the field was in 2000s during a Seto event in a village (see also Annist, 2013). I participated in a traditional open-air village party, a *kirmask*. Some of the people at the party were non-Seto, some were returnees after years spent studying outside Setomaa, and some were locals known in the Seto heritage setting. Many were wearing Seto costumes or parts of costumes. A group of younger people were playing *karmoškas*, Russian button accordions. *Leelo*[4] singing sprang up spontaneously here and there, and a few foreigners with some exotic instruments were making the environment even folksier. In the opposite corner of the party grounds, a group of local youth set up their own alternative musical environment – with a CD-player and pop music. They played it loud enough to disturb some of the Seto music and made a few attempts to bring their music more to the centre of attention. Although their attempts were occasionally successful, control remained in the hands of the Setos and

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[4] Polyphonic singing tradition (on the UNESCO intangible cultural heritage list since 2009) with one lead singer delivering a verse line followed by a choir joining in for the final syllables to repeat the whole line. Whilst lyrics are repeated, borrowed and amended across time and geographic locations, the lead singers do also make up whole songs on the spot. The choirs primarily consist of women only but there are also some all-male choirs. At parties, *leelo*-singing is accessible to the audience as well who can join in or suggest songs. The *leelo*-choirs are present at most public events in the area, performing wearing the full folk costume. The pejorative term *setotamine* is often attached to the singing and presence of the choirs.

their fans. Eventually, leelo singing won the ground and the local youngsters returned to the opposite part of the field. As I was, at the time, studying the Seto rather than those not those uninterested or opposed to Setoness, I left with the former. However, one of my first interviewees of the older youth group in 2017 was a young man, who had been part of this group as a teenager. He recalled the event, although not in great detail as he said he had been 'too drunk' and too interested in the pretty girls to remember much else. He did mention his anger about the events, however:

> After they 'sang us off', I just went around and wanted to kick someone so bad. Had anyone come near me, I would have. Yeah, I was drunk too. Not something I do anymore but boy I wanted to that day. (Indrek, older youth)

Interestingly, one of the Seto activists commented to me in passing at the time that a traditional Seto party would have been exactly like that – everyone doing their own thing without being bothered by the neighbouring singing or dancing 'corner.' Of course, this could be interpreted as an attempt to demonstrate the all-inclusive, permissive nature of the Seto culture. It might equally be seen as the ultimate demonstration of the success of Seto hegemony, so successful that any attempt at resistance would simply become incorporated into the schema of the dominant culture. From the point of view of the local youngsters, it was another experience of exclusion, as the party grounds remained dominated by the folk event. It was during those years in the 2000s when most of the older interviewees were teenagers and had experienced similar 'invasions' where Seto visibility was rapidly increasing. Although none of the other interviewees had a similar recollection of direct attempts at confronting the Seto dominance, other direct conflicts described in various recollections included tearing down or soiling the ads for Seto events in the village and gate crashing events. One of the Seto activists recognises the danger signs:

> [We are] raising enemies in our midst, people should not be pressurized…[Some activists] have not accepted their own people, we are scaring off the new generation. (Oskar, Seto activist)

Most Seto activists, however, put this down to the unwillingness of the remaining locals not involved in organising to pay the price for the tickets, and expecting that everything is offered to 'them' for free.

3.1.2 Political obstructions

The more recent conflicts are related – or are felt to be related – to the position of, on the one hand, the Seto culture has in the region, but on the other hand, also the Seto 'elite'; the cultural, symbolic and social capital-rich group of people who are seen to get all the funds for all the projects, whilst the rest of the population and issues suffer.

As one example, Siiri described the attempt her and her peer group to develop an area in Atsi village near the lake.

> We had a big group something like 6-7 years ago, we still get on. We went to the council to get that lake sorted – to clean it up. We did all the work, got the plan on the paper in a really detailed way and everything, we had these big plans how to develop it, and so we presented it to them. And they just rejected it. They said they

have other priorities….That really threw us, we were so ready – but they just rejected it. It was one of the reasons for bitterness of the young people towards the municipality. (Siiri, older youth)

Similar experiences were reported by Ergo (older youth) whose friends' group similarly had put forward a proposal to clear a spot for benches and a grill near Kõrbõ village. They had experienced similar rejection, and Ergo's take on this was very similar to that of Siiri's:

> They just don't care about anything else than their Seto issues. You go there with your proposal and they just see this as trouble.

The same events were also recalled by Meeli who belonged to the same friend's group.

The political conflict involves also mild, subtle pressure not to have the opposing views even on the social media, as Indrek (older youth) experienced when expressing his critical views on Facebook:

> I: But then I pulled out as there was so much of this spitting around…
>
> A: How do you mean, someone responded to you publicly in this way?
>
> I: No, personal calls were made and I was asked why am I doing this and…as if I cannot.

The same young man was approached by the Seto representatives to join the political party, which he rejected. He did not join the political opposition either, feeling that he is not around enough as a pendulum migrant – but he emphasised several times 'The time might come [that I will join the opposition]'.

3.1.3 Social and cultural dispossession

Seto culture is, on the one hand, something that dominates the everyday life of the locals. The monopolisation of what Seto is by the Seto heritage activists has restricted access to defining it to those not clearly engaging with the heritage side of Setoness. Living legitimately as Seto within the sphere that these young people inhabit is, somehow, constantly in doubt and has contributed to their removing themselves from the competition. This cultural dispossession, to borrow a concept from an ethnography on Bulgarian peasants loss of access to their identity as culturally grounded (see Creed, 2011) is coupled with certain cynicism that the greater access to cultural capital does not derive from the greater knowledge of Seto culture of the Seto activists:

> Around Atsi village, I have noticed that paasapäev (local holiday), a really important day for the Seto…but the 'big Seto' [elite] around here do not participate, they are not interested…so it raises the question what is it that this is about actually? If it is so important for the community and the people, how come it can be ignored like this? Yet [folk] costumes are put on, and [they] go to some Udmurtia to sing and represent the Seto abroad…This creates bitterness towards these people. They demonstrate they are Seto when it suits them and when it is useful for them. (Siiri, older youth)

Siiri (older youth) worked at the museum in Atsi village during the summer. She described how she kept seeing the tourist buses going into the village centre just across the field, but never coming to the museum. One day, the mystery was solved:

Then one day we had this group [of tourists] whose guide was from somewhere else in South Estonia so she took the group to the museum – an unusual event. When Laine [an adult staff member at the museum] asked [what had they had heard about the museum at the village centre], they told us that [the Seto activists there] had expressed the attitude that – oh, well, there is nothing interesting at the museum.

So it really felt they do it for themselves…

The same view of 'everyone for themselves' was repeated in other interviews and conversations. But people clearly recognised the selective nature of this – Seto culture allowed more opportunities yet Seto activists were seen not to make an effort to spread their fortune –

Laine asked Eero [a Seto activist] that, you know, otherwise you are always saying Setos and collaboration and…but why are you not collaborating with the museum?

When I asked whether it was felt that joining in and flaunting their own Seto heritage was the solution, most did not feel they even could, or wanted, and many older youth mentioned they had 'drifted away' from 'Seto stuff' (setondus).

I have never done any of those things here, it would really not work to suddenly take it up and start, I don't know, participating in the café days [a two day event every summer where different homesteads open their doors to public and offer meals, often somewhat traditional]. (Riina, older youth)

I am absolutely not interested in the Seto stuff anymore. (Meeli, older youth)

But furthermore, this was not necessarily considered even to be key. I asked Siiri who had given a detailed account of unfairness at the local council funding schemes whether her family might have considered they should send a family member to a leelo choir to increase their chances of getting funds for building a bore well.

Not at all. It was joked instead that one should start getting along with [this or that person] to get the money… (Siiri, older youth)

In other words, the monopolisation was seen to extend further from the cultural sphere into the social sphere, the dispossession taking place, therefore, with both. This is a more generally observable process in rural areas where the fragmentation of social relations has aggravated the misfortunes of a sector of the population (see also Annist, 2015).

For the younger youth, the 'Seto thing' is brushed aside as unimportant. Their whole attitude to Seto issues is more one of rejection and passive distancing rather than openly worded resentment, disappointment and lived struggle that the older youth are describing.

It's pointless, the Seto thing, as there are so few of them. There is no use [for it] for other people… It's a kind of waste of money. (Kaarel, youth at school)

This lack of interest extends to free time activities on offer in the region ('I don't go out here', as Triin and Kaarel explicitly stated). The youngsters plan their free time around 'getaways' and travel away

from the region to various leisure centres. This is also often organised by the youth centre which most of my younger respondents went to. The activities were mostly described as 'just being', hanging out, and planning the next 'getaway'. One of the main locally organised activities and the most popular event for the youth are rally competitions on a field between the Kõrbõ and Atsi villages. This brings together the youth who go to the youth centre and some who go there less often but are friends with those frequenting. Otherwise, non-confrontational and in no way Seto specific events, sometimes funded by different EU bodies, the youth reported how the local police is on the alert in case they would drive onto the roads – the law would forbid that for the under 18 year olds. Problems have been avoided so far, and the youth are quite proud of these occasions and their achievements in speed. More recently (after the end of the fieldwork), the youth centre has also been offering information on courses and organises travel there.

Disregarding these events, youth non-presence at Seto events is problematised by the Seto activists. It is seen as a worrying passivity – but they do not connect this to the lack of opportunities for those uninterested in Seto-centred activities. Instead, they link the lack of Seto mindedness with a general lack of interest and activism. The same view is common amongst the younger Seto-minded people too, most typically stated as: 'They just don't care'. Furthermore, Seto activists neutralise the potential criticism that youth lack of involvement could be seen as with their view that these youngsters are from families that are 'not cultured', have 'no values' and have 'lost their culture'. The interviews I have had with the representatives of the Seto elite demonstrate that they see a link between a lack of keenness in Seto culture and the homes in block houses of the centralised villages. Such homes are seen to not uphold the cultural values enough:

> in those apartment blocks…these people, there was this period where the young decided not to speak Seto to their children… [They] spoke in Seto with the cow but in Estonian with the calf…these houses are characterised by disappointment and bitterness and the sovkhoz time is the ideal they uphold….And now that Seto culture has become visible, something they [in the block houses] used to be ashamed of has become a matter of pride…now they cannot deal with this… (Eero, Seto activist in his early 60s)

The youth are aware of this vision but also what this is implying about the value and socioeconomic position of those not Seto-minded is picked up by the youth:

> They [Seto activists] think they are ultra-cultural people and others are…I don't know, plebs…' (Indrek, older youth)

Or another Estonian local:

> It's like…they try to create some sort of a reserve here where there are all these pure
> Setos and it's actually better if the rest would leave! (Anne, older youth)

A similar sense of feeling rejected by the locals is also reflected in some Facebook rows where people became defensive and some were led to ask 'is this only for the Seto here?' More direct experience of this is described by young parents who have had to face various channelling or imposing forces particularly in relation to local schools.

Kõrbõ village school has then got Seto language. I said: "What is the child doing today, in the present era, with Seto language?!? When everything is in English?!?" [...] My child doesn't need this! They're learning less of something else, right? (Ergo, older youth)

I'd like to show you this conversation [that I had with the council head on Facebook]: he and some others, you know, they wrote that it is better indeed if such mothers [emphasises the derogatory implications of this phrase by facial and body movements] – imagine! – put their children to a non-Seto school! I just could not understand how some public figure can despise other people like this! (Meeli, older youth)

The sense that the Seto culture is so prevalent is also met with a certain mild annoyance by some:

Yes we are Seto but we don't need to…advertise this so much… [...] People don't always want to listen to leelo. Yes, it is the culture [here] but it's not necessary to always stress that one line…I don't feel that I must do something because I am Seto…it does not fit me… (Riina, older youth)

Seto language has not been taught to any of the respondents themselves – this was introduced more recently. But the thought of it is not appealing.

A: Do your parents speak Seto?

Urmas (school youth): Yeap

A: Can you as well?

U: Mkm [No]

A: Was it not taught at school?

U: They started when we were already bigger so we were not taught [the language].

A: Not at all? Would you have liked to [have it taught to you]?

U: No

A: Why not?

U: Not necessary

A: Why not?

U: Just not necessary.

3.2 Consequences and constraints: migration and lack of opportunities

Development of any hegemonies inevitably creates or affirms exclusions. Establishing a cultural hegemony triggers the weakening or omission of alternative versions of local culture; institutionalised activities lead to the success of certain spheres, approaches and values, while alternatives wither.

It is, however, not only the importance of Seto culture that dominates the life of the young locals. It is due to their lack of connection to the Seto culture that is seen to make them part of a social strata that is emerging as lower. It ties in with a similar process going on in the rest of the country, and possibly, more generally in the countries that have started stratifying relatively recently and in

relation to the impact of neoliberal policies and practices on society. The challenge for the youngsters has, therefore, been not simply this environment where a particular culture has become hegemonic and appears to have limited the opportunities locally to what they do not feel they can or want to partake in. The challenge is in the way it is tied in with social hierarchy that places them as not only different, but inferior for the region, as well as socio-economically. The effect of this, whilst also creating resentment and critique amongst the older youth, is most prominently creating passivity. The avenues to this are difficult to grasp but Indrek's (older youth) description offers a revealing take:

> 'A: So why did you give up [on your critique on Facebook]?
>
> I: No I just….I just could not be bothered[5] anymore…all of this is just…too much, I cannot be bothered…I don't…I think [the Seto topic] is already for so many complete bollocks, they know nothing will change…and I personally think it is getting worse or if it is not getting worse then at least nothing is getting better…

The same attitude is reflected in the younger youth complete withdrawal from the topic and their weary lack of interest in anything related to their surrounding cultural revival. Whilst the older youth all expressed negative views on this, the younger youth expressed instead lack of interest and rejection of Seto culture. Several of them say more or less the same thing: 'I don't hate that Seto thing but…'

> We don't talk about the Seto stuff at all. Well, at least we don't talk about this between ourselves; if it comes up [from someone else] then it does… (Triin, younger youth)

Indrek recognises that the ability to celebrate Seto culture – or any culture for that matter – is related to socio-economic circumstances:

> I don't know…when the economic activities are there, yes, then cultural activities work as well but…if people struggle then…yeah, sure you would want to go to a party or burst into singing…' (Indrek, older youth)

Those critical of the Seto emphasis suggest further that the economic opportunities and efforts to create circumstances in which these can arise are omitted in the name of cultural matters. This view, reflected also in the political struggles over the last year, has far reaching consequences. Eventually, such a lack of opportunities locally results in migration, as the older youth are pointing out. Nearly every one of the older youth has either left the region themselves or reports to be the only one in their peer group to still be around. Marko (older youth) laughs that he is 'The only fool who stayed'.

> All those my age have left. The majority have moved away. (Riina, older youth)
>
> …those who have no anchor here, they have left. (Marko, older youth)

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[5] '*Ei viitsi*' is a hard to translate word in Estonian as 'cannot be bothered' does not actually fully convey the array of meanings in it. '*Ei viitsi*' refers to feeling overwhelmed and under-resourced to deal with something as well as feeling that one just does not care about the topic.

'For the young there right now…It's the lack of opportunities….you can say even peripheralization…especially in the smaller places. (Viiu, older youth)

The response of the Seto activists appears to be one of appealing to the 'cultural obligations' of the inhabitants:

Those who leave, they don't recognize you need to work hard to get here… (Eero, Seto activist)

Even the young themselves rationalise these decisions along the lines of worthiness, depending on their own circumstances:

…All the youth who have left, they are mostly those with higher education…and I think this background and this attitude [towards local life] there is thus also very different. They are perhaps happier with their choices [than those left behind], they have had the opportunities… (Viiu, older youth)

3.3 Responses: passivity and disgruntlement

The prevailing response to the reality that youngsters are facing is one of passive rejection or simple airing of disgruntlement. As a group, they have few features in common, not enough to be able to respond with any kind of social mobilisation. In the rare cases that some kind of common identity has emerged (as in the case of Indrek who was trying to organise some people around the identity as non-Seto in the region), this has eventually faded – however, last year's activism over the municipal amalgamations might have planted the seeds to newly found recognition of some kind of common interest. Whether such oppositional identity is useful, remains untainted by various other struggles and lasts, also benefiting the younger generation remains to be seen. None of the respondents had been involved themselves which does suggest a certain bystander attitude from this age group.
The most common response also reflected in the local statistics is migration – whether this is a direct result of the same passive rejection or disgruntlement or simple lack of opportunities to find a suitable job without a particular relation to the Seto issues is, of course, difficult to tell with any certainty.

Most of the younger youth would like to stay or return after their studies. Surrendering to the reality of it being impossible may only come with time, as one of the older youth with such experience described:

I do think I would like to go back…but there is nothing there I could do. So for now it will be the summer home hopefully. (Viiu, older youth)

It appears that the debilitating forces that have come together in this region have left little room for the young to respond in any meaningful way. The positive signs hide in the almost unanimous expression of liking the peace and quiet of where they live but with all the constraints and rejections; this might not be enough to enable the youth uninterested in Seto life to stay and change the circumstances. However, paradoxically, the act of migration itself is something that is likely to be a

wake-up call to politicians and activists, some of whom appear to imagine the possibility of some sort of 'purified Seto reality', only inhabited by committed Setos.

The willingness of the older youth to take initiative suggests that they do both see the need and have the knowledge to organise things in their interest. Further, some possibilities are also in organising around village identity as opposed to regional, thus, Seto identity, and awareness of the need to support this is slowly emerging in the Seto circles. Also, the young Seto activists themselves are often critical of the purified Setoness. A 'heritage theatre', organised by young women in their mid to late 20s has presented many critical plays, and the museum in Atsi village has had an exhibition questioning the singular version of Setoness. Whilst still within the Seto heritage space, the need for a more open local identity is recognised.

This conflict between the 'heritage Setos' and the remaining locals is not intergenerational and has also been there for the older generations. They have carved it out for the young and it has deepened along with the deepening of the new class divisions to the point that the two groups are involved in activities where the participants barely overlap. Such institutions as the youth centre do not appear to have taken the role of creating a common identity, being seen as simply the place to hang out and spend time. However, the activities there do provide the space and, thus, the chance to take it a step further and offer opportunities outside heritage Setoness.

The individuals, who have attempted to achieve change so far and have experienced failure, may also still come back. The new amalgamated Setomaa municipality will create new circumstances where perhaps the Seto identity is felt to be secure enough not to undermine and reject alternative activities.

4. Conclusions

The young people in the Seto ethnic region in South Eastern Estonia have experienced conflicts in relation to the hegemonic role that the Seto culture has taken in the region and that it is felt to have superseded people for whom Seto heritage is secondary or unimportant. This reality has framed the lives of the young in ways that make them feel unwelcome, and labels them as being less valuable, even celebrating their migration – in essence, they have experienced stigmatisation in relation to their lack of cultural identity in a newly emerged hegemonically heritage oriented region.

Seto identity has become central in the region in a uniform way both locally, nationally and symbolically. This is supported institutionally as finances are offered to the Seto culture specific activities. Such support has become the centre of local disgruntlements amongst those locals who do not identify with heritage-based Setoness. It is recognised to benefit the Setos economically, and the cultural alliances are the source of further social allegiances which drain the rest of the population of both opportunities as well as hope. Crucially for this study, such processes have become a tool to restructure the society in situations where new classes are emerging. As a result, divisions emerge along the economic lines partly because of the cultural lines, diminishing the opportunities for those not related to the cultural activities. The studied local youngsters, all from families that do not identify themselves as Seto activists, are considered to be culturally unrooted; their homes hybrid, not supporting, sustaining or enhancing the local heritage.

Whilst the Seto may be dominant or be seen as dominant, the disgruntled local minority – nationally a majority – respond in ways that reject the identity, suspect the "heritage Seto" to be corrupt and selfish, as well as move away. The latter response has perhaps the greatest, albeit diffuse effect on the local politicians as loss of population is one of the major issues regionally. It has a diffuse effect however, as the reasons for this are not necessarily recognised to have to do with what the critics would put it down to: to the excessive emphasis on Seto culture. Rejection and suspicions have the effect of creating a certain stand-off which also brings attention to the issue no matter how hard it is denied.

This kind of challenge is, however, to some degree dissipated by the manner in which the local youth with little interest in Seto heritage are stigmatised. The cultural divisions are transposed onto an emerging social hierarchy that places them as not only different, but inferior for the region, as well as socio-economically. Their critique and responses, therefore, are presented as at least partly arising from this, and as such, reflecting their lack of roots, substance and relevance to the region, rather than the issues that could be solved by addressing the problem of exclusion in the current tendency towards cultural fundamentalism.

In other words, the stigma experienced by the youth is manifold: the stigma of non-heritage, or even Soviet hybrid identity is related to the stigma of belonging to "uncultured and rootless" lower class, a new, emerging identity; in turn, the response of passivity or rejection and even migration of the youth is further reinforcing their inferior, failing status in the region. The obstructions on their way to contribute to local life as well as the feeling that the region is not providing them the same range of opportunities as there might be in other regions is seen by many of the respondent to link to Seto focus in the region, whether or not this is actually the case. They remove themselves from being involved in local activities and even from confronting the challenges, making them less visible and able to have an impact. To add insult to injury, lack of participation is taken as further indication of the inferiority of the young locals who do not align themselves with the Seto heritage culture. This may further temper their chances of finding successful avenues to present critique and finding solutions. Instead, they spend their time in smaller groups, often away from the Seto region itself. It is possible that them staying away has the potential of carving out more common features which enable them to move forward together in the future.

Whilst 10-15 years ago, more forceful rejections and attempts to regain the cultural ground to more 'mainstream', global youthful sounds and activities were common, today's younger youth do not appear to pose such challenges to Seto events and do not participate in the protests of the older generation either. The response of the youth, apart from recognising the unfairness of both such generalising attitudes, and loss of opportunities for themselves or rejections of their efforts, is rejecting Seto heritage culture even further. They do not feel they can or even should make an effort and incorporate Seto heritage in their lives in order to be more successful. This rejection can be considered on some levels an innovative positive reaction that would sustain alternatives in the region where some are politically airing the view of the need to strive for purity. Further, as a parallel critique of this purity discourse is emerging from amidst the young with Seto heritage interest, awareness of the need for a more complex and inclusive local atmosphere could be possible in the future.

5.   Future analysis

The Seto case is directly related to the economic dimension as the cultural identity has remarkable implications on the class and economic status of the youth. Furthermore, as leisure spaces were one of the sites of conflict, some data may be relevant for that aspect of the cluster, too. Not all of the data on the role of schools in framing young people's lives was included in the above analysis but could contribute into the education cluster.

The data from WP4 could be seen as confirmation of the link between lower socio-economic status and lack of trust of politicians and lack of belief in the ability to have an influence. Political and civic engagement is low in the rural regions, and possibly reflects on the issues raised in the case study. The low expectations that in particular the rural dwellers have on immigrants' value in the society might align with the issues of inclusion described in the case study.

Whilst notable differences have taken place between 2008 and 2017 in Estonia. The case study offers insight into the passivity of Estonian youth and their relative lack of political activism and participation in data from WP4. Further links and interest could be seen in the data on belonging-based concern amongst the youth.

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Appendix: Table of respondents' socio-demographic data

Pseudonym	Gender and Age	Socio-economic status	Location	Family status	Ethnic status	Link to Setomaa
1. Siiri	F 26	Employed	Tallinn	Single	Seto	Born, school, migrated but visits regularly
2. Meeli	F 29	Employed, accountant	South East, rural	In a long distance relationship, child from a different relationship	Seto	Born, school, works there
3. Marko	M 28	Employed, teacher	South East, rural	In a relationship, child from a different relationship	Seto	Born, works there
4. Indrek	M 28	Employed, builder	Pendulum migrant, South East, rural and Northern Europe	Single, lives with mother when in Seto	Half Seto	Born, school, home nearby
5. Ergo	M 29	Employed, builder	South East, rural	In a relationship with a child	Seto	Born, school, works there
6. Anne	F 29	Employed, office worker	Tallinn	Married with children	Estonian	Has lived in Seto, migrated
7. Riina	F 29	Employed, office worker in Tartu	Tartu	In a relationship	Seto	Born, migrated
8. Viiu	F 28	Student	Tartu	In a relationship	Seto	Grandparents Seto, frequent visitor
9. Üllar	M 15	Pupil	SE, rural	Lives with family members	Seto	Born, at school
10. Kaire	F 15	Pupil	SE, rural	Lives with family members	Seto	Born, at school
11. Grete	F 14	Pupil	SE, rural	Parents divorced, lives with mother	Seto	Born, at school
12. Nelli	F 15	Pupil	SE, rural	Lives with family members	Estonian	Born elsewhere, at school

13. Triin	F 15	Pupil	SE, rural	Lives with grandmother	Estonian	Born elsewhere, at school
14. Rain	M 14	Pupil	SE, rural	Parents divorced, lives with mother	Seto	Born, at school
15. Pärtel	M 15	Pupil	SE, rural	Lives with family members (incl uncles)	Estonian	Born, at school
16. Kaarel	M 15	Pupil	SE, rural	Lives with family members	Is not sure	Born at school
17. Urmas	M 15	Pupil	SE, rural	Lives with family members	Half Seto, half Estonian	Born, at school
18. Minni	F 16	Pupil	SE, rural	Lives with mother and some of the siblings	Seto	Born, at school elsewhere
19. Kata	F 17	Pupil	SE, rural	Lives with parents	Seto	Born, at school elsewhere
20. Reelika	F 16	Pupil	SE, rural	Lives with family members	Estonian	Born and at school elsewhere, lives here

PROMISE: Promoting Youth Involvement and Social Engagement: Opportunities and challenges for conflicted young people across Europe.

WP6: From Conflict to Innovation: Ethnographic Case Studies

New pro-citizen activities of young Petersburgers for 'public morals and order'

Russia

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Executive summary:

This case comprises two subcases: 'opposition activists'; and 'moral order activists'. These two youth communities (subcases) constitute two types of civic engagement and the empirical data were collected separately by two researchers. The empirical basis of the study consists of 29 in-depth biographical interviews with 19 men and 10 women aged 18 to 39. The interviews were conducted simultaneously with participant observation undertaken during field work (from October 2016 to March 2017).

The analysis shows that the scenes of 'opposition' and 'moral' activism have similarities and differences. Both groups are to some extent in 'conflict' with the current political authorities in Russia. They share a lack of trust in the current regime in Russia and 'moral' activists often criticise the government in a similar way to 'opposition activists'. Regardless of what activists are fighting for, they often share common motivations (professional development, capital accumulation, and social change) and oppose the passive majority. However, it is important to note differences between the groups in terms of their internal hierarchy as well as gender-related contradictions within the groups: the activists' values do not always correspond to what is actually happening in their communities. Participants of each subcase recognise that it is necessary to act today in order to achieve results in the future. And even 'small deeds' prove to be significant for them. The two communities are also not isolated from each other; on the contrary, they display a mutual interest in each other's activities.

Contents

1. Introduction

According to the latest studies of youth participation, institutionalised civic engagement and interest in formal politics is on the decline in most European countries and especially among young people (Norris, 2004; O'Toole *et al.*, 2003). On the whole, young people are less involved in formal traditional political institutions and processes – they tend not to not vote in elections and or join political parties. In the context of contemporary Russian society in which political and civic participation is widely considered meaningless or dangerous (Krupets *et al.*, 2017), young Russians show less trust in political institutions and in the very possibility of social change via traditional channels (Trofimova, 2015: 77).

Nevertheless, the fact that young people tend to distance themselves from institutionalised politics should not be regarded as an indicator of their civic passiveness or apathy. There are new forms of civic participation developing rapidly, and Russia is no exception. For instance, a new protest wave (mass protest demonstrations of the spring of 2017 that took place in many regions of the Russian Federation) demonstrates a high level of young people's and even school students' civic engagement. Indeed, the media and state rhetoric have described this protest participation as a serious 'problem', which has given rise to a new moral panic directed at young people. Currently, the main strategy for solving this 'problem' involves 'prohibitive measures' (the prohibition of minors' participation in rallies) and preventive measures within the education system (the cultivation of 'proper citizenship' among school students). This response, it is argued in this report, constitutes a lost opportunity to understand the motivation behind young people's actions and establish communication with them in order to create legitimate platforms and opportunities for their interaction with the authorities – in other words, to increase young people's civic and political engagement.

As demonstrated by a number of studies (see, for example: Sveningsson, 2015; Rheingans and Hollands, 2013; Pilkington and Pollock, 2015; Norris, 2003; Harris *et al.*, 2010), youth civic participation has not so much decreased as shifted to new forms of political and civic expression. This new focus on alternative forms of participation is observed across all age groups, but young people are especially inclined to break away from 'traditional forms of participation' in favour of 'special, contextual and specific activities' (through new social movements, online activity, etc.) (Pirk and Nugin, 2016; Kim *et al.*, 2016; Johnson *et al.*, 2016).

Young people's reluctance to participate in formal politics results in the need for a broader definition of the terms 'political' and 'civic', a definition which would include a comprehensive experience of a young person's life and various types of activities aimed at social change. Russian researchers also note that, especially in large cities, young people's participation in public life is triggered by initiatives that they find meaningful, and their engagement takes innovative cultural forms, such as flash mobs, performances, and art activism (Omelchenko and Zhelnina, 2014; Krupets *et al.*, 2017). That being said, innovative forms of youth civic engagement are a relatively new topic for academic discussion and there are to date relatively few in-depth studies especially in the Russian context (Abramov and Zudina, 2010: 7; Lebedeva, 2012: 27; Fedotova, 2016: 82).

In this case study, we focus on exploring innovative forms of youth participation and emerging conflicts faced by young people who openly label their activities as civic or political engagement. We call them 'the new civic activists' because despite the generally negative attitude towards politics, the lack of trust in political institutions and the increased risks associated with one's participation in public rallies, these young people are not afraid to openly take part in various

initiatives. In this way they are becoming a subject of civic and political engagement (in the broader sense of the terms), which entails conflicts with both public authorities and with individuals with a more 'passive' attitude.

Given the versatile and broad nature of civic participation, in this case study we single out two youth communities (subcases), which we consider to be illustrative examples of two politically different forms of civic participation that brings them into conflict with state authorities and each other. The main goal of these communities is to change the existing order in the country, at least in some ways (but including in a political sense). This creates conflictual relations with the state authorities, which try to keep the existing order in place. While both communities share an aim to change society, the seek differing (sometimes opposite) outcomes: while one promotes liberal values and openness in Russian society, the other is oriented towards conservative values, strict regulations and strengthening of Russia.

The first sub-case captures young people with so-called democratic values. They are critical of the current Russian government and they want to change the existing social order – for instance, through a change of regime. On the one hand, they use alternative channels to influence the state authorities and interact with them. On the other hand, they try to change the life in the city and in the society as a whole at the micro level. This subcase is referred to in this report as 'opposition activists'. The second subcase involves young activists from St. Petersburg who are not focused on politics and social order as much but want to preserve the moral order enshrined in the legislation of the Russian Federation. For example, members of these communities opposed smoking and drinking alcohol in public places, which is prohibited in Russian law. They also fight against the advertisement of prostitution and brothels. This is their way of showing interest in civic participation and striving to realise their civic potential. They are referred to here as 'moral order activists'.

Further we will discuss in detail these communities and their relations with different agents of conflict (local residents, police, city authorities, and other state representatives). We will also describe the main actions taken by the group members to promote social change and analyse their views on the efficacy of their actions.

2. Methods

The key methods used to collect empirical data within the case study are in-depth biographical interviews with members of youth communities, participant observation and scene mapping. The empirical data were collected by two researchers: one working on the 'opposition activists' subcase and the second working on the 'moral order activists' subcase.[1] The two researchers worked separately but exchanged and discussed their fieldwork and findings in the course of the research.

The empirical base of the study consists of 29 in-depth biographical interviews with 19 men and 10 women aged 18 to 39. Fifteen interviews were conducted with 'opposition activists': four were 18-20 years old (3 men and 1 woman); 10 were 21-30 years old (5 men and 5 women); and 1 man was

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[1] The researcher who worked with the 'opposition activists' left research and academic work shortly after the field work stage and before the analysis was completed. As a result, the analysis was carried out by another researcher, who worked with audio recordings of the interviews, their transcripts, and research notes from participant observation (the observer did not leave her original field diary entries). The field researcher currently works for an opposition movement in another city, suggesting that she found herself drawn into the field she was studying.

over 30 years old. There were 14 interviews with 'moral order activists': one male respondent was 18 – 20 years old; 12 respondents were aged 21–30 (8 men and 4 women); and one male respondent was more than 30 years old. The duration of the interviews ranges from 71 to 248 minutes and the average length was 126 minutes. The interviews were conducted simultaneously with participant observation; the researchers spent 6 months doing field work (from October 2016 to March 2017). The informants were recruited using the 'snowball' method at the most high-profile and well-known youth civic organisations and movements, whose activity is covered in the media, including the Internet. It was relatively easy to recruit informants among 'opposition activists' due to trust established with the researcher and the researcher's deep involvement in their activity (participation in events and execution of various tasks alongside other activists). However, it was more difficult to recruit 'moral order activists'. This was due, on the one hand, to the informants' limited availability. However, it was also because of a conflict within the community, which grew increasingly intense during the field work period. The presence of a sociologist (who was perceived by most activists as a journalist) only exacerbated the situation and this limited the opportunities for conducting interviews.

Both subcases involve participant observation (about 6 months) as a means of empirical data collection. There are 16 diary entries based on 52 hours of participant observation in the 'moral order activists' subcase. Members of both subcases gave their consent for the observation. According to the researcher who worked with the 'opposition activists' subcase, she managed to fully engage in the groups' activities, which allowed her to conduct observations at their meetings and gain access to members-only chats. As for the 'moral order activists' subcase, participant observation was carried out at various events, such as clean-up raids targeting sex ads in the streets, raids against people who smoke and drink alcohol in public places, and sporting events organised by the activists 1–3 times a year. Several observation sessions were made at the activists' meetings, which took place 1–3 times a month.

Diary entries on participant observation within the 'moral order activists' subcase are in a free format, but they all include a description of the location, participants and communication. They also cover both offline and online communication. The diaries also include photos (see Plate 1) taken by the researcher (with the consent of community members) or by community members themselves, who usually photograph or film the whole meeting (raid, etc.) and post these photos and videos in their chat.

Plate 1. Pro-citizen activities - Raid for clear street 25.01.2017

The participant observation method was particularly useful for tracking key figures on the scene. The observation brought to light certain features of the scene that the informants omitted, probably intentionally, in their interviews. The informants' jokes and vocabulary prove to be most telling, as they reveal a different image of the informants and field participants than they chose to show in personal interviews. For example, there was no offensive language in the interviews, and the informants tried to keep it that way at the beginning of the observation. However, after a while this self-imposed ban was lifted, and eventually everyone forgot about it. The observation also noted a gender imbalance in the 'moral order activists' subcase, which presented certain difficulties for the researcher when entering a field where the key participants were young men who, it turned out, were sceptical of sociologists, especially female ones. As noted above, the collection of empirical material coincided with a certain conflict in the activist community, which made it difficult not only to conduct interviews but also to observe the participants.

In addition to their offline activity, researchers continuously monitored the behaviour of group members in social networks, as they are an important resource in the life of the community. The very fact that there are so many online communities and chats demonstrates the scale of both subcases, both inside and outside of St. Petersburg. In the 'opposition activists' subcase, there was complete trust between community members and the researcher, who was granted access to all the relevant chat rooms at the field work stage. However, in the 'moral order activists' subcase, the researcher could access just a few members-only chat rooms.

In the process of collecting empirical material, we encountered ethical problems associated with determining the role of the researcher in the community. This was partially because activists often did not understand that the researcher should remain a researcher and not support the values of the young people or become an activist herself. This 'neutrality' caused a rather negative reaction among the majority of field work participants. There were also dangerous situations connected with clashes at raids; for example, on one occasion, activists were attacked by homeless people during an observation There were clashes between activists and the police as well. However, despite all the aforementioned difficulties, the researchers were able to collect the necessary empirical material for further analysis.

3. Key findings

The space of civic activists in St. Petersburg is very heterogeneous and dynamic, with fluid borders, which may be hard to define, both for the participants themselves and for an external observer. We present the results of the studies of two subcases (the description and the analysis of the two communities) in the form of a comparison, since they have both similarities and differences, and we refer to the two groups as 'opposition activists' and 'moral order activists'.

At first glance, the key difference between the two groups of civic activists is their interests and values. The moral order activists' identity takes root in the confidence that patriarchy is essential for proper moral development, along with a rather aggressive promotion of the idea that the only true duties of women are becoming mothers and housewives, which is reinforced by homophobic behaviour and consumer asceticism. In the context of this narrative, a sober and healthy lifestyle is an axiom; it requires no additional evidence or explanation and the activists are not willing to discuss or change it. The activists employ a variation of the discourse of fighting for the 'traditionally Russian' morality, which they view as being threatened and attacked by 'Western

values'. This, they believe, requires a response from real patriots and civic-minded citizens. The activists from this community avoid discussing other topics – such as politics, the economy, culture, and education – since such issues lie outside the main sphere of the activists' struggle for moral order and discussion of them might lead to disagreement and distract from the key objectives of the movement. Therefore, they prefer to avoid these topics and focus on the struggle against things that violate the moral order (alcohol, nicotine, prostitution, etc.). At the same time, they do not expect assistance from the authorities; indeed they are prepared to take action on their own in order to achieve greater results.

Opposition activists, on the contrary, believe that politics, the economy, culture, and education are top-priority issues. Members of the opposition community are motivated by democratic values in their discussions and activities. They take pride in their involvement in what is happening around them; namely, at the moment, they are not satisfied with the state of society (meaning social and economic problems that people face in everyday life), the work of government agencies, and the detachment of the government from the population. Through their activities, they try to initiate a dialogue with the authorities and they want to be heard. In this sense, they seek to rebuild capacity for political participation.

However, along with different ideologies and goals, the analysis shows a number of fundamental similarities between these two civic youth initiatives, which are discussed below in more detail.

3.1 Scene mapping

It is difficult to unequivocally determine which organisations, initiatives and movements are operating and can be attributed to the scene of St. Petersburg civic activists. On the one hand, this has to do with the fact that some initiatives are informal and are not registered anywhere. On the other hand, it is due to the extremely dynamic nature of activists' participation, membership and migration from one organisation/group/initiative to another, which makes it difficult – even for participants in it - to see the boundaries of the scene. In addition, community members often take part in several initiatives at once and simultaneously both offline and online. Therefore, when mapping the activist space, we primarily focus on identifying virtual links that allow us to create a general map of youth civic engagement in St. Petersburg[2].

The analysis of virtual connections reveals a very important fact: in Figure 1 we see that activists from the two subcases[3], despite the fact that they (according to their interviews) do not interact in

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[2]In order to create this map, we used an information system that works with the social network VKontakte called *VkMiner_32*. It allows you to determine the number of social network users that follow the same community at the same time. On the final map, lines connecting different initiatives show that any two linked initiatives have a certain number of participants in common. The thicker the line, the more participants follow both public pages at the same time.

[3]The analysis includes the following online communities of 'moral order activists' (blue colour in Figure 1): Lev Against|SPb [*Lev protiv|SPb*] (tobacco), Russian Run! St. Petersburg! [*Russkaya probexhka! Sankt-Peterburg!*] (runspb), Sober Petersburg – UPS [*Trezvy Peterburg – SBNT*] (alcoholsp), Clean Petersburg [*Chisty Peterburg*] (prostitution), World Without Drugs [*Za mir bez narkotikov*] (againstdrug), Union for People's Sobriety • UPS RF [*Soyuz borby za narodnuyu trezvost • SNBT RF*] (alcohol), Russian Run. Russians for a Healthy Lifestyle! Rus [*Russkiye probezhki. Russkiye za ZOZh! Rus*] (run), Slavic World [*Slavyansky mir*][3] (world), Zhdanov Vadim Georgievich (zhdanov). The opposition communities include the following (red colour in Figure 1): Youth Movement 'Vesna' [*Molodezhnoye dvizheniye 'Vesna'*] (Vesna), St. Petersburg Human Rights School [*Sankt-Peterburgskaya shkola prav cheloveka (POShPCh)*] (POshPch), Democratic Petersburg [*Demokratichesky Peterburg*] (DemSpb), Parnas Youth Wing [*Molodezhnoye krylo 'Parnasa'*] (PARNAS), Youth Yabloko [*Molodezhnoye Yabloko*] (MolYabloko), creative group {rodina} [*tvorcheskaya gruppa {rodina}*] (Rodina), Open Russia [*Otkrytaya Rossiya*] (Openrussia), Youth Human Rights

the offline space and often oppose themselves to each other, have online connections. This is particularly true of such groups as Open Russia [*Otkrytaya Rossiya*] (opposition) and Slavic Union [*Slavyansky soyuz*] (moral) (296 connections), Civic Union [*Grazhdansky soyuz*] (opposition) and Professor Zhdanov Group [*Gruppa professor Zhdanov*] (moral) (190 connections), Parnas (opposition) and Russian Run [*Russky beg*] (moral) (174 connections), Solidarity [*Solidarnost*] (opposition) and Russian Run [*Russky beg*] (moral) (68 connections); the remaining communities have up to 30 connections between community members and initiatives of the two subcases.

Some participants of this common space are included in the same online groups and monitor each other's activities. They also borrow some methods of self-presentation and activism from one another. Thus, the participants are included in the agenda of each other.

While there are initiatives that belong to just one group of activists, for example, the initiative of 'opposition activists' called the Human Rights School [*Shkola prav cheloveka*] that does not have a single participant in common with the 'moral' subcase, we can see that it is more of an exception in comparison with other initiatives.
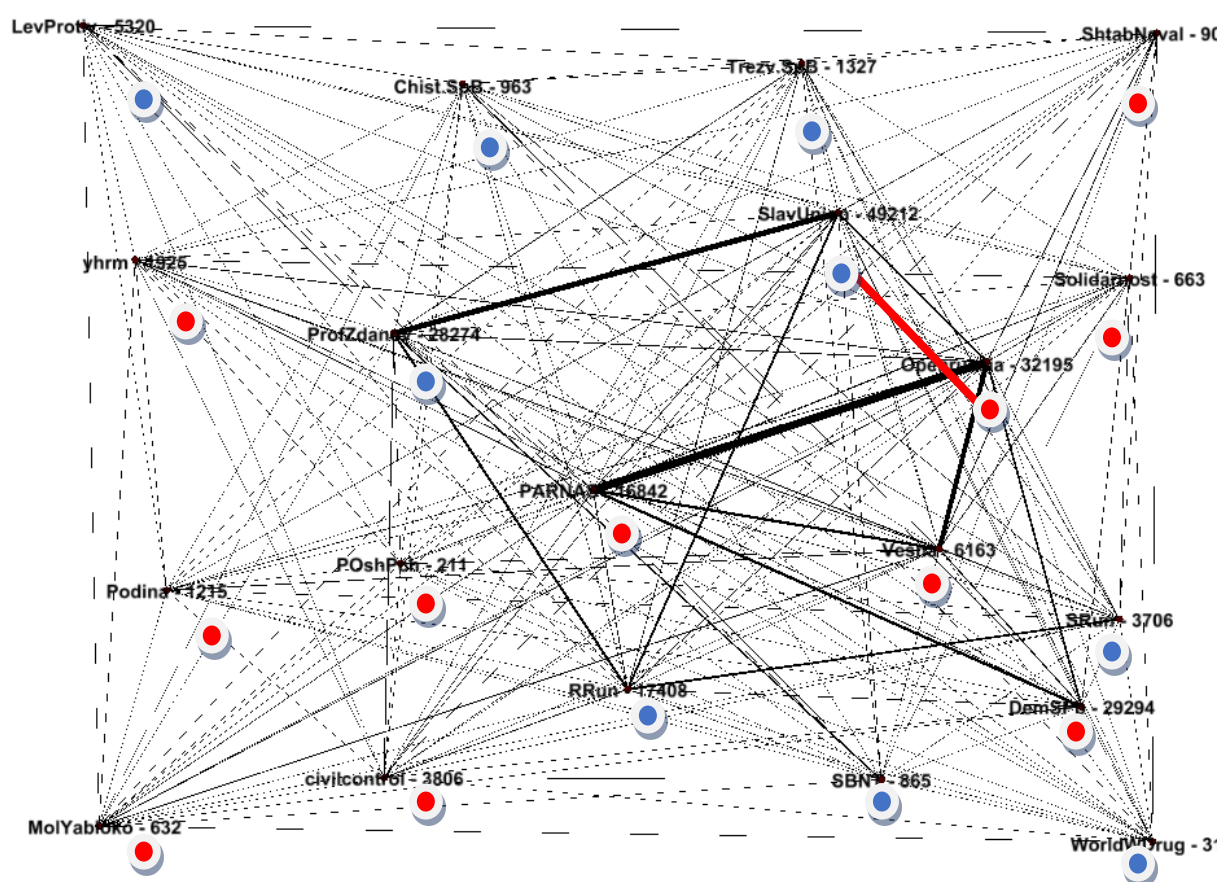

Figure 1. Online map of the new civic activists in St. Petersburg

The strongest links, of course, are formed between communities that belong to the same subcase. For example, the map shows that 'opposition' members of Vesna, Open Russia, and Parnas have more intersections than others (in other words, they follow the same online public pages), thereby

Movement [*Molodezhnoye Pravozashchitnoye Dvizheniye*] (yhrm), Civil Control [*Grazhdansky Kontrol*] (civilcontrol), Navalny Headquarters in St. Petersburg [*Shtab Navalnogo v Sankt-Peterburge*] (ShtabNaval), and Solidarity [*Solidarnost*] (Solidarnost).
The names in parentheses are used to label each youth movement on the map.

forming a single community. The strongest links among 'moral' activists are formed between nation-wide movements, with the strongest link between Slavic World and Zhdanov – the idol of many activists of this scene. It is followed by the all-Russian Russian Run public page, which has a strong connection with its St. Petersburg branch. We can also see thick lines that connect the community Zhdanov and online communities that advocate a sober lifestyle, both nation-wide and local ones.

In general, it should be noted that such an abundance of (mutual) connections formed by activists' participation in several initiatives (overlapping groups) proves the existence of so-called structural folds in this field (Balázs and David, 2010), which, on the one hand, can increase the efficiency of various groups' activities (including borrowing new ideas/practices from each other and redistributing resources) and, on the other hand, can lead to a rather high mobility of participants within the field, with a possible reduction in stability within individual organisations/movements.

3.2 Internal structure of communities. Power struggle or its absence

As for the organisational structure of communities (based on interviews and observations), it is worth noting that there is an important difference between the two subcases in question. For example, communities of 'opposition activists' do not have a rigid internal structure and a set hierarchy: their participants can perform different roles, switch their functions, organise some events and just participate in others. Moreover, such a lack of hierarchy is viewed as a community value, which they try to preserve. At the same time, it is evident that in reality the differentiation of roles and responsibilities results in conflicts associated with the internal competition for status. For example, there are leaders trying to win universal recognition:

> N really wants to have authority, and he is [an authority] for a very small group of people, because N does a lot, but he really wants to be a leader – that's obvious and that's why it's repulsive... People who are obsessively trying to be leaders are not so great. (Renata, female, 21 y.o., opposition activists)

However, it is important that, as of now, the field of youth 'opposition activism' still preserves its 'leaderless' nature. People who try to claim leadership do not receive general support and their claims are called into question. The values of equality and the absence of a hierarchy remain this community's constitutive principles. Thus, in general, we can observe solidarity in this field.

The subcase of 'moral order activists' presents somewhat different principles and practices of self-governance. Here, all the roles and responsibilities are assigned much more clearly, in a rather hierarchical way: there is a leader, assistants and 'ordinary' activists. As a rule, this does not lead to conflicts, and the status of a participant depends on the extent to which the activist is ready to 'invest' in a group's activities (attend meetings and raids, distribute information on the Internet, take initiative, organise and participate in events) and take responsibility. The informants' interviews mention the concept of 'hot' and 'warm' circles of activists, the former being community leaders, and the latter being ordinary members.

> There is a certain group of key members who are responsible for organising, covering and holding events, right? So, sometimes, of course, they are selected from... from... from, so to speak, well, there is this 'hot' circle, right, the organisers? And there is a 'warm' circle, a 'warm' circle of people who constantly come to... to rallies, you know, to demonstrations, to... to jogs, to raids, yeah. They are also doing some kind of social work with them, yeah. ''So you want to take part in an event? Here is a small task for

you. Are you done? Are you? Shall we give you another task? Well, great, you are doing just fine. Here is another, and another, and another one.'' Because you kind of want to train someone who could replace you because you won't be going to raids forever. (Alex, male, 28 y.o., moral order activists)

The 'career ladder' of an ordinary community member is completely transparent and depends mainly on one's desire to participate in the life of the community. The status of a leader/organiser is viewed as honorable; people are drawn to community leaders and they have great authority.

Despite the different degrees of rigidity in assigning member statuses within the two subcases, it is important to emphasise that both communities are built on the principle of bottom-up self-organisation, and the roles of event organisers and participants are quite interchangeable and can switch from one event to another.

Both subcases also demonstrate a gender-specific nature of community organisation. For example, the subcase of 'opposition activists' has an approximately equal number of male and female participants, and they advocate the principle of gender equality. However, leading positions (for example, event coordinators) are usually occupied by men, which is problematised by some participants: 'Well, I don't think that age is. But gender... It seems to me that it does make a difference in people's minds. Well, I mean that boys, men – they happen to coordinate things more often' (Ira, female, 22 y.o., opposition activists). The subcase of 'moral order activists' presents the opposite situation in a certain sense; the community is thought of as a masculine one with a dominant patriarchal order, and the number of male participants is much higher than that of female ones. However, if we look at the role distribution in the community, we can see girls in leading positions (4 female event coordinators and movement leaders). At the same time, this situation is not problematised but, rather, justified as an exception to the rules (the rules here are universally understood as the shared principles of patriarchy in the community and the perception of the role of women solely as housewives, etc.).

> INT: One of your leaders is [Elena]. A girl.
>
> INF: She is the only girl in the organisation, yes. But it is an exception, naturally, because there are girls like that, yeah. (Ivan, male, 19 y.o., moral order activists)

These examples show an important contradiction and present an interesting issue for further analysis. Why is it is much more difficult for young women to become leaders in the community of 'opposition activists', who value gender equality while the opposite is true for the subcase of 'moral order activists', where participants support a patriarchal regime but women are allowed to take the lead and are even encouraged to do so?

3.3 Online activity

As mentioned earlier, young people have the opportunity to participate in various communities and initiatives thanks to the widespread online activity of all the aforementioned communities. Civic engagement often starts on the Internet: young people search for news, organisations, like-minded people, and opportunities to take part in certain events, and later, online and offline activities become intertwined. Social networks, communication in chat rooms, writing press releases for events and news coverage – all these are parts of the everyday life of a young activist and they require certain competencies (the ability to write press releases, knowledge of

responsible online behaviour, skills needed to create video content, conduct online discussions, etc.) and resources (first of all, time) in order to increase the efficiency of one's activities.

There are 3 types of online mediums that activists use: (1) open communities; (2) video channels (YouTube) and websites of movements; (3) invitation-only chats. Participant observation shows that the social network VKontakte is the most popular among activists. 'Opposition' activists also like to use Telegram, which, from their point of view, is the most secure means of communication (you can quickly delete a chat with all the sensitive information in it).

The Internet plays several key functions for the representatives of both subcases:
- management - most of the communication and the resolution of many organisational issues takes place online (for example, event planning and discussion, assigning responsibilities, search for participants and their engagement, etc.).
- integration and stratification - activists involved in different initiatives are united by a complex and differentiated network of chats that are designed for different purposes and include different participants. Invitation to a specific chat is a sign of trust, evidence of shared practices and meanings, a means of integration into the community. The rejection of requests to join specific chats, on the other hand, allows young activists to draw a line between 'us' and 'them' and to differentiate individuals in the group of 'us' in terms of their 'proximity' and participation. It is important to note that the Internet also becomes a resource for assessing newcomers – that is to say, deciding whether they share the scene participants' interests and values based on the analysis of a newbie's social network profile. Public representation and promotion - the information about the majority of events and activities is posted on the community's webpage (in social networks and in blogs). Activists also write press releases for the media (primarily local ones), which can publish them online. Different initiatives and s often support each other by reposting relevant information. Informing a wide audience about the latest event online is often considered to be a performance indicator of the event as a whole. In this case, online representation may compete with real offline actions. The Internet acts as a channel for making activists' work 'visible', and this public representation also helps them recruit new community members.
- communication: activists use the Internet to interact not only with each other but also with society. Comments, reposts, and likes become a means of feedback and allow them to communicate with other people, including adults.

It is therefore evident that online communities, blogs and public pages on social networks allow activists to inform people about their goals and activities, to engage new supporters and participants, to discuss topical issues, and to maintain internal and external solidarity. In addition, chats and online communities serve as a means of enlisting the help of activists for both planned and unscheduled events.

3.4 Reasons and ambitions facilitating civic engagement

In analysing the interviews of our informants, it seemed important to us to understand the reasons why they decide to engage in activism, while a large part of the population prefers to stay away from politics and social change.

The analysis shows that some participants (from both the 'opposition' and the 'moral' subcases) value the process more than the achievement of specific changes in the public and political life. On

the one hand, many informants note that it is impossible to bring about changes here and now, but it is necessary to act today, as today's activity becomes a part of a long, large-scale process whose result can only be seen in the future. On the other hand, the delayed result makes some participants shift their focus from general goals to individual ones, such as professional development and accumulation of capital (social, symbolic, and cultural) for a future career in politics or civil service.

> I am planning to get a degree in municipal management, master all the necessary tools, well, I mean, I will have... I will have some sort of an idea, and then I can go and work in municipal administration, having specific tools, you know? I will continue working on making society better. (Elena, female, 22 y.o., moral order activists)

> I would have never met some people if I weren't an activist. For instance, members of the Legislative Assembly. I respect them very much; I would vote for them. But I would not have met them in person. And now I have. (Platon, male, 25 y.o., opposition activists' and 'moral order activists)

Such young people may turn activism into their profession, and at some point it may start to generate income or other resources – for example, such activities as educational trips to seminars and schools may be financed in whole or in part by an activist organisation.

Some activists seek to accumulate social capital in the process of activism for a different purpose: social capital becomes necessary for socialization in a new space (for example, for a student who came from another city to St. Petersburg and does not have any acquaintances there). Such young people use civic activism as a way to get to know the new urban space and to enter new communities.

> Returning to youth issues, when you feel that you are a part of some movement, of some community, you basically feel more confident... I have friends and those who do nothing, well, they just study or work, and they are more prone to all sorts of depression and pensiveness. (Masha, female, 25 y.o., moral order activists)

This strategy often leads to a person leaving activism, since it loses its meaningful value and is eventually replaced by other life circumstances.

On the other hand, there are participants who believe that the most important part of activism is the opportunity to implement specific social and political changes, which they are trying to achieve here and now.

> I am not indifferent to the situation with human rights and civil liberties... People are put in prison, being tortured, and... some are even killed, especially well-known, prominent political figures, due to the fact that the government does not want to be replaced, well, they do not want to leave (Kirill, male, 20 y.o., opposition activists).

Such activists see themselves as 'revolutionaries' and they have a clear idea of how to change the life of the society. The main idea in this case is the struggle against the existing regime/moral order, and the activists' work has a final goal.

I believe in building a civic society from the bottom, and I do not believe in building it, creating it from top to bottom […]. (Varlam, male, 21 y.o., opposition activists)

It is all up to me; everything depends on my actions. If I don't like some conditions in the country, and I can... and I cannot change them, then I have to either accept them or leave the country. And I don't want to leave, so it means that it is all up to me. So, I am trying to make my environment better. (Egor, male, 29 y.o., moral order activists)

Other community members usually believe that such activists are the most courageous and ready to take action: 'In order to participate in such events, you need much more courage, some bravery... but this would be real'. (Kolya, male, 20 y.o., opposition activists)

To sum up, we can say that the listed types of motivation behind activists' participation in various initiatives are not mutually exclusive and a given activist may be driven by a number of them at the same time. There are also activists who join the community or support initiatives on a case by case basis, for example, when there is a surge of activity or some conflict. A number of people engage in civic action because they are subjectively forced to do so, as they can no longer tolerate what is going on around them. Their activism stems from the inability to remain indifferent, which distinguishes such activists from the rest.

Despite the variety of reasons that can lead a young person to civic engagement, it is worth noting that all activists regularly reflect on their own reasons for entering the community and can always explain the circumstances and reasons for their involvement. Paying attention to yourself and to what is happening around you in an attempt to analyze the situation becomes one of the key skills of an activist.

3.5 Interaction with external actors: the police, 'other' youth and the older generation

One of the key tasks of the study was to distinguish the agents of conflict encountered by the young people. In this section we will describe the interaction between activists and various people outside of the community, such as the older generation, 'other' young people, the police, and executive authorities.

It is important that, in general, both communities believe that they are not prone to conflicts, either internal or external. They represent themselves as 'unconflicted'; stable links between group participants and common meanings and values shared within the community are indicative of intergroup cohesion. However despite the absence of 'visible conflicts', it is possible to identify lines of tension in the informants' narratives. In our view some of these tensions might be considered as conflict.

3.5.1 Attitude towards 'other' (passive) youth

First of all, it is worth noting that the communities in question are in a kind of 'opposition' to passive young people. In contrast to them, both groups claim that they have the right to change society. The policy of 'small deeds' can be traced in both subcases, and it is aimed at a final result – a change in the social, political or moral order. In practice, opposing oneself to the passive majority is a way to assert one's own identity and a certain superiority: 'The aspiration for moral ideals is the best. What is the worst is the desire for a consumer lifestyle'. (Egor, male, 29 y.o., moral order activists).

Activists believe that civic engagement should be manifested through dealing with your problems yourself and through helping people around you. Their willingness to go into the street and express their attitude towards an existing social problem is the manifestation of their social engagement and contribution to changing the social system – as opposed to remaining 'armchair warriors'.

> I am like a crusader. I have my sins and I, you know... do good in order to cleanse myself from these sins. Well, not really 'do good', not for everyone, but still. For me it's like a way to wash away my sins and show that I can do something, something useful. And it's also about perception [informant's perception of himself]. For example, I used to smoke, but I don't smoke now. (Denis, male, 23 y.o., moral order activists)

Passive youth's lack of recognition of existing problems and their unwillingness to change anything is problematised by activists, who try to call for action, albeit often in vain.

> For example, not a single lift in our building works. I'm personally not really affected by that, I can run up the stairs to my third floor, it's fine, but there are 16 floors... I say: 'We need to solve this problem, people.' 'So we will go to the superintendent – what will she do?' Well, at least go and tell her that there are many of you and that you have a problem. Because sure, going up the stairs is fine, but what if someone gets sick or needs to carry stuff? But no, they are all just sitting on their asses. (Lisa2, female, 21 y.o., opposition activists)

At the same time, 'opposition' and 'moral' activists exhibit different behaviour in their interaction with passive youth. Most 'opposition activists' remain neutral and keep their distance in the process of interaction, not trying to impose their point of view and values.

However, young people feel themselves stigmatised by apolitical people, although they try to avoid physical conflicts, this confrontation takes place at the level of discussion.

> I think that people who are negative about this, first of all, are the same people who... They are the same people who do not go to vote in the elections, they are the same people who are asked: 'Why don't you vote? And they say, 'What will it change?' That is, they see that someone, some upstart is doing something, and I think that they just think that this is nonsense, that this is nonsense, and they are… this disappointment in everything that is happening, which is sitting, they are projecting on this person. Because they, they think that this person ... Well, any activist get a lot dumped on them... a lot of dirt from people, even those who are, in principle, apolitical. (Lisa, female, 22 y.o., opposition activists)

Activists fighting for moral order try to ensure that the attitudes they promote (a healthy lifestyle and a certain behaviour in public – for example, no smoking and drinking alcohol in public areas, tearing down sex ads, etc.) are heard by 'other' youth and, moreover, they want the 'other' young people themselves to accept these attitudes and promote them among their friends. In this regard, they often run the risk of open conflict, although no such incidents were witnessed during field work.

I can also give an example of my classmates, when I just entered University, there were situations repeated, when I came there, then I was saying, sharing my emotions: yesterday on a run we beat our own possibilities, ran more than I could. That is, ran an hour instead of forty-five minutes. And seeing in their eyes some boredom, that they drank last night, spent time in clubs. That is, hearing in your address, although I'm the oldest of them, who already has a child, something of my own. I, of course, do not put myself above them, but respect should still be. When you hear that you're such a backward person from their lips, but it even sounds strange. That is, when you say: "Come on, come on, come with me to run", "I'm a fool, or something to run?" (Natasha, female, 22 y.o., moral order activists)

In general, both groups of informants note that their opposition to passive youth does not usually result in open conflicts.

3.5.2 Interaction with the older generation

The analysis of the activists' attitude towards 'adults' (both those in their immediate environment and strangers) reveals an intergenerational tension, where an average adult is viewed as more 'conservative', 'busy', not willing to 'change' and not supporting youth activism. In this case, activists represent themselves as initiators of change and, among other things, try to overcome the passive nature of the 'older generation'.

As far as I can see, as I communicate with different people, for example, my mother is willing to listen to me. But in general, I see that parents, teachers, well, those who seem to be helping young people, they are very reserved, old-school, stiff; they only see their point of view and, unfortunately, they are not really ready for change. (Ira, female, 22 y.o., opposition activists)

Activists talk about 'verbal conflicts' with the older generation who want to prove their point of view on what is happening in politics. In the following excerpt, Eduard talks about an emotional confrontation with a man who objected to the candidate he was campaigning for because 'he is a Jew':

Well, I say, 'does that make him not a man? What's the problem?' He says: 'He goes every day with Dmitrieva to the US Embassy for tasks.' I say, 'I have two questions.' [I was] all emotional, I could feel my blood starting to boil. 'First of all, what makes you think that? Secondly', I say, 'if you know about that, why didn't you tell anyone anywhere? Why didn't anyone stop them? Why is the FSB not working on it?' He's like, 'Well,' I said, 'Well, who told you?' He says, 'It was on TV.' The same channel that's so good at brainwashing. And I just laughed in his face, still worked up. I said, 'You do know that this is all nonsense?' He said, 'obviously they go there for assignments like the sun going up and going down. You know, they "said" that the sun rises and sets?' I say, 'I know as a geologist that the sun comes and goes.' I said, 'I studied it.' I said, 'Did you study political science? Or, like, work at the KGB? - There's something some kind of thought was… Spying on him?" 'No, I got a Soviet education!' I said, 'Come on, we're done.' I couldn't stand it any longer. I said good-bye to him, very nasty guy. I have come across that sort. (Eduard, male, 25 y.o., opposition activists)

As for the sub-case of 'moral order activists', they say that apart from passive, 'conservative' representatives of the older generation, who often do not understand and accept their activities,

they also meet real opponents, who sometimes present a threat to community members. These are characterized as adults whom activists have to face in the course of their work, for example, those involved in organised prostitution, alcohol and cigarette sellers, etc. Informants say that those of them who take down sex ads receive threats, and those who do it on their own are tracked down and beaten up. Those who fight against unlicensed alcohol sales or selling alcoholic beverages to minors also face retaliation.

3.5.3 Interaction with state bodies

The very nature of activism makes it inevitable that representatives of both subcases have to interact with various state authorities and the police. Activists 'force' government officials to communicate with them or at least try to make the authorities notice their petitions, complaints, open protests, and public actions: 'Well, judging by what we do, the authorities do not listen to anyone at all. Until you really force them to do something'. (Ira, female, 22 y.o., opposition activists) The establishment of such communication can be regarded as an independent result of activism.

The need for such interaction demands that activists should have certain competences, which increases the social and cultural capital of the community: knowing the legislation, how to act when taken into custody, and how to write complaints and petitions, as well as the ability to speak the same language with the authorities, as dictated by the rules of bureaucracy. It is important that the community's capital becomes a resource for the development and support of individual activists.

> Well, it's just that I got into [name of an organisation], you know, I got... It was interesting for me, yeah. But it was interesting because I had no idea how to go on a one-man protest in a city where you don't know anyone, where you call your parents from the police station, and they are sleeping; so that's why I joined [name of an organisation]. (Matvey, male, 21 y.o., opposition activists)

Interaction with the police is regarded by informants as an integral part of activism in the current conditions. Interviews with 'opposition activists' clearly show how much this kind of interaction is normalised even in a situation of an open conflict/clash.

> Well, you probably have to [interact] with the authorities sometimes... when there are rallies, cops show up, and their idea is that you are doing some nonsense, so they have to come freeze in the cold there... (Renata, female, 21 y.o., opposition activists)

At the same time, being prepared for conflicts with the police becomes a feature of civic engagement that distinguishes movement participants from other young people.
As for the 'moral order activists', although this community tends not to trust law enforcement agencies, they try not only to avoid conflicts with the police but also to establish interaction with them

> INF: I think, well, it might be generally true, and there is such a thing – well, maybe about 70 percent of brothels simply belong to the police itself. So...
> INT: You mean, they said something and the ads were up again? While they were gone.
> INF: Yes. Maybe.

INT: But they were so eager to get someone [to get the person who put out the ads].

INF: Well, I only said it so that no one would bother. Because, for some reason, they view what we do as a rally that they have to monitor. And if you say to people that we are being watched, like a demonstration, I was afraid that people would get nervous and leave. Then they called me and asked me to tell them about all our rallies. (Elena, female, 22 y.o., moral order activists)

It is worth noting that young activists' attempts to interact with the authorities (conflicts included) take into account the current legal conditions and opportunities. To do this, they carefully study their own rights and the duties, as well as the rights and duties of authorised persons (e.g. police officers), monitor the updates in the legislation, and many of them even receive legal education.

Thus, we see that conflicts between activists and the police can be solved in different ways. Some activists are ready for an open (physical) confrontation; others try to avoid such kinds of conflict. But both communities do not trust the police and often accuse the authorities of passivity in relation to the violation of the law by the opponents of the activists. For example, members of opposition movements see that police officers are loyal to representatives of the NOD (National Liberal Movement), although NOD activists' actions during protests are largely illegal. Meanwhile, the members of the groups for moral order on each raid observe that the police do not oppose those who smoke in the wrong places, and post sex ads. In fact, as we see from the last quote, members of these groups even suspect the authorities collude with those who advertise prostitution.

4. Conclusions

The analysis shows that despite the largely different goals and objectives of the two groups of activists, the scenes of 'opposition' and 'moral' activism not only overlap but have a number of similar features. First, both groups support grassroots initiatives and give non-members opportunities to take part in their events. Second, young activists in both groups sometimes participate in activities of other organisations. Finally, in both cases, each new activist goes through a phase of gaining the community's trust; one of the most important signs of that trust is receiving an invitation to chats/conversations where community members discuss their activities. Online activity is often more important and productive than offline engagement; we can see that the Internet is completely incorporated in the life of activists.

Regardless of what activists are fighting for, they often share common motivation (professional development, capital accumulation, and social change) and oppose the passive majority. Communities are not isolated from each other; on the contrary, they are interested in each other's activities. Activists widely use the media space and creative approaches to present their ideas. They challenge the system and try to change the existing order. However, the two groups of activists have different values and priorities.

Other differences include the groups' internal hierarchy, their modes of interaction with state authorities and the police, and their ultimate goals.

It is especially important to note gender-related contradictions; the activists' values may not always correspond to what is actually happening in their communities. For instance, in the subcase of 'opposition activists', who are fighting for gender equality in society, women are much less

likely to become leaders than male activists while, in the subcase of 'moral order activists', who adhere to and promotes patriarchal values, women are allowed to take the lead.

There is also a contradiction in the activists' attitude towards the authorities. When dividing the case of civic activists into two subcases, we assumed that 'moral activists' would be more loyal to the current government, but in reality both groups show a lack of trust towards the current regime in Russia. Moreover, 'moral' activists often criticise the government, in a way similar to the behaviour of 'opposition activists', who openly declare their lack of trust in the authorities.

Despite the fact that participants assess the effectiveness of their activities differently (some believe that it will only be possible to speak about effectiveness in the future), everyone recognises that it is necessary to act today in order to achieve results in the future. And even 'small deeds' are seen to be significant for achieving global goals.

5. Future research

The analysis of youth civic engagement in St. Petersburg has revealed several important topics to be researched further, including the use of cross-case analysis.

1) *The comparison of activists' social backgrounds and their paths towards civic engagement.* It would be interesting to compare the role of activism in the life projects of activists, how young people get involved in civic engagement and what their views on the possibility of social change are.

2) *Activism as a professional activity and the conversion of received capital into additional resources.* Data analysis shows that civic participation of many activists stems from their desire to accumulate new professional competencies that may be used in making a career later on. We can also see that the boundaries between activism and professional life become blurred and problematized, often by the participants themselves, which results in an opportunity to convert skills and connections acquired in the process of civic engagement into economic capital. A comparison of case studies can help us understand the potential and the limitations of professionalization in different forms and areas of civic engagement.

3) *Features, nature and tools of interaction with the state.* The state proves to be a key agent in activism, in the form of specific regulatory bodies, an enemy, or a partner. It is the interaction with the state that often shapes specific features and opportunities for activism in a given field.   Activists have to constantly work on their competence in communicating with state authorities and the police. Moreover, activists try to influence not only legislation related to the state's youth policy, but also other laws, and therefore it is important to identify their means of influence and their impact on the existing legislation.

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Appendix

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Education	Employment	Family status	Ethnicity	Religion
Matvey	Male	21	Currently at university	In full-time education	Living with partner	Russian	No information
Gleb	Male	22	Did not complete university	In full-time employment	No information	Russian. Ukrainian	No information
Platon	Male	25	Completed university	In part-time employment	No information	Russian	Atheist
Eduard	Male	25	Completed university	In full-time employment	Living with partner	Russian	Orthodoxy
Liza	Female	22	Completed university, Currently at 2nd university	In full-time education	No information	Russian	No information
Olesya	Female	23	Completed university	In part-time employment	Single	No information	No information
Tina	Female	18	No information	No information	With partner	No information	Atheist
Renata	Female	21	Currently at university	In part-time employment and part-time education	Single	Russian	No information
Kolya	Male	20	Currently at university	In full-time education	No information	No information	No information
Kirill	Male	20	Currently at university	In full-time education	No information	No information	No information
Lisa2	Female	21	Currently at university	In full-time education	No information	No information	Catholic
Ira	Female	22	Currently at university	In part-time employment and part-time education	No information	No information	No information
Borya	Male	18	Currently at Professional Secondary Education	In full-time education	Married	Russian	No information
Victor	Male	33	Completed university	In full-time employment	No information	Russian	No information
Varlam	Male	21	Completed General Secondary Education	In part-time employment	Single	No information	No information

Elena	Female	22	Did not complete Professional Secondary Education	Unemployed	Married	Russian	Orthodoxy (paganism)
Saveliy	Male	39	Completed university	In full-time employment	Married	Russian	Orthodoxy
Masha	Female	25	Currently at university	In full-time education	Divorced	Russian	Orthodoxy
Igor	Male	27	Completed Professional Secondary Education	In full-time employment	Married	Russian	Orthodoxy
Egor	Male	29	Completed university	In full-time employment	Married	Russian	Orthodoxy
Denis	Male	23	Did not complete university	In full-time employment	Living with partner	Slavonian	Atheist
Arkadiy	Male	21	Currently at university	In full-time education	Single	Russian	Orthodoxy
Alex	Male	28	Completed university	In full-time employment	Single	Russian	No information
Anton	Male	28	Completed Professional Secondary Education, Currently at university	In full-time employment	Single	Russian	Judaism
Vladimir	Male	27	Completed Professional Secondary Education	In part-time employment	Single	Russian	Orthodoxy
Sonya	Female	29	Completed university	In full-time employment	Single	Russian	No information
Sergey	Male	24	Completed university	In full-time employment	Single	Russian. Estonian. German	Atheist
Natasha	Female	22	Currently at Professional Secondary Education	In full-time education	Single	Russian	No information
Ivan	Male	19	Currently at Professional Secondary Education	In full-time education	Living with partner	Russian	Paganism

People living with HIV and HIV activists (St. Petersburg & Kazan)
Russia

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Executive summary: Today, around 36 million people live with HIV. Despite the existence of a global strategy to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030, the situation in Russia is critical. Officially, by November 1, 2017, 1,193,890 cases of HIV infection had been registered among Russian citizens. Given the moralising discourse created by the state with regard to HIV-positive people and the spread of the virus, HIV activism plays an important role in developing and preventing the epidemic.

Our goal was to study the structure, actors and their strategies of HIV-activism. Two locations were chosen: St. Petersburg; and the Republic of Tatarstan. St. Petersburg is one of the Russian regions most affected by HIV, while the Republic of Tatarstan is recognised as one of the safest regions in the country with regard to the spread of HIV. However, both in St. Petersburg and Tatarstan, there is rapidly developing HIV-activism.

The collected data include 29 semi-structured biographical interviews and 28 days of observation. The study shows that, despite the stigmatisation and high level of and control over the actions of civil society, a heterogeneous but solidary HIV activist space is developing. The structure of the HIV activism field is set by officially registered NGOs and informal network associations, depending on the direction of its activity. Being key figures in the community, activists create a comfortable and safe environment for various groups of people with HIV. Activists organise support groups, individual counselling and support, outreach work, provide medicines in emergency situations, etc. Thus, the emerging HIV community is becoming, in a sense, a communication space, which is important for both activists and community members in maintaining their identity, recognition and belonging.

Contents

1.   Introduction

The first clinical data on the disease later called HIV infection were recorded in 1981. The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which causes this disease, was discovered in 1983. Since then, about 78 million people have been infected with HIV and approximately 35 million have died (UN, 2018). UNAIDS estimates that in 2016, around 36.7 million people worldwide live with HIV, 20.9 million of whom are receiving antiretroviral treatment (UNAIDS, 2018). Today, both the scientific community and international organisations focus on the regions of Asia and Africa with more than 30 million HIV-positive people (19.4 million in East and South Africa) (UNAIDS, 2017: 14). At the same time, Russia is experiencing a critical situation comparable to that in South-East Africa, which, nevertheless, has almost completely fallen out of the research focus both at the national and international levels. According to UNAIDS, Eastern Europe and Central Asia are the only regions where the HIV epidemic continues to grow rapidly. Moreover, more than 80% of new HIV infections in these regions occur in Russia (UNAIDS, 2016: 170–173).

According to regional AIDS Centres, by December 31, 2017, 1,220,659 cases of HIV infection had been registered among Russian citizens, including 550,000 in 2012–2017. In 2017, 104,402 new cases of HIV infection were reported (excluding anonymous cases and cases of foreign citizens) which is 2.2% more than in 2016. About 277,000 people with HIV died. The number of people living with HIV who know about their diagnosis had amounted to more than 944,000 by January 2018. In 2017, for the first time, the share of heterosexual contacts as a risk factor for the infection (53.5%) exceeded the share of drug use by non-sterile instruments (43.6%) among 'newly identified in 2017 HIV-positive people with established risk factors for the infection' (Rospotrebnadzor, 2017: 3). According to V. Pokrovsky, Head of the Russian Federal AIDS Centre, about 500–600,000 people in Russia live with HIV, without knowing about their status (Mishina, 2016). The number of HIV-positive people, thus, may total more than 1.5 million.

However, state officials do not consider the current situation critical or call it an 'epidemic'. The state creates a moralising discourse with regard to HIV-positive people and the spread of the virus, which sets a nationwide stigmatising and marginalising rhetorical framework. The reinforcing rhetoric of 'traditional values' as the main way of regulating infectious diseases among other things is manifested both in separate statements by politicians and in state documents. In 2016, the government approved the 'State Strategy for Counteracting the Spread of HIV Infection for the Period until 2020 and for the Longer Term'. Despite the fact that one of the objectives of the Strategy is to increase citizens' awareness of HIV and create a social environment without discrimination against people infected with HIV, it uses traditionalist rhetoric (*'to strengthen traditional family and moral values'*), which contradicts the anti-discrimination agenda, and does not contain any provisions on sexual education, harm reduction programmes, or replacement therapy (State Strategy, 2016). This view of the HIV/AIDS situation, from the standpoint of 'traditional values', narrows the possibilities of spreading information about the epidemic and supports treating HIV-positive people as deviants. This is illustrated by an example of the kind of slogans used in promoting anti-HIV messages captured in Plate 1 (below). The poster reads 'The greatest weapon against HIV is love and loyalty'.

Plate 1. One of the slogans of the 'Stop HIV/AIDS' campaigns held by the Foundation for Social and Cultural Initiatives under the supervision of S. Medvedeva in 2017.

Another important structural condition that determines the context of life of HIV-positive people is legislation. The law on the prevention of the spread of HIV infection was adopted in 1995, and many activists believe it to be outdated and to infringe people's rights, despite the amendments. This is primarily due to the restriction of professional activities, restriction of entry into the country for HIV-positive foreign citizens and their deportation if they do not have any close relatives.

Moreover, in recent years, legislative initiatives significantly affect the activity of civil society. For example, the legislation on public events has been tightened up; coordination of public events has become more complicated and punishment for unauthorised actions more severe (from fines to imprisonment for up to 5 years). The legislation regulating the activities of NGOs has been changed —there is now a law that requires organisations which receive foreign funding to register as 'foreign agents', which entails stricter government and financial inspections, restriction of activities and stigmatisation in the public eye. This law resulted in the persecution and closure of a number of civil and research NGOs in Russia, reduction of their funding sources, creating an atmosphere of danger, where an organisation is likely to be closed if its activities, including its financial sources, cease to satisfy the government. The amendments, known as the 'Law on Unwanted Foreign and International Organisations', resulted in a situation where many humanitarian international organisations and foundations, including those supporting the fight against HIV/AIDS, had to limit their activities or close their offices in Russia.

Cultural and legislative stigmatisation of a number of social groups in Russian society significantly limits the possibility of working with them. For instance, drug use and sex work are criminalised and marginalised, which impedes access to these groups in order to prevent the spread of HIV. In addition, the ban imposed in 2013 on 'the promotion of non-traditional sexual relations among minors' actually criminalises discussion of LGBTQ+ issues in public and limits the possibility of informing the public about the ways of HIV transmission, since the part connected with sexual transmission cannot be properly discussed without a threat of being prosecuted under this law.

Thus, HIV-positive youth and young adults live in the conditions of an epidemic, the rhetoric of 'traditional values' and the discourse of amoralism towards people with HIV, weak state policy regarding HIV/AIDS and repressive legislative regulation of civil society. At the same time, HIV activism, which appeared in the mid-2000s and is aimed at protecting the rights of HIV-positive people, continues to develop and prevent HIV/AIDS, even under these difficult circumstances. The overall goal of the project is the study of the role of young people, especially marginalised and stigmatised ones and those who are in a conflict, as an initiator of social changes in modern society. Taking into account this goal, we have chosen the HIV community, which is one of the problematic and stigmatised groups in modern Russia. Within this case, it was important for us to answer the questions: How is the space of HIV activism in modern Russia organised? Who is involved in it and why? What are their challenges and how do they react to them?

2.   Methods

Two locations have been chosen for the study: St. Petersburg and the Republic of Tatarstan (its capital, the city of Kazan). St. Petersburg is the second largest city in Russia in terms of size, development and infrastructure, and one of the Russian regions most affected by HIV. Incidence of HIV infection (the registered number of HIV-positive people per 100,000 residents) in the city was 981.9 as of December 31, 2017, while in general in Russia it was 643 (Rospotrebnadzor, 2017: 2).

The Republic of Tatarstan, on the other hand, is recognised as one of the safest regions in the country with regard to the spread of HIV. Although much higher rates of infection have been registered in the three South-East regions of Tatarstan (in Bugulma (847.5), Almetyevsk (565.2) and Leninogorsk (501.7)), in the Republic of Tatarstan as a whole, the current HIV incidence is much lower than the average for Russia, 336.8 (in Kazan – 393.6) (Weekly epidemiological situation, 2018). Moreover, the Republican AIDS Centre in Kazan is considered the best in Russia.

However, both in St. Petersburg and Tatarstan, unlike many other Russian regions, there is rapidly developing HIV-activism aimed at resisting the epidemic and helping HIV-positive people.

The main research method we used is a case study, which comprises participant observation and audio-recorded deep biographical interviews. The primary access to the field in St. Petersburg was conducted through researchers' social networks and in Tatarstan through a key informant: an HIV activist Svetlana Izambaeva, living with disclosed HIV-status, who is the organiser and coordinator of support groups for HIV-positive teenagers and women. Subsequently, social networks of informants were also involved.

In order to establish trust and be included in the community in both cities, researchers volunteered in the organisations. However, this role was overt not covert. The Svetlana Izambaeva

Foundation provided assistance in photographing and video recording of trainings, writing letters, news about current events for the website, discussing the 'theatre project' (a performance/writing plays) involving HIV-positive children and discussing current situations. In St. Petersburg, one of the organisations was assisted in conducting a small sociological survey initiated by this organisation for their internal purposes.

In total, 29 semi-structured biographical interviews with activists, NGO workers, and their leaders were conducted: 10 of them in Kazan and 19 in St. Petersburg. 14 women (5 in Kazan, 9 in St. Petersburg) and 15 men (5 in Kazan, 10 in St. Petersburg) were interviewed. The age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 51. This included: ten people under 30; 15 between the age of 30–40; and four over 40. The preliminary research analysis of open sources (texts and photographs on NGOs websites, media materials, etc.) made it possible to assume that mainly young people were involved in HIV activism. However, the fieldwork showed that at the moment, the core of HIV activism is formed by young adults aged from 20 to their mid-30s who have been involved in HIV activism for the last 10–12 years. Thus, the average age of informants of the case is slightly higher than the one targeted in the project. Nevertheless, we believe that this can still be considered youth activism, as: a) current active participants became involved in activism when they were young; b) the study shows that there is a significant proportion of young people involved in HIV activism; c) a significant part of the activity is oriented towards young people, including those age groups that, according to the ethical clearance of the Russian team, could not participate in the study as informants (since they were under 18).

The length of the interviews varied from 50 to 145 minutes. The total length of interview recordings amounts to approximately 38 hours. It should be noted that all informants have different class, educational and social backgrounds. The group includes people with higher education, students, and people with only secondary school education. There were members of high and low-income families, as well as individuals with an addiction or criminal past. However, they are all united by the fact that at the moment, each of them is involved in the work of HIV NGOs and HIV activism.

Prior to the interview, each respondent had been informed about the purpose of the project, as well as about the fact that the interview would be recorded and subsequently transcribed word-for-word, anonymised and used for research purposes. No one refused to participate after that. All the respondents reacted well to the recording, and some of them even said that they did not mind the researchers using their real names. It is worth noting, however, that not all respondents were ready to draw a map of the field or mention specific names, when speaking about interaction among organisations. The ones who agreed often stressed that it was only their personal view of the situation and that they did not know the state of affairs in reality. Moreover, in the course of several interviews, informants asked to stop the recording for a while when talking about unofficial functions of their organisation's activities, its funding, etc.

In addition to the interviews, 28 days of observation were conducted (20 in Kazan, 8 in St. Petersburg). The total number of observation hours in Kazan amounted to about 46, while in St. Petersburg, the number was about 11. In Kazan, the events and practices observed included meetings with key informants (21.02.2017, 17.04.2017), training sessions with HIV-positive children who do not know about their diagnosis (25.02.2017, 22.03.2017), support group meetings of HIV-positive teenagers (26.02.2017, 5.03.2017, 12.03.2017), support group meetings of HIV-positive women (5.03.2017, 19.03.2017), meetings and trainings of school children, students of secondary and higher educational institutions held by HIV- activists (10.03.2017, 06.04.2017,

21.04.2017), a webinar of the international community Teenergizer (offline monitoring of participants on 18.03.2017), a training with parents, grandmothers and other family members of HIV-positive children (22.03.2017), a meeting of HIV activists and HIV-positive teenagers with the participants of the project '*Takie Dela*' (25.03.2017), meetings of HIV activists with the head and director of the theatre laboratory '*Ugol*' and discussion of theatre projects for HIV-positive teenagers (05.04.2017, 10.04.2017), preparation for a round table discussion with HIV-positive teenagers in Moscow (18.05.2017), a campaign of HIV activists for testing, distribution of leaflets and condoms in the pedestrian Bauman street (19.05.2017), an open discussion 'Attitude of the Public to the Issue of HIV' within the Kazan marathon (19.05.2017), the Kazan marathon with HIV activists as participants, who ran as a separate group in white T-shirts with a red ribbon (21.05.2017), and an event 'Dance4life' organised by HIV activists in a Kazan secondary school (26.05.2017). In St. Petersburg, the events included a dance flash mob, timed to the International Women's Day (5.03.2017), International AIDS Candlelight Memorial Day (25.05.2017), lectures on HIV infection held during various events (06.03.2017 and 27.05.2017), testing for HIV carried out by different organisations (20.02.2017 and 27.05.2017), as well as making a video for International Condom Day (11.02.2017).

The specificity of the field in St. Petersburg (the closed nature of the organisation, sensitivity to anonymity, orientation of some organisations to the men who have sex with men (MSM) community) did not allow researchers to conduct a traditional participant observation and, therefore, the study here was limited to participation in public events and several working events. For the same reasons, there was no photographing in St. Petersburg. In Kazan, photos taken with the permission of the participants during the observed events were included in the observation diaries. A total of 360 photographs and 3 videos were made. HIV-positive people apart from Svetlana Izambaeva, who is open about her HIV status, were photographed from the back to make sure they could not be identified.

In order to analyse the empirical data, narrative and thematic approaches were used in parallel. The narrative approach allowed attention to be focused on the narrative construction of identity. During the thematic analysis (Riessman, 2005: 2), we reconstructed common themes and events, as well as the dominant types of their interpretations, which allowed informants to describe their own experience and that of the community. Therefore, we could take into account both the factual biographical components and the values attached to experience and practices. The analysis of the empirical data has shown a similarity of the contexts, practices, interpretations shared and produced by activists in St. Petersburg and Tatarstan. The locations differ mostly in terms of the length of HIV activism, the size of the activist field and the effects caused by the size of the location (e.g. greater anonymity in the larger city), whereas the structure of the experience of activists differs to a lesser extent. In this report, we have focused on similarities, specifying differences when necessary.

3.   Key Findings

3.1 Stigmatisation of HIV-positive people

The basis and context for HIV activism is stigmatisation and discrimination of HIV-positive people. Throughout the study, during most days of observation and a large part of the interviews, members of support groups and informants living in Tatarstan and St. Petersburg told us about many cases of discrimination of their rights, negative attitude, aggression, violence, fear, and breaking of relationships, and moreover, a significant proportion of these cases were recent. The

contexts of stigmatisation and discrimination are very diverse: family, parties with friends, schools, sports clubs, health resorts, clinics, and hospitals.

The most frequent agents of stigmatisation are close relatives and friends. Quite often, becoming HIV-positive is one of the turning points in life, which is perceived as a litmus test showing who is who and separating 'real' friends from casual acquaintances. However, in some cases, even the closest people, including family, can turn their backs on a person because of the moral stigma with which HIV is often associated:

> If, for instance, in Yakutia someone says that he is HIV-positive, this is the end. No one will talk to him anymore, he will lose all friends, even his family can abandon him... (Ivan, male, 29 y.o., St. Petersburg).

In a number of cases, HIV-positive people were not supported by close family members because of the fear of being stigmatised if the information spreads.

> While telling her story, A. cried and said that she had not visited the [support] group for a long time; she came because she could not take it any longer, 'this is unbearable', she did not sleep at night, there was no work or family for her. When A. comes home [she lives 170 km from Kazan], her mother is displeased and asks her why she has come: 'Do you have much money to spend on trips?' A. says that it is better to live in Kazan, she is afraid that people [in this town or village] will find out about her diagnosis (Field diary, 5 March 2017, Kazan).

Although HIV infection is not an obstacle to undertaking the vast majority of professional duties, including in the medical professions, and HIV-positive people have equal labour rights, they are often subjected to various forms of labour discrimination. This can manifest itself as the requirement to take an HIV test and report the result (which is officially prohibited by the law), as well as dismissal or creation of conditions for dismissal if the diagnosis becomes known. At least once during the observation period, there was a dismissal in Kazan because of HIV status. The management of a private dental clinic forced a nurse to resign after finding out that she had HIV (Field diary, 6 April 2017, Kazan).

However, some of the key agents of stigmatisation are medical professionals. Activists emphasise the low level of competence and knowledge about HIV among medical professionals who are not specialists in the field, at all levels, from doctors to junior medical staff. It is in (non-specialised) medical institutions that HIV-positive people experience degrading attitudes and statements, are denied services and their confidential information gets disclosed:

> In medical institutions, there is still this... I mean, they refuse to treat us still, although they already know that it is, roughly speaking, punishable, that this is illegal, nevertheless, they deny service. They do not want to bother. (Ksenia, female, 33 y.o., St. Petersburg)

Medical workers violate not only the law on provision of medical help but also the law on doctor-patient confidentiality. In a relatively short period, several months of observation and interviewing, informants spoke repeatedly about the disclosure of medical information, i.e. the diagnosis of 'HIV infection' by doctors and medical staff:

A year ago, a member of the mutual support group for teenagers L. went to a private dental clinic to get braces. Before the consultation, she filled out a questionnaire which contained the question whether the patient was HIV-positive. L. gave the affirmative answer, believing that she should report this. Recently, she has found out that the clinic administrator told her son, who knows L, about her HIV status. He, in turn, told this to other teenagers in the neighbourhood. L. has recently discovered that many teenagers with whom she spends time know about her HIV status, although she has not revealed this information ... L. said that, as a result, her boyfriend broke up with her. 'My grandma worried a lot, yesterday she was ready to file a law suit.' L. was smiling when she said that everyone had found out about her HIV status, but then she added, 'Now I am going to cry again'. (Field diary, 18 May 2017, Kazan)

The collected data demonstrate that, despite a large amount of information available to the public, there are still a lot of myths around HIV that lead to discrimination and stigmatisation of HIV-positive people. Moreover, they often impede the effective control of the spread of HIV infection. These myths are based on stereotypes, outdated information and fears. As a rule, they concern ways of transmission of the infection, the standard of living with HIV, as well as groups of people that are at risk of getting infected. It is important to reiterate that all of the aforementioned facts have a strong impact on people's self-perception and often lead to self-stigmatisation. In this case, the HIV status is viewed as something shameful and embarrassing; it ceases to be considered a disease, starting to be seen as a stigma:

I work at the AIDS Centre, I talk to women mostly, and some people do not even say the phrase 'HIV infection', they say 'Well, I have this ...' I really see that if she is denied services, she will not even complain to anyone. (Ksenia, female, 33 y.o., St.Petersburg)

According to an HIV activist, HIV-positive children in one of the orphanages where she conducted trainings, called themselves 'HIVed' (Russian 'vichyovye'): 'we are HIVed.' Only after the training, they began to say: 'Living with HIV' (Field Diary, 10 April 2017, Kazan). Adults living with HIV can limit the range of their communication to HIV-positive people, accepting the stigma:

A. said that she once again broke up with a man, who left after he learned that she had HIV ('everyone leaves'). She said that she was not going to try to build a relationship with an HIV-negative person anymore, but only with HIV-positive people. (Field Diary, 5 March 2017, Kazan)

In addition, it should be noted that activists and HIV-positive people also face the problem of double and triple stigmatisation, e.g. if they belong to such groups as drug users, MSM, sex workers, LGBTQ+:

Well, who is stigmatised? There is a stigma in the stigma now. Everyone without exception is stigmatised, there is a stigma in the stigma, one group stigmatised another, there is internal homophobia, external homophobia, heterophobia, male gays are afraid of lesbians, lesbians are afraid of homosexual men, everyone is afraid of transgender persons, transgender persons are afraid of everyone, heterosexuals stigmatise everyone with no exception, the patriarchal society stigmatises everyone. Well, cross discrimination and stigmatisation is what we experience now. (Alex, male, 29 y.o., St. Petersburg).

In this situation, a lot of HIV activists face the problem of 'opening up about their identity', as they see the need for this action as a political act to overcome discrimination. Some people do it boldly, but many are still afraid of being stigmatised and discriminated:

> Well, just when we have several people who live openly with their status and talk about it on television, on the radio, everyone already knows them really, and they know that there are, say, 5 people or if there are 15 of them, then it will be..., if there are 50 of them. However, I myself am not ready to reveal my own status, but, as I say, I am fighting underground. (Alice, female, 35 y.o., St. Petersburg)

The state's discourse, which moralises the HIV epidemic, and the insufficient information policy contribute to the stigma and discrimination of HIV-positive people in medical institutions, the labour market and interpersonal communication.

3.2 Structure of the HIV activism field

A number of governmental and non-governmental organisations operate in St. Petersburg and Tatarstan in the area of HIV prevention, treatment and support of the rights of HIV-positive people. As for the state institutions, the key ones are the State St. Petersburg AIDS Centre and the Republican AIDS Centre in Kazan, which unite all organisations around them, because clients of any initiative eventually meet at the AIDS Centres. This is primarily because it is there and only there that you can get the necessary medications, after the second confirmatory test for HIV. In addition, the AIDS Centres also conduct various activities aimed at medical professionals, as well as informational and psychological support for people. In addition, St. Petersburg has a number of state infectious disease hospitals and addiction treatment facilities which treat HIV-positive people. However, despite cooperation and respect for the activities of the AIDS Centres, activists point out that their work is not enough; therefore, civil initiatives are important elements of prevention and combating HIV/AIDS. For example, Alex, 29, says:

> As far as I know, clinicians do not have resources now for all the necessary services, in particular, psychological help and support, self-help groups, some deeper consultations. It is caused by their high workload, the lack of such specialists, or their lack of competence and skills. Well, for example, few employees of the AIDS Centre know how to talk with LGBT and transgender people, just because they have never met them. But we do, so we do it. What is the role of NGOs? Well, it's significant. It's easier and simpler with us, with the help of NGOs everything is faster; it's faster to get a diagnosis, get treatment, help, to re-socialise, adapt, and do other important things. (Alex, male, 29 y.o., St. Petersburg).

In total, in St. Petersburg, there are eight non-governmental initiatives in the field of HIV. Some of them are formally registered NGOs, some are parts of projects within NGOs that focus on other problems, some are network and actions groups. In Tatarstan, small communities of HIV activists exist, and they are active: the Svetlana Isambaeva Foundation and its mutual support groups of HIV-positive teenagers and women; the public organisation Prevention and Initiative (the low-threshold centre Ostrov); and the Timur Islamov Foundation. Formal registration allows initiatives to obtain a legitimate status for interaction with state institutions, apply for grants from the government, but makes them dependent on state control and policy. The lack of official registration provides the opportunity for more autonomous work, but significantly reduces resources for funding. Therefore, initiatives that focus on individual work with people, including outreach, peer counselling, support and testing, prefer to have a formal status, as it provides them

access to public medical institutions, a possibility to obtain permission for outreach buses, etc. Meanwhile, initiatives that are aimed at critical analysis and community monitoring of public policies and practices in the field of HIV prevention and treatment prefer to work as unregistered network patient groups, thereby minimising the risks of state pressure and persecution.

HIV activists involve different groups in their activities. Initiatives focus on drug users, sex workers, HIV-positive women, gay people and men who have sex with men, and overall, HIV-positive people and the general population. At the same time, these initiatives are aimed both at taking care of and supporting HIV-positive people in each group and at transforming the institutional and cultural order in society to ensure the protection of rights of the HIV community and vulnerable groups.

Specialisation of various initiatives makes it possible to minimise competition and internal conflicts. Despite the fact that leaders of initiatives point out some competition between organisations in the struggle for resources and influence at the state level, common activists emphasise stable horizontal cooperation between initiatives; moreover, sometimes they work in different organisations simultaneously.

Through work and inclusion of different groups, heterogeneity of the community develops it as an open community, sensitive to the problems and specific situations of people with different experiences. Even having their own focus in their work, initiatives automatically take agendas relevant to others into consideration.

The structure of the HIV activism field in St. Petersburg and Tatarstan at the moment is formed by stable NGOs and initiatives. Personal experience of civic activism in the HIV field over the past 20 years and that of others allows initiatives to choose different organisational forms that give them the opportunity to work in the existing political and institutional context; from formally registered NGOs to unofficial network communities. The focus of their work on different groups creates a heterogeneous, reflexive and sensitive community, with horizontal relations and cooperation, despite some competition due to funding shortages and strict state control over civil initiatives.

3.3 Involvement in the work of initiatives, development of agency of participants and constituting of a community

Those who get involved in HIV activism and come to work for NGOs and independent initiatives are, first of all, HIV-positive people or people whose friends or relatives are HIV-positive, as well as representatives of groups that NGOs work with:

> HIV activism, how did I start? Well, I got a positive result, I mean the result of the HIV test, I'm HIV-positive, and a friend of mine invited me to work for this organisation, saying that they are starting a project, and I got here like that. However, there was an interesting case, I had a boyfriend who was HIV-positive, well, this was why I got tested myself; and when I had an HIV-positive boyfriend, I already thought that I should engage in HIV activism, because the problem was close to me, in reality, it touched me, too. (Igor, male, 22 y.o., St. Petersburg).

This, on the one hand, includes people who have experience of living with such a stigma, like HIV or, for example, drug addiction, homosexuality or sex work, which means that they know from personal experience the problems and difficulties faced by community members in their everyday

lives. On the other hand, it makes it possible to develop the community itself, involving its members in this work. Alex says:

> Outreach work is off limits if you do not belong to the community; if this is the case, then unfortunately, this is not for you. And this is an essential method of conducting the preventive service. It means that an expert is not hired and sent to the community, but he/she is hired in the community and made an expert later. In this way, they develop the leadership potential of members of the community, as well as their skills and knowledge, so that they themselves would share and spread them. (Alex, m., 29 y.o., St. Petersburg)

Often, young people who turn to civic activism do not have any special education, and they receive the necessary skills when joining the team, attending special trainings and seminars, and gathering information by themselves. Education and professionalisation are becoming one of the key activities of organisations, which is not only the training of personnel for working in the HIV/AIDS environment, but also a resource for destigmatisation. For example, Vera, 36 y.o., says:

> I saw how people grew up and became talented stars in helping people. And I saw how fates change, that is, how newly released former drug addicts come to this field, and years later, these people, who might be called scum, (well, this also applies to me at some moment of my life), how these people communicate, for example, with representatives of the Ministry of Healthcare or authorities in Moscow, I mean how they look and feel wearing suits, when they express their point and provide arguments and believe in them. They do not act for commercial purposes. And they represent so many lives, and it impressed me a lot. (Vera, female, 36 y.o., St. Petersburg)

In organisations, newcomers take a variety of positions: case managers, project coordinators, peer consultants and outreach workers. From the community's point of view, for these positions, the HIV status itself is the key criterion, and its absence can be a serious obstacle not only to providing peer counselling, but also to simply providing psychological support.

At the same time, along with the 'line'/field staff, who deal with ongoing interactions with clients, target groups and the population as a whole, there is also a number of professional workers in NGOs, usually psychologists, lawyers, analysts and experienced managers. Their hiring and involvement are determined not by their HIV status, but by their professional knowledge and competences.

However, regardless of what position a person is applying for/is hired for, tolerance and acceptance of different identities, lifestyles and experiences is one of the key criteria for being involved in a particular team and work as a whole. Julia, 34, project coordinator, says, 'If there is a fear that a person can cause harm to one of the clients, it does not matter in which programme, then we will not involve this person in any work.' (Julia, female, 34 y.o., St. Petersburg)

The role of tolerance, positive HIV status and belonging to target groups is so important as it is related to guaranteeing anonymity and the creation of a safe space for both activists and their clients:

> ... the issue here is also that we have a specific audience. For example, let's say, in a small bus that works with sex workers, in general, well, the attitude to outsiders is very

suspicious. Girls don't trust them, they feel uncomfortable. Drug users are also a discriminated group, which is, in fact, outlawed, too, so when they see some fresh faces... and volunteers are here today, but tomorrow they are gone... (Julia, female, 34 y.o., St. Petersburg)

Therefore, the field of HIV activism is quite closed in its structure, and daily activities of organisations and activities rarely include random, outside people, and usually do not involve the work of volunteers, who are exclusively engaged in participation in large-scale events. It is worth noting that part of the volunteer work is carried out by activists themselves, who get payment within one particular area and perform some additional functions without payment.

Simultaneously, a long time in the field of HIV activism and participation in various activities allows its participants to accumulate social capital and acquire high status in the eyes of other activists. For example, for many novice HIV activists the personalities of heads of organisations are role models and a source of strength and inspiration (as a rule, heads of these NGOs and initiatives are those who have the longest experience of field work and who are recognised as experts). This, in its turn, leaves a mark on the organisation and perception of the hierarchy within the initiatives; despite the fact that hierarchy exists and is established by both the structural organisation of NGOs (executives, coordinators/managers/rank and file employees), which determines work areas and responsibility, and the symbolic capitals of recognition and authority among members of the field, on the whole, activists emphasise the democratic way of work in a team and a family atmosphere in the teams.

Thus, NGOs and initiatives working in the HIV space not only set the structure of HIV activism field, but also shape, support and develop the community. This happens, first of all, through the targeted recruitment of community representatives. Secondly, through their education and development as workers, activists and key actors in the HIV space. Thirdly, such professionalisation of community representatives in NGOs makes it possible to create comfortable and safe communication, environment and projects for ordinary members of different groups within the HIV community.

3.4 Collective actions and their effect

NGOs and associations implement various types of activities aimed at addressing the problems topical for the HIV community. Informants note an extremely low level of competence among the population in Russia in issues related to HIV, which, in turn, leads to the creation of strong myths concerning HIV infection, pathologisation and stigmatisation of HIV-positive people. Fighting against institutional discrimination, activists hold special conferences, training seminars for representatives of medical, educational, and social institutions. They also work with people in order to inform them and prevent HIV. This is done by using mobile buses, providing the opportunity of obtaining counselling and anonymous testing in the city (see Plate 2).

Plate 2. Campaign for HIV testing and distribution of leaflets and condoms.

A special area of activity of HIV activists is educational work with young people in vocational schools and universities (see Plate 3). Due to the virtual state ban on sex education in Russian schools, adolescents and young people demonstrate an extremely low level of competence not only with regard to HIV/AIDS, but also sexuality and health in general.

Plate 3. A 'training' on HIV in Kazan Theatre School (participants gave permission to be photographed).

One of the key problems for the community is availability of medicine and access to treatment for HIV-positive people. Activists problematise not only the regularly occurring shortage of medicines, but the 'quality-price' ratio of the supplied and used drugs. They also emphasise the obsolescence of the current treatment regimens in comparison to modern Western HIV therapy practices, the intention to save funds when procuring quality medicines, and price manipulation in the pharmaceutical market. Direct actions, used in the past, which were actually quite effective, aimed at drawing attention to problems of treatment have become too risky due to the increased legislative pressure on public events. Therefore, the emphasis in the struggle for the availability of medicine in St. Petersburg is put on expert work; monitoring of procurement of and prices for medicines, as well as work in the field of intellectual property, which provide a complete picture of how many people get medicines, whether they are bought for the best price or the price is too high, and how their price can be reduced. Analytical activity allows activists to provide expert information, to act on an equal footing with state and multinational organisations, to criticise, and thereby attract attention to problems.

In order to minimise the negative consequences of medicine shortages, activists in St. Petersburg and Tatarstan have created special 'first aid kits'. They include medicines that are leftover when, for example, patients change their treatment regimens. When someone does not get medication, then he or she has the opportunity to get it from this 'first aid kit':

> I was in a situation when we called and there was no medicine... And a person only has 72 hours. So what can we do? We had to do everything on our own. I mean, we have a large first aid kit, yes ... Everything had to be found somewhere among patients. Because still medicines pile up, regimens change, there are drugs leftover, or someone dies. And so they bring them, yes ... Since pills cannot be returned to the pharmacy. Well, and we do it to have something to help people with. Some people lose their stuff. Yesterday a guy came, he moved house, and he had had the same therapy for five years. He says, 'Damn it, I moved from one apartment to another and put the medicines in some packet and lost them. And where they are now I do not know.' He hadn't had any medication for 25 days. I say, 'Well, of course, we'll help you now.' Soon we found everything. All by ourselves. (Arthur, Kazan)

In addition, activists in both locations are actively working in the community at the individual level in order to encourage accepting HIV infection as a disease that does not reduce the quality of life, is not socially dangerous and does not carry a moral value. For this purpose, support groups are organised, and psychological counselling is provided.

One of the characteristics of HIV activism in Tatarstan is the participation of HIV-positive teenagers in it. The mutual support group of teenagers in Kazan is unique, because, to our knowledge, only in Nizhny Novgorod and Yekaterinburg are there similar groups, and they do not exist in other regions. The mutual support group of teenagers with HIV was created by the HIV activist Svetlana Izambaeva. The uniqueness of the group is that its participants are not only HIV-positive teenagers but also their friends. During the period of participant observation, from February to May 2017, the support group had meetings once a week, and at weekends (see Plate 4).

Plate 4. A 'theatre training' in the mutual support group for teenagers (at the Smena Centre of Modern Culture, Kazan)

An important part of this area of work is support, which helps those who for some reason stopped taking medication, to start taking it again, and to people who have just learned about their status to get all the necessary information and medical support.

> It can be physical accompanying or remote supervision. That is, I can ... I already did so, once, yes, I can get a person to phone someone. It's not difficult for me. If there is someone for whom this is their first time, we can get a person to phone, without meeting with them or having a physical contact, but in fact it is simple. For example: 'Hello, you need to go there, and then there. When you get there, call me, please.' Why is this necessary? 'If you come across this or that problem, call me, I will tell you how to solve it, if it is possible.' I had such a situation, when a person got to the Centre, he stood at the reception and did not understand what to do. He turned the speaker phone on so that I could talk to the receptionist and explain what he, this person, wanted. To do this I didn't have to go or be present there. You can supervise a person remotely. (Alena, female, 38 y.o., St. Petersburg)

In addition to such individual psychological support, some organisations which usually work closely with the LGBTQ+ community, create a space where HIV-positive people can get acquainted with each other and spend time together, where among 'peer' HIV-positive people, this characteristic is not taken into account. For this purpose, regular movie nights, meetings, board games nights and other leisure activities are organised.

However, activists often disagree in assessing the effectiveness of their activities. The difference is particularly visible between those who have long been in the field and activists who have joined recently. The former tend to give a higher assessment of the effectiveness of organisations, which

is due to the availability of their experience of the first stages of HIV activism and a more complete awareness of the work done. For instance, Olesya, a 32-year-old activist, says:

> Well, while activists are alive, something is changing, one way or another, you know. I think it's getting better each year. I have been living with the status of an HIV-positive person for eleven years. And since those days when I just found out about my status and to this point, it's been eleven years now. And it seems to me that a lot has changed. Attitude, well, not of the whole society, but most people have a more reasonable attitude. People have become more attentive to this. Doctors have also become more reasonable. Well, there is less discrimination. (Olesya, female, 32 y.o., St. Petersburg)

However, younger activists and those who have lower positions often emphasise that although organisations do a great job, in comparison to the scale of the disease, in general, it is only a drop in the ocean, which obviously cannot be enough, and that it is necessary to work more.

Nevertheless, active involvement in the work often leads, according to activists, to emotional burnout. This is due to the close communication with different people and institutions during a day, which requires strong emotional work, and with the impossibility of seeing the results of your activity in the short term.

One of the key ways to overcome burnout and fatigue, along with specially organised psychotherapeutic support of employees within the NGO, is 'return to the community': provision of direct services. This is especially important for those activists whose main work objectives are in other areas. Personal consultations and support allow activists to interact directly with those at whom their activities are directed, which helps to see the results of one's activities here and now. Julia explains:

> Because there is work which is like compulsory, but there is also work for pleasure; that probably can be called a hobby, because it is, well, counselling people, support ... some, I do not know, there is protection of rights, in general if somewhere something comes up related to my area of expertise, I enjoy doing it. (Julia, female, 34 y.o.)

In other words, activists emphasise that working with the community, within the community and for the community, are the main ways to protect and promote the rights of HIV-positive people and HIV prevention. Egor, an activist with a lot of experience, points out:

> This is exactly field advocacy, with real patients, it was still more effective, so I believe, and it remains the main mechanism. I always want to achieve more – get on various committees to take some decisions, do something else, but practice shows that these committees don't do anything crucial, that it's usually just reports, some showy events, while just a simple protest or attracting a patient's attention, a press conference, a round table in the region with everyone who deals with the HIV problem, that's what works better. (Egor, male, 38 y.o.)

Thus, through various types of activities (from analytical monitoring of public procurement to accompanying people in a difficult life situation to the AIDS Center), NGOs work and support the community, and the community, in turn, is a supportive environment for activists, giving them a sense of belonging and importance of their own activities and lives.

4. Conclusions

The study of HIV activism in St. Petersburg and Kazan/Tatarstan shows that with the rapid growth of the HIV epidemic in Russia, which affects all population groups, the life of HIV-positive people and activists' work takes place, on the one hand, in the context of the high level of stigmatisation of HIV-positive people. On the other hand, there is strict restriction and control over the actions of civil society, which are set by the political agenda in Russia. Low competence of the population (including medical professionals) in the issues of transmission, the standard of living with HIV and population groups that can/cannot be infected, the moralising discourse of the state and ineffective state policy construe HIV as a moral stigma, leading to discrimination, social inclusion, and self-stigmatisation of HIV-positive people. However, both in St. Petersburg and Tatarstan, a heterogeneous but solidary HIV activist space is developing, aimed both at supporting and caring for the community and at trying to transform the institutional regime with regard to HIV.

The structure of the HIV activism field is set by officially registered NGOs and informal network associations. The choice of a specific form of organisation is determined by the direction of its activity. Initiatives that are oriented toward individual work with people prefer to have a formal status, which gives them the opportunity to legitimately interact with state structures, although it puts them under strict state control. Those initiatives that are aimed at critical analysis and control of the state policy and practice in the field of HIV prevention and treatment prefer to work as unregistered network patient groups, thus, minimising the risks of state pressure and persecution, but also narrowing opportunities for funding and representation in the public space.

NGOs and initiatives, first of all, involve representatives of the community in their work, contributing to personal destigmatisation, social inclusion and development of their agency. Although NGOs recruiting members of the community, which 'precisely because they are integral members of the community, they have been exposed to the same social and cultural memes, which often means that they are constrained by the very patterns of thinking, being
and doing that they are attempting to change' (Wood, 2017: 687), in this case NGOs overcome this problem by continuous professionalisation of the staff, by using various resources: their own capital, educational programmes, inviting external specialists, and engagement in international networks. In general, the core of the HIV community in St. Petersburg and Tatarstan is formed as a highly professional and expert environment.

Being key figures in the community, activists create a comfortable and safe environment for various groups of people with HIV, including those experiencing multiple stigmatisation: drug addicts, sex workers, LGBTQ+, MSM, etc. However, acceptance of the diversity of experiences and identities within the community and high reflexivity to various types of vulnerability, stigmatisation and discrimination do not yet lead to destigmatisation of these groups in society and openness of the community as a whole to the outside world. This prevents HIV activists uniting with other civil initiatives, volunteers and social movements, although, as McCrea and colleagues emphasise, reflexive solidarity between different communities and social movements is one of the key ways to combat social injustice (McCrea *et al.,* 2017: 400).

The activity of NGOs focuses on solving the problems faced by the HIV community and consists of various areas of work, including those at the state and international levels. However, for activists, the key activity is work within the community and for the community: improving the quality of life of HIV-positive people here and now. Activists organise support groups, individual counselling and

support, outreach work, provide medicines in emergency situations, etc. Moreover, direct communication and assistance to HIV-positive people gives employees of civil initiatives a sense of the meaning and importance of their work. Thus, the emerging HIV community is becoming, in a sense, a communication space (Souza, 2009), which is important for both activists and community members in maintaining their identity, recognition and belonging.

5.   Future analysis

Further research and analysis of clusters mighty include:

- A more detailed elaboration of the concepts of 'activism' and 'activist' and their correlation with the concept of public arena operatives proposed by Stephen Hilgartner and Charles Bosk (Hilgartner and Bosk, 1988).

- Identifying the boundaries of the concepts of activism/activist within communities. This question arises, for instance, in the case of HIV activists who call themselves activists, despite the fact that, for some of them, participation in the movement against the HIV/AIDS epidemic has become a profession, their main occupation and a source of livelihood.

- Analysis of the repertoires of action and constitution of solidarity, similarities and differences, by activism fields aimed at the inclusion of some (stigmatised) groups in the community and oriented towards public protest.

- Analysis of destigmatisation strategies. In the case of HIV activism, it can be seen that professionalisation in the activism field is one of the key strategies of destigmatisation. Informants successful in other professional fields often overcome self-stigmatisation only after becoming activists and after professionalisation in activism.

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Appendix 1: Table of respondents' socio-demographic data (St. Petersburg)

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Education	Employment	Residential status	Family status	Country of birth
Alice	Female	35	General Secondary Education	Work	Lives independently with own partner	Married	Russia
Vera	Female	36	No information	Work	Lives independently alone	Single	Russia
Sacha	Male	51	No information	Does not work	Lives independently alone	Single	Russia
Petr	Male	39	Higher Education	Work	Lives independently with own partner	Living with partner	Russia
Misha	Male	47	Higher Education	Work	Lives independently alone	Single	Russia
Kirill	Male	19	General Secondary Education	Student, Work	Now information	Single	Russia
Julia	Female	34	No information	Work	Now information	Now information	Russia
Egor	Male	38	Professional Secondary Education	Work	Now information	Now information	Russia
Igor	Male	22	General Secondary Education	Student, Work	Lives independently alone	Single	Russia
Alex	Male	29	General Secondary Education	Work	Lives independently alone	Single	Russia
Ivan	Male	29	Higher Education	Work	Lives independently alone	Single	Russia
Ekaterina	Female	31	Higher Education	Work	Lives independently with own partner	Living with partner	
Alena	Female	38	No information	Work	Lives independently with own children	Divorced	Russia
Olesya	Female	32	Specialized Secondary Education	Work	Lives independently with own partner and children	Living with partner	--
Arina	Female	22	General Secondary Education	Student, Work	Lives independently alone	Single	Russia
Roman	Male	27	Higher Education	Work	Lives independently alone	Single	Russia

Olga	Female	31	Higher Education	Work	Lives independently with own partner and children	Married	----
Eugenii	Male	36	Higher Education	Work	Lives independently with own partner and children	Married	Russia
Ksenia	Female	33	General Secondary Education	Work	Lives independently with own new partner and children	Divorced	Russia

Appendix 2: Table of respondents' socio-demographic data (Kazan)

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Education	Employment	Residential status	Family status	Country of birth
Renata	Female	32	Higher education	Work	Lives independently with own partner and child	Married	Russia
Alyona	Female	36	Higher education	Work	Lives independently with own partner, brothers and children	Married	Russia
Natalia	Female	19	Special secondary education	Does not work	Lives with parents	Single	Russia
Anatoliy	Male	21	Undergraduate - special secondary education	Work	Lives independently with sister	Single	Russia
Anastasiya	Female	21	Secondary Education	Part time work	Lives independently	Single	Hungary
Ruslan	Male	40	Higher education	Work	Lives independently with own partner and children	Married	Russia
Rustem	Male	17	Undergraduate - special secondary education	Part time work	Lives with grandmother	Single	Russia
Alexander	Male	41	Higher education	Work	Lives independently with own partner and children	Married	Russia
Artur	Male	38	Special secondary education	Work	Lives independently with own partner and children	Married	Russia
Dina	Female	43	Special secondary education	Work	Lives independently with own partner and children	Married	Russia

CLUSTER 3: ECONOMY/LEISURE SPACES

➢ Artistic/Creative Start-Ups in the Suburbs of Naples – Italy

➢ Self-building, alternative accommodation & public space uses – Spain

➢ Returning young migrants – Slovakia

➢ Intergenerational contests in the media city – Finland

➢ Supporters' Varteks FC – Croatia

PROMISE: promoting youth involvement and social engagement

PROMISE: Promoting Youth Involvement and Social Engagement: Opportunities and challenges for conflicted young people across Europe.

WP6: From Conflict to Innovation: Ethnographic Case Studies

Artistic/Creative Start-Ups in the Suburbs of Naples Italy

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Executive summary: Young people growing up in harsh environments are often stigmatised by society as "troubled" and "losers" and this affects their future life. This report illustrates the case of the stigmatised young people from the suburbs of Naples who have instead succeeded to turn the stigma into a positive value and a powerful driver for social change. Despite coming from social and economic contexts of hardship and often linked to the environments of organised crime, the youth addressed by our research have found a way to put in place an extraordinary innovative potential, for themselves and the community, through the use of art - in particular, circus and theatre. In the absence of strong reference points to which they can adhere (e.g. family, institutions), the values, role models and negative habits learnt from living in the neighbourhood become the only things "grounding" the young people, allowing them to develop their individual identities. In this perspective, the conditions of exclusion and marginalisation can lead young people to develop a strong sense of belonging, which is essentially based on sharing a common setting and experience characterised by marginalisation and exclusion from the rest of society. Albeit a "negative" one, such a feeling of belonging can be regarded as positive in certain circumstances. Research findings demonstrate that young people from marginalised suburbs can promote innovation and lead social change by "investing" in their sense of belonging and transferring it, from the street gang they used to belong to, to the local community. The young street artists addressed in this case study, without denying their troubled pasts, have effectively learned to use their street origin as an asset, something they share with the younger generations they wish to involve in their arts projects. They have maintained their marginality but have transformed it into a positive trait, a sort of "culture of marginality". In this transformation lies the strong desire for change felt by the young people who are the object of this study.

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Conceptual basis and theoretical approaches

A fundamental assumption drove the research in Italy; namely that troubled youth, relegated to the country's geographical and existential peripheries, have extraordinary potential for creativity and innovation. According to this belief, troubled youth represent privileged agents of innovation, capable of undermining the preconceived ideas of the adult world. Moreover, the youth can make a positive contribution to improving the country's political and social spheres, perhaps even more so than their peers who have a more harmonious social and economic background.

What does it mean for a young person today to grow up and live in a troubled area? As in the rest of Europe, youth in Italy experience a profoundly critical and stagnant period during which they appear more concentrated on themselves and less idealistic, ready to adopt whatever strategy necessary to adapt to a fragmented society characterized by a global economic crisis. The newer generations are overwhelmed by the transformations overtaking not only our society, but also our behavioural models, our fundamental values and beliefs, and thus, politics (Crespi, 1999: 73-4). These transformations have put youth in a state of isolation, confusion and uncertainty where individualism represents the only option. These 'failed youth' or 'invisible youth' (Diamanti,1999: 45) increasingly specialise in dealing with the present, adapting to the uncertainties of living day to day without ever really taking a stand or showing signs of opposition. These youth must deal with the possibility of sudden changes and have adapted their response times accordingly, reacting immediately to the unforeseen (Leccardi, 2005).Perhaps the most innovative and original of their characteristics lies in their 'ability to deal with the fragmentation and uncertainty of their environment as though these were normal aspects, thus using them to their advantage through constant awareness and understanding' (Savonardo, 2010: 332-3).The most valued ability is 'being able to adapt' or to be 'flexible'(Bauman, 2009: 47-8). In addition, today's youth are generally represented as having foregone the idea of forging new paths, limiting themselves to adapting, albeit with some difficulty, to the existing paths passed down to them by previous generations (Crespi, 1999; Savonardo, 2010). Not surprisingly, the main difficulty encountered when initiating this research was the need to identify troubled areas where youth still felt the necessity to express their dissent by speaking up and challenging the source of their discontent.

1.2 Objectives and questions posed by the research

The PROMISE project aims to investigate into the innovation potentials of youth and particularly of young people in conflict with authority and with social norms. Youth defined as conflictual can be subjected to a stigmatization that labels them as problematic in terms of social engagement. The effects of such stigmatization can affect the young people's self-identity and hamper the possibilities for them to participate positively in society. The case-study presented in this report intends to contribute to PROMISE by providing a positive example of a group of youth who, despite being stigmatized as criminals and 'losers', succeed in overturning the stigma into a positive value and this allows for their active participation in society.

Initially, finding examples of live conflict or troubled areas as mentioned above led to the exploration of one of the many peripheries in Italy where these invisible youth are to all effects hidden from society. Reaching the centre of this area meant going to Naples, a place that has become, for some academics, the definition of a city in a state of crisis and a city as crisis(Chambers, 1994).Naples, however, has always proven itself a proactive and productive city,

a place where innovation has created increasingly original cultural and artistic paths (Savonardo, 2013).

The idea of exploring 'off centre' stems from the belief that it is precisely in the geographical outskirts, far from the centres of power, that youth experience the most difficulty living (and surviving), especially in an increasingly unjust and unfair society. The youth in these areas not only face greater exposure to injustice and social inequality, but also to distorted values and contradictions that effectively isolate them from legality, the state and society as a whole. Yet it is precisely here, amidst social, cultural and economic deprivation that creativity flourishes. The angst of youth, before it explodes into social conflict, can nurture and drive the desire for positive change. Jonathan Friedman (Friedman, 2001) pointed to the possibility that this impasse, identified by urban anthropologists (for example Hannerz 1992), could be overcome. When urban anthropologists depicted cities as exotic cauldrons and creativity as a casual phenomenon, they overlooked key factors such as social class structures and the distribution of power. It is in the suburbs that change can take on its most radical form: the will to subvert the system and to transform negative energy and frustration into positive outcomes for oneself and for society increases in intensity when social injustice and unease can no longer be tolerated. A sense of rebellion drives those living on the margins to redeem their social, cultural and economic rights. Thus, they may be highly motivated to take control and initiate social change and development. Given the potential present in these areas, the emphasis of this research study is on creativity and innovation as a specific "cultural" ability that people can develop in order to compensate for or modify their difficult circumstances (Löfgren, 2001).

The outskirts of city can be a hub for creativity and change, a place where *rebellious energy* can become something positive. The outskirts are no longer merely a place of rejection and abandonment, but a place where one can re-establish a sense of community life (Viviani, 2015). Today real change seems to be in the hands of youth from the periphery. They have shown great determination by initiating *bottom-up* projects for social inclusion, community involvement and active participation. These projects offer inhabitants a way to deal with social unease and juvenile delinquency as well as the general issues related to living in a problem area. If the possibility of a better life exists, then it must be sought right there, digging under the rubble, rummaging in the ash. This study explores the context of these stigmatised and *bad* youth, whom the media hasten to label *youth gangs* or *at-risk youth*. Defining themselves as 'ex-street kids', they are the *enfant terrible* rejected by schools, by their peers and often their own families. Finding themselves on the street, these young people try to reverse the injustices they have had to deal with. The troubles these youth experience, however, affect them in various ways: from their conflict with authority (e.g. inadequate education, an absentee state), to their families and adult figures in general, all of which is fuelled by the barren social, cultural and human landscape in which they grow up.

The area analysed covers the Sixth Municipality of Naples (San Giovanni a Teduccio, Barra, Ponticelli) and is the scene of widespread degradation. Unemployment, poverty and crime have flourished in an environment of absolute cultural deprivation and that has the lowest level of education recorded in Italy. In such a fragmented social context, with almost non-existent urban areas or places for socialization, organized crime is a deep-seated presence throughout the area. The youth – a clear majority here compared to the rest of the city –grow up in an impoverished and bleak environment, devoid of any educational possibility, let alone cultural exchange or growth. Consequently, they become easy prey for criminals and organised crime.

The study's objective was to understand how the youth in question have overcome their condition of rejection and abandonment and transformed their frustration and difficulties into something positive, both on an individual and a social level. The study questions focused on the motives and ambitions leading the youth to make such changes as well as trying to understand how their actions can be of value for overall social innovation. In addition, the study investigated the origins of this radical conflict and the burden and consequences of being so hastily and negatively labelled by the media and society in general. The study sought to understand what lies beneath these labels and what motivates and inspires these youth to shed the labels and be viewed positively. Further questions explored why the youth wished to actively take part in society when it had done nothing but exclude them. In short, the aim of the research was to understand how youth branded as *troubled* by society managed to break free from that stigma and how they have transformed their negative experience of being born and growing up on the margins of society to creating a more positive and proactive outlook for change. Findings show that art represents the common denominator linking the youth in question. Art is a powerful medium capable of transmitting knowledge and important values, but, in this case, it is theatre and the circus—two forms of expression characterised by *risk*, which is a key factor in attracting and engaging troubled youth—that played a key role.

2. METHODS

2.1 An ethnographic approach to research

The study adopted an ethnographic approach due to interest in the forms of conflict adopted by youth and their potential for social innovation. Ethnography offers a means of 'getting to know a world' (Agar, 1986: 32-3) and an answer the queries posed by the research from the privileged viewpoint of the inhabitants of that world (Cardano, 2011: 55-6; Silverman, 2008: 77-8). In consideration of the heuristic irreducibility of someone else's point of view in relation to one's own, ethnographic research focuses on the relationship and interaction with and among the subjects of a study and analyses contexts and processes (Silverman, 2008: 100-1).

The research focused on the intersubjective dimension of the phenomena observed in order to underline the space of the relationship between the researcher and the field of investigation. With this in mind, the ethnographic methodology led to the use, as the primary means of investigation, of semi-structured interviews. This interview methodology enables the interviewer to conduct the conversation following a line of questioning considered important in order to acquire information. An outline of questions suggests the subjects to be raised and the appropriate linguistic style to use while leaving the order in which to proceed up to the interviewer (Cardano, 2003: 22-3) based on the progression of the interviewee's answers.

For this study the interview outline, developed in agreement with the partners of the PROMISE project, served as the basis for a new outline developed to better suit the research presented here. The outline acted as a guide providing cues to encourage discussions pertinent to the research. However, it did not exclude the possibility of asking unforeseen questions that, during the course of the conversations, proved useful to the researcher, adding context to the study. The interview outline identified five main subject areas within which the interviewer – in no particular order – pinpointed various points to be addressed. Conducted in this way, the guided narrative interview was sufficiently malleable and adaptable to the context and the respondent's specific needs. Data from various forms of documentation (e.g. photographs provided by the youths

interviewed, newspaper articles, secondary data) supported the semi-structured interviews. This additional data recreated 'the performance dimension of street speech' as Bourgois defined it (2005: 77-8).

Thus, the field research made use of the following techniques and resources:

- Active observations in key areas around the neighbourhood were conducted for five days and a total of 20 hours (at the location where the youth attend their cultural and sporting activities, at Their Youth Centre Asterix, on neighbourhood streets and in squares);
- 20 semi-structured interviews (average length 45 minutes each and all of them audio-recorded) were conducted with key figures (ex-street kids, Youth Centre workers, the president of the association), as well as a number of informal conversations with key figures;
- Field diary (approximately 30 transcribed pages);
- Photo elicitation: approximately 100 photos taken by the key figures upon the researchers encouragement ; and
- Newspaper articles and internet research.

Following the field research, all audio interviews, field diaries and ethnographic notes were transcribed and coded using NVivo. Text coding involved two steps: first, case-specific text extracts were identified and labelled (Level 1); subsequently, all Level 1 codes were grouped within broader labels (Level 2) that had been agreed on by all project partners in order to allow for data sharing and comparability across all case studies. The analysis presented in this report are based on the coded data.

2.2 Access to the field and interactions with interviewees

Researchers contacted the interviewees via telephone prior to beginning the face-to-face narrative interviews. The telephone contact made it possible to present the research to the respondents and provide adequate information about the study, as well as offer reassurance about the nature and use of the material gathered during the interviews. It should be pointed out that all interviewees work for two associations (*Trerrote* and *Iltappeto di Iqbal*), which made it easier to identify key figures.

Interactions with the subjects was extremely easy during the interviews; there were no particular incidents to report. Research participants were very forthcoming and helpful when answering the questions and providing information. Interviews comprised an initial sampling phase, followed by a second phase that enabled the exploration of some aspects that emerged during analysis as well as the inclusion of other interview participants identified during the field research. The second phase proved particularly complex due to some organisational and logistical issues which arose while making arrangements. Overall, the youth were very enthusiastic about sharing their experiences with the researchers.

The interview atmosphere was characterised by the spontaneity and the ease with which the youth shared their experiences. These were frequently frank and emotionally charged stories about their troubled pasts. However, since the primary objective of the study was to establish a climate of trust, be as minimally intrusive as possible and cause the least emotional distress, it was often necessary to support the flow of the interviewees' narratives, regardless of the relevance to the research. Showing sensitivity to the entire story shared by the youth was essential to avoid

undermining the delicate issues that emerged, offending the respondent's sensitivity and potentially causing distress.

Recording the interviews in audio format proved to be particularly well suited to the context, allowing the interviewees to act naturally and thus with greater freedom of expression.

2.3 Ethical issues

Field research and observations of the interactions between people requires not only consideration of the value of the research, but also the responsibility towards the observed. In this study, the first step was to offer participants informed consent in order to provide clear and detailed information about the research, its purpose and the possible uses of the information collected. This enabled participants to make a free and conscious decision about whether or not to take part in the research. Researchers ensured that each participant fully understood the aim of the research and its implications.

An issue of primary importance, from an ethical point of view, was how to gain access to the research field. The approach adopted was to propose an open-observational role that built on the observed subjects' sense of trust. It was equally important to maintain contact with all the people involved in the research. One way of doing this was to keep in touch with the interviewed subjects and, when possible, return to the field after a few months presenting them with the partial results of the study and returning some of the transcripts and audio-visual material. This left them with a tangible autobiographical memento and served as a token of the researcher's gratitude.

2.4 Gender

Less than a third (6 out of 20) of the interviews were with females. This data reflects an objective numerical imbalance between males and females in the groups of youth involved in the research, the main cause of which stems from the economic and social conditions that characterise the neighbourhood. As mentioned, the neighbourhood studied is one of the most degraded on the outskirts of Naples; the absence of numerical gender equality underscores the exclusion of young women in the suburbs of Napoli in general, a 'marginalisation within marginalisation'. Today, as in the past, women are mainly relegated to the home. Extremely young motherhood is the norm, as is the preclusion to furthering their education and wanting to have a professional life. Thus, it was not coincidental that the young women who were part of the groups involved in our study came from other, more affluent neighbourhoods and family backgrounds. Amongst the interviewees, 6 out of 6 females came from other neighbourhoods, while only 3 out of 14 males were not from the neighbourhood in question. This means that the girls and young women involved in the artistic activities studied, became bearers of cultural diversity; a diversity that for the majority of the street kids, was a first glimpse of the world beyond their neighbourhood.

3. KEY FINDINGS

3.1 Experiences of being young

The youth involved in the study come from an urban context characterized by deprivation. There are no health services or services in general, no places in which to socialize, no sporting or recreational facilities for young people, and no public transport. Most significantly, there is a dire absence of jobs and economic resources. As 19 year-old Cristian told us:

> We didn't have anywhere to hang out…we were always making trouble in the neighbourhood. It was dark. There was no cinema. There weren't any football pitches, we'd use fruit crates, one on the left and one on the right, 50 meters apart, and we'd play. It was bad. There were no theatres, no parks…nothing. Bars closed at 7pm.There was a curfew. You couldn't go out. Nothing, nothing at all! (Cristian)

Crime is very much present in the life of the majority of these youth, so much so that it permeates the entire cultural geography. Crime and drugs are often the reason they do not have families – and therefore lack an adult presence to guide them and provide affection- a fact most of them have had to deal with from an early age. In the stories told by the boys and girls interviewed, the particular characteristics of this area – "the neighbourhood" – appear like a background to their lives, without which they cannot even imagine another existence. The distinctive features of the neighbourhood keep them firmly rooted and linked to their relational references, forcing them to grow up fully aware of the deprivations.

Twenty year-old Paolo explains what it means to live in a neighbourhood on the outskirts, marked by socio-economic underdevelopment, high rates of unemployment, urban environmental decay, and a lack of public transport, infrastructure and services aimed at the younger population:

> Compared to the centre of Naples where you can go out and find anything you like, in the squares here in Barra the most you'll find is drunks and drug addicts… it's difficult to frequent those kind of places. So we'd meet at the football pitches. They may have been half destroyed but at least you could play. (Paolo)

Twenty-five year-old Marcello's words also strongly convey the distressful atmosphere that has permeated the streets and squares of the neighbourhood for years: We were born in a neighbourhood where the discontent grows within you. A neighbourhood that can only harm you, a lot… (Marcello).

3.2 The Internalized Periphery: Identity and Stigma

Living in a time, as some authors have highlighted[1], characterized by the expansion of possibilities in every area and the perception that everything is possible, young people tend to be assigned the task of recognizing themselves in relation to a specific identity and having to deal with feelings of profound uncertainty and instability (above all economic and social). In contrast, the periphery seems to reserve an *awful certainty* for young people, a pre-packaged identity that is socially recognised and approved in virtue of representing social negativity in the collective imagination. The absence of alternatives, the lack of opportunities and the economic deprivation leave no room

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[1]Fabbrini, Melucci 2000: 34-35

for uncertainty: within the neighbourhood, choices are limited and there are but a few set courses. For a street kid from the outskirts of a metropolis such as Naples, one of the most stigmatised in Italy, imagining a life elsewhere is very complicated.

Many of the youth on the outskirts of Naples spend the majority of their lives within the neighbourhood without ever leaving, be it because of a lack of means, knowledge or desire. Often, they refuse to leave because they know wider society looks down on them, or because they are afraid of the police. The negativity with which these young boys and girls have been labelledfosters a sense of exclusion from not only the social, cultural and employment spheres in the country as a whole, but also - and especially – the more central areas of their own city. The youth learn from an early age to internalise this stigma and develop the conviction that they are exactly as other people paint them to be:

> I was born in the sewers…Everyone here ends up the same way… (Cristian)

The testimony of one of the young *Trerrote* theatre teachers, who comes from one of the upper-class neighbourhoods of Naples, is eye opening:

> This condition of internalised marginalisation - of internalised periphery is very strong and clear. They have internalised the inability to get out of their specific context, emerge and change things. A girl recently said to me: "Teach, what do YOU know? I come from the sewers" as if to say, worrying about me is useless, I know more about life than you do because I live amidst gunfire, shit and filth. You adults come here thinking you can help, save me in some way… What do you think you're doing? Nothing, that'swhat! Because I don't think you can change the way things are. (Maria)

Thus, by accepting the image and prejudice people project upon them, they give up believing they can live differently. The neighbourhood stamps a distinctive mark on the lives of these youngsters deemed dangerous, infamous, and unapproachable. The stigma attached to them makes them out to be angry, eternally defeated criminals, with no possibility of redemption: a stigma that denies them a real individual identity. As time passes, these youngsters internalise the way others perceive them, identifying with that image and forgetting their own identities. The inability to identify one's true self is the steady outcome of an automatic rationalisation and cataloguing process—a process triggered by the way people from 'other' neighbourhoods see these youngsters. However, it also occurs from within – because of the deprivations and the feeling of being different they experience first-hand. In fact, "*the stigma is not a mark in itself, it subsists in the perception of others before being internalized by those stigmatized: it occurs in a relationship between those who assume the position of "normalcy" and those who diverge from it* " (Goffman, 1963:77-78).

Mauro explains this dynamic well:

> If you are born in my context, you usually only interact with people from that same context. You talk with and go out with them. When you seek relationships with "others" you are either a bad person who's up to no good or, in any case, there is something not very convincing about it. (Mauro)

There is a strong feeling of insecurity and the fear of the *different* and *unknown* prevent any attempt at communication between the city's centre and its periphery. In truth, the feeling of

insecurity perceived in the outskirts mainly belongs to those who do not actually live there. To all effects they avoid frequenting these places by putting up a mental barrier in the city, as if to permanently erase them from the urban map. That is not to say that the actual inhabitants of the periphery do not shut themselves off for fear or indifference. It is not surprising to hear a woman of only 18 years confess her fear of 'crossing the border', of leaving the confines of the neighbourhood and going into the centre of the city: 'No, I'm not leaving this place. – Why not? – Oh, my mother's scared. She says it's dangerous to go way down there' (Maria, reporting a conversation hold with a local girl).

In the case presented here, it is also important to point out that the stigma attached to these youth is collective and that their feeling of marginalisation is shared. They are excluded from the rest of society principally because the area they are from creates an isolated context: 'There were kids who wouldn't even come near me because I was from Barra. I had a bad reputation, they would back away from me'(Andrea).

The stigma is attributed in equal measure to all members of the group and derives from their sharing the same geographical provenance, a place that in their eyes is the place par excellence, as Andrea tells us:

> For us kids, the laws of the neighbourhood were the laws of the world! Many, for example, don't know the centre of Naples…They've never been! Their whole world is right here, just up above us, in the council houses. That's it. (Andrea).

Such conditions of exclusion and marginalisation lead these youth to develop a strong sense of belonging, albeit a negative one. This feeling is essentially based on sharing a common setting and experience characterised by the stigma of exclusion from the rest of society. In the absence of strong reference points to adhere to (e.g. family, institutions) the values, role models and negative habits they learn from living in the neighbourhood become the only things grounding them, allowing them to develop their individual identities.

3.3 Contexts of conflict: Family and education

For many of the youngsters interviewed, family is nothing but an abstract concept. Whether they grow up without parents (often because they are in prison), or with unprepared guardians who are not capable of looking after them, the youngsters are raised in the absence of emotional and economic support. They do not know what it means to experience the love and care of an adult figure, let alone a parent. In addition, from a very early age some of them are forced to resort to burglaries, robberies or drug dealing in order to provide for themselves. Thus, these strategies, which they have to adopt early on in their lives, compensate for the absence of adult figures of reference and provide a response to their difficult economic situation. To all effects, the youth have to become the adults:

> I come from a very numerous family. I have 7 siblings. When my mother gave birth to me she didn't want to keep me so I was sent to my grandmother who was already elderly at the time…She didn't have the energy to keep up with me (…) I never hugged or kissed my parents, I don't know what it feels like to hug your parent (….) Unfortunately, in this neighbourhood you become an adult at 13! (…) I had to take care of myself right from the start. If I needed shoes, I had to go and buy them myself at the

age of 14/15…I had to work and do illegal stuff to simply get normal everyday things… (Marcello)

Dad would come home in the evening, put a plate on the table and say: "This is the plate, you think of the rest!" What I understood by that, though he didn't actually say it, was not that he didn't want to provide…it's that he couldn't! (Cristian)

I always had a million things to think about while I was growing up because we had to face a lot of problems. My mum separating from my dad because of his drug addiction and stuff like that… To take my mind off things all I wanted to do was go out and have fun.(Paolo)

The interviews with the youth also highlight school and the negative meaning the youth give it. To them it is considered a *non-place* (Augè, 2009) of education that reinforces their negative experiences with adults who do not know how to listen, care for and guide them. School is the place where they merely receive the confirmation that they are on their own and that teachers and an education do not provide any form of guidance:

For me, well… schools may as well all close down. Life is my school! Living in this world, the universe, is a university. If you don't live, you don't learn…Have you ever heard a teacher at school say: "What's missing from your life? How would you like school to improve that for you?"…There's no time for improvement. There's no time for taking care of us, for relationships. (Matteo)

The interviews also show how the youth treat school as a playground, a place where they go to 'create chaos with friends' (Cristian)*,* and vent their anger and frustration, enforcing the survival of the fittest laws they have learned on the streets:

I used to break everything. I'd throw desks at the teachers.(Andrea)

I liked it because I didn't do anything. I was in charge! I'd leave the classroom without asking permission. I'd go downstairs to the staff room and make myself coffee…We would be very disruptive… We even hit quite a few teachers. My cousin would always hit the music teacher. (Cristian)

Other youth, boys but mostly girls, abandon their education completely and end up on the streets (the girls often become teen mothers), spending their whole day in the neighbourhood and often becoming easy prey for organised crime. In these neighbourhoods, schools could carry out an important function by keeping boys and girls off the streets for as long as possible. But in presenting itself as a *non-place* for education, with adults completely lacking authority who are either incapable, or have no interest in establishing relationships based on trust and respect, the schools contribute to the marginalisation that these children experience and recognise from every other aspect of their lives.

3.4 Peers and friendship groups

In the above contexts, characterised by weak parental ties, the absence of authority at schools, and a high level of urban and social decay and neglect, it is easy to understand why organised crime has become a fixed presence. Youth from these areas have to deal with a desolate environment devoid of educational and cultural opportunities that makes them easy prey for criminal organisations. In such a context, criminals, who represent the only organised group

present throughout the territory offer ways in which to generate income in an area where levels of unemployment are extremely high, and thus easily influence neighbourhood life:

> Barra is a neighbourhood where institutions don't exist, the Camorra has taken the place of the state. If something happens here you don't go to the police you go and talk to the local boss to solve things. If you need a job you don't go to the job centre, you go to the boss and he finds one for you. (Marcello)

> Standing around for two or three hours being a lookout you get 500 Euros a week… while when you go do hard labour for hours and hours, come Sunday you're lucky if you put 50 Euros in your pocket. It's an easy choice. (Cristian)

The absence of institutions together with the fixed presence of organised crime (and the connected mentality), inevitably condition relationships within the neighbourhood. The youth who grow up here absorb these particular dynamics, which act as a moral compass for their behaviour towards peers and friends. Friendship is based on a relationship where the balance of power reigns supreme. There is also a pack mentality: within the pack you feel safe and protected; the stronger the pack the greater the chance that it will be feared and respected in the neighbourhood. The possibility of violence and the risks to which the youth are exposed forces the youth to become part of a gang in order to defend themselves more effectively. They view friends as useful allies rather than playful companions. Individuals, in order not to feel isolated, become part of the gang. This keeps them safe from predators or rivals from other parts of the neighbourhood. However, their need to unite and build ties is not only to overcome fear, but also to prove themselves and gain respect.

> Those friendships are based on the idea that "I do something for you and you do something for me!"If you have an argument with someone today and have to beat them up, I'll have your back just as you'd have mine if I have to go and fight with someone one day! It's a question of reciprocal favours…It's all based on " if I give you this you have to give me that otherwise me and you no longer know each other". (Fabrizio)

A friend is someone who comes to your rescue when you are in danger, who does not betray you and defends you if needs be. Interactions are based on a sense of brotherhood, which means defending one another against outside threats, protecting members of the gang in difficulty, gaining power over other gangs in the neighbourhood:'If one of us started something, we'd all be behind him. We've been in fights where I would take a punch in the face so a younger member wouldn't have to'(Michele).

> I'd go and ask my friends from Barra to back me up. I'd go back to my neighbourhood and say "guys let's go over there, let's go and fight!"There was this, how can I put it…war between two neighbourhoods.(Matteo)

Differential association[2], the tendency of young people belonging to the same (sub) culture to join in gangs that reinforce deviant behaviour, is commonplace in these neighbourhoods. This behaviour is used to gain the acceptance and respect of other members who share common values and codes that stand in contrast to those accepted by society. Belonging to a gang means

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[2] In 1930 Edwin Sutherland elaborated the theory of 'differential association' whereby an individual will choose the criminal path when the balance of definitions for law-breaking exceeds those for law-abiding.

being part of a parallel social structure to the one commonly found in society and from which these youngsters, from the outskirts, find themselves excluded. Gangs become social structures unto themselves, governed by leaders who have precise roles and whose authority is approved and legitimised. A staunch belief in unity and the real or idealised antagonism towards the society in which they live links gang members and holds them together; they are bound by a strong sense of belonging to their community, something that individuals who are to members of the gang perceive.

The need for these youth to belong to a gang stems from various aspects observed in the neighbourhood studied: complex family situations, failures in the educational system, close proximity to illicit activities, difficulty entering the job market, boredom or depression. Apart from belonging to the same community and sharing the same negative experiences related to family, childhood and education, the *gang logic* also relies on other key factors: the sense of brotherhood that strengthens the bond between members; risks and challenges; and the language of the street. However, it is precisely these key factors that a group of young people from the neighbourhood are using to start changing society. Their aim is to attract younger children, thus removing them from their inevitable life of crime and deprivation, to open up a window to a different future.

3.5 Turning points

The ways in which a group can exert a negative influence are not dissimilar to those with which it can exert a positive one: deviant behaviour is assimilated exactly like any other behaviour, the difference is the model being taught. '*It's always been said to "learn from your elders…" They learn from whomever they can.'*(Marcello)

This is precisely the aspect the youngsters rely on in order to initiate the renewal process within the neighbourhood. The interviews highlighted that for these young people, being part of a group – a community – is of the utmost importance. The group is in fact the ideal and necessary dimension that helps them bring about a radical change in the area in which they live. Redirecting the negative implications of being part of a gang and adopting a new set of values and ideals,the group can become a positive experience and give meaning not only to themselves, but also to the community to which they belong. In this way, they are changing the content but not the form; belonging to a gang acquires a new meaning, that of belonging to a cohesive and conscientious community; values such as solidarity, sharing and social cohesion replace violence, oppression and crime. The tendency for these young people to join gangs to reinforce deviant behaviour is completely reversed; now they can band together to avoid deviant behaviour and prove that a different way of life of is possible for all of them. The 'tribal' aspects that characterize their neighbourhood can be converted into positive ones capable of bringing them out of their condition of exclusion and isolation, simultaneously, modifying the way in which they and their community are perceived.

> The thing that distinguishes us from other cooperatives and associations is that we really are a group!…When we're together we're really like one big family! Whoever sees us says: "Wow, what a group! How do you manage it?" (Marcello)

Their stigma and marginalization transform into strengths. The youth do not deny that they come from that particular area, but they can now use those strengths to revolutionize their world. How can this be achieved? Which strategies can be put into place to overcome their condition of exclusion and marginality? How can they turn upside down a world governed by violence, crime,

oppression, and death? Some of the testimonies gathered about past times portray, albeit unconsciously, a sense of being lost and dissatisfied with one's life: 'I'm not saying that there weren't times in which I just wanted to leave everything and run away…I wanted to change things even though I didn't know how' (Matteo).

Digging deeper into the past of the interviewed youth reveals that most of them have had a particular experience that acted as a turning point in their lives. More often than not, these experiences were particularly traumatic and affected them deeply, making them realize they were at a crossroads.

Having to experience the extreme trauma of a friend being killed is a clear example of how an event can be the defining moment between then and now:

> My best friend was the son of Barra's boss, F… F. was killed by 16 shots to the chest, the head and the back. When I saw him lying there in all that blood my thoughts weren't that I was sorry for him but that I was glad it wasn't me down there on the ground. (Marcello)

> I mean, can you believe it? You get a call on your cell phone… You know, when I think about it I still get chills! When they called me and told me: "A. is dead!" I said "what the hell are you talking about? A. is dead?" It makes you put things into perspective and say to yourself: "what the hell are we doing?" I mean, at 18 he had hardly lived, he'd done nothing, nothing! At 18 you should have a girlfriend, a job, you should travel, see the world, experience things. Instead, at 18 they put you out like a light! They just flipped the switch? No… for me that won't do!…How can you possibly want to live on the streets like that? …It would either have to be you killing A…or A. would be coming to kill you.(Michele)

The fear of ending up like many of their friends who have disappeared over the years, whether they were killed, imprisoned or lost to drugs, spurs the youth to find a way out. They may only have a vague idea that a different life is possible, but that does not stop them from searching for a different path to turn their lives around.

Positive experiences can also act as catalysts for bringing about a change in one's life. Travelling is an example and many of the interviewees talked about how the trips they had made. For many, it was their first experience outside of the neighbourhood and was eye opening because they came into contact with peers who led totally different lives and even spoke in a different way.

> Before, this was normality for me! But since I've started getting out of Naples with G., away from the Campania region… I've seen other towns in Italy and I've seen the difference between them and us down here. It's astonishing! (Cristian)

> Just the fact that I've had to communicate in Italian and not in my Neapolitan dialect has been a breakthrough for me. (Andrea)

> …Then I went to Padua where I met loads of young people my age who were continuing their studies in higher education. When I came back here all the people my age were doing was stealing and bag snatching!…I had never imagined it was possible

to work and study and lead a regular law abiding life. It never dawned on me to live "above board" let's say! (Michele)

The project also offers the youth the opportunity to travel and be away from their city and above all, their neighbourhood. Their new circus and theatre skills provide a chance to explore other places for the very first time in their lives. The stories they tell of these experiences often convey a sense of amazement at the discovery of new and different possibilities. Travelling also allows them the possibility to look at their lives from a different point of view and to compare themselves with others. This comparison is experienced in a positive way and helps to trigger the process of transformation since it allows them to see a different future for themselves.

3.6 Contexts of support

For these youth from the outskirts in the process of changing their lives around and discovering new possibilities, a decisive factor was meeting an adult figure whom they could rely on. In this case, the adult in question was Gianluca, a 28 year-old from the same neighbourhood. He shared a common background with the youth, yet wished to change the social and cultural geography of the area. He had taken over a cooperative that had been active for years but was on the brink of failing and decided to 'ask the ex-street kids who were over the age of 18, if, instead of working on the streets they would be interested in becoming partners of the cooperative – presenting them with the challenge of turning the neighbourhood around' (Gianluca). He uses his background to become part of the group of youngsters and be recognized as one of them: 'Firstly, I'm from Barra. I know all these kids' stories' (Gianluca). He revolutionized the cooperative's organisation and its mission and selected, as partners and operators, some of the neighbourhood's street kids who frequented the cooperative in the past: 'Iqbal was made up of all ex-street kids. We all spoke the same language' (Marcello).

The youth accepted the challenge and effectively gave up their former street lives to take on a new role under Gianluca's positive guidance. In this way, he represented a key figure who implemented the process of change on two levels: he developed a relationship based on caring and trust; and he used art as a means to educate the youth. Art was perfectly suited to raise awareness, functioning as an effective means to transmit values, affection and care. The youngsters were able to see Gianluca as a credible role model, someone who could transmit passion and knowledge about new things. For the first time in their lives, these youth felt what it was like to experience a meaningful relationship. Gianluca's main mission was to 'take care of the kids, help them to grow into their full potential and bring out their inner beauty and resources' (Gianluca). An astonishing experience for these youth, who for the first time were able to form a positive relationship, full of trust and respect, with an adult:

I would have liked to have had him (Gianluca) for a dad, that's for sure. My decision to come back here stemmed from the fact that I wanted to spend more time with him and learn from him… (Paolo)

By that point I trusted him (Gianluca) so whatever he suggested, I'd do it! Bungee Jumping? Ok, tell me when! Swimming? Let's go! Anything would have been fine. I trusted him and believed in what he said!(Andrea)

3.7 Innovation and social change

The idea that 'the individuals and/or groups from this neighbourhood possess the capacity and the skills necessary to improve their lives' (Gianluca) is the premise for all the activities carried out in the neighbourhood. Circus skills (Aerial acrobatics; Trampolining; Juggling; Clowning) theatre and sports (basketball, parkour, rugby, gymnastics, etc.) are some of the activities carried out *by* the youngsters *for* the kids at the neighbourhood's community centre. An important social meeting place for the kids of the area as it symbolises an indispensable point of reference. As previously mentioned, the arts represent a decisive turning point in the lives of the young people interviewed, a revolution: they are an effective means to transmit new values and skills; to gain a new perspective on the world; to have a valid alternative to street life, crime and the 'obligatory' paths previously imposed by the troubled neighbourhood; they allow a sense of freedom in which one can find one's true identity; the possibility to compare one's self with others and escape one's confines to explore the world. The arts also grant a unique opportunity to be with others in a positive way, not as an individual or worse, as a 'pack'; they transmit a sense of community characterised by very different values than the earlier ones. However, the arts are simply the means and not the ultimate goal of the activities provided by the project. As the cooperative's slogan points out: *'Not so that everyone can be an artist, but so no one has to be a slave'.*

Thus, the process of social innovation started by the neighbourhood youth is based on collaboration between individuals. Each of them participates and contributes in their own way, acquiring an active role in the activities aimed at providing them with support. The study observations clearly indicate that these marginalised youth from the degraded suburbs benefit enormously from such a social enterprise. The project organized *by* the youngsters *with* the younger children from the neighbourhood can also be seen as social entrepreneurship. The fact that they take on an active role not only benefits them as individuals, but also the community as a whole, as Nino explains:

> It is a joint task! We are building a cathedral, all together, each with their own knowledge and their own skills. Thanks to this metaphor we can accept things that we generally tend to reject: being distressed, being judged negatively, being asked to make an effort that goes beyond your personal interest and what you would normally accept as an individual… An effort you make not only for yourself, but for the greater good. (Nino)

These young innovators have found creative ways in which to compensate for the lack of resources. They ignore the scarce economic, social and cultural resources their area has to offer, instead concentrating on and enhancing the value of the opportunities their area *does* have. Acting on their endogenous resilience or ability to develop 'good energy', they have effectively overcome the obstacles they have had to deal with for most of their lives. Furthermore, their active participation in the project means that they go from being simply members, to having a much more significant role; a role that will guarantee the project's continuity in the future.

Finally, there is also the opportunity to address the youngster's economic needs by offering them employment within the project. Many of the young people have gone from being members to becoming partners of the cooperative, benefitting from an economic return and a source of livelihood. These young people not only play an important role in social development by supporting social integration, improving local services, promoting the active participation of young people in society, and encouraging a positive sense of community, but also promote dignified and

quality employment. They reverse the culture of exploitation and debasement present in the illegal labour market.

It is possible to identify some common pillars that represent the fundamental principles to the work carried out by both associations that were part of our study. Firstly, the *operators/educators are the members' peers*. They come from the same area. They have the same cultural, social and economic background; they have had the same life experiences, use the same language and have suffered the same marginalisation. The majority of the operators are ex-street kids who now have an active role in organising and implementing the centre's educational and training activities. The fact that they too have been marginalised helps them to attract other, younger street kids as these testimonies explain:

> If you came along and wanted to hold a workshop for difficult kids from the suburbs of Naples… They would never listen to you because you'd be Italian… You would be seen as being detached! Like "this one's Italian is way too proper!" (Riccardo)

> I saw something of the street in him, like me, he spoke my same language, the language of the street I mean, and that's important because to connect it's exactly what you've got to have. (Marcello)

Secondly, the *use of the arts* turned into the elective means to move the youth first towards an individual transformation and then towards a social one:

> One day this little group came along to teach circus skills. I went out and was intrigued by all the things they were doing. One was on stilts, another was juggling clubs, balls… I went up to them because I wanted to try! And I liked it… it was fantastic. It made you feel good! (Paolo)

Thirdly, the main elements used by the proposed art forms (circus and theatre) are immediately recognised by the youth and something they can easily associate with: *risk and challenge*.

> When we went into the streets and they'd stare at us. None of us would lower our gaze. We'd stand there and challenge their stares. However, we had to know how to handle that challenge otherwise it would just end up in a fight! We'd challenge them then say: "do you want to try the stilts?" and they'd answer "Why not? How hard can it be?" A bit like what I would have said some time ago - also because these are kids who are used to challenging the police every day. Nothing and no one scares them. So we'd get them up on the stilts…(Marcello)

> These are kids who are constantly at-risk, even when they're not doing anything, simply because of the context they come from. So we transformed that risk from a negative one to a positive one: they have to take risks, do risky circus things like aerial silks or parkour but with positive connotations. That's what we work on. (Marcello)

The main idea behind the project is to use the arts to teach these new generations to become more self-aware and proactive individuals, capable of initiating a long-term social transformation:

> We don't go around singing PEPPPEPEPEPE and making people laugh…of course, that's important too but at this moment in time what we need to do is something else. We

need to create awareness!…People have to be made aware and get involved in everything we do. (Gianluca)

The aim is to raise awareness throughout the whole neighbourhood by influencing the younger generations, building their creative and artistic skills and divulging a new *forma mentis* within the entire community. Emancipation and development is possible by working with resources the neighbourhood has to offer and giving the community a sense of *empowerment.* The main project promoters assert that is only way that transformation can occur, a transformation capable of turning the internalised marginalisation of the neighbourhood's inhabitants into a new awareness based on the *culture of marginality*.

The project attracts a large number of children and adolescents due to the team of educators, almost all of which are ex-street kids. This implies that because they share the same cultural background and speak the same language, the children they teach do not have difficulties with the process of identification. In addition, the ex-street kids represent *credible adult models*, new points of reference in a previously barren environment from a human and cultural point of view. These *model* adults also have another fundamental role: that of being a guide for the neighbourhood's youth, someone who can point them in the right direction – an alternative one – and support them during the difficult period of growth and the development of their personal identities.

> The work I do with these youngsters is actually quite selfish! You know my kids right? Well one day, these youngsters will be my kids' leaders! I mean, when I won't be able to do it anymore, who will my kids have to relate to? With them, that's who! So you see, if they are going to go on to take over the leadership of my kids, if I don't act now it means I'm not taking care of my kids. I have to do a good job with these youngsters so that they can do a good job with my kids. I'm investing in the future! (Gianluca)

The aim is to guarantee the new generations the possibility of a different future and an alternative way of life that sees the youth as promoters of a possible social, cultural and economic change in the entire community. Working for and with the younger generations, means multiplying the number of potential agents of social change, thus guaranteeing a better future to them:

> We are doing a work on generational change. We work with their children (...) for example, the sons of [mafia] bosses. We work with them, not with fathers, to hope that the child will not replace his father tomorrow, but he will choose a different life ... (Matteo)

The involvement of an ever-growing number of youth and the continuous expansion of the proposed activities aims to shape an entire population of youth. In the future, the younger generations are expected to take over and continue the project's work. Armed with a new set of values, these youngsters are expected to be able to create a better social environment and a better life for themselves and their community. Only then, the young people who are working today with the younger kids will feel free to leave their neighbourhood, if they wish so:

> I'll never leave this neighbourhood. If I do, it'll be because I know that Barra is capable of making it, that the kids will be fine on their own and that a whole new generation will be able to grow up correctly, in the right way, with the right rules, experiencing the beauty of childhood. (Marcello)

4. Conclusions

Many threads have become intertwined in our research. Firstly, there is the re-semanticising of the idea of *suburbs*, that proposes to overturn exclusion into value, marginality in a positive sense. In this sense, the need to trace an innovative image of social exclusion and spatial confinement starts from the periphery, which transforms a place of shortcomings and conflict into a creative space of trust and relationship. The outskirts of city thus become, as Viviani (2015: 66-7) puts it, places where it is possible to re-establish a sense of community life.

This study has originated from the PROMISE project, which aims to investigate the possibilities for positive social engagement and the innovation potential of young people defined as 'conflictive'. The original assumption beyond the project is that 'conflicted youth' are confronted with the effects of stigmatization and such effects can reduce the possibilities for them to engage positively in society. The case study presented here has aimed to depict a different picture of conflicted young people. In fact, it demonstrates how young people labelled as 'conflicted', on the margins of society and losers can become agents of positive social change.

Their search for a different horizon finds an answer in the realization of a joint venture. The drive of such counterculture experience, of the transformation process analysed in the course of this research, is initially triggered by an event that, for various reasons, marks a break in the lives of young people. The encounter with a *credible adult figure*, with whom to experience for the first time the power of a relationship of care, will then be a crucial factor to turn an individual experience into social aspiration, towards the building of a different community. The challenge posed does not lie so much in the subversion of a constituted order, but in the youth's transformation of this state, while remaining well anchored within the community to which they belong. A challenge that is carried out daily through arts and that finds its main weapons in the circus, the theatre and the sporting disciplines proposed. Arts therefore become, in this case, the privileged means by which to make the new generations aware and, through them, the whole community.

Studies on young people in Italy tend to focus on *uncertainty* and *fragmentation* as typically affecting their lives, with young people finding themselves responsible for confronting these key features and having to find answers to them. The young people who have been at the centre of our study, however, do not seem to reflect such a view. They have grown up in a social and cultural environment in which *scarcity* (e.g. of economic resources) and *absence* (e.g. of a care relation, or of *credible adults*) is a certainty for them. Nor do these young people seem to reflect the stigma that is often projected on conflictual youth, and that views them as scarcely interested in participating in society nor in becoming agents of positive change. On the other hand, studies on stigma, starting from Goffman's (1963) work, rarely pay attention to the possibility that the stigmatised transformed the negative label into a positive value.

The findings of our research indicate that the status of marginal and excluded, far from requiring an intervention of mere correction, can become the spring on which to trigger change. In this perspective, the stigmatised youth are fully capable to assume the task and the responsibility of being the key actors of a process of social change. The culture of marginality is therefore maintained, but it is transformed into positive marginality. In this transformation lies the strong desire for change felt by the youth who are the object of this study.

5. Future analysis

a) Themes encountered:

The study presented here highlights some issues, proposing a reversal of the significance attributed to core items:

- Marginality: can be regarded as a positive value;
- The outskirts: can be transformed from places marked by exclusion and insufficiencies to places in which to experiment with new forms of social cohabitation, taking away the need to leave at all costs;
- Youth labelled as 'marginalised' and 'problematic': have the potential for extraordinary proactive participation *in* society *for* society;
- Inter-generational relationships: can mark a decisive turning point in the paths of problematic youths if they provide the necessary understanding and support; and
- The arts: circus skills and theatre in particular, can be used as a means to encourage positive social transformation, turning problematic youngsters with no hope into active protagonists for change.

b) Issues of concern or hypothesis for triangulation with quantitative data:

In regards to the modalities of participation, the research findings suggest that the indicators provided by the major (quantitative) European surveys are limited when referring to how young people participate in society. Belonging to a human rights group, a religious organisation or other group or organisation is considered an important indicator of social engagement, possibly demonstrating youth involvement in the community. Nevertheless, some academics (Quintelier 2008, see PROMISE Deliverable D7 – D4.1) do not regard another set of indicators – including education, arts, music, cultural activities, sports or recreation - as likely to have a significant impact on society. This study demonstrates that social participation and commitment to a community can also be achieved by belonging to artistic and sporting groups. The authors believe that these activities can help youth radically change their community and society as a whole.

It would, therefore, be useful to review the indicators used in EU surveys, possibly by adding a set of questions on the individual's intentions and expectations regarding belonging to a group or association. In this way, it would be possible to understand both the expected and the effective outcomes in society produced by participation in these activities.

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7.   Appendix: table of respondents' socio-demographic data

File name	Age	Gender	Education	Employment	Residential status	Family status	Ethnicity	Country of birth	Religion
1_Cristian	18	Male	Completed vocational academic secondary education	In part-time employment	Lives at home with parents	Single	Not applicable	Italy	Not applicable
2_Carla	29	Female	Completed university	In part-time employment	Lives independently with friends	Single	Not applicable	Italy	Not applicable
3_Gianluca	38	Male	Completed general academic secondary education	In full-time employment	Lives independently with own partner/children	Living with partner	Not applicable	Italy	Not applicable
4_Matteo	19	Male	Did not complete secondary education and left	In full-time employment	Lives at home with other relatives	Single	Not applicable	Italy	Not applicable
5_Marcello	25	Male	Completed vocational academic secondary education	In full-time employment	Lives at home with parents	Single	Not applicable	Italy	Not applicable
6_Mauro	22	Male	Completed vocational academic secondary education	In full-time employment	Lives at home with parents	Single	Not applicable	Italy	Not applicable
7_Michele	22	Male	Completed vocational academic secondary education	Working and in part-time education	Lives independently with own partner	Single	Not applicable	Italy	Not applicable
8_Paolo	20	Male	Completed general academic secondary education	In part-time employment	Lives at home with parents	Single	Not applicable	Italy	Not applicable
9_Sabrina	31	Female	Completed university	In full-time employment	Lives independently with friends	Single	Not applicable	Italy	Not applicable
10_Andrea	22	Male	Did not complete secondary education and left	In part-time employment	Lives at home with parents	Single	Not applicable	Italy	Not applicable

11_Franca	24	Female	Completed university	In part-time employment	Lives at home with parents	Single	Not applicable	Italy	Not applicable
12_Fabrizio	22	Male	Completed vocational academic secondary education	Unemployed	Lives at home with parents	Single	Not applicable	Italy	Not applicable
13_Gabriella	25	Female	Completed university	Working and in part-time education	Lives at home with parents	Single	Not applicable	Italy	Not applicable
14_Maria	26	Female	Completed university	In part-time employment	Lives at home with parents	Single	Not applicable	Italy	Not applicable
15_Nino	36	Male	Completed university	In full-time employment	Lives independently alone	Single	Not applicable	Italy	Not applicable
16_Riccardo	23	Male	Did not complete secondary education and left	In part-time employment	Lives at home with parents	Single	Not applicable	Italy	Not applicable
17_Patrizio	28	Male	Completed university	In full-time employment	Lives at home with parents	Single	Not applicable	Italy	Not applicable
18_Nevio	34	Male	Completed university	In full-time employment	Lives independently alone	Single	Not applicable	Italy	Not applicable
19_Federica	27	Female	Completed university	In part-time employment	Lives independently alone	Single	Not applicable	Italy	Not applicable
20_Giacomo	27	Male	Completed university	In part-time employment	Lives independently alone	Single	Not applicable	Italy	Not applicable

PROMISE: **Promoting Youth Involvement and Social Engagement:**
Opportunities and challenges for conflicted young people across Europe

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Self-building, alternative accommodation and public space uses
Spain

Zyab Ibáñez

IGOP/UAB

Executive summary:

In recent years, a growing number of young Spaniards have wanted to participate directly in providing for their own futures, and see tangible results in the short, medium and long term. They try more or less collective and non-hierarchical ways of working, they often learn main skills informally, non-formally or are self-taught and they try to avoid bureaucratic constraints. Among these, in our case study we include the following aspects: the self-building of collective or private places; the *masovería urbana* (rent arrangements that include maintenance and restoration work as a partial or total substitute for paid rent); and the involvement in new uses of collective spaces the public/private character of which is unclear.

It is difficult to speculate, at the collective level, the extent to which these initiatives will be able to question, substitute or coexist with other more traditional options. At the individual level, it is difficult to estimate the most relevant effects of these young people's actions. It has always taken decades to translate minority, atypical or conflicting views into concrete actions, influencing political actors in government positions to implement social change. A key question that remains open is how these participatory, bottom-up, atypical and micro-local initiatives can gain further momentum, be articulated into sustainable proposals and enter into the central political arenas. However, it is already possible to identify in these distrusting, resistant, critical and alternative behaviours, some elements that can contribute to complementing, replacing or revitalizing the usual practices.

Contents

1 Introduction

Several factors led us to the choice of our case study, specifically youth involved in self-building, alternative forms of accommodation and new uses of public spaces. In recent years, a growing number of young Spaniards have found solutions to their vital needs outside traditional educational and labour inertia; they have pursued alternatives to conventional political participation when it comes to expressing their demands and they question proactively the usual inter-mediation chains in the satisfaction of basic needs, such as housing, access to public spaces, and even clothing and food. In this context, many of them are committed to participate directly in the satisfaction of their needs, with tangible results in the short, medium and long term, in more or less collective and non-hierarchical ways, whilst trying to avoid bureaucratic constraints.

Among these initiatives, we can situate those that are our object of study: the self-construction of collective or private equipment; the *masovería urbana* (rent arrangements that include maintenance and restoration work as a partial or total substitute for paid rent); the implication in new uses of collective spaces the public/private character of which is often found in a kind of legal limbo that can last for years. In most of these, we find several of the following features: they try to respond to specific needs; they do so in the company of others, through open, spontaneous coordination, with flexible assignment of roles and little hierarchy; they use their own available skills and abilities, while they also learn from others according to specific objectives; they often learn informally, non-formally or through self-taught modes; they try to make the most of scarce resources, including the recycling of a large part of materials; there is the frequent assumption of political intentions that question established practices but try to avoid usual labels; often, they make wide use of spaces and realities between the legal, the *alegal* (with unclear regulatory gaps) and the illegal.

We wanted to work with young people who carried out some of these activities. In most of the cases that came to our knowledge, the number of young people really involved in the design and execution of these activities rarely exceeded a dozen – we often speak of only 5 or 6. Therefore, given the variety of localised activities, instead of focusing our case study on a single initiative, we preferred to identify several activities that shared the greatest number of traits described above. Thus, we ended up working with 23 young people from 6 different collectives: 2 self-construction initiatives for collective equipment; a *masovería* group that has carried out the restoration of an urban dwelling while also participating in the development of an urban garden and another *masovería* group focused on restoration objectives in a rural environment; a group of young female architects involved in alternative forms of construction that include a wide range of techniques, from bio-construction to the recovery of several craft practices.

When considering the activities of these young people in depth, through ethnographies, participatory research and interviews, we have focused our attention on several points that we will detail in the following sections. Among these are the following: the content and nature of their efforts; the ways in which young people organise themselves when dealing with the issues in which they are involved, the distribution of roles and the greater or lesser disagreement with the institutions that interact with them; their experience of being young at this particular historical moment; intergenerational relations; the types of benefits or satisfied needs they gain from these activities, for both themselves and their immediate surroundings and society as a whole.

Assessing the impact and efficiency of these activities on the young people themselves and on their environments may undoubtedly require several years, given their minority status,

unconventional nature and scarcity of resources. It is too soon to speculate the extent to which they will be able to question, substitute or coexist with other more traditional options at the collective level, or to estimate the most relevant and lasting effects of their exploration of new personal routes in the labour, educational, political and affective realms at the individual level. Some authors (e.g. Benedicto 2016; Feixa et al. 2016) advocate optimistic patience, comparing discontent and attempts at social change among current youth with the effects of the protest youth movements in the 1960s in terms of how they contributed to consolidating new perspectives in the debates on ecological, feminist or personal rights. Afterwards, it took decades to translate these new views into concrete political actions among those in government positions, in order to implement social change.

In the immediate future, it is not easy to separate the tangible results from the intangible, to distinguish between the satisfaction of instrumental needs (accommodation, collective space, acquisition of a skill, etc.) and that of fundamental expressive needs (belonging, self-confidence, relatedness, etc.) enabling people to give meaning and purpose to their lives. Above all, in this context, verifiable precariousness (low wages, few social benefits, falling spending on education, social protection or public equipment, rental bubble, temporality, unemployment, 30% of young people at risk of poverty) threatens young people with lasting impacts on their lives – the scar effect (Felgueroso and Jansen 2015: 130) – which could lock many young people into a culture of uncertainty and frustration and undermine their confidence in their own abilities.

In many cases, the crisis and precariousness have tested the autonomy, resilience and tremendous capacity for innovation shown by many of the young people we have met, managing to continue pursuit of their aspirations while living on less than €8,000 per year (<60% median Spanish income). Sometimes, there are efforts to turn temporariness, unemployment and flexibility into a situation that allows a higher control of their time, according to one of them, '…the truth, I do not see myself working the whole week for a salary'. But to what extent? At some point, precariousness could limit the sustainability, generalisability and scalability of several of the practices we have considered. Indeed, many of the young people who have found unusual answers to such precariousness come from non-precarious environments (30–40% of the population suffering the least from the financial crisis), without having lived under the threat of having their day-to-day basic needs at stake.

In this situation, one particular question that remains open is how participatory, bottom-up, atypical and micro-local initiatives can add further momentum and be articulated in durable proposals. If minority and autonomous efforts fail to enter into the central political arenas and remain on the side-lines, they risk, albeit involuntarily, contributing to weakening those arenas that today are still perhaps the only alternatives to the hegemony of market forces and technocratic arguments. In other words, the only environments in which to propose options not reducible to cost–benefit logics. A fundamental aspect is to be able to identify in these distrust, resistance, criticism and alternative behaviours of young people, elements of which can contribute to complementing, replacing or revitalizing what already exists.

2   Methods

The fieldwork included: 23 semi-structured in-depth interviews –averaging a duration of about 85', recorded, transcribed and analysed in NVivo; interviews conducted among the young people themselves as part of a participatory research strategy; several days of participant observation; numerous informal conversations, both during the days of participant observation and in other meetings; written, audio-visual and photographic material of the different activities; the collection of various documentary sources, such as websites, internal documents and media articles. At the time of arranging the interviews, we were interested in talking with young people in the initial (15-17), intermediate (18-24) and final phases of their youth (24-30) and including those from different social classes, with special attention on having several of them from disadvantaged contexts, as well as making every effort to interview at least the same number of women as men.

Access to the groups of young people finally integrated in this case study was relatively easy as many of them were interested in disseminating their activities and understood the relevance of participating in a European research project. However, initially we were interested in several groups of young people involved in similar activities who refused to participate on the grounds of lack of time, privacy issues and sometimes suspicions of a university environment, which they understood to be part of the establishment. In addition, some youth groups claimed to be overexposed to academic research and lamented the lack of greater reciprocity between their possible openness to social science researchers and what they ended up receiving in return. Of course, in light of our experience, much discussion is still pending in the social sciences in terms of how to attenuate the asymmetry in the interactions between researchers and the groups investigated: who decides what, how, when, how much and in exchange for what? In this regard, in the context of qualitative and ethnographic research, the issue of how to better reconcile the necessary trust between researchers and interviewees is yet to be resolved, given the isolated and exceptional *one-off* nature of most of the encounters (even if they last for weeks), often without past or future continuity. However, since the first considerations about this case study, I reflected about my own positionality as an adult university researcher interviewing young people involved in non-conventional practices, and I kept reflective throughout the whole process. In every step, I have been transparent about the motivations for doing the fieldwork and PROMISE's main objectives, providing any requested details about the research, and stressing our interest in developing peer research.

Among the groups contacted, once involvement in the research was agreed upon, the reception to our participant observation was in most cases open and generous, imposing hardly any restrictions, beyond wanting to safeguard the confidentiality of some internal meetings. In three of the five groups visited, the first contact with one of the members with more active participation in the group – through emails, telephone conversations and informal meetings – was decisive when it came to gaining access to the group and an open reception. Among the elements that they valued most when deciding on their participation were: the relevance and nature of the project – described in detail in the documents and presentation conversations – the European nature of the work and the participation of the UAB, the commitment to facilitating publications and the emphasis on dissemination of the results. The fact that the dissemination of activities is important for some groups must be taken into account when considering issues of anonymity.

The days of participant observation were key in facilitating the generation of trust with several members of the group. They offered many indications about the nature of their activities and the dynamics of the internal organisation when making certain decisions or distributing tasks. In

addition, they allowed us numerous meetings, both bilaterally and in groups of more than two members, in which to discuss specific topics concerning the activity, various aspects related to the general situation of young people in the present and individual issues experienced by some young people in their relationship with the activity, or about other labour, educational or political concerns. All this contributed to enriching the detail of aspects raised in the interviews and carrying them out in a climate of trust.

The initial availability of the interviewees presented different levels of receptivity, according to personal idiosyncrasies, more or less sympathy with the academic research and also – as we have said – more or less closeness to the researchers on some of the days of participant observation. The age difference between researchers and interviewees was also an element to be borne in mind in the initial contacts. In any case, shortly after the interviews began, practically all the young people showed great interest in the topics discussed, they were generous when it came to delving into their main concerns and implications and except for external reasons, almost all the interviews lasted longer than expected.

Some of the interviewees, in contrast, took time to confirm, mainly citing tight agendas and alleging lack of time to carry them out. In these cases (4 of the 23 interviews), in which it took weeks to confirm, there were doubts about whether the reluctance was due to lack of time, or other types of problems. Problems such as not having generated sufficient confidence to bridge social differences between the researcher and interviewee, not having transmitted the relevance of the project, distrust towards the university context or European institutions, or lack of tangible individual incentives for the interviewees.

In terms of ethics, all participants received detailed information concerning the nature and purposes of the project, the main topics of the interviews and the need to have their consent, which was obtained verbally.

We analysed the data using the NVivo 11 program within a multi-grounded theory approach. This allowed us, in a first inductive phase, to codify, categorise and contextualise the reflections and approaches of the young people with whom we had spoken and interviewed. This supported us in generating level 1 and 2 nodes and the memos that constituted the fundamental ingredients of this report and successive analyses. Then, we followed a process of theoretical matching to incorporate contemporary theoretical developments in the interpretation of the data and generate level 3 nodes serving to identify the main findings of the research.

Table 1. Interviews and Participant observation

	Interviews	Participant observation (days)
Self-building 1	6	4
Self-building 2	4	6
Masovería Urban Gardens	7	4
Alternative Architecture	3	3
Alternative Accommodation	3	3

3   Key Findings

3.1   Empowerment

Some needs, activities or capacities are so essential to those who carry them out that it is not easy to understand their practice within a rational analysis that enquires about the purposes, the reasons or efficiency issues. In a certain way, they cannot be reduced to instrumental judgments.

Among the topics discussed most often in our interviews and field work – especially those that arise when young people are not limited by the narrow margins of restricted questions and are able to explore different interests –, there are issues that mix several objectives, whether educational, professional, or associative. Sometimes, it is even difficult to determine if the predominant nature of an activity or experience is cultural, political or social:

> It is a complex project in every way. All the fields that it activates ... I do not know, I find it strange to speak only of the [removed] as a building, at the level of results, [removed] is a building and it is an experience. So, there have been many more results; there have been much more results, as new projects are planned in the school. (EC2)

On the other hand, as difficult as it is to operationalise concepts and link them in causal reasoning, these activities, situations, relationships and experiences have effects on the participants' lives and often improve them, both according to their own judgments and from other more objective or inter-subjective perspectives for which we will try to provide support. It makes sense to ask how these activities improve the participants' lives and the extent to which their practices are more or less advisable than other alternative options and if those courses of action serve as a reference for other people in similar situations. But from what logic should we orient such assessments?

One of the recurring themes is the idea of empowerment. Empowerment is an ambiguous, broad, fashionable concept and is therefore also prone to confusion. Nonetheless, many of the contemporary arguments about power, participation and youth revolve around this idea (Martínez et al. 2016). The different translations of the term in different languages, for example in Spanish or French, offer clear reflections of its multiple dimensions: *potenciación* (strengthening), *participación social* (social participation), *refuerzo de capacidades* (reinforcement of capabilities); *attribution de pouvoir*, *obtention de pouvoir*, *emergence du processus d'appropriation du pouvoir*, *autonomisation*, *renforcement du pouvoir d'action*, *capacitation* and/or *habilitation* (Zambrano 2007, cited in Martínez et al. 2016: 3–4; Luttrell et al. 2009).

> So, I think that line is very important. One of the most interesting capabilities I find is to know that it is possible, that is, by pouring energy into a project you know that you can take it forward. [removed] have a certain autonomy, certain security in which things are possible, that is, maybe now in school they would not be talking about many things that they are talking about if it were not for the [name of the initiative], because the learning I think has not only been for the students, but has been for the educational community in all regards, from the management team to the students, I think it has been a global learning for anyone involved, there have been times when the principal, or a teacher, or a student have been at the same level. (EC2)

The former quote contains several of the dimensions mentioned before: autonomy, reinforcement of capabilities, associationism. Martínez et al. (2016), in their detailed reading of contemporary debates on empowerment in various academic disciplines, highlight elements such as: the ability

of people, groups or communities to exercise control over their lives and contexts; the possibility of changing them; the acquisition of power or capabilities that can contribute to the desired changes; the ways of acquiring such power; the participatory and collective nature of several of the processes involved; the fit within broader sociocultural contexts, with which they interact in dynamic negotiations. In line with our research, several of the terms more present in these arguments constitute many of the second and first level nodes of our analyses: personal and community resources; poverty; agency ('capacity that people have to act on their surroundings' [Martínez et al. 2016: 5]); acquisition of knowledge and skills; awareness; feeling competent and self-confident; access to decision-making processes; self-esteem, supportive relationships and resilience.

Regarding youth empowerment, Martínez et al. (2016) stress the following dimensions: development and personal well-being, starting with the satisfaction of basic needs (Luttrel et al. 2009) and paying special attention to the following: situations of adversity that call for resilience (Travis and Bowman 2012); relational and interactive aspects among young people and among young people and adults; educational and participatory aspects; political elements around decision making; influence in institutions, or questioning power hierarchies; contribution to social change (Wagaman 2011). With regard to these dimensions, there is the favouring of bridges between critical thinking and interventions with specific purposes; indeed, for Wagaman 'empowerment is the process by which adolescents develop the consciousness and skills necessary to envision social change and understand their role in that change' (2011: 284). There is also the acquisition of skills and abilities when facing demanding situations and finally the emancipatory aspects that underline the capacity of young people to make decisions themselves and carry them out themselves.

Several of these issues are essential in our case study. The young people's activities focus on how social and individual needs are satisfied better or worse, and what is the role for young people in these processes. Two initiatives deal with accommodation, especially how accommodation for young people has been neglected in the housing bubble financial crisis context; other two want to improve access to collective equipment and public places; ant the one led by the young female architects group confronts both individual accommodation and collective spaces.

Most of the young people met showed an explicit interest in having a greater say in the solutions to their unmet demands

> Yes, it's like ... take more responsibility, or I do not know if to say responsibility, but to do more with your hands, have more ... well, I do not know! Get more involved in most things in your life, think about how you dress, how you eat, where you live... (HQ3)

> And then, in this regard, I like to be able to convey this, the ability to transform with the tools you have and with which you are more comfortable, too, right? ... A bit like the use of the cane is an excuse because the cane is not a material to build super-resistance, but it is easy to grasp, it is easy to handle, it is very handmade ... and to recover this artisanal concept and take this approach to other parts of the architecture. (V1)

A direct consequence of this greater involvement young people aim at, is that, since the initial steps of their activities, there is the intention of advancing in finding tangible solutions to their

needs, what translates into a hands-on approach, openly revealed, for example, in their willingness to acquire new skills, often through informal peer and self-learning.

> ... Even with the orchard, I have been very motivated, I am learning a lot about how to plant, how to prepare the soil, how to compost ... I already have my composter at home, you know? (HQ4)

Moreover, these pragmatic concerns are not pursued just for their own purpose, but within agendas where collective action, associationism and political assessments of young people's context are main components of their strategies.

> We want to work for ourselves, we like to be able to self-manage our lives in many ways and therefore generate our jobs, right? And work with friends and be able to provide a different vision of the profession and not just be working for money… (V1)

> But the same thing happens again, that is, coexistence generates a state that engages. And if you have a good time and enjoy yourself and if you do something that you see that really grows, that is very important, that is, the visual and the material also generates an emotion... (EC2)

For some of them, actually, raising the political visibility of their concerns and engaging in the political debates around them, are consubstantial with their more material interventions, be it a new community centre or a new urban garden that also works as an outdoor cinema and as a site where different recycling processes take place

> The issue of recycling material and then to a great extent also the political issue, a bit of the political context that always gets into our works of self-construction, of vindication, empowerment of space, of the space of the city, the coexistence that is made around the people who self-build. (EC3)

This presence at the same time of concrete objectives, political engagement and the collective nature of their actions; makes them often ponder about what their contribution to social change might be

> I suppose that all this learning will somehow have to infiltrate, no matter how formal I want to be in the future, that is, just for the sake of saying "No, I do not accept this" or "This can be done differently", or asking "Why don't we do something that I've seen that has worked?" (EC1)

> Of course it surprises me, because in the end a complex process is opened up, because it is not an easy project but a complex one and it is started, is carried out and it seemed quite interesting to me that [removed] with its own resources, was able to take decisions that were protest on the one hand, and that were practical on the other, that is, formally we built a space on the one hand, but on the other we made visible a lack of space that the administration did not fill, because in the end we are following studies that have some requirements that the administration was supposed to take care of. (EC2)

But whereas they are prudent, even sceptical on several occasions, about what their actual contribution to social change might be; many of them are more confident about what they have got from their participation in these initiatives

> Since I was 21, or so, a couple of years ago, not that long, but I feel I am a person much more capable than most youth my age I know, right? Also with critical thinking, which is important... Not to settle for the idea that before it was worse… But to find an alternative, no? (HQ2)

> Confront yourself and say: I am where I want, I am strong ... and knowing and feeling good already makes you focus your whole life in another way. (HQ1)
> Yes, but not only my house... As soon as you realize that you can do things with your hands and that it is a very entertaining process, you are already looking at other things. My house in the future, of course, but you're already looking at things like: "I need this!" Because "I'll do it!" (EC1)

3.2   First steps (pivotal moment or slow turning?)

In terms of the introductory steps that led the young people interviewed into their chosen activities and concerns, some spoke of personal evolution over the years, resulting from several factors, experiences and environments. Many of them emphasized the usual contexts, such as universities, workplaces, or groups of friends with certain affinities. Others, though, identified specific events, such as knowing someone in particular who discovered and suggested a new possibility, or they spoke of concrete experiences, such as participating in training workshops (from a weekend to a couple of weeks), or making a trip that, for several of them, could be crucial in letting them know other ways of living and that made them rethink their own choices. These pieces of evidence point to the importance of exposure to a plurality of places, institutional environments, activities, countries and people in the biography of young people.

Several of them explained how crucial was meeting a friend or acquaintance, who let them know about a certain activity that might be of their interest, and even encouraged them to at least try a testing occasion

> [Subject 2] told me "we are going to [removed] it is really worth knowing how these things move in our area"; and since then I became interested in the subject, and as soon as I had the opportunity and this project took a little bit of shape, I said "I have to stick my head in there and find out how this is done from the very outset". (EC2)

> With the project I joined [...] with my cousin's contact, then ... well, I had been telling her for a while, she insisted, and in the end I told her that I was going with her on a Saturday and I got hooked! We were there 2 or 3 years... (T22)

In the group of specific events as catalysers to explore new options, together with friends and acquaintances, and travels – that we will address in the next section; there were various references to how influential for them had been participating in some workshops

> Yes, one of the principles of bioconstruction is self-building. In fact, I did a course in Cáceres, in a town in Cáceres, on bioconstruction, which was two intense weeks living with people in a house donated by the town hall and it became a prototype of housing with adobe and it was very nice. (EC2)

The possibility of spending two intense weeks, just one, or even a long weekend, deeply immersed in some new experience or context (activity, place or work), favours receptivity, knowledge and consideration of new alternatives. Besides, in their view, workshops facilitated intense social exchanges with both other people who shared their affinities and experiences, and also with others with maybe a few interests in common but coming from very different backgrounds.

3.3   Main motivations, chosen/unchosen

An important group of reasons for trying new ways of doing things included dissatisfaction with employment, education, traditional forms of politics and consumerism. Often, the participants did not speak of dissatisfaction as a lack or scarcity, but as a criticism of the established ways of satisfying certain needs: the precarious working conditions and the alienating nature of many jobs; formal education and the limited role for young people in the design of it; the passivity and dependence with which certain patterns of consumption are accepted and assumed as inevitable – from housing to food and from how leisure is understood to the multiple uses of public spaces. In each of these areas, they expressed regret at not participating more in elaborating, choosing and controlling the various dimensions.

Beginning with education and learning, a considerable number of the interviewees, in contrast to their dissatisfaction with their formal education, highlighted the opportunities to learn new knowledge and skills in the activities they had chosen outside regular systems. Many regretted that in the context of formal education, as it now takes place, or at least as they experienced it, it was difficult to satisfy either their personal interests, or to find formative paths that would put them on productive or meaningful trajectories. Others saw the formal education system as disconnected from the practical materialisation of the knowledge offered – 'we spent the five years of our career without visiting a building site' (V3) – and failing to guarantee foreseeable itineraries of emancipation – 'you finish your studies and you see yourself beginning from scratch again' (V2). These disconnections with conventional educational channels increase the risk for this young people of finding themselves in vulnerable situations, since they follow irregular trajectories and education-employment transitions, with several periods in their lives with no clear status as in employment or in education. During these periods they can be labelled as NEETS, what may have long-term stigmatizing effects, given the assumptions of current social policies or human resources management procedures, where the lack of enough time for detailed assessment of individual trajectories may favour prejudiced lines of action.

In contrast, in the activities of self-building or restoring the houses or public spaces in which we interviewed them, the young people appreciated that in the same month, sometimes weeks, that they learned a skill or knowledge, they had the opportunity to put this into practice and see the impact. Thus, the generation of value and tangible benefits is not postponed to an indefinite and uncertain future. On the contrary, learning, putting it into practice and benefiting from it (economic benefits or not) are better synchronised within the same temporal unit: 'you benefit from what you are learning while you are learning it' (EC4). Together with this, we must add that they valued: a much wider margin of choice in the content of what they learned, in line with their interests; a more participatory nature, with less hierarchical communication modes; access without high tuition costs. With regard to quality checks or how to evaluate the results of their efforts with some verifiable transparency, they assumed that there was still a long way to go, but that in several cases they had already accepted quality controls linked to universal standards and some of their activities had passed the current official inspections.

- Criticism of formal education

> We also found ourselves with some tension in the course, because we started as a small group to organise ourselves and say: look, this part of the Master's, instead of making television we use it as a laboratory and since we are here, we do things as they come and as we like and we experienced a little. (HQ1)

> Everyone was going to do a degree and I did not know what I wanted to do, because I had done the scientific baccalaureate and I had seen that I did not like it and it was in a way that "I know what I do not want to be!" And it's like that ... I got quite unmotivated and thinking. (HQ3)

> It's a group of friends who work together. I guess we imagined ... what they taught us at the university did not just fit us. (V2)

Faced with this disenchantment, in the exercise of the activities they had chosen to carry out, they especially valued both the learning of specific skills and the knowledge of areas that until then had been unknown to them:

> Since I've been participating here, I've learned a lot about construction, at the political level as well, including the legislative aspect, regulations, because there are many problems with licensing issues; and then also on a personal level. (EC3)

> Oh, yes, I have learned a lot of things at a technical level, from fixing a window that is destroyed, starting from scratch... How to compost food and ... how to run a vegetable garden, well, I have improved my techniques for different tasks, right? Ah ... also to work as a member of a big group and ... fix my bicycle! (HQ2)

> Or a reformation of a house that we were doing, that the customers came to look at, and then we considered Low Energy Architecture, houses that spend less energy because they are built of wood and such and we had some basic knowledge, but one of the girls who was responsible for it, she was like a month reading and looking for more information about it. I would love to be able to do a course on this subject. (V1)

The questioning of traditional practices was also central to assessing their work experiences and how to fit their jobs into their biographies. This involved important concessions and commitments, including accepting a wide variety of temporary and low-paid part-time jobs. Often, temporality and part-time are obligatory. Sometimes, however, they chose these options to evade a full-time salaried discipline in order to maintain sufficient autonomy to devote to their own initiatives or have time to explore other alternatives. They were aware of the risk and precariousness that this implies, but the relationship of these young people with precariousness is far from dichotomous, accepting or rejecting it as an irrefutable fate. Several of them tried, in some way, to take advantage of this context of generalized instability to the extent that it could offer margins for manoeuvre or autonomy:

> And if you take it badly, or you do not have ... I realize now I am lucky to feel good in this sort of precariousness, because it is a positive aspect of youth, because you say: for God's sake! Do not put me in a permanent job! Do not put me ... because this precariousness is a luxury! But... (HQ1)

(He completely subscribed to the Smiths' song lyrics "I was looking for a job, and then I found a job and heaven knows I'm miserable now…")

> I'm working right now, I'm working in a bar, 30 hours on weekends. Then, this gives me four whole days to be here during the week and do what I want... In the bar I am 10 hours on Friday, 10 hours on Saturday and 10 hours on Sunday ... in the evening ... I actually asked at the bar to have the most concentrated working time, to have intervals of 4 days off for me... (EC3)

Many reported avoiding full-time salaried work. They do not necessarily try to avoid full-time employment because of the nature of the work itself, but sometimes they reject the subordinating conditions of salaried employment and tried to limit them to the minimum necessary. For example, a young man had reduced his contract as a bicycle mechanic in a large sports store to 25 hours a week – 'I do not need more' – while two afternoons a week he volunteered at a bicycle repair workshop in a peripheral neighbourhood of Barcelona. This case also contradicts views of young people as too prone to all-or-nothing responses in dealing with discontent, which may go together with stigmatizing judgements about some young people having little endurance for non-desired circumstances. When different alternatives are available, and young people feel they have some real bargaining voice in the final arrangements, there may be room for exploring different commitments.

Still, one of the fundamental features of the work experience of several young people interviewed was precariousness, many times regardless of their socioeconomic background. And, yes, they were aware of the double side of this flexibility when precariousness was completely unchosen:

> Work that never ends up being enough to ... you're always half-hearted, right? Half here, half there ... half work, half do not know what ... it's a lot ... much precariousness in this sense! And for a long time ... I do not know! The worst can be ... well, the worst thing is to have such a generalized precariousness, in all aspects, because there are so many changes. (HQ1)

> Very long waiting periods have been created and this affects everything, that we cannot become independent, that we must be enslaved working in jobs that increasingly pay less... Mmmm... I started studying the career and the baccalaureate in full crisis, right? And then, there is the feeling that there is no future... Yes, yes, yes … not having a job means not being able to become independent. (HQ2)

A 29-year-old young man, who had completed a degree in architecture, said:

> Right now, like most of my friends, we are all in a very precarious situation, none of them today, that I think, that is, in simple thought, there is no-one who has a home of their own, still… (EC3)

A 30-year-old female architect reported:

> Yes, sure! And in the end there are three people who can live on this and that's great! But, well, I guess it depends on how you look at it. It is a bit precarious ... but anyway, I worked outside in an office, I also worked in a bar belonging to some friends and to this day I have received more income working as a waitress than as an architect, always! But well, you never know... (V2)

The double face of flexibility and uncertainty – with the implications of freedom and openness on the one hand and vulnerability on the other – has more obvious causes and consequences in labour market practices, but it also conditions major life decisions in several areas. It is not always easy to distinguish the extent to which certain choices are autonomous, whether the options of residential coexistence or family formation, or the reasons behind a trip. For example, when traveling to other countries:

> There are a lot of people with specific training of something that do not have a job, or their professional ambition cannot be solved here... I have many colleagues who have gone out to work. (V3)

> My school friends living abroad, I see them as very alone! They have not found a job and have had to leave (Spain) and many want to come back and they cannot! The situation is lonely, no? (V2)

Travelling, voluntary or not, has always been an important option for youth, but it has never been such a key aspect in the biography of so many young people as in the last two decades, with the generalization of cheap flights, the opening of borders and the different exchange programmes. For several of those interviewed, travelling had been a critical experience that had led them to crucial decisions and to learning that they often cited as vital references. Together with the availability of more facilities to travel, cross-national mobility was also linked to the greater flexibility and the different temporalities of their lives. When indefinite and interrupted employment was expected once education had been completed and travel was expensive, contemplating travel as an alternative to explore other realities, or to reflect on personal choices, was usually limited to an exceptional moment in the biography of a privileged minority. Now, in another manifestation of that double face of freedom or vulnerability, given the flexibility in increasing numbers of young people's lives, the temporary nature of many contracts and occupational trajectories puts many young people, every time a job ends, in a situation to rethink what to do with their lives. Thus, travelling, as a hybrid between formative experience and labour immigration, re-emerges as an alternative.

Travelling as learning and considering other ways of living was articulated as follows:

> And then there was a Basque kid, who had already made this constructive system in Mongolia and as humanitarian aid… (EC3)

> And I think ... that there is a bit of a feeling of widespread hostility towards youth, huh? I compare it to when I lived in Vienna, that people become independent at 18 or 20 years without problems with work, accommodation... (HQ2)

> And it was cool, because there (foreign country), there was a time when I focused a lot on myself, I said, let it go! Let's think from scratch what I would like to do. (HQ3)

> From what I understand of what architecture can be or ... in the end, when I lived in Uruguay, people did not need that much, they went, tried and built a part of their house and when they saw that they did not know how to go on, they asked for advice from someone else who knew more ... Yes … there was a lot of experience with people who were buying land and building their space and I really liked it! (V1)

The double face of flexibility as freedom or vulnerability has been a feature linked to youth throughout history, but the way in which it has been accentuated in recent decades, with developments in different areas, is seen by many theorists as an element that identifies the era. We have already mentioned how the evolution of the labour market has been fundamental in this regard. However, along with work, in many other crucial spheres of life, from the most personal affective relations to the more public ones, such as political participation, we can identify allusions to the complicated relationships between strong aspirations for greater personal autonomy and freedom on the one hand and the awareness of an environment with uncertainties and insecurities in various life circumstances on the other. The complex balances involved are reflected, for example, in the explicit and implicit negotiations that characterize the search for collective solutions to these uncertainties. We saw commitments that involve different types of negotiations with respect to the individual autonomy that they valued so much. These three aspects: autonomy, uncertainty and association or collaboration, offer various types of equilibria and combinations, with expressions such as the tendency to pursue forms of activism that are difficult to label. While this complicates the life cycles of certain initiatives, it may also increase the scope for young people with different backgrounds to mix in:

> Mmm ... well, I do not know if it's a youth problem, or sometimes people say generations are lost, or that they do not have a future. Maybe that idea of creating a family, finding a job, children, right? What I was saying about the generation of my parents, maybe now there are so many opportunities, or so they say, I do not know if I believe that… young people are more lost, they do not know how to focus, no? (V2)

> I could not find my place, I could not find people, I could not find ... well, security, no? ... I see it also in concrete aspects of my life, in affective relationships and in my life as a couple, the referents are changing so fast, as in aspects of information and technology… Well, there are no stable things ... there are no secure bases, right? And this makes everything precarious. And if you have it bad, or you do not have... (HQ1)

This uncertainty also generates strong feelings of insecurity:

> There is a total loss of models. Before, it was much easier. You just studied, worked or studied to end up in a job for the rest of your life. And now ... well if you can be a cashier in Caprabo (retail business), do you know? I ... or you went to another country … and they are stealing us and ... Well! … They (previous generations) had models to follow and we no longer have anything... They had established paths, right? (HQ2)

> Every time there is a bit of everything, right? There is always some time to want to send everything to shit, it depends on how it goes ... but that has happened to me all my life, I am on a bit of a roller coaster and it will always be like that for me! (V2)

3.4   Political participation

In the present day, any social participation on the part of Spanish young people is framed within a reality of economic and employment hardship. As previously noted, unemployment and precarious jobs translate into average incomes around poverty levels, late emancipation and serious threats to autonomous lifestyles. This situation, though, can provide a misleading picture that overlooks precisely the experiences we are studying in the case studies. The growing number of young people whose main interests have little to do with formal employment, formal education

or formal politics constitute a mix of different minorities with little visibility and who are not that well represented in the main official statistics. In this context, it is difficult to know the quantitative relevance of social developments of a different qualitative nature to usual practices. Nor do we know much about the thresholds above which small quantitative dynamics become significant for substantial social change. Non-formal and informal experiences (learning, working, politics) and social and communication skills that allow adaptation to different cultural and social contexts gain relevance. Here, we need wider notions of human and social capital to include the social relations that favour resources enabling actors to pursue their interests (Coleman 1990; Eseverri Mayer 2015).

Quantitative studies point to important changes in the ways in which young people participate in politics, with an activism that is moving away from traditional parties and institutions (Anduiza et al. 2014; European Commission 2016). Given the nature of our case studies with young activists in alternative fields to conventional politics, we must be aware of the risk of bias in any evidence in this regard due to the selection on the dependent variable and the validity must be viewed with caution.

The reflections on the political implications of the actions carried out by many interviewees are consistent with the general trends shown by quantitative studies in relation to avoiding conventional labels and not being at ease when having to position themselves on long-established dichotomous scales: left/right, materialist/post-materialist, or modernist/postmodernist.

In our case study, most show greater proximity to leftist positions and in fact some are militants in traditional left parties (minority and majority), but as a whole they appear reluctant to link their initiatives to specific political parties or forces. Besides, they show a great distrust of the bureaucratic implications and inertia that – in their opinion – is involved in the exercise of most policies linked to state institutions. Perhaps their strongest and most radical aspiration is to ensure that the democratic nature of their initiatives goes beyond decision making and becomes imbued in day-to-day practice, in details such as the distribution of specific tasks:

> One of the great things about this project is that it is a participatory process, totally, not only self-construction, but participatory. So, any idea, any design that you want to incorporate, any modification … is open. The group, for example, which is dedicated to closing a gap in a wall has freedom on how to close it. (EC3)

> Or the [removed] space, which is a community space and works on a regular basis, where there are no detailed rules, there are very minimal agreements, but it has been created and is inclusive, right? Because it is not a space that is mine and you cannot enter, no, no, it is a place where you can fit too and tell your ideas. (HQ2)

Another issue that caught our attention, from the earliest stages in the interviews, was the different emphasis among most of the young people when it came to link the support they received from specific actors on the one hand and the tendency to identify obstacles with systemic inertias on the other. Thus, they would usually name concrete actors favouring their initiatives: a certain institution, relatives, friends and frequently other activists. In contrast, when we addressed obstacles and restrictions, attention was not drawn to certain actors (individual, group or institutional), but often to systemic inertias or logics: consumerism, housing speculation, job insecurity, the bureaucratization of the education-employment transition and lack of political representation.

This different perspective when identifying obstacles and contexts of support did not prevent them from mentioning more structural facilitating contexts, such as the development of new technologies, or an increasing tolerance towards diverse life options. They also mentioned concrete obstacles, such as speculators or the specific negligence of a local administration. Yet, in their efforts to differentiate themselves from the more established practices, they did not usually oppose certain institutions head on, but sometimes maintained dialogues with them to agree on spaces in which to try new solutions. At other times, they tried to operate completely free from any form of institutional supervision or commitment, seeking an autonomy that could also involve the risks of isolationism.

Among the references to sources of support, we find: the action of specific administrations or specific actors within those administrations, emphasising the importance of face-to-face interactions; family and friends in several cases; collaboration and coordination with other activists in sectors close to their area of interest. With the latter, they reported exchanging information, knowledge and certain material resources. They shared the use of equipment and spaces, which could possibly be identified as the 'ecology of support' (Christens and Peterson 2012:626), or perhaps arguably 'incubator' environments. There were also transfers of young people between different initiatives.

As we have already said, together with the emphasis on more particular supportive actors, they also had in mind structural facilitating elements, above all new technologies, social networks and the growing tolerance towards a diversity of lifestyles. This plurality of lifestyles, some chosen and others resulting from adaptations to various degrees of precariousness, has expanded the repertoire of what is acceptable. Some groups of young people even manage to instrumentalise adaptations to living with little money for their own benefit, deactivating the potential stigmatising effects of precariousness in several ways – notably by articulating arguments that support their options, including their options in broader agendas, or simply through the awareness of being part of a group, although a minority the number could be sufficient to achieve critical mass.

Regarding the major obstacles and restrictions they suffer, they repeatedly insisted on how certain structural drifts make it increasingly difficult for young people to lead autonomous lives. Issues such as housing speculation and job insecurity shape a socioeconomic environment with elements that some perceive as a systemic hostility against young people. Hence, in our case study, the chosen activities are understood as liberation exercises in spaces in which precisely the restrictive effects of such structural logics affect the most personal experiences. According to the debates raised by authors such as Habermas (1981/1984) and Touraine (1992/1995), the initiatives of the young people we have met above all aim to resist and oppose the growing pressure of dominant social logics when it comes to restricting the ways and means of satisfying basic needs. Together with this resistance, young people seek to affirm, within their particular circumstances, their desire for autonomy. And they do so by taking an active role in satisfying those needs, proposing alternative ways of satisfying them.

3.5 Social participation

The activities we have considered try to combine associationism with the pursuit of certain objectives and do so through decision-making processes and the distribution of tasks aimed at showing a radical exemplarity of democratic practices (transparency in terms of the reasons, knowledge or experiences behind the decisions). These combinations between associationism (relatedness/affiliation), certain objectives or needs and the ways in which they may be satisfied

appear so intertwined that at times it is not easy to recognise the causal sequences that make them up, or even if it makes sense to distinguish between them. Sometimes it is unclear if young people seek other young people with something in common in order to try to change certain things, or if they try to change certain things or perform certain activities to meet other young people with some affinities.

The young people we have met want social environments in which they can participate with more prominence than in any of their other usual contexts. They do not forget the concrete objectives and the needs that they want to satisfy, but their political expression combines cause-and-effect arguments with a clear interest to engage within democratising experiences. These links between political expression intentions, wanting a shared experience and obtaining tangible results allow us to understand, for example, their preference for activities with visible impacts and a certain exemplary character, such as ecological commitments to intensive recycling or limiting conspicuous consumerism.

The relational element, associationism – awareness of not being alone or isolated – makes it possible to confront the distrust and vulnerability with which many young people live:

> Perhaps one of the ways is through participation. Why? Because participation has been the key piece of the [removed] and it has been seen how it works and it has been seen that it is a process that can be carried out in many more areas. (EC2)

> Man, in our concrete case, I do not know very well what the neighbourhood was like before, it has lived through years of isolation and at the moment that [removed] has started to be a collective heritage, many things have been generated and to this day all very positive... I have the feeling that outside it has been perceived as something important, not so much for the subject of "*masovería*" itself, but for what it has led to, the type of life, what it has allowed… (HQ1)

> It's a good question! Ah... Well, I suppose, now, as everything is so individualistic, then let's do something with a collective. I think that if I were not in [removed] I would do it in some other way because I would feel bad, I think it's important ... for no ... forgetting individuality a little bit, that social tendency… Home, work, being a couple ... a little out of this is what I like the most. And ... well, thinking things together too and I suppose also the part of the construction. (V2)

In this line, young people stressed the need to achieve tangible objectives and meet specific needs; but, at the same time, they wanted to transcend the imperatives of merely instrumental logics, to escape from debates in which only technical solutions are confronted. Approaches of this nature are very present when considering the efficiency and benefits of the activities carried out, their greatest achievements and the obstacles they face. And they crystallise in a particular way in the two groups (activists and architects) in which there are no clear lines of separation between fully voluntary activists and those who combine voluntary activism and professional activism (paid). How to distinguish the voluntary from the paid, how to compare the efficiency of different proposals or courses of action and based on which criteria are themes that come up again and again when referring to the democratic demands assumed.

3.6 Innovation?

The willingness to change or improve something, to do something differently appears in almost all the interviews with the young people: to move beyond the ordinary or what is expected of them and to have the ability to provide reasons to explain their initiatives. In this regard, it can be said that they tried to find new or less common answers.

Do they innovate? One of the liveliest debates in contemporary social sciences concerns clarification of what social innovation is, how to measure its impact and how to differentiate it from other more technological innovations – without forgetting the social content of any technology (Boelman et al. 2014). New software is a technological innovation and can be a social innovation. There are also many other forms of social innovation: testing new forms of exchange, trade, sharing, or facilitating access to a good or service (meeting basic needs, such as accommodation or leisure, informal learning and providing access to knowledge, to public spaces, to political participation, or to more autonomous uses of time). The young people we have spoken face certain needs – theirs and those of others. In their efforts to satisfy these, when they go after them actively, whether individually or collectively, with a certain systematisation of practices and using the knowledge, tools and technologies of their time, they experience those pursuits as part of something new. Undoubtedly, many elements and longings of their initiatives are not new (democratic, participatory, redistributive, collaborative or personal autonomy aspirations), but these elements are configured in new historical contexts, with knowledge and circumstances that were not present ten years ago. Therefore, to the extent that the concrete and historical materialisation of these responses to specific needs, individual or social, constitute alternatives to established practices, we may perhaps speak of social innovation (Murray et al. 2010; Godin 2012). *New*, *innovative* or *evolutionary* are difficult concepts to grasp in social terms. Indeed, keeping Levi-Strauss in mind, 'There are neither "primitive nor evolved" civilizations; there are only different responses to fundamental and identical problems' (in Sorman 1991: 89).

In our field work and interviews, we have found evidence of some of the three fundamental aspects according to which several authors (Moulaert et al. 2013; Pares et al. 2017) characterize social innovation: the satisfaction of inadequately met needs; the concern to transform certain inertias in social relationships; the empowerment of citizens through bottom-up participation processes that train young people as individuals and groups. In addition, the evidence gathered shows that several of the activities considered pursue these objectives in a conscious way and achieve positive and testable effects in the three aspects mentioned, both among those who carry them out and also in their local contexts. However, given the nature and circumstances of the cases, made up of small groups of young people taking their first steps in areas still incipient in many ways, it is much more difficult to speculate about the long-term impact of their initiatives, the extent to which they may last and evolve over time, so that they can be articulated with other similar initiatives and in broader institutional contexts to gain generalisability and scalability ('out and up') and thus produce relevant political and social change.

These alternative ways of doing things do not just affect the conceptualisation of the needs young people face, the ways of satisfying them and the indicators for evaluating their satisfaction; above all, they stand out when it comes to linking several needs between them and thus also interlinking the activities aimed at satisfying them. In the initiatives of self-construction or alternative uses of collective sites that we have studied, there are tangible objectives for the creation of spaces and facilities, with criteria of verifiable efficiency to evaluate the results of their efforts. They go beyond the expressive functions they also fulfil. Still, since their first design and implementation,

these activities incorporate in their nature a way of understanding personal autonomy, social relations in collective action and political participation.

In this theme, the work of authors who have organised their arguments around basic needs might be helpful, for example Sen's (2009) and Nussbaum's (2000, 2009) research on capabilities, analysing human development and personal autonomy (individual and collective); or in a different field, but with many elements in common, the development of the good lives model (GLM) by Yates and Prescott (2011) and Chu et al.'s (2014) work, placing the satisfaction of basic needs at the core of rehabilitation interventions (see Table 2).

Table 2. Essential Goods/Capabilities

Strengths-based rehabilitation theory (psychology, criminology), the GLM (Yates and Prescott 2011; Chu et al. 2014)	Human development, justice, agency (Sen 1999; Nussbaum 2009)
Goods	**Capabilities**
Life (health)	Life (bodily health, integrity)
Knowledge	Practical reasoning
	Control over one's environment: political (political participation), material (economic autonomy)
Excellence in work and play	Play, leisure
Inner peace (emotional equilibrium)	Emotions
Relatedness (relationships and friendships)	Affiliation: social interactions, associations
Spirituality	
Happiness	
Creativity	Senses, imagination and thought
	Other aspects

Indeed, the young people in the case studies placed as much emphasis on the specific needs they intended to satisfy as in the way of satisfying them. As we have seen, addressing several needs simultaneously is one of the aspects that most moved them away from conventional practices. They questioned the divisibility with which traditional systems tend to rationalise the satisfaction of specific needs, isolating them and emphasising one over the rest. For example, labour market logic would subordinate relational needs, political participation or learning to a specific economic efficiency (Hanna Arendt [1958] was among the first to identify the problems of reconciling the imperatives of economic efficiency and those of a democratic nature).

Moreover, the practices we have studied usually take into account several needs at the same time and consider that the impact of an activity on the satisfaction of a specific need cannot be separated from its impact on other areas. There is an explicit interest in the activities meeting several needs at the same time (instrumental, expressive, participatory, etc.), so that a particular political, economic or cultural objective cannot be conceived in isolation. By virtue of a more efficient economic response, participatory aspects or possible excluding effects cannot be neglected. In this regard, they are very close to Nussbaum (2009), emphasising that all essential capacities need to be satisfied at least above a minimum threshold, so that there can only be interchangeability between them to a certain extent. Below that threshold, they are neither

interchangeable nor reducible to other purposes. That is, for the sake of a political or economic objective, the realisation of emotional, participatory, playful or creative needs cannot be ignored.

In fact, one way of differentiating the proposals we have studied from other conventional practices is their opposition to unchosen systemic rationalities, precisely by raising the thresholds that avoid the interchangeability and reducibility of *non-economic* needs. Our respondents want to limit the sacrifices that can be justified with economic arguments and reinforce the attention on basic needs, especially those less *monetizable*. Moreover, by pursuing the satisfaction of several needs simultaneously, they also look for possible synergies between the different responses.

For example, in the self-construction initiatives studied, several participants learned professional skills while building walls or reinforcing foundations – something close to the 'learning by doing', 'in-job training' and 'earning while you learn' initiatives that are becoming key themes of several educational and labour discourses (in the employability and capabilities literature (Schneider and Otto 2009; Otto et al 2015). In addition, they linked their initiatives to political arguments regarding the unmet needs of many young people. Above all, they made many teamwork and meeting sessions into moments of intense social interaction.

From a conventional perspective, efficiency could be one of the weak points of such initiatives, but when comparing the alternatives, there are numerous details to be taken into account and questions about the possible criteria with which to assess them. In some of the cases we have studied involving qualified young people who claim to lead autonomous lives on an income of €8000 a year – around 50% the country's median salary – the resilience and autonomy they reveal may be the result of efficient trajectories and of course they can also be its constituents.

4   Conclusions

The recurring themes in this case study are as follows:

- The idea of empowerment, understood as 'a process by which adolescents develop the consciousness and skills necessary to envision social change and understand their role in that change' (Wagaman, 2011:284). We found evidence of this in the following areas: personal development and well-being, relational and social interactions, political and social participation and the acquisition of skills and capabilities.

- The reasons and motivations behind most young people's activities found in this case study share a deep dissatisfaction with the main forms of employment, education, politics and consumerism. Often, they do not speak of dissatisfaction as a lack or scarcity, but as a criticism of the established ways of satisfying certain needs: alienating jobs; bureaucratised education; unrepresentative politics; unsustainable consumerism. In contrast, in their chosen activities they especially appreciate a better fit between choosing objectives, learning relevant skills, and attaining tangible results, the participatory and non-hierarchical nature of decision making and the distribution of tasks and open access.

- The answers to these areas of dissatisfaction are far from dichotomous approaches in which precariousness is accepted or rejected as an irrefutable fate. For example, several of them have tried to take advantage of an employment context of generalised instability to gain wider margins of manoeuvre. This involves important concessions and commitments, including the acceptance of a wide variety of temporary and low-paid, part-time jobs. Often, temporality and part-time are involuntary. Sometimes, however, they choose these options to evade full-time

salaried disciplines in order to maintain sufficient autonomy to try their own initiatives, or gain time to explore other alternatives.

- The double face of flexibility and uncertainty – with its implications of freedom and openness on the one hand and vulnerability on the other – has more obvious causes and consequences in labour market practices, but it also conditions major life decisions in several areas: forms of residential sharing, family formation and hybrid migratory/formative/experiential trips.

- When offering political explanations of their contexts and behaviours, there is a different emphasis on the nature of supportive versus inhibiting factors. On the one hand, they rather link the support they receive to specific actors; on the other hand, they tend to identify obstacles with systemic inertias. Thus, they usually name concrete actors favouring their initiatives: a certain institution, relatives, friends and frequently other activists. However, when addressing obstacles and restrictions, attention is not drawn to certain actors (individual, group or institution) but often to systemic inertias or logics: consumerism, housing speculation, job insecurity, bureaucratisation of the education-employment transition and lack of political representation.

- Still, they are aware of some structural trends that favour their options. Together with new technologies and social networks, many young people make strategic use of the wider social tolerance towards a plural diversity of lifestyles. The majority enjoy wider political, national, religious or sexual rights than their parents; but even some of the adaptations to living with little money during and before the crisis have contributed to expanding the repertoire of what is acceptable (i.e. sharing flats, sourcing expired food, acquiring second-hand clothes) and this increases their leeway in terms of money versus autonomy dilemmas.

- In their activities, they combine associationism, political expression and the pursuit of tangible objectives. And they do so in such deeply intertwined ways that it makes it very difficult to isolate the specific goals or needs that they want to satisfy. Indeed, one of their main ambitions is to transcend the imperatives of instrumental logics and to escape debates in which only technical solutions are confronted.

- Therefore, it is not easy to assess the long-term impacts of these initiatives; the extent to which they may last and evolve over time so that they can become articulated with other similar initiatives in broader institutional contexts to gain generalisability and scalability ("out & up") and thus produce relevant political and social change. Their minority and unconventional nature makes it challenging for young people to find ways of extending their efforts in replacing or revitalizing usual practices, but the resilience and autonomy present in many of their trajectories provide clear hints of what different alternatives could look like.

- Is there innovation? The young people with whom we have spoken face certain needs and in their efforts to satisfy these, they engage, whether individually or collectively, in active systematised practices, using the knowledge, tools and technologies of their time. They often experience those pursuits as part of something new. Their aspirations (democratic, participatory, redistributive, collaborative and personal autonomy) are not new, but they follow them in new historical contexts, with knowledge and circumstances that were not present ten years ago. Therefore, to the extent that the concrete and historical materialisation of these responses to essential needs – individual or social – constitute alternatives to established practices, we may perhaps speak of social innovation (Murray et al. 2010; Godin 2012).

5   Future analysis

For the cross-case analysis, the evidence of our case study suggests the following main lines of argument:

- Looking for shared elements in the different clusters concerning possible 'empowering' dynamics, we identify: the acquisition of skills or capabilities; participatory processes within their own groups and negotiations with non-youth actors; practices that involve gaining more control over their lives and contexts, with a special focus on positive examples of resilience in situations of adversity. Some of the activities we have considered favour bridges for many young people to translate critical thinking and conflictive opposition into interventions with specific purposes and an exemplary character.

- Despite the vulnerable socioeconomic circumstances in which many young people live, their discontent is less directed towards any particular shortage or scarcity than to the main logics regulating key social fields: employment, education, housing and political participation.

- In a related way – and as remarked previously – while young people usually identify specific actors or factors as supportive elements, when focusing on obstacles they prefer to mention structural trends. Indeed, in our case study, their main activities and behaviours were often understood as liberation exercises against the restrictive effects of those structural logics on their personal experiences.

- In the activities studied, the combination of associationism, political participation and pursuing tangible objectives, together with the fact that young people tend to try to find answers to several needs at the same time, is at the core of their critical activities. They are opposed to what they consider as the short-sighted, cost–benefit rationalisation present in main societal systems, in which solutions to specific needs (whether employment in the labour market, or distribution in the retail sector) do not usually take into account their impact on other needs or social areas (cultural benefits, personal autonomy, environment, social life or political participation).

Given these main themes, the literature on empowerment, basic or social needs, innovation and the welfare state could orient us in formulating our main hypotheses. For example, in the topic of how young people deal with their needs, we could draw on Sen's (2009) and Nussbaum's (2000, 2009) research on capabilities in social justice debates; and on the development of the GLM by Yates and Prescott (2011), or Chu et al.'s (2014) in rehabilitation interventions. The criticism, conflicts and activities engaged in by the young people we have met could be more or less efficient in satisfying their needs, but they certainly give visibility to what they are missing.

Here, triangulation could help us with quantitative evidence to support points concerning the following:

- Evidence of how conflictive, performative and atypical activities raise the visibility and general awareness of unmet social needs among young people (e.g. one of the groups we considered, through their guerrilla self-building initiative, actually obtained the authorities' commitment to invest in new equipment).

- In the efforts we have studied, young people tend to stress that part of the solution is assuming close links between several needs at the same time. For them, these needs should not be isolated or presented in a too disconnected sequential order, with the postponement of some needs to an indefinite future. In their activities, they aspire to get greater simultaneity and synchronization between their main concerns: identifying objectives, participatory procedures, learning skills, putting them into practice and attaining visible results. The fact that they

themselves provide visible elements of best practice in this regard could be further supported with other examples of best practice backed up with quantitative evidence. This is in line with how certain public policies are trying to substitute sequential approaches with simultaneous ones whenever possible, for example in the areas of employability (Otto et al. 2015), or welfare-state reform (Morel et al. 2012; Hemerijck 2017).

- The welfare state literature and quantitative data on public sector expenditure could also be helpful in other key areas. The qualitative empowerment and innovation literature, by focusing on the resilience and creativity of people in minority contexts, may not pay sufficient attention to the realisation that the more basic needs are guaranteed, the greater the scope for trying new things. Qualitative findings on the resilience and creativity of particular groups can help in discussing total expenditures on social protection up to a point, but they certainly offer key evidence for the better design of specific public policies and getting the most out of any given expenditure.

- The young people interviewed particularly value the control of their own time. Here, we could probably strengthen our points with time use data. Surveys of actual time use and preferences for time use (e.g. perhaps the European Time Use Survey) might consider inter-generational evolution or undertake cross-country comparisons.

- The participants also valued access to equipment and facilities, especially when such access was not constrained within detailed schedules, regulations or as part of demanding employment or education programmes. It would be interesting to know more about how the access of young people to equipment and facilities (cultural, sporting, political, educational) has evolved in recent years, particularly when access is not conditioned on participating in a full-time activity.

- When talking about the first steps and motivations in joining a specific activity or group, some young people spoke of gradually evolving processes within their usual contexts (university, employment, neighbourhood), but a surprising number named specific events – meeting someone new, a trip, a weekend workshop, etc. – as decisive moments in their new choices. Perhaps we could have more discussion and data on the importance for young people of exposure to people with different backgrounds, different places, activities and so on.

- Given the minority and unconventional nature of the activities considered, the possibility of finding other young people with similar interests and concerns to share experiences and projects was also a major issue for many of the young people interviewed. We know that fragmentation, isolation and self-blaming processes prevent persons from agency and political participation (Klein 1984; Pilkington and Pollock 2015). Our cases may have a lot to say about the critical mass and dynamics that enable social agency.

- As the different clusters and cases include very different numbers of participants and different levels of articulation with other initiatives and larger institutions, this could help us to make relevant arguments about what favours the generalisability and scalability (up, out) of different innovations and their chances of contributing to social change.

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7 Appendix: socio-demographic information

AR (Argentine); ES (Spain); IT (Italy); FT (Full-time employment); PT (Part-time employment);

Subject number	Age	Gender	Education	Employment	Residential Status	Family Status	Country of origin
201 (EC1)	26	Male	Completed University	PT	Lives with friends	Single	ES
202 (EC2)	31	Female	Completed University	PT	Lives independently with own partner	Married or living with partner	ES
203 (EC3)	27	Male	Completed University	Other	Lives independently with friends	Single	ES
204 (EC4)	31	Male	Completed University	FT	Lives alone	Single	ES
205 (EC5)	22	Female	Currently in 3 Year University education	Economically inactive	Lives at home with parents	Single	ES
206 (EC6)	21	Male	Currently in 2 Year University education	PT	Lives independently with friends	Single	ES
207 (HQ1)	29	Male	Completed University	Other	Lives independently with friends	Single	IT
208 (HQ2)	23	Female	Completed 2ª education (18)	Other	Lives independently with friends	Single	ES
209 (HQ3)	24	Female	Completed University	PT	Lives independently with friends	Single	ES
210 (HQ4)	25	Female	Completed University	Other	Lives independently with friends	Single	ES
211 (HQ5)	14	Male	Currently in first general academic 2ª education	Economically inactive	Lives at home with parents	Single	ES

212 (HQ6)	15	Male	Currently in first general academic 2ª education	Economically inactive	Lives at home with parents	Single	ES
213 (HQ7)	22	Female	Completed second general academic secondary education	Unemployed	Lives independently with friends	Single	ES
214 (T1)	27	Male	Completed university	FT	Lives independently with friends	Single	ES
215 (T2)	25	Female	Currently at university	PT	Lives at home with parents	Single	ES
216 (T3)	27	Female	Completed postgraduate education	PT	Lives at home with parents	Married or living with partner	ES
217 (T4)	24	Female	Completed postgraduate education	FT	Lives independently with friends	Single	ES
218 (V1)	28	Female	Completed university	Full-time education	Lives independently with friends	Single	ES
219 (V2)	29	Female	Completed postgraduate education	FT	Lives independently with friends	Single	ES
220 (V3)	27	Female	Completed university	Other	Lives independently with friends	Single	ES
221 (UT1)	26	Female	Completed university	Other	Lives independently with friends	Single	ES
222 (UT2)	25	Female	Currently at university	PT	Lives independently with friends	Single	AR
223 (UT3)	29	Male	Completed second general academic secondary education	Other	Lives independently with friends	Single	ES

PROMISE: Promoting Youth Involvement and Social Engagement: Opportunities and challenges for conflicted young people across Europe.

WP6: From Conflict to Innovation: Ethnographic Case Studies

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Returning young migrants

Slovak republic

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Executive summary:

Migration is a cyclical process which also involves a decision as to whether to return. The situation in Slovakia is characterized by a high number of young people studying or working abroad. The process of return migration from new member EU states is often studied from an economic aspect. However, the return migration also presents new themes, some of which we include in our paper. We have focused our attention on the tendencies of returning young migrants to become bearers of change and development in their home country. Therefore, their return migration is not only an economic phenomenon but also contributes to social innovations. We observed how young returning migrants modify life in their immediate circle, community and even society. The process of returning migration contains an element of active communication with the environment, an element of a certain negotiation and modification which does not have to have a particular goal. Changes can be an unintended consequence of negotiation in the process of reintegration. Innovations can be observed both on the micro level (family, friends) as well as an active function for community and state.

Content

1.   Introduction

Migration experience currently presents an important phenomenon for a variety of social groups. It is considered one of the key civilization challenges thanks to demographic, economic, cultural, social, political, safety and other impacts (Divinský, 2009). Entering the European Union in 2004 and the Schengen area in 2007, transnational migration became a highly debated topic in Slovakia (SK). This could be seen in scientific fields as well as political circles, media and the general public. Migration is not only perceived as the physical movement of people from one place to another, but is also connected to the movement among different cultures. It is for this reason that this process is accompanied by the process of change on different levels. Initially the change concerns the individual and his/her immediate social group in the context of family, network of friends or work. In the big picture, it involves the change in basic attributes of culture on both the side that accepts the migrants as well as the society they leave.

The case study 'Returning young migrants' looks at young Slovaks´ returning migration issues. In line with the goals of PROMISE it focuses on specifying the problems, stimas and conflicts (personal as well as social) that young people encounter and experience after their return home. We study migration as a series of decisions. It is a decision to leave for a foreign country, to stay abroad and sometimes to return home. Each of these decisions entails both objective and subjective reasons. We focused primarily on reasons for returning home. The subjective viewpoint in narratives of return is represented in particular by 'a feeling of homesickness' and 'an overall concept of home'. The objective aspects of return are mainly reflections on future career and family life. With regards to a job and career, a certain form of stigmatisation arises. It comes from the awareness that foreigners abroad often have restricted career opportunities and are met with distrust because of their country of origin. This experience provides them with an impetus to return. Even after their return, young people face difficult decisions. These decisions range from economic issues, such as employment and obtaining affordable housing, to social issues, e.g. moral challenges, multicultural society, radicalisation, participation and community engagement. In the context of a migration cycle it is possible to discuss double stigmatization of young people. It occurs not only in the position and role of a migrant – as a stranger in a foreign country, but also in the position of young returning migrants – when returning home. The stigmatization differentiates young migrants/returning migrants from the majority and supports stereotypes. On the other hand it also supports the perception of the society and engagement with the wider social world.

In comparison with young people without migration experience as well as older generation, young returning migrants have a different perception not only of their host country but also of their home country. We have called it 'a realistic viewpoint'. This means that young migrants returning to Slovakia are neither prejudiced towards nor do they idealize life abroad and in Slovakia. This way of thinking can generate possibilities for change. However, it also serves as a source of suspicion. In connection with the aims of PROMISE we consider it important to point out the fact, that young returning migrants when advancing their visions, ideas, acquired skills and experiences, can be faced with incomprehension and encounter conflicts. However, these conflicts may ultimately lead to innovation and progress.

Based on the scope of the PROMISE project and its objectives, on the basis of the in-depth analysis of the interviews, we refer to the agents of conflict (institutions, organizations, adults, peers), its consequences, and young people´s responses to it. We identify what can be seen as an impulse for social and personal change and which are the social innovations, as well as various types and levels of engagement and activism. Simultaneously we refer to young people´s effectivity when mobilizing and implementing social change efforts. The results of our findings will be helpful for

the formation of a comparison for problems, conflicts and young people´s attitudes, linking with other PROMISE partners' studies, as well as for the comparison of innovation and social change brought about by young people in Europe.

1.1. Why migration?

In the year 2013, 150,000 people worked abroad, which represents 7.5% of the economically active population in Slovakia, averaging 45 years of age (Labour Force Survey – LFS). Other than work migration, Slovakia has a specifically high number of university students leaving the country. According to the Brain Drain research 2014 (institute of sociology SAV), 15% (36 200) of students in 2012 studied at universities abroad, not including student mobility, which present the 3rd highest number among the EU. This is ten times as many as in 1998. It is also true, that many (65%) choose to study in the Czech Republic. While in 2002 there were 4,900 students studying in the Czech Republic, it was 24,800 in 2012. However, the number of students studying further abroad (in countries which are not bordering SK) has been increasing since 2004. In 2012, this was 25% (9,400) of all those studying abroad, with the greatest number in Great Britain. Since 1998 the number of students studying in the UK rose from 74 to 3,000 in 2012. Overall, whilst in 2002 the number of Slovaks studying abroad was 11,281, in 2012 it was 36,455.

Other evidence of high international mobility of young Slovaks can be found in research on the Political participation of youth in V4 countries. Data collected from the survey show that young people from Slovakia have the most experience with a long-term living abroad in comparison with young people from the other countries. Almost 40% of young Slovaks, followed by young people from Hungary (34%), Poland (28%) and the Czech Republic (24%) spend more than 3 months abroad.[1]

In the case of young people working or studying abroad long- term, many return, or try to return, to Slovakia. The Brain Drain research shows that 42% of all graduates return home within two years (Bahna 2018). The migration experience influences the integrity of the individual as well as his/her family and social relations and ties. It interferes with the consciousness and functionality of society on both local and national dimensions. Diversification in cultural and social spheres not only accompanies migrants in the new environment, but also influences their way of life after returning home.

Most theories anticipate the economic connection to migration. Both the neoclassical theory of migration as well as the Push Pull model (Portes and Borocz, 1989) assumed that the movement of people has chiefly economic connotations. The neoclassical model works with the idea that a rationally calculating individuals decide for migration in case that the contributions exceed the potential costs (Bahna 2011). Push Pull models do not work with such strictly defined rationality of the people involved. They, however, point out that migration is the result of poverty and certain backwardness. The supporters of the theory present a whole variety of factors (economic, social and political) in poorer parts of the world with a set of advantages, or pull factors in the more developed countries (Portes and Borocz, 1989). Other alternative migration theories, such as the theory of world systems, also work with the economic concept of migration which however focuses more on the application of political economy. The movement of the capitalist system from the centre to the outskirts generates the opposite movement from the outskirts to the centre. Globalization of migration is therefore directly connected to the globalization of capitalism.

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[1] The survey was conducted in Hungary, Slovakia, Czechia, Poland on a population in the age group of 15 – 24 years.

1.2. Why Return Migration?

The second half of the 20th century saw the rise of a new aspect of migration: return - migration. The economic crisis of the 70s meant that a proportion of workers active in Western Europe (Germany, Belgium, and France) began to return to their countries of origin (Turkey, Morocco). Returning migration of people from the EU to developing countries outside the EU is still an important research topic (De Bree et al., 2010; Cassarino, 2004). The expansion of the EU brought about a new matter which is not only emigration but return migration of the people from the new member states. Current research mainly focuses on the economic relations of this process. The causes of returning to the country of origin, behaviour, income bonuses based on foreign experience as well as the basic characteristics of returning migrants are being repeatedly examined. Research also shows that instead of the Brain drain concept suggesting the irreclaimable loss of minds, new EU states are experiencing brain circulation (Martin and Radu, 2012; Zaiceva and Zimmerman, 2012). This means that migrants returning to their country of origin bring with them new experiences that influence their new life.. Young returning migrants can contribute to changes and be a source of new social innovations. However, we still do not have the information of how this process takes place. Researches focusing on economic contexts of migration mainly target the decision making or the primary causes for migration and returning migration. They do not, however, pay any attention of how returning migrants influence life in their immediate space (family circle, network of friends) or how they contribute to the innovations across the social spectrum. Generally, we could say that we are missing information on social remittances (Levitt and Lamba – Nieves, 2010). It is therefore important to change the focus of the analysis and make use of the observations that allow us to analyse the practical context of return migration.

Up to this point, anthropological perspectives have dealt with the practical aspect of migration (Brettel, 2003). The research focused on the understanding of the processes of migrants settling in a new social environment and how the migrants adapt to new life situations in a new country. A modification in the understanding of migration presents a concept of transnational migration. It has a more complex understanding of the process, where the migrant does not leave the borders of his/her home country indefinitely (Szaló, 2007; Portes and Borocz, 1989). In this case, Vertovec talks about the existence of a transnational conscience, meaning being home 'here as well as there' (Vertovec, 1999; Cassarino, 2004). For the purposes of this analysis, the concept of transnational migration anchors in the fact that it attributes the migrants with their place in society. The process of negotiation does not mean the total abandonment of skills acquired abroad. Returning home after a while living abroad is not always an easy process. Living overseas contributes to a certain advance in value and normative standards. The people involved acquire new experiences with differing functioning of society, work procedures and lifestyle. It is for this reason returning migrants often face problems reintegrating on a social or professional level. Re-migration is thus best understood as a new phase in which belonging to a place, community and society has to be renegotiated. During the cause of this repeated bargaining for a place in society, there may appear emotions of frustration, alienation or lost identity where people may experience misunderstanding and envy, leading to internal struggle or troubles within family, friends, school or employer/company (De Bree and Davids and de Haas, 2010).Problematic integration back can adopt two aspects. It can presents a negative dimension and cause a consecutive feeling of alienation (disembeddedness of actor), leading to leaving the country again. It may, however, have a productive side which leads to social change, generates social innovations, brings new thought and creates new dynamics in society.

1.3. Research questions and approach

Our case study focuses on the voluntary and temporary migration of young Slovaks abroad. The entire cycle of migration can be divided into the following phases. The first is the decision to leave (why/process of decision making, motivation, goals, etc.). The second phase concerns the migration itself, where the individual has to cope with the new situation him/herself, surviving the culture shock and adopt to everyday life. The next phase in the cycle is the return migration. Here, we meet again the topic of adaptation, possibility of culture shock and the clash of ideals with reality. Our main aim is to provide the first findings about a relatively overlooked topic of the return migration of young people. This is why we mainly focus on the third phase of the migration cycle, which is the return home. We concentrate on how young returning migrants change their environment and contribute to innovations in society. Reintegration can not only be understood as passive adapting, but also contains an element of active communication with the environment, an element of a certain negotiation and modification which does not have to have particular goals. Change can be an unintended consequence of negotiation in the process of reintegration. A shift of innovations can be observed both on the micro level (family, friends) as well as an active function for community and state.

2. Methods

The case study 'Returning young migrants' summarizes the findings of individual in-depth conversations, where we focused on 'individual migration stories'. In relation to the topic, we determined that migration is a cycle consisting of several phases. The first is the decision to migrate from the home country. The second phase is the migration itself. This phase can be further divided into the phase of introduction into a new culture and society, followed by the phase of adaptation and building a home. The third stage presents the decision making for returning to the home country. This is followed by the return - migration itself.

This case study mainly focuses on the results where we analyse the 'return home'. Return - emigration is closely related to the immediate process of adaptation and confrontation where a lack of realising of ideals, goals, personal and professional strategies can lead to discrepancies between expectations and reality. We are interested in what happens upon returning home, in coming back to 'own reality' or what assets, innovations, conflicts or problems return - migration brings.

The interviews were conducted by means of a semi-structured interview. We followed a pre-given set of outline research questions that we modified according to circumstances reacting to individual history of each of the subjects. We also included questions concerning family background, childhood, free-time activities, studies, work, problems of young people (personal and social character) on the positive attributes of 'being young' (personal opinions). The questions followed a context and environment in which a person acts and reacts. The researchers have recorded 32 hours of interviews.

The people interviewed were chosen by personal contacts, using a snow ball method, as well as with the help of several institutions (Sokratov inštitút[2], Leaf[3]) and the universities: Univerzita Mateja Bela in Banská Bystrica, Univerzita Cyrila a Metoda in Trnava, Univerzita Konštantína

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[2] See: http:// www.sokratovinstitut.sk/. Last accessed 15 March 2018
[3] See: https://spap.leaf.sk/navrat-na-slovensko/skusenosti-s-navratom/. Last accessed 26 February 2018

filozofa in Nitra. For a deeper understanding of the problem, we also mapped out internet conversations and interviews focused on young people and migration. We also concentrated our attention on a content analysis of websites and news articles focused on young people returning to their country of origin. As such, we did not look upon the process of return migration as such, but also focused on the broader perspectives of social, economic, political and cultural life of young people. The topic of migration and particularly return migration is not sufficiently anchored in Slovakia. In particular, there is a lack of qualitative research focused on return migration and the innovations brought to Slovak society. For these reasons, the researchers decided to carry out a series of ethnographic observations at a cultural centre in a small town in north Slovakia, which was founded by young people upon returning home. Two of the founders studied and worked in the Czech Republic, the third studied in Spain and worked long-term in South America. The nature of the observation consisted of two plains. In the first, the researcher attended events organized by the cultural centre. These were mostly concerts, exhibitions or theatre. The second phase of the research consisted of constant collaboration with the centre. The researcher became a part of the group and took part in meetings, drama sessions and the preparation of the annual multi-genre festival. The cultural centre is in a long-term conflict with the representatives of a local self-government, the core of the conflict being the public involvement of the representatives. This could be seen in the final 4 weeks, where the centre became the main tent for the protests in town (public protests after the brutal murder of a journalist and his fiancée). Overall, the researcher spent 30 days of observation during the year 2017 and assisted to organize main festival in the Cultural centre and moderated monthly discussions named 'central point'.

Overall, we conducted 26 individual interviews. The target groups were determined by certain criteria resulting directly from the project (age). During the preparation phase of the research, we looked at the age of the migrants and tried to focus on young people up to 29 years of age. Upon the basis of contacts and informal interviews with potential people of interest, we came to a conclusion that this age is too low. Decisions and planning of life strategies appear around the 30th year of age. It is in this phase that young people embrace the process of decision making and establish personal, family and professional strategies. Because of our thematic, we did not exclude people between 29-32 years of age. By the reason that the amount of women studying at universities presents more than 65% of all studying Slovaks, a greater number of respondents were women. The average age of the interviewed is 27.3 years of age. In 2012, there were 74, 819 men and 114, 522 women studying at universities.[4]

At least one year abroad was considered as migration experience during which the person studied or worked. Another important criterion was the country of migration. Even though most young people choose to study or work in the Czech Republic, these were not the primary subjects of our research. The Czech Republic is culturally, historically and economically similar to Slovakia, thus concluding that problems with adaptation would not be paramount. Furthermore, living in the Czech Republic, visiting home can be easily arranged on a weekly basis. We also considered an even territorial coverage (people interviewed coming from all around Slovakia). Even though the aim is not statistical representativeness, we wanted to uncover the regionally based strategies for returning back and the consecutive problems returning migrants have to address. Before the interviews, we sent out information about the project and the project website. Initial interviews show that the people interviewed read the information and assumed a positive attitude (interest in the topic and the problems).

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[4] See: https://www.gender.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Sprava_o_rodovej_rovnosti_2013.pdf. Last accessed 16 January 2018

The research took place from March 2017 until January 2018. There were also certain situations where interviewees did not want a part of their response recorded, which was granted. Respondents were asked about problematic situation after return and two of them had emotional upset during interview. The interviews were immediately stopped by the researcher. The respondent and the researcher changed place of interview and had a break for one hour. After one hour they returned to the problematic issue. The interviews were conducted on neutral soil and we always adapted to the criteria of the respondents. No part of the research took place in a private zone and the interviews were mostly conducted in restaurants, cafés or workplaces. All interviews were coded using Nvivo 11 pro software.

Qualitative research handles personal and confidential information, so we put emphasis on the ethics of collecting and storing this data. We applied this according to ethical principles and the framework of the project:

- each respondent was acquainted with the identity, professional profile and intentions of the researcher;
- each respondent was given an explanation of the research objective, the way of processing and the use of research data;
- each respondent was assured that the research data obtained would be used exclusively for the purposes of the project;
- each respondent was asked to give consent for recording the interview (recording or notes taking);
- respondents are anonymous and their statements are reported under a fictitious pseudonym.

For a detailed description of the ethical process please see the introduction to this series of reports

During the research, there were no unpredictable risk factors that would limit the face to face approach. A Respondent memo and Attribute sheet for respondents was written for each respondent.

3. Key findings

3.1. Historical context

Slovakia was a part of different migration waves affecting Europe at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. A specific situation arose in the second half of the 20th century, when migration efforts in Czechoslovakia were mainly influenced by two political events. These events: communist takeover in 1948 and the occupation of the countries of the Soviet bloc in 1960 significantly influenced the living conditions of several generations in Czechoslovakia. For many, this posed existential and moral dilemmas with the only outcome being migration. Main reasons were political (fear of persecution, jail), economic (ban of freelance businesses), as well as work-related (inadequate job positions). Since the 1950s, migration was considered a felony. [5] This meant that it was connected with the risk of persecution by the people holding political power and

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[5] § 95 law nr. 86/1950 Sb.

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the decision to migrate was often conclusive. For this reason, political migration was usually permanent (Nešpor, 2002; Ratica, 2006).[6]

Migration patterns have changed since the Velvet revolution in 1989. With the downfall of communism political reasons are no longer predominant. Current patterns have different characteristics and relate to the socio-economic transformation and quick rise of globalisation (Kostlán, 2009). Accelerated socialist modernisation in Slovakia left its mark on the structure of the economy, where the arms industry, heavy industry and primary production had the strongest position. In the process of complicated economic transformation after 1989, many businesses were closed down giving rise to long-term unemployment. In recent years, incomplete migration for work is becoming characteristic. It does not have a permanent character and is often contrasted with permanent political migration before 1989 (Okólski, 2014). Their comparison shows the difference between the migration movements after 1989 which are more diversified and the permanent migration to the West is paramount. Current migrations, whether it would be for study, travel or simply a better life are perceived as a basic human right and are no longer punished by law.

Perhaps that is why the reflections and constructions of historical events (the occupation of the country by the Soviet Army in 1968 and the Velvet revolution in 1989) quite often featured in respondents' narratives, even though due to their age, young people did not experience these events. Contrary to the communist idea of a country, the respondents connected ideas of freedom to the opportunity to travel, study or work abroad. These interpretations oscillated across several discourses. Non/experience of individuals with the democratic possibilities of the Western world was reflected not only in the motivations and causes for going abroad, but also in misunderstanding and no support of such ambitions. Another historical experience, transformed through the memory and experience of older generations, was also perceived by respondents in the confrontation with other countries:

> The historical progress just cannot be overlooked. For many years, we were not free, we could not travel and the whole setting was different to other European countries. My parents told me and my sister to do what they could not. They did not have the opportunity to travel, but we can. There were many times, I didn't even have a clue, that we did not have much money, but my parents always did maximum so I could go for exchange stays because it was important to me. I had great support. (M. Ch.)

> My father's mother (grandmother) lived abroad after 1989 so she was much more open to such things. She is different to my other grandparents which probably travelled no further than Croatia. It's so stressful for them. My cousin, for example, went to study high school in Vienna and my grandfather pissed off the entire family by saying that only prostitutes go for walks there. I said it's ridiculous and anyway, it's just across the border […] But they don't understand […] Just don't. (B. H.)

In professional literature, migration has long been seen as an expression of an individual's economic needs, a consequence of political events that often forced him/her to leave the native country for a better standard of living. Nowadays, there are several views concerning foreign migration. An important aspect is the migrant's desire to acquire new experiences gained abroad. In addition, migration is currently facilitating the removal of administrative barriers, increasing political and economic integration, widening access to the labour market, learning opportunities,

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[6] The exact number of people migrating during occupation. According to Koudelka, it was an estimated 200, 00 people between 1968-1989 (Koudelka et al., 1993: 196).

developing transport infrastructure and information technologies, social and demographic change, as well as family unification and social networking (Divinský, 2009). Bahna states that among the migration flows in Slovakia, we can consider two existing basic strategies of migration. First is the strategy of material security for the family, used mostly by older migrants who already have a family. The other is the strategy of young people without obligations (Bahna, 2011). In our study, we focus on the latter. For young university students, migration is perceived as a positive phenomenon (Divinský, 2009). It helps the people involved to gain inter-cultural experience, to recognise human rights, suppress displays of intolerance, xenophobia and navigate among the new economic context of a post-socialist country. At the same time, young people gain valuable experience and abilities that can improve the chances of gaining employment or studying, which present a great contribution to starting a life by oneself. Young migrants are becoming a source of information, skill, knowledge, and other experiences as well as a source of income (economic capital). Migration also presents a cultural phenomenon, as it creates a cultural image of both the old and the new home. It is a new world in which an individual loses his/her security, social capital and gains a new status. Upon the return home, a cultural image is created, based on new experiences.

The fluid and uncertain character of today's society, closely related to globalization, generates a wide range of different types of migration used by young people. Decisions to travel abroad for a long or a short period are influenced by:

- current status (work, student)
- social-economic background
- region of origin
- interests of the individual (career and life strategies, gain independence, etc.)
- parents' interests
- problems and conflicts.

3.2.   Return migration strategies of young people

> Home is home. That goes for young people too. But we have to create conditions, so they feel they want to return. I had the opportunity to meet two Slovak students studying abroad and asked them: 'Will you come back?' The answer was: 'Yes, we will, if we can put to use what we learned in practice.' (Andrej Kiska, president of SK, 27. 03. 2017)[7]

3.2.1. Process of deciding to return

When deciding whether or not to come back, there can be several factors or motives related to general and personal characteristics. They may be family, economic, professional or cultural factors. Home represents a physical structure (territory), affective ties to a physical environment; based on respondents' answer we could say that home has a manifold meaning – biological, psychological, social, cultural or educational. Home is a value and the return home is an important decision in a respondent´s life. All of the respondents left with the idea that they would return. Their life strategies were not focused on a permanent stay abroad but concentrated on the return that was voluntary. Visions and innovations merged into universal values and attitudes – such as

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[7] TASR Tlačová agentúra Slovenska, 27. 03. 2017: https://www.postoj.sk/22473/kiska-slovaci-sa-vratia-domov-ked-budeme-mat-spickove-firmy-a-vyskum.

helping their country. One of the respondents has compared the willingness to return between Slovak and Polish migrants in the UK. He has concluded that Slovaks are more eager to return than migrants from Poland. All of the people interviewed kept in regular contact with friends and family (skype, e-mail, facebook, whatsapp, viber or phone). Thanks to new technologies, anyone could have been in touch at any time and see the events happening back home on a daily basis.

> People, family, friends or home. Those are strong emotions. That something is my home. And even though it's not governed here well at all, it's still my home. Maybe the young ones in their naiveté still want to help their home and make the country better. (M. H.)

> Almost everyone wants to come back. When I compared people I noticed abroad, for example none of the Polish people wanted to come back. We seem to be more tied to the nation or the country. (P. C.)

> They say that several generations have to pass for a democratic country to be formed. Some say 50 years, some a 100. I don't know, but I don't think it's all bad here and I have hope for this country. (M. Ch.)

The general category of home coincides with personal factors affecting the return. These include family or relationship ties, nature and culture. An emphasis on family strategies sources from the system of values of a particular country and how important family values are there. The weight of decision-making reflects, in particular, the concept of strategies to settle, start a family in the country of origin as well as the care for his/her closest (parents, grandparents). The process of returning was also decided according to relationships (break-ups) or birth of children.

> A really, really strong factor is that people of a certain age want to settle and start families. Or their parents come to an age where they need to be taken care of. Not necessarily daily care, but that they realise they are suddenly needed home more than anywhere else. (M. R.)

> It's not easy. Even if you have a couple of friends, it's not family. You realise that as you mature. When you're young, you don't need anyone. Just a boyfriend, friends and parties. Eventually you realise that here is my home, here is my family. (P. O.)

Another factor that played a role in the decision making were the employment and economic conditions. This element can be perceived on two different levels. One is the realisation of the barriers preventing migrants in professional growth. This means that the potential of the individual is not fully realised. However, we would not generalise this factor as among the respondents there were individuals who managed to get a job reflective of their education and abilities and with bigger salaries. The other level is that experiences of migrants on the Slovak labour market are highly valued. Young people abroad gained bonus experiences that put them to the forefront of the home job-market, such as language and communication skills, greater self-esteem and independence. Many were motivated to come home and utilise their skills back home or start up their own businesses.

> Work was the cause. The frustration that I was always perceived as different, not as a normal resident applying for work. I think this is why young people return in general.

They acquire certain skills but don't reach the full potential to get a job for which you're qualified or don't reach an adequate post. (Z. B.)

We knew it was not gonna be permanent already before we left. And then we made enough money to start a company. I wanted to do something on my own. I was so active, I didn't want to be someone's employee. So I wanted my own company. I knew it had to be in Slovakia. I know it here. (M. H.)

When I work, I work in some kind of a tea of people or some kind of community. I always wanted to create something like this in Slovakia. I saw no point in collaborating with a foreign tradesman. I just wanted to do it at home. I have a feeling of great self-realization here compared to how I wanted to apply this abroad. There are so many migrants who are willing to work for salaries that force people taking completely different jobs. We don't see this in Slovakia. I find it much more chilled here. (M. R.)

Other factors leading to return migration were problems with different cultures or lifestyle. Respondents pointed out the stigma they faced as migrants from Eastern Europe (25 out of 26 people asked had a negative experience with stigma). Whilst learning about new cultures, there was also a problem with disorientation in the new environment. They were strangers and also felt like it. They lost their position anchored at home and missed the familiar socio-cultural norms. As they were perceived by the majority as different, so did some of the behavioural patterns of the majority population appear as strange to the respondents. Greatest problems were mostly with sexual harassment, gender inequality, not respecting work contracts or a general discontent with the system in the country.

They are totally different people. Men are really into women. […] they're just annoying. The young people don't seem to know how to talk to foreigners, so they shout and whistle. I didn't like their personality, especially the men. I'm not used to be whistled at or have stupid comments. The woman-man relationship here is much better and women are also better off. They're more accepted here. Here, you can just be friends, there, I always felt as a sexual object. (B. H. /Cyprus)

I saw people dealing drugs during the day. I saw on the news that they sell weapons at the station at night. Crime was terrible. […] I didn't like it there. I like multiculturalism, but I thought this was a bit too much. I found it dangerous. Personally, I felt in danger. (K. E. / Belgium)

3.2.2. Return – problems and conflicts

The theory of transnational community considers the returnees as migrants who keep strong ties with their previous homes in other countries (Cassarino, 2004). Even though the return - migration was voluntary and the respondents looked forward to coming home, the decision-making process and the subsequent adaptation back were described as complex and demanding. In the words of Alfred Schutz: 'The home-comer sees a face of home that he is not used to. He believes he is in a strange country, a stranger in a strange land' (Schutz, 2012: 407). The return home required a change in the social, psychological, cultural and economic world of the individual, with which he/she has become used to. The process of return brought about feelings of distance from social and work contacts the young people have built abroad. This was accompanied by states of alienation, frustration, and in some cases, depression. Returning migrants usually adopt dual

identities. They are bound to the socio-cultural environment of both the host and the home country. Home society is often idealized when abroad and upon the return; the individual has to face a reality that does not correspond to the return migration framework. Here we can talk about the 're-entry shock' where it was necessary to newly define the current situation, understand the new-old world and build social capital. Feelings of alienation were often connected to feelings of misunderstanding or grief and loneliness:

> It was a strange feeling, almost like schizophrenia, that I'm starting a completely new life and broke away from all contacts abroad. And that's where it stopped. I had a feeling like I ended one life and it couldn't be done on both ends. (M. R.)

> When I came back it was really awkward. I had a lot of crises when I thought I cannot do this, this isn't the same as it was abroad. Especially personally. The process of deciding was hard and it took a while. But I knew that the inner voice in us can lead us on our way. I'm no mystic, but I believe that we have intuition and so some kind of an inner feeling that guides us. It told me to go back to Slovakia, to the family, settle down and find something. (M. Ch.)

> When I came back after my studies at one of Europe's leading universities it was a real shock. I had no idea what to do with all the stuff I learned. I fell into depression and had to seek professional help. (Z. B.)

Young returning migrants had to form their social networks twice. Not only upon the arrival to the host country but also upon their return home. It is worth noting that long-distance relationships were not kept at the same intensity and quality. At family level, in terms of family ties, the quality of family life upon returning home has not only been filled but exceeded expectations. Family ties and communication among different family members improved and became more intense. When the respondents were asked, they emphasized the support of family members and the importance of relationships and interpersonal communication. Ties with friends presented a greater problem and were not always fully resumed. On the one hand this is connected to the forming of life and family strategies when friends moved, started working elsewhere or started families. On the other hand, the structure of relationships was also disturbed by new life experiences acquired abroad. Apart from some positive reactions from family members, the respondents also experienced less positive reactions such as a lack of understanding or interest as well as envy. Abroad, the migrants were stigmatized by their origin, such as: 'the one from the East' (M.R.) . Furthermore, they become 'different' in their home country as well 'the one who lived in Paris' (M.R.). Therefore, respondents agree, that these problems are best understood by the people who experienced similar migration experience and they were similarly stigmatized.

> I came back to Slovakia and had to acclimatize back. Relationship-wise first. When I came back after a year, people in the class were totally regrouped. I had to accustom, that some were no longer friends with others and vice versa. I didn't know where to sit, with whom as everybody had a partner. So I sat alone. I must say, that's also how I felt. Alone. (K. E.)

> It was really weird that all the people back home had no idea about the reality there. I had no one to really talk to, only the very few who had similar experience. I suddenly felt distance from the others, such other than others. (M. R.)

I was just in a group of friends until I went abroad. When I came back, eventually I stopped seeing them. I saw this as a loss, but on the other hand as a step forward, that enough is enough. I wanted to move ahead and had no further perspective among my old friends. (P. C.)

Culture shock is also caused by different attitudes and forms of inadequate behaviour of Slovaks: unwillingness, grumble and an unprofessional approach in different spheres. Value differentiation of young migrants and parts of Slovak society also manifests itself in an open, critical attitude towards corruption, xenophobia, intolerance and protectionism: 'In Slovakia, a young person first and foremost, needs contacts to get anywhere. You just need to push much harder to get anywhere, there is clientelism and corruption. There, it doesn't even occur to them to break the law' (P. C.).

In pointing out the corrupt and non-transparent behaviour in society, young returning migrants are active and resolute. On the issue of the future development of society, young people critically perceive the ruling political leaders and feel frustrated that government policy is ineffective and that corruption cases are not properly investigated. Similar results bring the study 'Political Participation of Youth in V4 Countries'. This lack of trust to ruling elites could be recently seen in the current attitude of young people organising the protest 'Za Slušné Slovensko'.[8]

Another problem identified by all respondents was education: 'Education is the most important. And that's why I consider returning abroad. Not because of me, but because of the children, so they could study there.' (P. C.).

All our respondents were critical about the educational system that is old fashioned. Schools are institutions that do not nurture esteemed individuals capable of critical thinking, but rather people without the ability to speak their opinions. The problem of education in Slovakia is rooted to the low social status of being a teacher and the diminishing value of education. Changes in education were suggested by all of the respondents.

Change is undoubtedly the most dynamic category regarding migration. In the context of innovation, it concerns young returning migrants, who are ready to use all means and skills with the intention of achieving certain goals in their country of origin. Based on research, we can assume that young returning migrants respond to specific institutional, political, and cultural conditions. On the one hand, they have a drive and the potential to mobilize their resources in order to help social change. On the other, value disillusion, discrepancies between expectations, ideas and reality are in some cases divergent, so that many also consider returning abroad in the future.

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[8] Za slušné Slovensko [For decent Slovakia] initiative began as a result of the brutal murder of the investigative journalist Ján Kuciak and his Fiancée (February 2018). He wrote of the political connections to organized crime and corruption. Protests that took place after were the biggest since the fall of communism in Czechoslovakia. People called for an independent investigation of the murders and a new and a sincere government. As a result, the prime minister and the minister of interior both resigned. One of the initiators of the protests was also one of our respondents.

3.3. Returning migrants as active citizens in society

Some Slovaks that decided to return home overcame some of the problematic aspects of return migration and showed an interest in social events. This interest can be characterized as the realization of the importance of citizen activity for the development of the country. In the interviews this motive appeared as responsibility. A greater need for engagement is also related to a higher education of our respondents. Responsibility, however, in the answers of returning migrants is in contrast to the passivity and resignation represented, for example, by their classmates or friends without foreign experience. Passivity and little activity in this context also represent an important attribute of Slovak society. The emergence from internalised behavioural patterns, presenting a cultural pattern of passivity, represents a moment of civic conversion. It expresses the transition from non-willing to a more active understanding of citizenship, while the experience with another culture represents a significant impulse for this transformation.

> […] I feel somewhat responsible about what sort of country you make you also have. But they'd rather not get into it. Because, why. It's still the same, there's no point and we always go for the lesser evil. But there is no need to do anything. Myself, I like active people who organize festivals or cultural events, or just go and do stuff spontaneously. Our education system doesn't motivate young people to do this. I only realized this two or three years ago. Took a while. (K. E.)

> Eventually I took it for granted cause I was fed up with the attitude. Complaining, cussing and the last one to turn off the light. I hate that. So as soon as I came back, I realized this really annoyed me and started to focus on people who want to do something worthwhile. Today, I listened to an interview with sociologist who claimed that a person is the average of his five friends and that he/she looks for people who he/she would like to be like. I didn't do this with an aim, but I just found it natural. (P. C.)

The motive of activity and social responsibility is demonstrated in the acceptance of the bringer of change. The picture of young Slovaks with migration experience changing society is present in public discourse. The president's statements about young people returning home and changing society are an example[9]. Regular interviews with active young people who returned from abroad also helps form the picture of the bringer of change. Some respondents, however, showed a certain amount of distance: 'I think it's all a bit blown up. I don't feel special or better. It's all 'in' but there are lots of active people in small cities in Slovakia and none of them went to any fancy schools but do great and important things.' (Z. R.)

The respondents admit that they began to view their country in a different light. They agree they gained two things: confidence and independence. Migration for studies or work created an imperative that a person had to come to terms with being on their own, getting a job, etc. Sometimes, they gained bad experiences, which however, essentially turn out important and enriching. They realized that they are able to be on their own and that their fate is in their hands only:

> […] I think they are a contribution particularly for these demotivated and negative people. You'll say, you're pissed off all the time, so go out, go and try how it is when you don't know the language or even if you know some, go and live the real life. Open

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[9] Our respondents also recalled the statements of Andrej Kiska, president of Slovak Republic.

a bank account, get a doctor's appointment, read a contract when you get a job. Everyone should try it. You'll get a drive into life. And the problems you have here will look like nothing compared to what you'll experience. (P. O.)

The very acceptance of the role and the identification with the bearer of change is reminiscent of Schutz's reflections in The Homecomer. Everyone who leaves home encounters two feelings: the feeling of longing for home, and the feeling of bringing something new, something acquired abroad. Here, the person is faced with the situation generating conflict. The Homecomer forgets that years of practice arise from years of experience. It is tested by generations. In the eyes of people, the Homecomer represents someone who disturbs the peace and questions the knowledge rooted in the past (Schutz, 2012). This disturbance is not cause by his/her presence itself. The main source is the attempt to alter the things the way they are. We saw similar responses:

> Sometimes they accuse us of going abroad, that we bring it all here, we don't want it, we're a traditional society, don't like differences, don't adapt well and so on. So it's a sort of a challenge for me to show these people that the world is opening and it doesn't matter what you want or don't. I don't want to sound above anybody, but there are some things we perhaps understand better. This is the negative aspect, especially on how people who have not travelled much see me and that I travel a lot and also bring new stuff such as openness. (M. Ch.)

> It depends on the people and it really depends on whether they are older than me, and how much older. It's usually the older people that start arguing their own, no, this or that is not possible. With the older people it's usually about anti-arguments, whilst with the young people, we can communicate about how this could be done and why. Still, there is more negativity. (R. H.3)

3.4. Out of passivity: returning emigrant´s socially oriented activities

3.4.1. Small steps

The acceptance of an active role of young people in society and the narrative of responsibility is practically realised in the day-to-day activities of the people. The activities have different characteristics. Some are in the form of small steps that the respondents consider minor, but at the same time emphasised that they would not have taken these steps before migration. These small steps can be perceived as 'micro-dramas' in which our respondent acts against the practice of passivity or racial discrimination. They are not revolutionary changes, but their aim is not to cause great revolutions. In this case, the respondents see their objective in the application of small steps leading to eventual change. They are proud of even small advances and set a positive example.

> I filed a complaint for a bus driver which was being particularly rude to a mum and her two kids, as I was standing waiting for a different bus. I was so angry, I wrote the company. It was a young mum, bus full of people and no one said a word. Before, I would have never done that, but now I see, one can't act like this towards another person. It can be done otherwise. (Z. A.)

> Online, I'm well hard. I don't only tell people off, but also try to tell them what or how to say stuff. Don't tell a woman she belongs to the kitchen if you wouldn't say it to your own mother. Think a bit. People ask me why wasting energy, that you won't change anything, which is probably true, but I can't help it if it's just unfair. I always say that even if one person reading it thinks about it and changes, it's worth it. (K. E.)

The concept of small steps resonated among the answers of our respondents. Even if they did not immediately participate in public activities, they pointed out that society changes via small steps. They did not call for radical change, but wanted to see it happen and are willing to contribute. Emphasising the importance of small steps is probably related to the rationalisation of the situation after return. It is however, impossible to change society from day to day. Yet, the beliefs in small modifications bring hope for greater change in the future, so people do not have to regret returning home.

3.4.2. Civic participation – Live in NGOs

The world of small micro-dramas and everyday conflicts in the eyes of young returning migrants is in dispute with a culture of passivity, frustration, and indifference, and creates a mood of dissatisfaction that is important for the formation of more formalized activities and innovations. The Platform in which the activities are realised is, to a significant extent, provided by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In this context, we need to explain the position of non-governmental organizations in the background of Slovak and Central European society. Central Europe does not have a continuous experience with the functioning of civil society´s elements. More importantly, the term NGO used in a certain political context often raises questions as something suspicious[10]. In other words, it often means introducing and enforcing new and liberal cultural models that are contrary to the traditions of Slovak society. Sometimes this can literally mean action against Slovakia in the interest of foreign states. The metaphor of an internal enemy has regularly appeared in political discourse in situations of political instability since the time of the rise of Slovak society. However, after the migration crisis, the term non-government has become an imaginary enemy for a part of the population. A similar situation exists in other EU's new member states as well. In the case of returning migrants in our research, we can distinguish two forms of relationships with NGOs. The first is to join an existing NGO and the second is to start one.

One of the aims of working with NGOs is to meet people with similar opinions and experiences. Integration in an active group also presents a form of therapy, support and strengthens young people's resolution to remain in Slovakia. Non-government organizations are the means for a young person to make and implement changes. The effort to profit their home country appears as one of the motives that explains the return home and is also seen in the response to problems of return as discussed above.

> I knew that I'd be among people which want to stick out a little. Not that they'd have a particular need, but it's just how they are. Even being in a group of people similarly different is great support. Meeting with them and seeing what they're doing and what problems they're facing. (M. R.)

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[10] Seen especially as suspicious are organisations such as Transparency International, Open Society Found, Via Iuris, Amnesty international, organisations for protections of the rights of LGBT community, organisations for rights of migrants end ecology activists.

I applied to the Institute of Antiquity and we're all friends till now. A group of young, active individuals. I knew then, that I wanted to stay here, live here and do something valuable. The possibilities are endless. And there are so many problems, there is plenty of space to grow. (K. P.)

The establishment of a non-government organization is the second option we have encountered in the socially oriented activities of young people returning home. In this section, we look at a story of a cultural centre in a small regional town in Slovakia. The organization was founded by people who lived abroad for some time. Their main focus is on activities tied to the town and locality. It was started in response to the absence of space for alternative and independent cultural performances and art. Another motive was to avoid jobs in 'boring' corporations in the capital:

Of course, when I moved, all my friends in Bratislava told me how they were gonna recommend me to all sorts of companies. And that would be just as boring as anywhere else abroad, so I rather wanted to stay in here in a small town. I didn't really know what's next, but my friends also returned back and we thought of starting a cultural centre. We really went after what we wanted and what we didn't have in our town and what we were actually capable of doing. We thought up this place to create something. (K. Ch.)

Existing social contacts played a significant role in establishing the centre. This is nothing surprising. According to Cassarino (2004), the success of migrants in the process of implementing innovation depends on their ability to mobilise resources for their return. Part of mobilising resources is also the maintaining of a certain form of social capital in home society. Technological changes over the last decades helped to maintain this form of capital easier than in the past. Another reason why the centre could be founded was the previous biography of the founders. Before leaving Slovakia, all of them actively participated in the local alternative theatre community. The cultural centre also acts as a certain opposition to formal public organisations. The city has a regional gallery and a city cultural centre. However, in terms of representatives of the independent cultural centre, these institutions are less dynamic and less current. The reasons for this are the political nominations for the directors that caused the current administration to be incompetent as no one comes from an artistic environment at all: 'Corruption and nepotism is also part of artistic community, this is really terrible in Slovakia' (Field diary 23.10. 2017). In addition to introducing new and fresh art, it is also important for the cultural centre to bring new ideas into a small city. For example, they organized a LGBTI Film Festival, the One World Film Festival on Human Rights. This was summed up by one of the founding members: 'We decided to bring the world into our small town'. (J. M.) An important attribute of the centre is to serve as a creative networking hub for the small city. Therefore, the centre also supports young volunteers from other EU countries. These volunteers work and run a Language Cafe, where it is possible to meet and talk with them. Sometimes they prepare local foods and lead lectures about the differences between societies. This activity serves not only to improve the communication skills of the citizens, but also contributes to better understanding of other cultures. Through these volunteers, the centre also indirectly supports the local Roma communities, as the volunteers assist at the day care centre. Funding for the centre comes from several sources. Sale of books, running the café and, to a large extent, grants for the promotion of art.

Activities of the centre are accompanied by a latent conflict. Even though we thought that a part of the problem lies in the value setting of the centre, this is not the case. Representatives of the centre argued that their activities still concern a relatively small proportion of the population, so

local politicians do not consider it an ideological threat. The main source of conflict comes from the division of city politics into two rival camps (Left and National conservative and Right and liberal party). The centre was formed during the time of the previous mayor (Right and liberal party). He provided the unused space but considered it somewhat of an experiment. His view is: if the centre prospers, it will be a bonus for the town. If it does not, it does not matter. However, the current Mayor combined the support of his predecessor with political affiliation, and considers the centre linked to the opposition. The founders suddenly and unwillingly became a part of a political struggle in a small town. 'We had no idea they would take it to such levels. ' The activities of the city's current management are perceived as a disturbance to their own activities (Field diary 14.5.2017). However, as the centre has already managed to establish a circle of supporters, it can no longer be closed down. The conflict can be seen in restrictions: for example, increasing the rent on the basis that the centre sells drinks and therefore is not a cultural centre, but a pub. Another example may be the banning of opening a small summer terrace due to the damage on the sidewalk.

Plate 1: Protest against ban of terrace (Artistic installation/ Sitting on the own chair)

It was this ban that prompted a spontaneous protest in the city, where the supporters of the centre brought their own chairs and drank coffee in the street. Mutual distrust between the members of the cultural centre and representatives of the municipal self-government is expressed in the following quote: 'People, who agree with these political opinions and are in the family, or whatever you want to call it, don't ever come here because they know what the black list is.' (HaHa). The centre also played an important part in the biggest demonstrations since 1989 (60,000 people in Bratislava, 2,000 in the small town, which represents every 10th person). The importance of the centre for the success of the demonstrations was significant because its existence enabled the interaction of active people from different areas (ecological activists, cultural activists, teacher unions, students). As a result, the reaction to the events was much faster.

Young returning migrants consider their situation as good and it seems it is good to be young in Slovakia. They in particular emphasize the possibility of movement and the freedom they have. They also point out that many of Slovakia's problems arise from large regional differences. According to the OECD report, Slovakia has one of the largest regional disparities within the organization. The situation of young Slovaks who return home is also affected by the fact that migratory trajectories often do not lead to their hometown but end up in economically stronger regions of Western Slovakia. This also affects how they perceive the opportunities for change in their home region, confronted with a disappearing social capital:

> Well, I think it's still quite a big problem in Slovakia to find people that really want and also understand. I think you can find people like this in Bratislava, but not in other regions. I think there are some personal barriers. I don't think there are people here. It annoys me, because I left my region as well and it needs to be developing. If I started a non-profit organization, I really don't know who I would go into it with. And that poses problems. Our institution has a branch in a small town in central Slovakia and when we look for new people, it's really hard to find quality workforce. Where they already are, people already know about them. (K. P.)

4. Conclusions

Migration is a phenomenon which significantly influences the whole society. Migration processes are closely linked to broader social, economic and political events. In an international, as well as the Slovak context, the extent of migration rises and its forms are becoming more diverse. In relation to the topic we originated from the fact, that migration is a cycle and has several stages. It is not only the process of leaving the country but a process of return as well. The return can be a necessary response to an unsuccessful migration, but can also be a long-term, planned decision. In this study, we focused on the voluntary return of young Slovaks after some time spent abroad. The expansion of the European Union and the subsequent financial and economic crisis caused a more

dynamic movement of people. Political decisions (e.g. Brexit) also influence return migration and affect young people from new member states.

The process of return migration of people from new member states is often studied through economic optics and the return home is primarily analysed by economic categories. This is mostly the threshold of saving enough money to return home, the individual's behaviour on the market or income bonuses. Return migration also presents new topics, some of which we have included in our report. We focused our attention on the process of decision-making for the return, as the tendencies of migrants becoming actors of change and development in their home country also depend on the extent to which they have prepared for return and identified themselves with it. Determination or the resolve to return is the key prerequisite for change. In the context of return we saw several different causes of return migration (economic, personal, family, social and cultural).

The situation in Slovakia is characterized by a high number of young people studying or working abroad. Therefore, their return migration is not only an economic phenomenon but also contributes to social innovations. We observed how young migrants modify life in their immediate circle, community and even society. This impact on society in Slovakia and other new member states has not yet been processed and it is worthy of further attention. Again, interest has focussed largely on how young returning migrants contribute to the economy, bringing new investments and creating startups. There is also a public discourse of positive impacts of return migration. Equally as relevant as economic topics are the social remittances and cultural innovation which young returning migrants bring from host countries. The source of conflict is the closure of post-communist societies to major cultural modifications (Dzieglewski 2016)

The topic of the relationship between young returning migrants and NGOs has recently come to the foreground. Post-communist states show a relatively high mistrust towards political parties and institutions. In the case of our research, we observed that this does not necessarily mean apathy towards politics. On the contrary, young and educated returnees presented themselves as politically active. They often use an apolitical way of participating. In the context of past Czechoslovakia, Václav Havel's term 'unpolitical politics' is often used. This means engagement without engaging within the political structure. Perhaps, engagement while distancing oneself from political support. If we look closely at the map of big protests in Poland (Komitet na obranu demokracji), Slovakia (Za slušné Slovensko), Romania (turn of 2017/2018), Hungary, we can see that there are mass protests in all of them. Their initializers are often young people and in the case of Slovakia, it is generally young people who studied abroad. At the same time they distance themselves from any kind of political support. For example, unlike the Spanish Podemos protest movement that transformed itself into a political organization, we do not see such advancements in Central Europe. On the contrary, there is still some caution.

Relating to the expansion of the European Union, we also see how we view return migration in a European context. We have a choice between several analytical traditions, each suitable for a different case. The main perspective on migration rose from the situation after the Second World War. The main topic was the return of migrants originating from post-colonial states or those who were guest workers coming to the EU during the economic boom. The importance of this tradition still persists even in the aftermath of an international migration wave in 2016. However, this analytical approach does not depict an adequate look at the situation of young people from post-communist Europe. For them, migration presents a temporary transition and a cyclical event, not a final destination. It is just one of the many scripts for the future evolvement in life. Migration of young people from new member states often has pragmatic or opportunistic contexts.

5. Future analysis

Returning young migrants are characterized in public discourse and in their own narratives as bearers of social change and social development. Due to the experience they gained while abroad, they have accumulated different types of social and personal capital. A young returning migrant is a bearer of experience from their home country, which are melded together with practices from host countries. Some of their experience or different types of capital are utilised for personal changes, for example enhancing their position in the labour market. However, some of these improved forms of capital lead to activities which bring changes on micro or mezzo social level. The new ideas and practices could lead to conflicts with local society and local traditions. Therefore, we have identified the following topics for cluster cross analysis:

Cluster cross analysis: We see the main conjunction with cluster 'Culture/ politics', especially with UMB´s second case study NIOT. Many respondents in the NIOT case study have experience with living abroad (work or study). Therefore, in the future we would like to merge our case studies and analyse the impact of a foreign stay on young people´s activism.

Quantitative data: Liberal values and traditional and nationalistic values among young Europeans; attitudes to corruption; young´s people NGO activism compared to older people's formal political activity (voting); housing problems; their evaluation of the national education system; reasons for migration/ international mobility; problem of trust towards formal institutions; overall satisfaction with life in their home country.

We have only focused on one section of young returning migrants – young people with university degrees or students (university or high school). They have a greater social and cultural capital and their activities are therefore more evident. Young people without a degree also deserve attention. Their trajectories are of cyclical character and are usually in a form of seasonal employment. It is for this reason that the research of young migrants in SK should also focus on the ethnography of young people without a university degree. One of the topics arising is the question of double work precariousness. Firstly, because of the applied neo-liberal politics, work at home is unstable and poorly paid. It is therefore important to bring certain optics of class analysis into the matter. The voice of young migrants from lower middle class without a diploma still is not represented in public discourse, dominated by a picture of successful young people. We would like to focus closely on this particular topic in the future.

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Appendix: Socio-demographic profile of respondents

	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Ethnicity (self declared)	Educational status	Employment status	Family status	Residential status
1.	B.H.	F	29	Slovak	Completed university	In full-time employment	Single	Lives independently alone
2.	B.L.	M	19	Slovak/German	Currently in school	Currently in school	Single	Lives with parents
3.	B.T.	F	22	Slovak/German	Currently in school	Currently in school	Single	Lives with grandmother
4.	D.M.	M	31	Slovak	Completed university	In full-time employment	Married/ living with partner	Lives with partner and child
5.	K.P.	F	27	Slovak	Completed university	In full-time employment	Living with partner	Lives with partner
6.	M.B.	F	30	Slovak	Completed university	In full-time employment	Living with partner	Lives with partner
7.	M.D.	F	28	Slovak	Completed university	In full-time employment	Married/ living with partner	Lives with partner
8.	M.Ch.	M	31	Slovak	Completed university	In full-time employment	Living with partner	Lives with partner
9.	M.L.	F	27	Slovak	Completed university	Unemployed	Single	Lives with parents
10.	M.R.	F	27	Slovak	Completed university	In full-time employment	Single	Lives independently alone
11.	N.V.	M	20	Slovak	Currently in school	Currently in school	Single	Lives with parents
12.	P.C.	M	30	Slovak	Completed university	In full-time employment	Married/ living with partner	Lives with partner
13.	P.O.	F	32	Slovak	Completed university	In full-time employment	Living with a child	Lives with own child

14.	R.K.	M	19	Slovak	Currently in school	Currently in school	Single	Lives with parents
15	V.B.	F	28	Slovak	Completed university	In full-time employment	Married/ living with partner	Lives with partner
16.	V.S.	F	31	Slovak	Completed university	In full-time employment	Living with partner	Lives with partner
17.	Z.B. Bartoš	F	31	Slovak	Completed university	In full-time employment	Living with partner	Lives with partner
18.	Z.B./2	F	27	Slovak	Completed university	In full-time employment	Single	Lives independently alone
19.	Z.G.	F	30	Slovak	Completed university	In full-time employment	Single	Lives independently alone
20	LV	M	26	Slovak	Completed university	In full – time employment	Single	Lives with parents
21	HaHa	F	29	Slovak	Comlpeted university	In full time employment	Living with partner	Lives with Partner
22	ZA1	F	28	Slovak	Completed university	In full time employment	Married	Lives with Husband
23	ZA2	M	28	Slovak	Unfinished university/ high school completed	In full time employment	Married	Lives with his wifes
24	Baker	M	27	Slovak	High school	Owner of company	single	Lives alone
25	SF	F	27	Slovak	University completed	In full time employment	?	Lives alone
26	ZR	F	26	Slovak	University completed	In full time employment	Living with partner	Lives alone

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Intergenerational Contests and Spatial Occupations in the City

Finland

Heta Mulari

Finnish Youth Research Society

Executive summary:

Young people and young adults' means of occupying urban space are regulated and their creative and/or political activism is often stigmatised in the public debate. Young people negotiate and struggle over their right to the city, through occupying, inhabiting and transforming places with embodied and material means. This case study explored how young people and young adults become active by using different public and semi-public spaces in Helsinki. The key research context was a youth cultural and community centre, which has its roots in underground antiracist and punk movements. Research participants were 16-30-year-old young people and young adults who participated in different activities at the centre, such as doing subcultural circus and queer theatre. While the life situations of the participants differed, they nevertheless shared, firstly, a distrust towards Finnish society and decision-making, which was voiced as explicitly intergenerational. The participants talked about lack of trust in governmental politics, disappointment in recent political decisions, such as cuts in the welfare sector and experiences of stigmatisation on the basis of age, gender or sexual orientation. Secondly, the participants emphasised the importance of *claiming an own space* and *creating communities* as counter-force to the distrust they felt. Thus, free leisure spaces as well as other spatial occupations (such as protests and performances) became important material processes in young people's feeling of 'belonging' in the city.

Contents

1. Introduction

> I was just thinking that if we didn't have these activities in this building, it would for sure be abandoned. There are abandoned buildings in Helsinki that are not used. So precisely these kinds of [activities], like circus, for example, this is a place that's been occupied. Perhaps this wouldn't have been possible somewhere else. [Lotta, 22]

This is how Lotta describes her feelings of having an own space for a certain cultural activity, which was urban circus, in the city. She participated in weekly circus rehearsals at a youth cultural and community centre in Helsinki and was active in environmental activism, both at grassroots and NGO levels. For Lotta and many other young people and young adults, gathering at the centre, having their own space for activities and community-gathering was very important in their everyday life.

Young people and young adults aged 16-30 occupying the youth cultural and community centre are the key informants in this case study. The main objective of the study was to explore how Helsinki-based young people and young adults reclaim urban space to create and maintain communities, become active and form creative solutions against different forms of discrimination they have experienced and to cope with intergenerational distrust that they feel against society. This research objective was arrived at on the basis of, firstly, the ambivalent political and media debates on young people: especially those focusing on regulating and controlling young people in terms of desirable life trajectories. Secondly, the study draws from theoretical perspectives of young people's spatial entitlements and occupations in the city as *counter spaces* and *counter strategies* (Lefevbre 1991; Rannikko 2018; see also Georgiou 2013).

According to Harrikari (2008), in Finnish debates concerning children and young people – whether in the media, in politics or in the professional field – concerns and fears have increased since the economic recession of the 1990s. Further, according to Aaltonen et al. (2015, 9), during the recession, attention turned explicitly to those young people and young adults who were outside of working life and education. The concept of social exclusion – which is most often understood as exclusion from the education and/or labour market, and rarely exclusion from leisure-time resources or social relationships – lies at the core of many stigmatising concerns related to young people.

These discussions were revived recently at the end of the 2000s and at the beginning of the 2010s. During the 2010s there have been several public debates in Finland, where concerns have been voiced on young people in transitions. Consequently, we have witnessed extensive political initiatives and aims to tackle the issue, such as, perhaps most importantly, the debated Youth Guarantee, implemented in 2012. The programme promised to guarantee a study place, or an opportunity for on-the-job training or rehabilitation for young adults under the age of 30 within three months of becoming unemployed (Ministry of Education and Culture 2012). While the programme was successful especially in terms of developing workshop activities and outreach youth work, several researchers have pointed out that the programme has also led to stricter regulation, control and guidance of young people (e.g. Gretschel, Paakkunainen, Souto & Suurpää 2014, 9–11). Further, as Harrikari (2014) states, the rhetoric of the Youth Guarantee has often turned into marginalising and discriminating discourses and practices, where young people are evaluated according to their productivity/the costs they create for society (119).

The recent years have been turbulent in Finnish politics. In spring 2015 a parliamentary election was held in Finland. The election resulted in the formation of a new government with the Centre Party as the biggest party and Juha Sipilä as the prime minister. Already in 2015, in relation to the implementation of the new government programme, Finland witnessed extensive cuts in the welfare sector, including cuts in the student allowance, and tightening of the regulation and control of unemployed people. Funding of the Youth Guarantee was also subject to extensive cuts and the programme was developed further into the direction of the so-called Community Guarantee. As Laukkanen et al (2016) argue, in the government programme, young people are seen from contradicting viewpoints: either as successful images of a bright future, or as passive targets of adult interventions. The programme's tone emphasises innovativeness, productivity and becoming a goal-oriented individual, who is capable of guiding and planning their life. Those who don't fit into normative educational trajectories within a certain timeframe are typically not only seen as an 'at risk' group, but are also subjected to heightened scrutiny and different interventions (e.g. Aaltonen 2012).

Further, as part of the pan-European trend, deepening economic recession, polarisation, youth unemployment as well as increasing racism have been visible in Finland as well. In addition to the growing success of the right-wing populist Finns Party, Finland has witnessed the rise of extreme nationalist movements, such as the street patrol movement Soldiers of Odin, whose agenda is openly hostile towards immigration. (Puuronen & Saari 2017, 9-10.)

This study discusses how young people and young adults navigate in this political and social climate by finding alternative leisure spaces where they can become active and create communities they relate to. The key context in this research is an underground youth cultural and community centre in Helsinki. It is an old industrial building with its walls covered by graffiti and its roots in the punk and house-squatting movements as well as antifascist and antiracist activism (Peipinen 2012). The centre is located in an old industrial area and surrounded by other cultural and subcultural activities, such as circus NGOs, a skate park, legal and illegal graffiti walls and workspaces for creative industries. The centre offers free space for different kinds of autonomous activities, such as music gigs (especially punk), courses, events, cultural groups (such as theatre, circus, Girls Rock! Finland, radical self-defence, radical cross-stitching) as well as gatherings of different politically inclined groups. While the centre is largely funded by the City of Helsinki Youth Services (the building was given to the organisation by the municipality in 2014), its role as an underground (punk) centre remains.

The case study has been informed by firstly, cultural youth studies, especially those focusing on youth cultural belongings (Rannikko 2018; Thornton 1995; Salasuo, Poikolainen & Komonen 2012). The study includes an intergenerational perspective, thus, it aims at looking at young people and young adults' spatial activities and occupations in relation to negotiations between generations. Secondly, the study draws on urban studies, thus highlighting the spatial dimension of young people's activism and urban belongings. Thus, the space is understood as socially produced – social and spatial are constantly intertwined (Kiilakoski & Kivijärvi 2014). Focusing on young people and young adults' spatial occupations means understanding the space as being produced through interaction and encounters: the space is understood as deeply material and political (Paju 2015; Pyyry 2015) and in a dialogical relation to youth cultural communities.

Myria Georgiou (2013) writes about the right to the urban space and how different groups of people become part of a global, digital city. As she states, '[– –] the city is a site of struggle', both

for symbolic and material resources. Young people and young adults' different means of occupying urban space are often materially and virtually regulated, and their creative and/or political urban activism is often stigmatised in the public debate. (Georgiou 2013; Tani & Robertson 2013) Different groups of young people and young adults struggle over the right to the urban space, through occupying, inhabiting and transforming places and spaces through embodied and material means and creating their own counter spaces (Rannikko 2018; see also Palmgren 2016).

Key questions of this case study are

- How do young, active urban people negotiate intergenerational conflicts and stigmas that exist in today's political and social climate in Finland?
- How do these young people use urban space to achieve innovative resistance?
- What are the arenas, opportunities and barriers of creative counteractions?

2. Methods

The case study employed an urban ethnographic approach and applied participant observation, semi-structured interviews and visual methods, including photographs, taken by two participants and myself. This methodological combination places the project in the field of ethnographic youth (and leisure) studies, where the research field is formed and materialises in the encounter between the researcher and informants – and of the material places and spaces the participants occupy (Käyhkö 2006; Ojanen 2011; Thornton 1995). Throughout the fieldwork and analysis, the research has been informed by an explicit aim to acknowledge and reflect the power relations and the place and positions of the researcher both in the field and when writing about the results (see e.g. Coffrey 2009; Ojanen 2011; Skeggs 1997) and disseminating them. This has especially meant reflection on the researcher's different positions in the research field while navigating in groups with varying hierarchical structures, conventions, activities and rules.

At the beginning of my fieldwork I chose to mainly focus on urban creative activism in two groups gathering at the centre: an urban circus and a rainbow group. The circus group got together in weekly circus rehearsals to practice with different props, such as balls, clubs, poi and hula hoops, to meet friends and hang out. For many it was a very important social gathering. The rainbow group gathered once a week as well to hang out, meet friends and participate in different activities, such as theatre. I also interviewed two young adults who were working at the centre as trainees. The initial reason behind the choice to include both the circus and the rainbow group in this case study was a hypothesis of a shared understanding of urban activism, including environmental and animal rights activism as well as anti-racism and intersectional feminism, among the participants. I arrived at this hypothesis on the basis of initial visits to the centre, discussions with the director as well as my first visits to the groups. As the fieldwork proceeded I noticed that there were several differences between the groups in terms of age, how the activities were planned and how much they identified in activism described above, as exemplified by protests and other urban occupations. However, most members in both groups nevertheless shared a distrust and criticism towards Finnish party politics, as well as an attachment to their own community and free leisure spaces, as exemplified by the youth cultural and community centre. Thus, the thematic focus was slightly altered over the course of the fieldwork period. Based on reflection and discussions with the national steering committee (NPPN) as well as the principal investigators of the PROMISE project, the thematic and theoretical focus was reorganised to address the key themes of intergenerational distrust and spatial occupations in leisure spaces and communities.

The most intensive period of fieldwork was done over three months. between February and May, in spring 2017, but I did return to the field a couple of times in autumn 2017, mainly to discuss the use of photographs collected by the participants. During the most intensive months I participated in weekly circus trainings (3 hours/week), rainbow group meetings (3 hours/week), office meetings (1-2 hours/week) and other events, gigs and performances (around 15 hours over three months). The data set consists of 20 semi-structured and recorded interviews (average length 50 minutes), written field diaries, of which a sample of 14 journal entries (approximately 800-900 Finnish words each) is used in the analysis, and 20 photographs collected by the researcher and two respondents.

Among the research participants, 10 were female, 7 male, 2 identified as non-binary and one identified as transgender. This gender profile mirrors the overall profile of the groups. The age range of the participants was between the ages of 16 and 30. This wide age range meant there were certain differences in the participants' life situations and this became evident in their descriptions of how they experienced life in Finland. However, the groups were nevertheless based on a shared experience of, either discrimination, exclusion and/or distrust and, thus, finding alternative ways of becoming active and, importantly, communities that they could relate to. Importantly, many participants' life trajectories can be mirrored with the concept of prolonged youth, characterised by longer periods of education and/or finding a place in the labour market and non-linear paths to adulthood (Aaltonen & Kivijärvi 2017, 8). Eight of the respondents had moved to Helsinki fairly recently. As for the educational and work background, the participant group was rather heterogeneous, which also reflects the overall profile of the centre [see Appendix for more details]. Most of the participants were of an ethnically Finnish background.

Already during my first visits to the field I had reflected on how to do research in a context that explicitly tries to distance itself from most explicit rules and structures. This seeming lack of structure meant that I came up against many other, often unspoken rules that were tied to the youth cultural conventions (see Thornton 1995, 3–4; Rannikko 2018). Navigating through these conventions became a key issue during my fieldwork, which I tried to manage and solve in different ways, depending on the context. My presence in all groups was characterised by participatory ethnography, which I applied in various ways. Sometimes I cleaned and made coffee, at other times I learned how to juggle and participated in improvisation theatre workshops. At times I also noticed I had to balance maintaining my role as a researcher while trying not to slide into being a youth/social worker. The participatory nature also meant that while I was in the field, writing a field diary was almost impossible and I thus wrote the entries in the evening after the group meetings, based on the short, written notes I had made in the field.

Negotiating access to the field was done firstly, with the director of the community centre, secondly, with the key persons in the circus and rainbow youth groups, and, thirdly, individually with each participant. Signed consent forms were collected from the director of the community centre and from each participant. Due to the different hierarchical structures and conventions, different approaches were used when informing the people in the circus group and the rainbow youth group about the research. While the 'welcome round' tradition of the rainbow youth group (where everyone sat down in a circle for a short introduction to any new members) offered a good opportunity to inform the participants each week, the circus group lacked any opening structure and was based on loose hanging out. Therefore, my approach was different in the circus group – I informed each participant I approached during the fieldwork individually. This choice also meant that potentially not every participant knew about the research, especially as there were almost

always people who just decided to drop by with a friend –I have not included these people in the field diaries.

After the fieldwork, the interviews were transcribed and anonymised and the field diaries were anonymised. In order to bring the different data sets together, the analysis drew from thematic close reading and qualitative content analysis. I used the NVivo11 software as a tool in the analysis of the interviews, field diaries and photographs.

Next, I will present the key findings of this study. The following section is divided into three main sub-sections. Firstly, I will discuss the intergenerational distrust and conflicts the participants voiced in terms of party politics as well as experiences of stigmatisation and not belonging in the urban space. Secondly I will analyse how the participants used and occupied different leisure spaces for activities and community building as forms of innovative counteractions and experiences of agency. Thirdly, I will present some critical notions on the inside hierarchies, power relations and exclusions of the groups and communities in focus.

3. Key Findings

3.1. Intergenerational Distrust

> There's a lot of uncertainty in relation to employment, education… It is very difficult to get into a school. Or alternatively we are pushed to study something we don't really want to study, but we have to be pushed somewhere. Or we are forced to make zero-hour contracts [job contracts with no guarantee of sufficient working hours] because we don't have any… Or people think that you don't have that much experience or any basic training. Or at the Employment Office they just put you somewhere with the pay subsidy because you have to work somewhere. And in practice they can then pay you less. So, it is, like, we young people are guided a lot. And, umm, we're not stupid, we realise that we are being guided and that puts us down a lot. [Utu, 25]

Here, 25-year-old Utu, who identifies as a rainbow activist, describes their distrust in the Finnish society. Utu's words echo of the changes in recent years in Finnish politics, implemented by the Youth Guarantee in 2013 and the government programme in 2015, affecting young people's situation in education and employment. The interview quotation can be mirrored with what Harrikari (2014) has written about the Youth Guarantee as a means of intergenerational control: society aims to keep young people in the system as productive individuals at minimal costs: -'It [the Youth Guarantee] aims at integrating young people. However, in comparison to previous initiatives, the boundary conditions are harder, the social control is harsher, and the responsibility is put on the individual' (119).

As argued previously, while the life situations and personal histories were considerably diverse, most participants did share a critical view towards society, which I have named *intergenerational distrust*. While the perspective of generations was directly included in the research questions – 'what's it like to live in Finland as a young person' – the informants also came back to consider this matter in several other parts of the interviews. 22-year-old Susanna stated in her interview:

> Heta: You told me that you could attend [a protest], against the parliament. What would you like to change?

Susanna: The present government. Can we have a new election, please? These politics run by Sipilä [prime minister], and all this.

3.1.1 Distrust in Party Politics

The distrust in party politics acted in many ways as a catalyst in the participants' ways of becoming active in the city. In Finland political activity among young age groups, if measured in terms of voting activity and interest towards political parties, decreased significantly between the 1960s and the 2000s (Hellsten & Martikainen 2002). According to the Youth Barometers[1] (e.g. Myllyniemi 2014), the low levels of political participation do not necessarily reflect young people's disinterest in society and political matters in a broad sense, but rather the difficulties in finding ways to channel these interests. Further, disinterest might tell more about a possible shift towards non-conventional modes of participation.

However, the results of the Youth Barometer 2013 tell quite a different story. According to the Barometer, Finnish young people's trust in the Finnish democratic system was growing. Young people felt a growing sense of belonging to Finnish society and it seemed that this relationship had become closer by comparison to the 1990s. (Myllyniemi 2013, 6.) Considering these results, the respondents in my case study seem to live in a rather different society or that something had drastically changed.

While a couple of the research participants felt that Finland was a good country to live in and they appreciated the societal structures, for most of them parliamentary decision-making and party politics appeared to be, either uninteresting, or distant, false and done from the perspective of older generations. Further, even those who thought that Finland was a good country, voiced concern over the recent cuts in the student allowance and economic polarisation. Juho (25) voiced his desire for young people's stronger involvement in Finnish party politics by stating that he sees how 'the older generations make decisions that have an impact on our lives, but not necessarily on their lives'. He also stated that 'young people are angry' and continued:

> For thirty years we have had these bourgeois people in the parliament, as the main thing, and they have fought for their cause for a very long time. So, I'm waiting for our time to come for a change, to fight for our cause. [Juho, 25]

This distrust and clash with the results of the Youth Barometer 2013 can be interpreted from several viewpoints. The societal and political climate in Finland has undergone turbulent changes during the past three years – changes that the participants often referred to. Further, quantitative surveys such as the Youth Barometer offer a selective view: those who feel positive about their possibilities to influence and participate are those who are more likely to respond to the survey (Myllyniemi 2013, 7). Also, the respondents in this case study were a specific group in terms of their political views. Many of them were greatly influenced by the global protest movements and becoming politically active outside parliamentary or municipal structures. Thus, their activism can be understood as part of non-conventional modes of participation.

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[1] The Youth Barometer is an annual research series that, since 1994, has been measuring the values and attitudes 15-29-year-olds living in Finland. The Youth Barometers are based on telephone interviews and the themes change annually. The research is conducted by the Finnish Youth Research Society in collaboration with The Ministry of Culture and Education.

Importantly, the cuts implemented by the Finnish government in 2015–2017 had a direct influence on many respondents' lives, since most of them were either working part-time, as trainees or studying full-time. Thus, their economic situation was increasingly fragile, especially as they were living in Helsinki, which has been ranked among the top 20 of the most expensive cities in the world. 20-year-old Reuben, who studied full-time at a vocational school and was living independently alone, commented on the cuts in student allowance as a key issue causing distrust against the political system in Finland. In his words 'society attacks poor students like this by minimising student allowance and so on. Everything's already so expensive so how am I going to finance my studies [- -]?'

Further, he took a stand for voting, which was a topic that divided the research participants. While some informants (especially those who identified more with anarchism and non-conventional forms of participation) didn't see voting as a means of making change in society and had decided not to vote, many found voting important and necessary, and underlined the importance of choosing young candidates to make a change.

> Who do they think will take their side in the Parliament if they don't vote for those who speak up? Like, it is very, very alarming that young people don't vote so much anymore, because it means the Parliament will be full of these bitter old men who hate everyone and hate their own life probably… Because if young people don't vote for young people into the Parliament, who will then speak up about things such as, 'we have this issue here, we can't cut from them, because if we cut from them, it'll have an impact here…' Because those old grandpas in the Parliament don't care about studying. They don't need to study anymore. [Reuben, 20]

3.1.2 Experiences of not Belonging to the City

Besides party politics, another important context for experiencing intergenerational distrust was related to the complex negotiations of belonging to the city. Different urban spaces are produced socially (Kiilakoski & Kivijärvi 2014) and can be understood through struggle for belonging and as arenas, which produce us as subjects of a certain gender, age, ability and ethnicity. Urban encounters between people reflect and remake urban racialised, class-related, age-related and gendered hierarchies. (Georgiou 2013; Massey 1994.) For example, feminist studies have pointed to sexism and harassment in the public space (e.g. Aaltonen 2006). Further, as Päivi Honkatukia and Arseniy Svynarenko state in their article about young people's different encounters on the Helsinki Metro and at Metro stations, young people often talked about pleasant encounters, such as those between peers, nice and safe adults, and even Metro guards. However, they also recollected unwanted encounters, which were almost solely intergenerational: the person who evoked the feelings of fear, anger or refusal was an adult. (Honkatukia & Svynarenko 2018, forthcoming; see also Aaltonen 2006.)

Especially the rainbow group members voiced experiences of discrimination in the public space. During a party to celebrate gender equal marriage which was organised at the centre, Julinette (16) wrote on a Post It Note: 'My biggest dream is that I could hold my future girlfriend's hand safely in every part of the world' [see Plate 1].
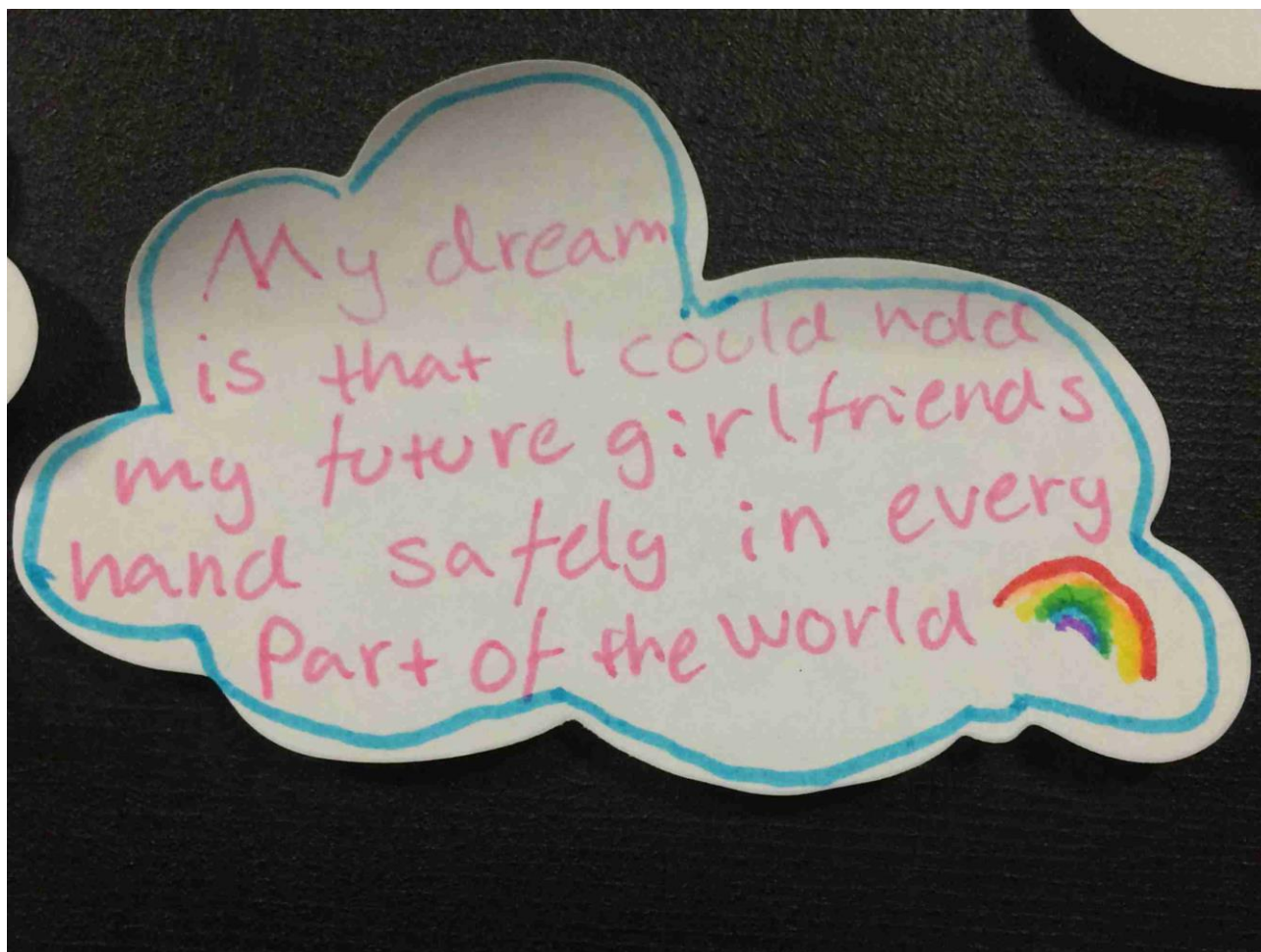
Plate 1.

Further, this is how ET (23) described their thoughts on intergenerational relations towards rainbow youth in the public space:

> Heta: What's your opinion on older generations in relation to rainbow youth? Are there any kinds of generational differences?
>
> ET: Well of course there is. Like… Whenever an elderly person notices that I'm wearing a rainbow badge I get a bit scared that soon there'll be a granny shouting at me. Nothing is as horrible as a granny shouting at you. Because if you start yelling back at them, then everyone will stare at you, like, 'there's a rude young person'.

Increasing racism was an issue that the participants recognised and were concerned about. As part of the recent, Pan-European changes of the strengthening of polarisation and extreme right-wing activism, Finland has witnessed the rise of street patrols and other groups whose agenda is openly hostile towards immigration. (Puuronen & Saari 2017, 9-10.) For example, Lotta stated that she was worried about 'the Finland First people who hang out on the Railway square' [Lotta, 22]. Further, a survey conducted by the City of Helsinki Urban Facts in 2016 reveals, that belonging to a visual minority increased especially girls' and young women's insecurity on public transport and other public spaces (Tuominen et al 2014). This research finding can also be backed up by the results of the research project Digital Youth in the Media City (Universities of Helsinki and Tampere, Finnish Youth Research Society, 2016–2018). In this case study, Maryam (16) voiced her recent concern over entering the public space as a Muslim girl:

I do notice that if I'm hanging out with friends who aren't Finnish and so, people do look at us differently than if I were alone in a gang where everyone's, like… And if I speak Arabic on the phone I do feel a bit troubled nowadays because I don't know at all how someone might react to it. And if I'm out with my family we do get those strange looks. [Maryam, 16]

Thus, in the interviews, the urban space was often seen in terms of constant struggle for the right to belong and occupy one's own space.

3.2. Spatial Occupations, Counter Spaces and Counter Strategies

As Sunaina Maira and Elizabeth Soep argue, youth studies needs to be reflexive and critical in its theorisations on resistance, to avoid dichotomous framings of resistance with simplified, and binary understandings of, for example, global commercial popular culture/underground DIY culture or parliamentary, state-led politics/grassroots activism (Maira & Soep 2005, xxxi; see also Thornton 1995, 163-164). The urban activities understood by the research participants cannot be labelled under these binaries either. While they did emphasise the relevance of their actions as a counter-force against the distrust, discrimination and pressures they felt, their means to counter-act differed, exemplified by the question of voting. Further, their urban resistance should be understood as a diverse web of actions and counter-actions – while the participants spoke about creating own spaces and strategies of resistance, their activities were still often realised under the umbrella of the official, municipal uses of the urban space (Rannikko 2018). In this section I will discuss the creative solutions and strategies the research participants found to tackle the experiences of distrust and not belonging into the city.

3.2.1 Occupations in the Urban Space

As argued, the youth cultural and community centre was one of the key urban spaces the research participants occupied. Access to free leisure spaces, such as the centre, parks and streets was especially important for the participants, since few of them could afford to participate in expensive hobbies, or even had the interest to do so. Such as Juho stated:

People who have been rehearsing for tens of years, so having free rehearsals is quite… It's very difficult to find. Whatever activity you practice, free rehearsals are always a good thing. [– –] Yep, I don't have that kind of money. [Juho, 25]

ET (22) discussed leisure spaces as well. In their interview my clumsy question about pubs shed light on the importance of free public and semi-public spaces for hanging out and becoming active.

Heta: […] do you go to someone's place, to a café, to a pub?
ET: To a pub… [laughs a little] We are poor. We go out, we go and buy something to eat from a grocery store if we want to. And then, now that it's summer again, we go out. In autumn we stayed out for quite a long time. We stopped doing that two weeks before it snowed for the first time because it was so cold. [ET, 22]

As argued before, the centre is linked to a certain transnational youth cultural tradition, especially that of the punk and house-squatting movements as well as anarchism. The walls and floors of the centre are painted black or covered with graffiti, and all furniture is second hand. Furthermore, the centre explicitly states that it follows the rules of safe spaces and accessibility, has gender-neutral toilets and different kinds of stickers on the walls, most of which carry the political agenda

of the new global protest movements, such as animal rights activism, feminism, antifascism and environmental activism. This material space was intertwined into the communities, lifestyles and activist identities of the participants in many ways: thus, the spatial was deeply interconnected with the social (e.g. Kiilakoski & Kivijärvi 2014; Massey 2005). 'The place is created by its users', voiced Aleks, thus summarising the DIY agenda of the centre and continued: 'The floor is dirty and there are wires hanging from everywhere. But it also offers a possibility, like 'hey! People don't expect anything from me here!'. Further, Juho (25) commented on the political agenda of the centre as follows:

> And the Youth Cultural and Community Centre is quite a good manifestation of it… It is a political place but also everything else, too, and there's quite a lot of political, what is it now… messages [in English]. Political messages on the walls. Yep. There's a lot of political messages on the walls. [Juho, 25]

Thus, the material elements of the space were filtrated into the lifestyle and other spatial occupations that the participants were involved in and the other way around. Many, although not everyone, were vegans or vegetarians and concerned about environmental issues, gender inequalities, animal rights and racism. While not all participants participated in protests (some voiced concern about attacks and the safety of participating, of felt that demonstrating wasn't their way of making a change), for many, protests were an important way of reclaiming the urban space. For example, Susanna (21) talked about an animal rights protest, which included theatrical elements and was held at the central railway square in Helsinki:

> We went to the railway square and showed videos from Finnish animal factories on our laptop. Like, what is going on at these factories. So, it was, like, people wearing anonymous masks were holding the laptop with the video, and then we also projected a video on the wall, which shows what's really going on at the factories. And then we didn't say anything. People came very, very close and were like this, but no. We didn't say anything and we let them react themselves. Well, I didn't have a mask on, but I was giving out the flyers that we had. So, very many people came to talk to us and many people were shocked about that. [Susanna, 21]

During my fieldwork, the central railway square in Helsinki became a symbol for political polarisation and the strengthening of the extreme right-wing movement in Finland. At one end of the square there was a protest camp held by the asylum seekers and at the other end a camp held by the extreme right wing movement Finland First. Some of the circus group participants visited the refugee camp with their props. In a circus act, urban space becomes occupied and transformed: certain parts of the city are turned into small subcultural arenas and pockets of counteractions (Shepard 2010). Juho described their occupations as follows:

> And about circus in general, when they had these protest camps for asylum seekers here at the railway station, we were often there with [unofficial circus organisation and social circus NGO], just doing circus and bringing joy and playing with children and… The children had come from difficult circumstances and they felt happy there. That was very nice to see. [Juho, 25]

Further, the research participants emphasised the importance of Pride as a form of reclaiming the urban space for protest, celebration and community-building. While some of them voiced concerns over safety during Pride, 'But I have been too scared to go to Pride for example, because

sometimes there has been egg throwing or something' [Lotta, 22], for most participants it was an empowering way to become visible and feel belonging to the urban space. This is how Julinette (16) emphasised the community-building aspects after attending her first Pride parade:

> And then I decided to go to Pride. And after that week I got, I was in, like seven new WhatsApp-groups. I had got to know… A third of them were only quick acquaintances but still I had got to know around forty people during that week, because the rainbow organisation organises a lot of these things. And I'm very grateful for that. Especially during Pride, I attended almost every single one of them. And then I was, like, I can't leave these people, you are too wonderful. [Julinette, 16]

These diverse spaces – both more permanent such as the centre and temporal, exemplified by the protests – used by the participants can be named as counter spaces that aim for rethinking and challenging conventional uses of urban spaces (Lefevbre 1991, 292; Rannikko 2018, 28). Thus, counter space is actualised in concrete material spaces, exemplified by the centre, as well as in acts and performances that remake and challenge the everyday uses of the urban space (Rannikko 2018). Further, the community took a clear stand on official urban planning and conventional uses of spaces, thus creating a counter space both concretely and metaphorically. Terhi (28) voiced her wish for alternative spaces quite concretely:

> I'd like there to be more places, spaces, urban spaces in Finland for… People spending time and developing themselves. It annoys me a lot that there's a certain purpose for each space and especially public outdoor spaces. They want to put fences around each space, they want to control them, they want to… they want to limit their uses. [Terhi, 28]

Sunaina Maira and Elisabeth Soep (2005) have used the concept of 'youthscape' to refer to different sites that young people use and occupy, which are not only geographical or temporal, but at the same time social and political. Further, these youthscapes are deeply 'bound up with questions of power and materiality' (xvi). The concept of scape captures the increasing forces of globalisation and digitalisation in young people's lives, and how these processes are deeply intertwined into understandings of the national, local and everyday practices (Maira & Soep 2005, xvi-xvii). This understanding of spatial occupations at the intersection of global, local, material and physical is useful in analysing the centre and other occupations in the urban space. The respondents became active through a deep connection to the different spaces, which were intertwined into global and digital forms of contemporary activism.

3.2.2 Peer Learning and Physical Proximity

> I feel that the atmosphere is very relaxed. I feel that I often think about how I look and everything and am I doing this right. But here it's very supportive, like… [Lotta, 22]

This is how Lotta (22) describes her feelings about the centre. Peer learning and support were influential and outspoken practices shared at the centre in both groups. Further, many participants pondered this 'different way' of learning and sharing in contrast to the societal pressures of individual success and a goal-oriented, neoliberal life trajectory. Many talked about intergenerational expectations and pressures they experienced from school, work or social services. For example, Eemeli (19) told me how he never really felt at home at school and how he still doesn't 'see that it is the best way to learn anything'. Magnus (21) stated critically:

[- -] for example, a kind of emphasis on efficiency is quite strong in this society and it affects young people… Young people a lot. Already at a young age you have to get… You should know what you want to do already when you are young and… You should have a direction somewhere. [Magnus, 21]

Thus, the theme that brought many of the respondents together were the societal expectations placed on young adulthood that they experienced. As discussed, young people have been targeted in several ways in the governmental initiatives during the recent years. The ideal of an independent, goal-oriented and successful individual was clearly visible in the way in which the participants talked about the pressures they experienced. For Ronja (21), stress and pressures were the first elements that came to mind when thinking about living in Finland as a young adult. In her response, the pressures were linked to not fitting into the mould of a successful individual, 'like everyone else'.

Heta: So, what is it like to be a young adult in Finland? [– –]
Ronja: Well, it's a bit... It is a bit stressful. Or, like, you feel that there are huge pressures after high school… Or even before high school. Go forward into the mould and there are huge and hard pressures coming from everywhere. And I have had all these sick leaves, so I haven't been able to… I just haven't been able to do the same as everyone else, so it has been super stressful, especially because I'm that kind of a person that feels the pressures from it, so… [Ronja, 21]

Further, Aleks (30) commented on the contradictory societal expectations as a dystopia. He described the neoliberal logic of competition and an individual being able to plan their own life and do whatever they want:

They don't set expectations but at the same time they do, so nowadays it's, like…Everything is contradictory. And in a way this kind of… This dystopia that somehow… I don't know. I somehow feel that everything… Nothing is clear. Everything's a mess and there are no answers to anything, if you think about young people. What a young person should do and what they could do. In a way, it is more, like, you can do whatever you want. The doors are open for you. So… So, something like that. And the sense of competition which in a traditional sense has diminished but that's also intensifying all the time. We have to compete with someone all the time. We can't do anything without a goal. [Aleks, 30]

In addition to pressures coming from institutions such as school, some commented on social media as an arena of constant peer pressure to achieve a 'perfect life'. For example, Ronja (21) commented on Facebook as follows:

At the moment, as I am in this phase where I can't live my life the way I would like to, I have left Facebook completely. It was stressing me out too much because all the time I was seeing everything my friends did and felt a complete outsider myself. It was such a big thing that I decided that it was best for me to step out of it completely. [Ronja, 21]

Mirrored against these descriptions, peer learning, and support can be understood as alternative, creative strategies that the research participants used to cope with the distrust and pressures they felt.

In the circus group, peer learning meant transferring knowledge of circus tricks, props and practices to other members, as well as sharing knowledge about the youth cultural elements that the activity was linked to. The practices and non-spoken conventions in the group can be mirrored with Rannikko's research (2018) on different forms of alternative urban physical activities, such as parkour, roller derby and skate boarding. She points out to the subcultural relevance of these activities and analyses the criticism these activities direct at more goal-oriented hobbies. This criticism includes a competition-oriented perspective, discrimination and hierarchical structures. Thus, the inner logic of alternative sports emphasises respect, lack of competition and the rhetoric that 'everyone is welcome'.

In the circus group, the clash between institutional and alternative practices was seen in explicit comparisons with institutional circus schools. The participants emphasised peer learning and teaching, as well as their close community as key attributes in their understanding of circus, in contrast to pressures, competition and goal-oriented learning. Thus, for many, the circus group appeared as an explicit counteraction to these 'official' hobbies. Susanna (21) who studied at a vocational school to become a youth worker and had practiced at an official circus school as a child described the circus rehearsals as follows:

> The fact that you can breathe out and take a break from your normal every day life. It is, like, a break where you can stop the time to do something with your hands. To focus on what you are doing, your brain relaxes, your mind relaxes from everything such as school and work. And you meet your friends. It is, like, stopping time for a couple of hours at the rehearsals. [Susanna, 21]

Peer learning was explicitly voiced in many interviews in a positive tone. The participants described it in terms of learning from each other, encouraging one another and finding the courage to face failures in the learning process (in contrast to the ideal of a successful, never-failing individual). This learning was very often non-verbal, such as positioning oneself in pairs or in smaller groups, going to introduce oneself to new members (or not doing so), hugging everyone (or selectively choosing people who to hug). Terhi (28) described the convention as follows:

> It is also about supporting everyone and if someone… If someone wants to learn how to use a certain prop so usually there's always someone who comes and helps you get started. Doing it together always gets you excited about doing more and if someone knows how to do a difficult… A new trick so usually they tell others how to do it. [Terhi, 28]

Peer learning and knowledge sharing about the DIY culture and rainbow issues was very important in the rainbow group as well. The theme that brought the rainbow group participants together was of growing up in Finland as a person belonging to a gender or sexual minority. While, following the overall profile of all research participants, most of them shared the generational experience of criticising societal pressures relating to education and work, their descriptions included an extra layer of control and stigmatisation because of their gender or sexual orientation. Many of the rainbow group participants spoke about not finding their place at school or in smaller cities (this was also frequently discussed in the circus group) and emphasised digital media spaces,

moving to Helsinki as well as joining the rainbow group and their first Pride festival as key points in discovering new ways of belonging in the city and finding their own community. In my field diary, there are several notions about thematic sessions aiming for knowledge sharing and peer support, such as watching YouTube videos on, for example, racism or transgender issues together. Most of the participants of the rainbow group felt that the group offered them a free leisure space for peer support and counteracting against the discrimination they felt in urban spaces and, also, at institutional settings such as school. Many felt that they got next to no information about rainbow issues at school or that the information was incorrect, out-dated or non-existent. Further, Maryam (16) commented on how racist and sexist remarks often went unnoticed as joking around without any intervention from teachers.

Importantly, and explicitly voiced in terms of resistance, both groups discussed peer support in terms of physical proximity. In the rainbow group, physical proximity was visible in how the participants located themselves into the space: 'Maryam pulls her legs closer to herself. Reuben sits on the armrest of the sofa and caresses Maryam's hair' [Fieldwork diary 24.5.2017]. In both groups hugging was very common. Especially in the circus group, hugging everyone was a tradition that I already noticed already during my first visits in the field. Magnus (21) commented that he appreciated the 'culture of closeness' that he couldn't see in the university circles and Laura (24) commented on hugging as follows:

> One reason why I come here are the hugs! I'm like… Yep. I make these hugging circles sometimes, like, who hasn't given me a hug yet? Oh, that one. I'm gonna go and get one more from [circus participant]. Like, I'm becoming fully addicted to these hugs… I shouldn't probably admit this but yep… During one night you can get more hugs here than an average Finn gets during one year. So… That makes you feel very good. [Laura, 24]

These outspoken and internalised practices: peer learning, peer support and physical proximity can be analysed under the concept of non-formal learning (in contrast to formal learning at institutions such as kindergarten and school), familiar from studies on youth work. Further, these practices can be understood as different ways – verbal, embodied and spatial – of sharing messages between young people in informal leisure settings. While the activities at the centre cannot be strictly labelled under municipal or NGO youth work (because of the non-institutional and underground history and profile), the conventions in both groups shared similarities with youth work. The participants made explicit divisions between formal learning environments (such as school or official hobbies), which they saw as hierarchical, competition-oriented and expensive. According to Kiilakoski and Kivijärvi (2014), these environments of formal learning can be labelled as 'tight spaces', presupposing 'functionality and homogeneity' (3).

In contrast, the definitions the participants voiced about the spatial occupations of the centre and other urban spaces (both permanent and temporal) as well as the practices of peer learning, support and proximity can be understood under the concept of loose spaces. Loose spaces of non-formal learning are more often open to negotiation and based on changing functions and heterogeneity (Kiilakoski & Kivijärvi 2014). However, this ideal of looseness and welcoming everyone should also be critically analysed in terms of inner exclusions and hierarchies. Non-formal and seemingly open learning and sharing strategies can also become exclusive, which I will discuss next.

3.3. Critical Reflections: Open Space?

While the research participants shared a critical and generational view of party politics and understood their spatial occupations and communities as important means to counteract, their experiences of belonging to their communities differed. During my time in the field I often pondered the contradictory meanings of an explicitly voiced open space where 'everyone is welcome'. This rhetoric comes close to what Kiilakoski and Kivijärvi (2014) have written about Finnish youth clubs, that are explicitly based on an ideal of *pedagogical loose space,* meaning little control, lack of adult manipulation and a focus on universalist tendency of welcoming everyone. In the following quotation, Johanna (22), who worked at the centre as a trainee, considers the values of the centre:

> I don't know whether 'no Nazis' is a value, but, like the ideas of no discrimination towards anyone and that everyone's welcome here as they are, and the gender-neutral toilets and all that. Like, we are an activity that's free from discrimination and the doors are open for everyone. [Johanna, 22]

Thus, the doors are rhetorically open, but what exclusions does this statement include? Rannikko (2018) points out the rhetoric of respect as a key issue in the inner order of alternative urban sports, such as circus, parkour or roller derby. While the rhetoric includes a principle of 'everyone is welcome'; respecting everyone; and takes an explicit stand against hierarchies based on gender, sexuality or ethnicity, it also includes unspoken rules and inner hierarchies. In this section I will analyse this explicit openness of the space as well as the hidden micro power structures, excluding practices and hierarchies behind naming a space as open and welcoming for all.

3.3.1 Unspoken and Explicit Rules

As voiced by Johanna in the previous quote, there were certain ground rules and restrictions explicitly stated at the community centre, namely, 'no alcohol/drugs and no Nazis'. These rules were often discussed in the interviews and were also visible on the signpost on the front door of the centre. For example, at the office meetings and in other discussions with the personnel at the centre, the limitations were often explicitly discussed. On 4th April 2017 I had written the following in my field diary:

> As a principle the place is open for everyone – except 'Nazis' – but its DIY spirit is also limited in certain ways. It is not good to be 'too anarchistic' or to not take care of something that's been promised. The activities are interestingly situated in between the anarchist and house squatting tradition and more established youth-, civic- and cultural activities. [Fieldwork diary 4.4.2017]

This quotation captures the negotiations of rules in a space, which explicitly tries to distance itself from any rules or hierarchies. If a certain person was known for not taking care of the space or not following the rules of providing information about an event and cleaning up afterwards i.e. too anarchistic, access was either limited or denied. The most explicit exclusion was on the basis of belonging to an extreme right-wing movement or displaying the symbols in clothing or accessories. Alcohol and drugs were forbidden because of, on one hand, Finnish alcohol legislation and, on the other hand, the role of the centre as part of municipal youth work. However, this rule was often bent especially during gig evenings. In line with the legacy of the centre as an underground punk space, moderate drinking was usually allowed if it wasn't seen.

These regulations (and bending them) can be understood, firstly, under the concept of intentional regulations in a youth club context, including restrictions created by the workers (Kiilakoski & Kivijärvi 2014, 7). The role of the centre at the intersection of municipal youth work and underground and DIY culture was clearly seen the juxtaposition between left-wing urban activism and extreme right-wing activism, which was banned from the centre. While banning extreme right-wing opinions and symbols is a practice generally applied in municipal youth work as well, at the centre it was explicitly stated in all activities.

Further, the communities included several other, more implicit and communally shared rules as well. While there was a more outspoken and explicit hierarchy in the rainbow group, especially after the arrival of a new community worker who planned different activities for the meetings, a hierarchical structure was also implicitly visible in the circus group. In the circus group, the person holding the key, together with a couple of other participants (all of whom were male), took the main responsibility of welcoming new arrivals to the group and giving them advice on props and tricks. The embodied practices of peer learning, peer support and physical proximity, discussed in the previous section, can be understood as unspoken rules and spatial practices that the participants slowly learned as they arrived in the community (see Kiilakoski & Kivijärvi 2014). This was most clearly seen in the circus group, where the rehearsals followed shared conventions – such as teaching each other, hugging, juggling in pairs, talking and practicing in smaller groups – which were seemingly open to everyone but also required learning circus techniques and how to place oneself in relation to the space and other people. Thus, the space became fully occupied only after learning the social conventions, which were also deeply gendered.

The importance of learning these conventions became visible in many interviews in relation to the question of entering the community for the first time. Some circus group informants stated that they had felt the need to practice at home first before they had the courage to come to the rehearsals – even if the rhetoric of the rehearsals emphasises peer learning and not focusing on any competition or comparison based on skills. Further, the lack of official conventions meant that the new participants had to navigate in the field of learning the conventions created and shared in the group. Susanna (22) describes these uneasy feelings of entering the community for the first time:

> And then I went there, all alone, and when I approached the place it was super scary. Because I didn't know anyone, and I was wondering if I can just go there or if I should sign up somewhere or if I can just go there. Then quite quickly I started talking to people and they started asking me, like, hi, hello, who are you, where do you come from and told me stuff. So, I don't think it took, perhaps three weeks and suddenly I had lots of friends there. [Susanna, 22]

In the rainbow group, the question of conventions and rules was more explicitly present, especially as I arrived at the group at a rather turbulent time. The group had been self-organised by the participants themselves and a group of 5-6 active young volunteers for over six months, but a new community worker arrived at the centre about halfway through my fieldwork. The community worker introduced several new rules regarding use of swear words, shouting, and talking openly about sensitive issues, such as drinking, using drugs or mental health.

These rules created debate and were discussed in many interviews. While some of the participants felt that limiting open discussion, especially about mental health issues was welcome, others voiced their disappointment at the rules. This uneasiness was discussed in, for example, Maryam's interview.

> Heta: What's the group like in your opinion? What kind of people come here?
>
> Maryam: Well… Everyone's quite nice and so. But because of personal reasons I find it difficult to identify with certain persons because we have come from totally different backgrounds, so I'm not… It is, like, you know, there are certain things that I totally disagree with. And certain people and how they react to certain things, this really pisses me off. And, you know, when I come here I assume that I can be myself and this is a safe space. Well, I do have certain sides of me. I'm a bit loud. I might say… They are… Like, I do use a lot of swear words and I know it and… Then if someone comes and yells at you in a space where you're supposed to feel comfortable… A couple of times I have thought that perhaps there's no point coming back anymore. But, like, this is only my personal opinion.

Maryam was speaking in an offended tone, mentioning her mixed feelings about the rules of not shouting or using swear words during the evenings. Further, through linking her thoughts to the concept of a safe space, her comment can be read as a more widely commentary on intersectional feminism and its inclusions and exclusions. Thus, the rainbow group was by no means uniform according to the age, gendered or sexual orientation, social class or ethnicity. For example, Maryam's outspoken criticism shed light on many inner conflicts in the group. Maryam was from a Muslim family and she was openly critical of the whiteness of Finnish Pride event as well as the media representation of sexual minorities of non-white homosexuals.

Thus, as Rannikko (2018) has argued, the rhetoric of keeping the doors open as well as welcoming and respecting everyone can also turn into a dominant discourse that actually hides any hierarchies or inner struggles in the communities. Further, the new rules can be understood in terms of unintended implications by the youth worker's acts (Kiilakoski & Kivijärvi 2014, 8), which describe the acts done by the worker in order to maintain safety and equality in the space. While the rules of not shouting or talking about mental health issues were introduced in order to enhance the safety of the space, for some participants it meant considerable feelings of exclusion. Strikingly, the new situation meant a clash between youth work and self-organising activities and led to confused reactions by the participants.

3.3.2 Youth Cultural Hierarchies

While, as argued, the material space including its explicit signs and symbols of environmental and animal rights activism, feminism and punk subculture was intertwined with the overall profiles of the different communities, the groups also carried different youth cultural connotations. Thus, the groups included internal control by the participants themselves as well as certain, shared spatial practices (Kiilakoski & Kivijärvi 2014, 9, 15). The youth cultural identification the circus group members often talked about was *hippie*. The rehearsals were often referred to by the concept of 'hippie circus rehearsals'. While the hippie movement originated in the (mostly middle-class) student and protest movements of the 1960s and the 1970s, what I could see in 2010s Helsinki was a local adaptation, deeply tied to its cultural and political context in Helsinki while simultaneously citing the historical legacy and values of the movement.

Hippie was a definition that the participants approached with close identification but also distanced themselves from. Identifying as 'a circus hippie' meant relating to shared values such as physical closeness, often vegan/vegetarian lifestyle, communal living and an overall explicit emphasis on empathy and harmony between people. Juho (25) commented on the definition of hippie as belonging that is related to community, values and space as follows:

> Juho: It [hippie] is only a word for me. Of course, it describes me quite well. Like, I have tangled hair [points to his dreadlocks] and I use these kinds of clothes and now I've found my own place there. Before I didn't really have my own place, so I think this hippie word somewhat describes it. And it's nice to belong to a group. Some people don't like it [the word hippie] but for me it only describes belonging to a certain group. And that's a good thing.

> Heta: Are there any values linked to it?

> Juho: Green values and such for sure. Overall being empathetic and sympathetic are the two most important things that are linked to being a hippie and to [the youth cultural and community centre] in general.

However, the participants of the community recognised the negative values linked to being 'a circus hippie', too. Especially inside the wider circus field, they felt that the concept was too frequently used in a pejorative and downgrading way, signalling unprofessionalism, drug use, laziness and lack of circus skills. Terhi (28) described hippie circus as follows:

> And this thing that I've been focusing on, object manipulation, which is quite a word monster, but it's a bit difficult to know what one should call it. Yep, it is a bit, in quotation marks, hippie activity. [- -] Only after you start doing fire art, then you come a bit further. A bit closer to circus art. Sometimes I… I have a feeling that it's somewhat looked down upon. Like it is valued less and seen as some kind of new age foolishness. [Terhi, 28]

Further, everyday rituals that were generally discussed in a positive tone, such as hugging and physical closeness, could sometimes also turn into selective and excluding acts. Laura (24), who explicitly told me that she wasn't a hippie girl, wondered about the difficulty of entering the rehearsal space, fitting in and spending the evening with the others:

> I somehow don't really understand these hippies sometimes, like… They're a lovely mystery to me, and I don't quite understand them. I don't know whether it's shyness or whether it is really that they come there to practice their own thing and being social only comes after that… [Laura, 24]

Thus, entering the space and finding a place in the community required considerable knowledge on, besides circus, also on the youth cultural conventions (including appearance and lifestyle, such as identification in urban activism), rules and spatial practices linked to the activity (Thornton 1995; Kiilakoski & Kivijärvi 2014).

4. Conclusions

Myria Georgiou (2013) writes about today's cities as arenas for the constant struggle for belonging. Stepping into the urban space as a person belonging to a certain category according to age, gender, ethnicity or sexuality puts you in a different place in relation to others: gendered, age-related, ethnic and sexual power relations and hierarchies are performed, forced upon and, also, challenged in different urban spaces. These diverse and competing understandings of the city are negotiated simultaneously in physical and digital arenas where the digital is constantly intertwined with the physical. Today's cities are also highly commercialised through entertainment industries: in fact, most of our activities in the city require participation in the commercial culture. Thus, belonging to the city is also a question of purchasing.

In this research project I was interested in intergenerational contests and conflicts, and how young people and young adults negotiate about them in the urban space and more specifically, in the context of a youth cultural and community centre, which is located at the intersection of municipal youth work and the tradition of underground and DIY activism and anarchism. What is extremely relevant is how intergenerational relations and conflicts were intertwined into very many layers of the research participants' experiences of society as well as their ways of becoming active in the urban space. Firstly, the key experiences of conflict and stigmatisation were voiced as generational, including party politics, ideals of individualism and success as well as discrimination in the public spaces. Secondly, the participants shared the understanding that their activities were a generational experience, whether it meant rainbow activism or experiencing agency in a community based on practices such as peer learning. Thus, space was in many ways linked to the social and the understanding of a specific generation. Importantly, while many of the research respondents weren't in a very vulnerable situation socially, their notions echo that of a generational experience of disappointment and distrust in society as well as the need for their own community and spatial occupation.

Further, I wanted to look at the different spatial occupations the young people and young adults were involved in and explore how the research respondents negotiated their place in the city, which kinds of conflicts and struggles they faced and what kinds of spatial pockets of becoming active, experiencing agency and forming communities they found. What became especially important for their belonging to the youth cultural and community centre was the fact that it was a free leisure space with no need to pay fees or to buy anything to gain access to the space. For the respondents, the community-building values of the youth cultural and community centre were deeply intertwined with the material space (Pyyry 2015; Kiilakoski & Kivijärvi 2015), for example, the walls covered with graffiti and political sticker art, the unisex toilets, the second-hand furniture. Further, the space carried its youth cultural norms following the transnational DIY tradition, which was repeated in, for example, peer teaching and learning, sharing knowledge and creating tight communities.

However, gaining an own space for the community also meant several informal and silenced rules, exclusions and hierarchies. The micro power relations inside the centre and in different groups were marked by subtle hierarchies that became visible during ethnographic fieldwork.

Thus, the case study participates in the scholarly debates on the fields of youth cultural and subcultural studies as well as urban youth studies. The results demonstrate how gaining an own space with its youth cultural connotations is deeply filtrated into the concrete, embodied practices of counteracting and building communities. Here, the theoretical perspective of spending time with the material spaces (rather than in) (Paju 2013; Pyyry 2015) becomes extremely important.

5. Future Analysis

The *Economy/leisure spaces* cluster consists of six case studies, all of which focus on youth groups through the themes of spatiality and leisure. Further, all of these case studies are engaged in critical evaluation of non-commercial leisure spaces that young people can use to become active and gain agency in society. I would suggest two possible ways of doing cross-case analysis within the WP6 cluster. Firstly, the logics of different spatial occupations (whether it is about young people who are involved in house squatting, alternative building practices in Spain or creative ways of taking over urban space, such as the circus enthusiasts in Finland and Italy) would be one important theme to look into further. This approach could mean analysing the way in which claiming an own leisure space can act as a way of becoming socially innovative in different geographical contexts. However, I also think it is important to analyse the dynamics inside groups and communities of young people who are somehow in a conflicted situation with the authorities and/or societal organisations. While the shared conflicted situation does, in the light of this case study, work as a strong community-building element, the communities also include inner hierarchies, power struggles and conflicts. Thus, instead of claiming for uniform resistance (which is an easy trap, since the activist movements are highly transnational), we should focus more on the inner uses of power, dynamics and conventions of these groups.

Secondly, based on the themes emphasised in my case study, I suggest focusing on community-building as a counter-reaction against overall intergenerational distrust, such as disappointment in political decision-making or discrimination based on age, gender or ethnicity, and how the communities are created through different spatial and creative means. This could mean discovering Pan-European trends of young people's distrust towards the societal structures and, also, critically analysing how this distrust is used as a catalyst for becoming active in different ways. Occasionally these practices are also transnationally shared with digital means in social media, such as in the case of intersectional feminism.

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7. Appendix: table of respondents' socio-demographic data

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Education	Employment	Residential status
Aleks	30	male	Russian	Completed university for applied sciences	In part-time employment	Lives independently with friends
Charlotta	16	female	Finnish	Currently in vocational secondary education	In full-time education	Lives independently with friends
Eemeli	19	male	Finnish	Did not complete secondary education and left	Trainee	Lives independently alone
ET	23	non-binary	Finnish	Currently in vocational secondary education	In part-time employment	Lives independently with friends
Johanna	21	female	Finnish	Currently at university for applied sciences	Trainee	Lives independently with partner
Juho	25	male	Finnish	Completed general academic secondary education	In part-time employment	Lives independently with friends
Julinette	17	female	Finnish	Currently in general academic secondary education	In full-time education	Lives at home with parent(s)
Kärppä	25	female	Finnish	Completed vocational secondary education	In full-time employment	Lives independently with partner
Laura	24	female	Finnish	Currently in vocational secondary education	In full-time education	Lives independently alone
Lauri	25	male	Finnish	Currently in vocational secondary education	In part-time employment	Lives independently with partner
Lotta	22	female	Finnish	Currently at university	In part-time employment	Lives independently with partner
Magnus	21	male	Finnish	Currently at university	In part-time employment	Lives independently with friends
Martin	27	male	Finnish	Currently at university	In part-time employment	Lives independently alone
Maryam	16	female	mixed heritage	Currently in general academic secondary education	In full-time education	Lives at home with parent(s)
Matti	29	male	Finnish	Currently at university	In part-time employment	Lives independently with friends
Reuben	20	trans-gender	Finnish	Currently in vocational secondary education	In full-time education	Lives independently alone
Ronja	21	female	Finnish	Competed general academic secondary education	On sick leave	Lives independently alone
Susanna	22	female	Finnish	Currently in vocational secondary education	In full-time education	Lives independently with partner
Terhi	28	female	Finnish	Completed university	In part-time employment	Lives independently with partner
Utu	25	non-binary	Finnish	Currently at university for applied sciences	In part-time employment	Lives independently alone

PROMISE: Promoting Youth Involvement and Social Engagement: Opportunities and challenges for conflicted young people across Europe.

WP6: From Conflict to Innovation: Ethnographic Case Studies

Supporters' Varteks FC

Croatia

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Executive summary:

This is the first Croatian sociological research on a specific social actor - Supporters' Varteks FC. It is football club founded and owned by its supporters. Old Varteks FC played an important role in Croatian football until its management and local political/football elites changed its name to Varaždin and brought the club to bankruptcy as a result of numerous deals, legal cases and convictions related to match fixing. In 2011, this led the White Stones, passionate supporters of old Varteks, to join with other supporters to found a new football club with the old name – Varteks. Today that club is known as 'Supporters' Varteks'.

This paper is based on 16 months of ethnographic research with members of Supporters' Varteks. This group of supporters is marginalised because of their age, stigmatised and frequently labelled in the media as hooligans and in conflict with the local political establishment and local/national football establishment. However, they did not remain isolated in hedonistic places (parks, pubs etc.) but emerged as a social actor, building their football club on a democratic basis (one member one vote) and fighting for their values despite the hostile social/political environment. Those values align with the Against Modern Football Movement (AMF), which, in the Croatian context, is not only against rigid commercialisation and police repression, but is also a movement against corruption in football and politics.

One of the key findings of this research is the demonstration of the inaccuracy of the stereotype that regularly appears in both the Croatian mainstream media and the academic community concerning supporters – a stereotype of violence and extreme right-wing political orientation. Our respondents represent a social actor that includes both representatives of the ultras subculture and other supporters who share the sensibilities of the 'Against modern football' movement and who oppose corruption and crime in the Croatian Football Federation. Whilst this stance brings them into conflict with a range of social and political institutions, it also makes them a potential site of social innovation.

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Why Football?

This report is the first scientific paper on the first Croatian 'Against Modern Football'[1] (AMF) football club founded (2011) and owned by its supporters The paper is based on 16 months of ethnographic research. We decided to conduct research with this group because it is a group which has been in conflict with the local political establishment and local/national football establishment from its inception; in fact, that conflict partially started even before the foundation of the 'Supporters' Varteks' in 2011. In the Croatian context, the 'AMF' movement is not only concerned with commercialisation and police repression, it is also a movement against corruption in football and politics. Marginalised because of their age, stigmatised and frequently labelled in the media as hooligans, the Varteks supporters did not remain isolated in hedonistic places (parks, pubs etc.) but emerged as a social actor, building their football club on a democratic basis (one member one vote) and fighting for their values despite the hostile social/political environment. This stigmatisation accompanied by the potential for social involvement, even innovation, constitutes the groups as an interesting case study for the PROMISE project.

Sport is indivisible from the structure of modern society. As an important social institution, sport greatly depends on the dominant culture, i.e. the norms and values of the society it is a part of. Sport in Croatia has had great social importance for decades, especially the most popular sport of football. The development of the sociology of sport in Croatia began in the late 1980s with research of football hooliganism (Žugić, 1996; Perasović and Bartoluci, 2007). This research into the football supporter subculture (Buzov *et al.*, 1989; Fanuko *et al.*, 1991; Lalić, 1993) significantly directed future empirical research of youth subcultures in general, foremost through the employment of the ethnographic method. Following the Croatian Homeland War (1991-1995) and the transition process, research was sporadically published on this subject (Perasović, 1995; Vrcan and Lalić, 1999; Vrcan 2003). Perasović and Mustapić (2013) argue that research on football supporters came to a complete halt during this period, and that an 'ethnographic turn' also took place in the broader international academic community. In this context, a handful of sociologists have returned to empirical research of football supporters in recent years (Perasović and Mustapić, 2013; Perasović ,2015; Hodges, 2016a, 2016b; Šantek and Vukušić, 2016; Perasović and Mustapić, 2017a, 2017b; Hodges and Brentin, 2018; Vukušić and Miošić, 2018).

1.2 Youth and the Socio-political Context in Croatia

Croatia's 'transition' differs from transition processes in other post-socialist countries in that transition in Croatia was tied to the Croatian Homeland War (1991-1995). In addition to material damage resulting from the conflict, it is also important to mention the enormous demographic losses the war left in its wake. The traumatic experiences of the Croatian transition mean that its young people are undergoing a process of personal maturation, and taking on social roles, under the expansion and domination of political capitalist values (Županov, 1995) and consumer culture alongside various forms of nepotism, corruption and crime in the political system. Županov (1995) emphasises that a 'new rich class' formed in Croatia during the 1990s that would never have come

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[1] AMF is the common denominator for the broad and heterogeneous social movement 'against modern football' across Europe. The establishment of football clubs by their supporters represents one of the means of struggle against current processes of the rigid commodification of football. Supporters also protest against new laws, surveillance and control. Within the movement, there are strong nostalgic sensibilities to the periods when loyalty of players to their clubs was natural, as well as links between football clubs and local communities/identities.

about under normal circumstances; it was created as a result of the 'theft and plunder of national resources' (Županov, 1995:146). Franičević (2002) analysed the dynamics of economic change in Croatia during the 1990s, emphasising that 'national capitalism was established, i.e. a specific complex of economic policies and privatization, which was the main cause of the weakness of the Croatian economy.' Because of the system's deviations, he named it 'crony capitalism'. That type of capitalism is unstable as such, but the war and its consequences additionally made the life conditions more unstable – refugee crisis and displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, 'us and them' media discourses, the spread of fear and uncertainty etc. The transition from childhood to adulthood is always complex, but under the 'war atmosphere' and presence of conflicted society with unstable institutions, such transition was more complicated and full of potential conflict between young people and social institutions. The political and economic establishment perceived particular youth subcultures as a threat (if only a symbolic one) to these social and political processes. During the 1990s, football supporters (especially the Bad Blue Boys, supporters of Dinamo from Zagreb) were labelled as hooligans, 'Yugo-nostalgics', 'anti-Croatian', and 'anti-state elements' by the political establishment and most of the media (which was almost entirely state-owned at the time) (Vrcan, 2003).[2] Indeed, youth more generally was politically marginalised during the entire transition process in Croatia (Ilišin, 2003, 2006). Existing social and political processes had a crucial influence on the process of distancing young people from politics and creating mistrust in political institutions (Franc et al., 2018). Mistrust of institutions and disappointment with politicians in Croatia are especially high among football supporters (Perasović and Mustapić, 2017a).

1.3 Modern Football in Europe and Croatia

Modern football is a short hand for referring to the process by which the most successful clubs and competitions have become a more and more important and profitable part of global business in recent decades. The largest clubs and associations function as corporations that brand their products and services with the goal of increasing profit. To this end, they focus on the 'supporter-consumer'. Professional football clubs are moving further and further from their former significance as symbols of local communities as the key element of their identity. The dynamic commodification of football, which began in the UK in the 1960s, saw a new phase in the 1990s, especially with the introduction of the so-called 'Bosman ruling' in 1995 and the liberalisation of football player transfers. Among other things, this ruling made modern professional football into what it is today (King 2003; Giulianotti and Robertson 2004; Millward 2011). The loyalty of footballers to clubs from their own local communities thus became a part of amateur football or a romantic ideal from the past. These transformations of modern football in the 1990s took place parallel with the establishment of an independent Croatia and of a football federation and competitions in Croatia. There is no doubt that Croatian football competitions are on the European periphery in terms of quality and marketing significance. The First Croatian Football League has changed its format multiple times since being founded in 1992, however a key fact is

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[2] Srđan Vrcan (2003) wrote of the conflict between the Bad Blue Boys and Franjo Tuđman, president of Croatia at the time. BBB wanted the club, which had been renamed NK Croatia, to have its original name of NK Dinamo reinstated. Despite being an impassioned supporter of this club and a regular attendee at matches until his death in 1999, Tuđman refused to consider allowing the name to change. The old name was only reinstated in 2000. In the context of this period, it is possible to understand the label of 'Yugo-nostalgic', 'anti-Croatian element', or 'Soros' mercenaries' as an attempt by the system to cast supporters as enemies. These labels have no connection to reality, as the supporters were predominantly strongly patriotic, and the system – which drew its own legitimacy from national (ethnic) sovereignty – actually wanted to waive the right to criticism within this same referential framework, portraying them as enemies of the Croatian state. A few years earlier, during socialism, these same supporters were labelled as 'Croatian nationalists' and 'hooligans'.

that it was composed of four former Yugoslav first-league teams (Dinamo Zagreb, Hajduk Split, Rijeka, and Osijek) and a handful of lower-league teams from the Yugoslav period. Numerous clubs went bankrupt due to financial difficulties, however all of them were financed significantly by local government and sponsored by large state-owned companies for many years. Politics, both local and national, had a great influence on the management structures and financing of clubs, just as it had during socialism. From among numerous court cases, three provide an important insight into of the most important shall be chosen to portray the way in which crime has permeated Croatian football: the 'Offside Affair'; the 'Fair Refereeing Affair'; and court proceedings against Zdravko Mamić and his collaborators for money laundering. During the 'Offside Affair', 22 individuals were arrested for match fixing in the First Croatian Football League, and 15 footballers and football club employees were convicted. The 'Fair Refereeing Affair' began in 2011 with the arrest of Željko Širić (vice president of the Croatian Football Federation), Stjepan Djedović (president of the Referee Commission), and their collaborators. Stjepan Djedović pleaded guilty and was released on parole, while Željko Širić was sentenced to four years in prison in 2017. Zdravko Mamić, executive vice president of Dinamo Zagreb football club, was arrested in 2015 and is currently involved in court proceedings together with a few other football club employees, all of whom have been accused of a conspiracy to defraud Dinamo of more than €19 million between 2004 and 2015 by concluding fictional agreements between the club and numerous foreign companies and delivering invoices for non-existent services for player transfers. Regardless of this situation, Zdravko Mamić remains the absolute ruler of Croatian football, and regardless of the successes of its national team, Croatian football has been referred to by supporters and some Croatian media for years as the 'football swamp'.

1.4 NK Varteks and White Stones

Varaždin is a town in the north of Croatia with 47,000 residents according to the last census data; it is also the seat of a county of the same name. Slavija Football Club was founded in Varaždin in 1931; its name was changed to NK Tekstilac in 1945, and again to NK Varteks in 1958, when its main sponsor became Varteks, the largest textile and clothing factory in Croatia at the time. Although Varteks supporters were already organising to attend home and away games by the 1980s, the supporter group White Stones was founded in 1990, and has operated without interruption since. Before 1991 and the collapse of Yugoslavia, the club was most often ranked second or third in competition; its greatest success was reaching the finals of the Yugoslav Cup in 1961. In 1992, the club became a member of the 1st Croatian Football League, where its greatest successes have been three third-place victories and six cup final performances. The club's greatest international success was entering the quarterfinals of the Cup Winners' Cup in the 1998/99 season. This was also the last Croatian club to 'greet the spring' (to qualify for the second phase of competitions, usually played in spring) in European competition. The club's main sponsor, Varteks textile factory, experienced a decline in business and layoffs in the 2000s, and NK Varteks also found itself in financial difficulties. The club leadership was in constant flux, and in 2010, the club was renamed NK Varaždin. Due to this, as well as to particular Varteks players' involvement in the 'Offside Affair', White Stones organised match boycotts, protests, and various organised efforts to keep the club operating under the name Varteks and in accordance with the law. Due to years of dissatisfaction with the state of the club and the name change, supporters (members of White Stones and other fans of the club) founded a new club with the old name NK Varteks on 29 April 2011. Due to its debts, NK Varaždin filed for bankruptcy in 2012. Since then, NK Varteks, which began from the lowest rank, managed to reach the Third league in 2017/18, while NK Varaždin entered the Second league in this same season.

NK Varaždin is headed by former players and officials who were once part of the 'old' Varteks prior to its bankruptcy in 2012. The club continues to play and train at Anđelko Herjavec Stadium in Varaždin (capacity: 10,800 seats); it depends greatly on public grants, and is supported by the local government and the largest local companies. The club also enjoys 'logistic' support from the Croatian Football Federation. On the other hand, NK Varteks has a reputation as an AMF and 'Supporters' Club' that functions under the 'socio' model of 'one member one vote'. It is primarily financed through membership fees, donations and sponsorships from small companies and craft businesses from Varaždin and the greater area, which support both the old and new Varteks. The club played and trained at an improvised pitch, in fact the field with no terraces, just standing area around it, in the village of Jalkovec, in the suburbs of Varaždin from its creation until 2017.

Crawford (2004) emphasises that football supporters in the older sociological literature are observed primarily as deviants or obsessed fanatics who comprise a group. However, in various aspects, the world of football, including supporters as an important part of this world, affect the society in which they live. Supporter activities strongly affect one's position and relations in various institutions such as family, school, university, work, etc. It is then understandable that White Stones ultras, like other NK Varteks supporters, have been subjected to labelling, barriers, and various problems in both club activities and in their private lives in recent years. One of the authors of this report has been researching football supporters since the late 1980s, while both authors have been researching football supporters in Croatia together continuously since 2011. The world of football and supporters is, in addition to a research interest, also a subject of personal affinity to the authors, primarily as supporters of HNK Hajduk Split. Therefore, the selection of this theme represents a combination of inductive rationale and deductive reasoning. On the one hand, we have followed and observed the phenomenon of the creation of the first true supporter (AMF) club in Croatia (NK Varteks) even prior to the outset of this research.[3] On the other hand, we are verifying the hypothesis from the literature on supporters as social actors included in the work of a broader, international social movement against modern football. The goal of this research is to affirm how stigmatised and conflicted young people succeed in creating social innovation by joining members of subculture groups (White Stones) and other Varteks supporters into an active social actor in a local environment, despite the barriers placed before them by the football and political establishments in this same local environment.

2. Methods

This research uses the participant observer method with detailed field diary entries; towards the end of field research, 25 semi-structured interviews were conducted. Our initial contact with individuals involved in NK Varteks began prior to the outset of this research in 2016. At one point, both researchers were university professors to an individual who was especially active in the workings of the club. The second moment in which contact with a few active members of the club and of White Stones took place on 17 May 2015, when a friendly match was held between NK Varteks and HNK Hajduk Split in Jalkovec. The respondent who was a former student of both researchers became our 'key informant'. He enabled us to meet a few groups of young people involved in White Stones and NK Varteks. Field research began with trips to Varaždin and socialising with supporters in September of 2016 (see Plate 1). Between then and January 2018,

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[3] NK Zagreb, founded in 1946, reached its greatest success in 2002 as the Croatian champion. Because of dissatisfaction with the work of the management, the change of the club's colours and logo, and a string of other reasons, supporters led by the ultras group White Angels also founded the AMF club NK Zagreb 041 in 2014. For more on NK Zagreb 041, see: Hodges (2016c); Hodges and Brentin (2018); Vukušić and Miošić (2018).

we wrote 53 field diary entries, of which 21 are related to NK Varteks home and away matches, to which we travelled and supported alongside White Stones (see Plate 8). The other entries relate to various forms of socialisation with supporters and club members in cafés and other public and private places in Varaždin. We spent a total of 94 days in the field, which amounts to roughly 1,500 hours of observation. The journal entries amount to a total of 62,000 words. We recorded and transcribed 25 interviews. The shortest interview lasted 40 minutes, and the longest lasted 230 minutes. The majority of interviews lasted between 80 and 120 minutes and all transcribed interviews amount to a total of 301,612 words. Nearly all interviews were carried out in the quiet atmosphere of private homes or flats which the respondents themselves made available to us, with the exception of a few interviews conducted in a hotel room; one interview was conducted in a car. During observation, we took around 100 photographs and ten short video recordings, each lasting roughly two minutes.

2.1 Access, positionality and field relations/dynamics

At the outset, we attended matches with our key informant and slowly began to meet people and get to know members of various generations of White Stones, as well as a few informal groups oriented around NK Varteks. In contrast to an earlier ethnographic research project we carried out in the 'Torcida' supporter group, during which our positionality and guarantee of entry and trust lay in the fact that both researchers are supporters of Hajduk and members of Torcida, this research found us in a different location and a different supporter group. The majority of members of White Stones viewed us primarily as Hajduk supporters, and then as sociologists, regardless of the fact that we had familiarised them with the research and our role in it. This perception was certainly strengthened by the frequent appearance of one of the researchers in the media, including his speech before 30,000 people in Split during protests against the Croatian Football Federation in November of 2014. Due to this, the respondents frequently referred to us as 'donkeys' (Cro. *tovari*), a derogatory term for Dalmatians and Hajduk supporters in the Croatian context. We accepted this as a friendly joke, and thus strengthened the impression of our belonging to the supporter scene. With every subsequent trip to Varaždin, we expanded our circle of acquaintances and began to earn trust. Our identity as football supporters (or at least a significant part thereof) doubtlessly had a positive influence on our ability to gain the trust of the respondents. We left the interviews to the very end of our research period, so that the most sensitive part came after the establishment of trust; the great majority of young supporters would certainly not have agreed to a recorded conversation at the outset, which is entirely understandable to us as ultras subculture researchers. Regardless of the fact that we encountered no serious problems, a great deal of time was necessary to expand our circle of acquaintances and move out of the initial circle of respondents. During our time in the field, it was difficult to avoid the fact that some respondents were more extroverted and communicative, and that our first independent socialising with them was determined by a few individuals who imposed themselves in various ways. Only after investing a sufficient amount of time, traveling to Varaždin numerous times and attending multiple NK Varteks matches, were we able to access those who seemed more introverted and who were in some kind of opposition towards the individuals who first approached us. In time, we realised the subtle differences in places where particular respondents gather, we learned of their likes and dislikes for each other, we began to understand the complex picture of variations in those belonging to different generations, neighbourhoods, and other differences and relationships that exist in this relatively small group. Our awareness of the rules that exist in the ultras subculture and our behaviour, which made apparent the fact that we shared values and sensibilities that arise from a critical relationship towards corruption and crime in Croatian football, certainly contributed to the establishment of interpersonal trust. Among

other things, this resulted in the respondents consenting to interviews. Given the aversion towards police in the ultras subculture and the explicit mistrust of the institutions, symbols, markings, and procedures of the establishment, we decided against the use of written consent for participation in the research, relying instead on verbal forms of consent from respondents. The respondents chose their own pseudonyms and they were introduced to our anonymization procedures, although true anonymization in this kind of group and a city of this size is not always entirely possible in some situations. For this reason, particular descriptions and statements by respondents that would compromise their anonymity have been left out of the report. Considering our age (40 and 54) during the research, it was not easy to enter informal groups in which the average age was 18 or 20; in such situations, we were aided greatly by one respondent (Eminence Grise) who became a kind of integrative point for a part of the younger generation. We developed a significant friendly relationship with him, and with his help, we were offered the chance to socialise and, later, to interview the youngest part of the group.

When choosing individuals to interview, we followed criteria that would represent all significant subgroups of White Stones, endeavouring to include representatives of various generations and neighbourhoods, etc. Within a sample of 25 interviews, 23 respondents were male and two were female. This reflects the actual composition of the Varteks group. The youngest respondent was 16 years old, while the oldest was 46. Eighteen respondents fell between 16 and 29 years of age, while seven were older than 29. While this means around a quarter of those interviewed were older than the formal target age group of the PROMISE project, it falls within the parameters agreed by the Consortium for cases where the socio-demographic of the group was older or where it was important to include key 'gatekeepers' in the respondent set. All but two respondents, who had moved to other cities due to work and were thus only partially active, were fully active members of the group. The majority of respondents had full-time jobs (17 of them), three were secondary school pupils, and the rest were unemployed, seasonal workers, or university students. As concerns education, one respondent had completed elementary school, three were secondary school pupils, the majority of the rest had completed vocational or secondary education, and four respondents had university degrees. As concerns marriage status, four of the respondents in the sample were married, one was divorced, and the rest were either single or in relationships.

3.   Key Findings

3.1 The old NK Varteks

In order to explain the source of the energy to resist the changes that would come to their club, it is first important to know how supporters forged their passion for Varteks football club. NK Varteks never won a championship or cup trophy; however it was a significant player in the First league before it was relegated.[4] During this time, the club's main sponsor was quite successful and financially powerful. The individual key to the club's rise in the 1990s was its president Anđelko Herjavec. The following view is typical for nearly all respondents, and is well illustrated by the point emphasised by Đoko: 'It all went to hell for me when Anđelko died. Anđelko died, some new people came and everything went downhill.' Varteks had a well-visited stadium, played entertaining football, and was known for its quality youth academy. As this part of Croatia gravitated towards Zagreb, during Yugoslavia, the great majority of football fans here were Dinamo supporters. However, with Varteks' entry into the first league, young footballers soon became the idols of children and young supporters. Žilac, like many others, appreciated most the

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[4] Croatian champions: GNK Dinamo 18, HNK Hajduk 6, NK Zagreb and HNK Rijeka 1 each. Cup winners: GNK Dinamo 14, HNK Hajduk 6, HNK Rijeka 4, NK Osijek and NK Inter 1 each.

'local boy' Miljenko Mumlek, and he describes how he perceived him at the time: '…I remember Mumlek, when I was training as a kid and going to matches, and when he would walk past me it was as if Ibrahimović or someone like that had walked past.' The majority of respondents, except for the youngest who came of age with the Varteks supporter club, built their relationship with Varteks during its successful first league period prior to the name change in 2010. During this time, the majority was truly interested in football as their favourite sport. Our respondents generally began to attend matches with an older member of their family, sitting in the 'west' Stand, like JK 47 who attended with his grandfather, or Seven and 1990 who went with their fathers. Thus, our respondents were the very first generation of citizens of Varaždin for whom Varteks was their first love in football. Such a strong emotional connection also engendered a very strong negative relationship towards the deviations and crime that brought this club to bankruptcy, its name change, and its move down to a lower league in the late 2000s. Supporters are especially disappointed with the fact that most of the players they considered 'legends of the club', such as Mumlek, were involved in these processes and did not support the Varteks supporter club. Rex summarises how he now perceives his childhood idols: 'Well, I would say they're local sheriffs, burnt-out stars who aren't stars anywhere except in their heads, and maybe in Varaždin.'

3.2 Turning points: corruption, name change, bankruptcy, and the founding of the Varteks supporter club

One important turning point for all our respondents who are old enough to remember the events of the time is the period of match fixing and the revelations concerning this event, which would later become known to the public as the 'Offside Affair'. For our respondents, this turning point began with a match against Šibenik in 2010. Varteks and Šibenik played two matches, a championship match and a cup match, with just a few days in between. Varteks secured a useful win in Šibenik (they were in dire need of the points); then, these same opponents played a cup match in Varaždin, which Šibenik won. Supporters protested during the match in Varaždin, demanding an explanation for the defeat from the players and club management. They attempted to break the barricade and move onto the pitch, but the players succeeded in calming them. Then, for the first time in the history of the club, supporters broke into a practice session a few days after the match. In the words of Kapelnik:

> That was the first time we came to a practice session and – at that moment we weren't exactly sure what was going on, when there's some sort of foul play going on then everyone is suspicious, every result is suspicious, every tackle, every foul, every intervention, and we wanted to let them know that we had been on the terraces for twenty years, that we had more years on the terraces than some players did on the field, and that we demanded they fight! (Kapelnik)

The same respondent explicitly describes the consequences of these events: 'It was such an ugly situation afterwards that it would be difficult for someone who's a true supporter, an ultras, who really has an opinion of his own, to make himself continue to support the club'. Random calls this a kind of disappointment 'the shattering of dreams'. Walker also emphasises one of the best-known players, Mumlek, and mentions how this turning point completely put him off following the club:

> Oh, it's terrible. Terrible, when you watch players, like Mumlek too for example, who were something at the time, and when you see him at 37 playing and being team captain, you think, he really loves this club, he wants to help, and then you realise they

were fixing matches, it just makes you sick of it all. You see that everything you believed, everything you lived for, everything you followed, everything you were preoccupied by in life at that time – we lived for the club 24 hours a day – everything falls apart, and that's when I left. And I didn't come back for a long time. (Walker)

Some of the respondents might have considered forgiveness if the players had honestly apologised or repented:

> That's one thing I simply can't overlook; maybe – no, I couldn't overlook it, but I might be able to understand it if he had ever shown any kind of regret, if he had stood before the supporters and said: boys, I'm sorry, I fucked up, apologised, showed regret, showed, you know, anything that showed he was even the least bit sorry, but he never did, and that's just one more reason not to forgive him. Essentially, yes, a betrayal. A betrayal and a disappointment. (Whatever)

The majority of respondents who were active at the time perceived this turning point as a warning sign, a signal for either some kind of action or complete withdrawal and disappointment. Discovering that matches had been fixed, alongside the name change and other financial fraud that had resulted in the club's bankruptcy, led to the founding of a new club with the old name – NK Varteks – which the First-league club's management had given up on. Our respondents mention that they had been disappointed because everyone else, including the public in Varaždin, journalists, and other members of the football and city political establishment did not want to talk about it, justifying match fixing by players because their salaries were late. Matches continued under the name NK Varaždin as if nothing significant had happened. In fact, the disappointment of the White Stones and other fans of Varteks and fair football turned into the strength and decisiveness to take action and found a new club:

> It was one of those reasons that simply forces you to take some other path, because nothing was happening. The club president didn't react, nor did the public in Varaždin, journalists, they all swept it under the carpet. Then the name change happened and everything just took its course, and then in 2011 we suggested to the NK Varaždin management that they consider reinstating the old name Varteks. And then the club president, Mr Horvat, answered that discussing this with us was the last thing on his mind. And that's where that story ended, a few days after that we announced to the public that we were founding a football club called NK Varteks. (Kapelnik)

The founding assembly was held on 29 May 2011. Some supporters decided to set off on an uncertain path with the old name, embittered by people who had driven their Varteks into bankruptcy and by the participation of key players in the 'bookie mafia' affair. The founding assembly was attended not only by the White Stones but by other Varteks supporters as well. Serviam provides a good overview of the number and structure of the active supporters at the time:

> In May 2011, the first assembly was held towards the end of the month, and there was, let's say, around sixty not only White Stones but some people from the East Stand and some people from the West, and that meant if there were around two hundred Stones, there were from 50-100 people up on the West Stand, depending on the match. And of those three hundred or so active supporters who went to matches, sixty or so of them came to Riki's pub and founded the club. (Serviam)

The founding of the club was not a mere one-time symbolic act – it was the beginning of a long, difficult task, and a shock for those supporters who had been used to First-league pitches:

> The first practice was the Varteks selection on that pitch in Jalkovec, which looked at the time like you'd come to a farmer's field, like there had been horses – the best part is that horses did use to graze there. You come from some First League and end up on a real farmer's field you come to a playing field that has no façade, that doesn't even have a fence. You could measure the grass in percent, I don't know, eighty percent dirt, twenty percent grass. Those were the initial problems we had to face as soon as we founded the club, no one gave us a stadium nor did anyone give us anything, we had to do absolutely everything from scratch. From scratch! (Eminence Grise)

Fixing the poor pitch was just one example of a large number of things the founders of Varteks had to undertake for the first time in their lives:

> We had no idea the problems we were going to come up against, it was all so complex. We were looking for a pitch, and we got one, but now none of us actually knew how bad a shape it was in, we didn't have a clue how to maintain a pitch. But then you have no choice, you need this, you need that, it was a property owned by the city but we got the toilet running, we set up a safety fence, we bought goal nets, we chased off moles, we planted grass, I learned to do things I never thought I would do in my life. In the first season when they chased off the moles there were people who came at five in the morning with spades and waited for the moles. People with wives and children. So what does that tell you? (Kapelnik)

In addition to the founders, who invested a great deal of effort and time, volunteered, learned skills 'on the hoof', and gave their all, there were also other supporters (active today) who were unaware of what was happening, and were sceptical towards the founding of a new club in various ways. Some, like Wild Boys, even considered it a betrayal of the real club, which would perhaps somehow consolidate and come back:

> And at the start, I thought, what are you thinking, it's a betrayal of the club, and so on and so on, but the club had already been founded. It took me a long time to swallow it. It simply wasn't Varteks to me. But in time I saw how much they (people around NK Varaždin) were attacking us and who was attacking us, and that was more like it. Now it's almost like the old Varteks. (Wild Boys)

Regardless of the fact that some supporters knew of FC United of Manchester[5] and similar examples from other countries, they could not believe that a similar story would take place where they lived:

> I knew about FCUM, but I didn't believe it would happen here, not in a million years, it was totally obscure to me. During the first year, the second year even after the founding of the new Varteks, I didn't realize how great a thing it was, until I got myself together and started following it, until I realised that there were young people, there were two or three hundred kids who would come, there was one member-one vote, everything was transparent, no one was making money, no one was lining their own

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[5] FCUM is one of the most known football clubs founded and owned by its supporters.

pockets, everything was out in the open, just the way a club should be, the boys were playing for, you know, a thousand, a thousand and five hundred or two thousand kuna, regardless, it's not a lot of money, you know. Exactly the way it should be. (Rex)

Seven years after the founding of the club, awareness of the great significance of this act was strongly present among all respondents interviewed, both those who worked hard from the start and believed strongly in the idea, as well as those who were sceptical at first, but later joined wholeheartedly.

3.3. The relationship towards modern football (national team) and the creation of new sensibilities

Football is a passion for the majority of our respondents. Many of them played in football teams for a significant part of their childhood. Some of them were promising young players, and some even played football professionally like Totti: 'I've played football ever since I was born. I was a footballer and I played in the First League and abroad.' Some still play football recreationally, however their following of professional football and matches manifests itself differently. Seven follows football closely: 'We also follow all Big Five[6] matches, we follow the German and Croatian leagues, I really follow them.' A small portion of our respondents also follow and are fans of some foreign clubs. However, their following of these clubs also includes the supporter groups of these clubs and the supporter atmosphere they create at matches. Totti mentions: 'I always watch matches that have some kind of atmosphere. The stadiums are more or less full everywhere, but it's not the same to watch Chelsea vs Shakhtar or the crazy Greeks against Barcelona. It's the best experience for me to watch that atmosphere'. Particular individuals follow exclusively Varteks matches. All respondents share an expressly negative opinion towards the amounts of money involved in player transfers and the commercialisation of football.

> It has nothing to do with football anymore. When you watch Arsenal and their new stadium where 30-40% of the people are tourists. It doesn't make any sense when you watch it, the first row are all cameras, video cameras, they're filming, taking pictures, what the fuck did you come for? I don't know, big football doesn't make sense anymore. It's all about money. (Walker)

They view Croatian professional football in a similar light. They are expressly negative and critical towards the deviations that have taken place as a result of the operations of the Croatian Football Federation and GNK Dinamo under the leadership of Zdravko Mamić, as well as the dictate of profit in the local context.

> It's all gone too far, it seems to me, football has lost its magic altogether. When you see everything that is going on with the Croatian national team and Mamić, it's totally turned my stomach. I actually don't follow anything anymore – because it's all against my principles. I don't see how it makes sense to waste my time on that kind of thing. (Rex)

As a group, White Stones has not gone to national team matches for the past few years, and some individuals have not gone even longer than this.

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[6] Big Five means English, German, Italian, Spanish and French (league).

First of all, I think it doesn't make sense for them (CFF) to make any kind of profit as a civil association. Their function is to regulate competitions, to make sure that each one has the infrastructure and conditions necessary for play. I don't see what reason there could be for them to be a money factory. (Serviam)

As much as I loved the national team once, then there was a period where I was neutral, but I would be glad when they scored a goal. But now I'm no longer neutral, instead I want them to lose, because I simply hope, I don't believe but I hope that it could maybe change some things, reduce the flow of money to the mafia, so those people will just turn on each other, let's say, because they're that sort of people. (Whatever)

3.4 Agents and sites of conflict

During the period of the old Varteks, the White Stones lived a life similar to any other ultras group, where in addition to existing conflicts with the Federation or players in the football and political establishment, the main conflict was against opposing ultras groups that also belonged to the same subculture. During this period, conflicts with supporters of Osijek, Cibalia, Dinamo, Hajduk, and other clubs were followed by conflicts with the police. After the founding of the 'Supporters' Varteks', this situation changed. In the lower leagues, there are no ultras subcultural groups nor is there organised supporting. Conflict with the Croatian Football Federation, the police, and the local football and political establishment, all of which existed prior to the founding of 'Supporters' Varteks', has now become even more explicit and visible. As opposed to conflicts with other supporter groups, the conflict with the local and national elites that manage football are clearer because NK Varteks must act and play under the rules of the same federation they are fighting against. Since 2011, NK Varteks itself – not only the White Stones – has been an actor in the fight for different football. In addition to extant agents of conflict such as the Croatian Football Federation, the police, and the national team (in a sense), people involved with NK Varaždin, led by the 'legends' of the old Varteks, now find themselves with a significant place among the agents of conflict. During our field research, a former Varteks player (a 'legend') and a current key figure in NK Varaždin, became the trainer of the Croatian national team, which intensified the tensions between the opinions of our respondents and the general position of NK Varteks in relation to NK Varaždin, the mainstream media, and the football establishment in Varaždin and Croatia.

3.4.1 The police

The police is a universal agent of conflict for the overwhelming majority of ultras subculture actors across the world. Supporters in Croatia often perceive the police as an excessively repressive force with no sense of understanding, characterised by a lack of principles in interpretations of the law, selective behaviour, overstepping authority, and endangering the human rights of supporters. One of our first field diary entries in this research is related to an NK Varteks match in the village of Slakovci, where the very number and presence of police amazed us (see Plate 2).

> A peaceful village atmosphere without any locally organised supporter groups and without any animosity or unfriendliness towards the visitors. In the peaceful atmosphere of a village, a few trucks of riot police stopped a column of vehicles with Varteks supporters, performed a detailed search, behaving as if they were in Zagreb as security for a Hajduk – Dinamo match. Later, they tested Varteks supporters for alcohol, but not the visibly drunk village residents in the stands. Some White Stones were arrested due to excessive blood alcohol levels. This is only one small example of

selective police behaviour towards supporters. (Fieldwork diary, Slakovec, 22 October 2016)

Walker recounts a few cases also mentioned by other supporters, which are unfortunately more a rule than an exception:

> In Koprivnica, it was really like you were a dog, an animal, you have no rights, you can't piss, you can't drink water, in Koprivnica a guy sprayed us with a hose two hours before the match, then they packed us into the stands in 35 degree heat and you're stuck there. We said we were thirsty, and he sprayed us with a hose and laughed. Drink up, he said.

3.4.2 The national team

To the majority of older respondents, the national team represents a symbol of love for one's homeland for which they were prepared to make sacrifices. They followed the national team everywhere and supported it wholeheartedly. However, just like other ultras groups, since the establishment of Mamić's domination of Croatian football in the late 2000's and the ever more apparent use of the national team for personal gain from player transfers to foreign teams, a wave of disappointment began that completely distanced many supporters from the national team, or even engendered a desire for them to lose matches. The national team thus became an agent of conflict, while matches represent sites of conflict. This is one example reflecting a complete lack of understanding between mainstream society and supporters (ultras), as the majority does not follow football and the events surrounding it closely. However, they are interested in patriotic feelings and the national team as a symbol of the Croatian state. This situation only serves to further deepen the gap between our respondents and their social environment, which, with the support of media propaganda, perceives them as 'traitors' of a sort.

> Yes, but the biggest problem in Croatia is that people in general – a lot of people aren't interested in football, not just club football but the national team also – they aren't interested in what's happening in general. They just want to be able to say, right, the match is on, I'm going to turn on the TV, I'm a big fan of the Croatian team, now let's take some pictures for Facebook so people can see that I'm wearing a Croatian team shirt, our boys are playing, I know Modrić, I know Mandžukić, now let's go: Croatia, Croatia, the match is over and that's that. And when supporters, Croatian ultras, stated that they wouldn't support the national team , and then all those others, tourist fans and politicians immediately call them anti-Croats, fascists, and god knows what other epithets they bandy around. And they refer back to the war, which is so stupid; people don't realise how narrow-minded they are. (John)

Those who followed the national team from the start experienced a change in the structure of national team supporters. While most of the national team's supporters were initially ultras, now they are dominantly tourist- and consumer-oriented supporters and diaspora who live outside of Croatia, to whom the national team represents an important symbol of the homeland. Eminence Grise believes that 2008 was the point when many people reached their limit: 'If you ask me, it started around 2010 in supporter circles, maybe even in 2008 after the match with Turkey and all that, there was a kind of emotional emptiness around the national team'. The same respondent describes who continued to follow the national team:

All that was left were square clowns, Indians as I would call them, as supporters would call them, who don't care if it's Mamić or if it's, I don't know, a war criminal like Mladić[7] at the head of the Croatian Football Federation – it doesn't matter to them. (Eminence Grise)

Ghetto Boys, who emphasises that he is a passionate patriot, believes that people at the top of the football federation wanted ultras to begin giving up on the national team: '*I think people gave up on the national team more than anything else. They gave up on fighting, and that's exactly what they want, to get rid of us, for thousands of people to come with selfie sticks and for nothing to happen*'. This respondent, like many others, considers this kind of situation unsustainable, and calls for revolution:

I want us to go stand in front of Parliament or the Croatian Football Federation - a peaceful protest. If five thousand people come it would be enough. But when you see that the government protects them all, that they're stronger than the state, that Mamić can tell the ministers anything, no one can do anything to him. He pays for the president's birthday parties and all that. How long has it been going on, ten years? What can I say? It's terrible! We can't change any of it. I'd rather we all went to the Croatian Football Federation building and started a revolution. You know, burn all their papers like they used to do, like when they overthrew Ceausescu. Alright, now I'm exaggerating, but… (Ghetto Boys)

3.4.3 The Croatian Football Federation

The national team is of key business interest to the Croatian Football Federation. The Federation is actually the most important and strongest 'agent of conflict' for those fighting against corruption and the 'football mafia', for different football. To the majority of respondents, the football establishment on the global level is no different than on the local level in Croatia:

All the people in all the federations in the world should be replaced with normal people for any changes to be even possible. Because that's exactly how it's set up in the Croatian Football Federation: you can replace Mamić, you can replace Marković, anyone, but all the same people who were installed in that phase stay, who are actually under their control, and everything continues along the same course, nothing changes. It's just like that in all the others: UEFA, FIFA. (1990)

Eminence Grise used a few adjectives, synthesising many other respondents who spoke about the Croatian Football Federation:

The Croatian Football Federation. I won't be saying anything new, I won't be reinventing the wheel if I say that what is happening in the Federation is a joke, a comedy of errors, a shame and god knows how many other adjectives and negative words I could apply to it... I'm completely opposed to the current state of affairs for the past 10 years in the Federation. Everything is in the hands of one man, who we can say is the ruler of Croatian football, it's a dictatorship... No one reacts, we supporters are the last remaining bastion of society that wants something fair, and then they discredit us and deride us because we have a culture that isn't socially acceptable, and

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[7] Mladić is Serbian general, convicted war criminal; this shows how sarcastic is this statement about 'square clowns' (square signifying Croatian coat of arms).

yet it's socially acceptable for there to be someone like Mamić who dominates Croatian football... (Eminence Grise)

3.4.4 NK Varaždin

The bitterness of young people involved in NK Varteks is understandable if we know that the people who run NK Varaždin today are the same people responsible for the failure of the old NK Varteks. Someone who is young or who nurtures the principles of fairness, principled behaviour, and transparency in football cannot understand how this kind of club can have the support of the local and national sports establishment, the media, and a significant portion of the public.

> Honestly, if you asked me about NK Varaždin, I don't know what I would say. I only know that, from the name change to the involvement of politics, I simply don't want to hear about them because I'm not interested in crime and the scum that's involved in all of that. It's simply something I don't need in my life and I'm not going to bother with it. (Drava)

Until now, Varteks and Varaždin have met only a few times in cup matches, and these are usually matches for which the White Stones and other Varteks supporters mobilise a great deal of people in the city (see Plates 4,5 and 6). They make large, symbolically important events out of these matches, because NK Varaždin has more money, support from the Croatian Football Federation, the media and politics, and it plays in a higher league. Despite this, no one organises to publicly support them at matches or on the street. Walker also points this out:

> But NK Varaždin, they're the 'saviours' of Croatian football, and they're all people who destroyed our Varteks, who bet on matches, who have been convicted, served time – today, there are trainers there who train kids as if they're upstanding people... But what can you do, they forced their way into the Second League, the rabble in town ate it up, they give away free tickets, a thousand, a thousand and a half people come to matches, of whom maybe ten of them can name the players. What can you do, they have the media, politics, the Croatian Football Federation behind them, they have it all, but they don't have supporters... (Walker)

The youngest respondent, Mali Narkoman, reduced the story to a single concept – money: 'My opinion of NK Varaždin is that it's all money. That they don't play football out of love like in Varteks, but that it's all for money.' In addition to the police, the Croatian Football Federation, the national team, and NK Varaždin are all interconnected 'agents of conflict', who actually form the basic referential framework of football in Varaždin and Croatia. They are symbols of the specific and broader surroundings in which NK Varteks finds itself, and in which it must fight for its rights against an incomparably stronger enemy – first and foremost, for the right to survive.

3.4.5 Sites of conflict

During the old Varteks, the sites of conflict were home and away matches. Today, home and away matches are sites of conflict only where the police are concerned, because there is generally no conflict with other supporters. National team matches can be a site of conflict, and considering the tensions towards NK Varaždin, cup matches with Varaždin can also be sites of conflict. The resistance of our respondents to the Croatian Football Federation, the national team, modern football, NK Varaždin, the new head coach (or any other actor in the football-political establishment on the local and national level) is sometimes expressed at the stadium, but most

often there is no specific, physical site of conflict – the site of conflict can be any place where a discussion or argument begins, and that means at home, at work, at school, in a café, on the internet, or anywhere else included in the everyday lives of our respondents. In addition to verbal conflicts and a lack of understanding in their surroundings, our respondents are not in physical conflict in a physical place as a part of their fight for different football, with the exception of occasional close encounters with the police.

3.5 Politics and politicians

Football (and other sports, but football is the most popular) in Croatia has played significant political role, especially in the war years and during Croatia's fight for recognition in 1990's. Croatia asked for membership in FIFA and UEFA before membership in United Nations, football players were considered 'ambassadors of Croatia' and the important role of the national football team in building Croatian national identity was already analysed by sociologists (Bartoluci, 2013; Biti, 2002; Brentin, 2013). From the beginning of Croatian independence, leading (and ruling in most periods of time) party, Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) had control over football and other sports; party members were, and still are, the majority in all supervisory boards and other controlling bodies of all big sport organisations. Croatian Football Federation is good example of that practice. Moreover, Croatian football national team became unquestionable symbol of patriotism, as journalists would put it, 'something sacred'. While politicians are trying to impose their meaning of the national team, as unifying, sacred force, members of ultras subculture (most of them strong patriots) are in opposition, sometimes boycotting, because of Mamić's dictatorship and corrupted character of the CFF. During our field research and interviews, respondents expressed a very critical opinion of politicians and political institutions. The majority of them are not aligned with any political party. However, some individuals are inclined to particular political actors or ideas to a certain extent.

> Interviewer: How do you view politics?
>
> Random: Politics?
>
> Interviewer: Are you interested in it, do you follow it?
>
> Random: No. I'm a very apolitical person. Hmm, I mean, I follow it, but I would never come close to politics at all, or anything that has anything to do with any party, I avoid it like the plague.

A complete lack of trust in the political establishment is apparent. The local government in Varaždin provides 15 times more money for NK Varaždin than it does for NK Varteks. The city government has not allowed NK Varteks to play at the city stadium. Also, local politicians were key members of club management during the seasons that preceded the bankruptcy of the old NK Varteks. Nearly all respondents referred to these facts during the interviews. They expressed feeling that the relationship of the local government towards Varteks was unjust. Some mentioned that they felt like 'second-class citizens' as Varteks supporters. In his interview, Stijena points out that it is tragic that a large number of children in the Varteks youth academy train under significantly worse conditions than those in the Varaždin youth school: 'It's sad that they play favourites like that. Then the city stadium – it isn't for the city! That's how it appears'. In late May 2017, the first round of local elections was held, and Varteks played a match on the same day (see Plates 5 and 6). In a conversation prior to the match, a few respondents told us that they had not voted, that it makes no sense because '*all politicians are the same, crooks*'. Eminence Grise was the only one among those present who had voted, but he had spoiled his ballot by writing in 'Al

Capone' on the ballot paper for County Council Therefore, his ballot was considered invalid. Opinions about politicians are the most radical among the youngest. Drava, for example, reacted as follows to the subject of politics during his interview:

> Interviewer**:** Do you see any difference, for example, between the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) as the two largest parties?
>
> Drava: Honestly, I couldn't give a shit about HDZ and SDP. There, if that answers your question.
>
> Interviewer: Is there anyone who seems different to you?
>
> Drava: In politics?
>
> Interviewer: Yes.
>
> Drava: No, I'm totally indifferent absolutely nothing related to that interests me. Whatever politicians do, they do in their own interest, it's the same today, everyone is still deeply connected and they still oppress us, there's always someone repressing the ordinary man.

Aside from a lack of interest, the youngest respondents have either a modest or almost no knowledge of historical figures and events. This is in accordance with the current findings of research on youth interest in history in Croatia (Mustapić 2015). It is very important in Croatian context because relation to the past (especially to WW2) is the key determinant of someone's 'left' or 'right' political position.

> Interviewer: Even though you're young and World War II might be distant history to you, do you know something about the Ustaša and the Partisans, for example?
>
> Malac 1: Well, I know something.
>
> Interviewer: Here, let me simplify the issue: do you know anything about Pavelić and Tito, what do you think of them?
>
> Malac 1: I don't have an opinion because I didn't really follow it, it didn't interest me in school.
>
> Interviewer: And the last war, the War for Independence, Croats and Serbs?
>
> Malac 1: That I know about.
>
> Interviewer: Alright. Have you ever noticed that people in the group talk about politics or doesn't it interest you? Do you talk about it?
>
> Malac 1: What, in our group, you mean?
>
> Interviewer: Yes.
>
> Malac 1: We don't give a shit. I don't remember anyone ever commenting on politics when we're out.

Notwithstanding this apparent complete distaste for politics, most respondents were active in protests and in various social campaigns related to the club. Some respondents relate to the activist character and populist ideological concept of the Living Wall party.[8] Many respondents

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[8] Human Wall is an activist-political organization that prevents evictions in order to highlight the problem of repaying housing and mortgage loans. Ever since its foundation in 2012, its conflicts with the police in

also mentioned the work of the Catholic Church in Croatia. Most of the respondents interviewed were not prone to positive evaluations of the church, while some were expressly critical, like JK 47.

> Look, I don't go to church, personally. Because I consider that the church as the church, not as a faith, as a big company across the world, they make lots of money, and the cover-ups of cases of paedophilia, as far as that's concerned, my personal opinion is that I'm disappointed. But now who goes to church, that's different, because you have to let people choose whether they want to go to church or not. I personally don't go, nor do I think that the church is some kind of religious institution, it's a big company that makes money. (JK 47)

The Croatian War of Independence (1991-1995) is an exceptionally important subject in the Croatian political context. The relationship of political actors towards the war is one of the key determinants of their image as 'left-wing' or 'right-wing'. During our field research, we were present when a banner commemorating 1991 was raised (Fieldwork diary, 23 September 2017, Varaždin):

> A few supporters came from Čepin, a small town near the Croatian-Serbian border, who occasionally cheered at the edge of the stands. They were loudest when White Stones raised a message in honour of the anniversary of the 'liberation of the city' in 1991 on today's date, when the YNA garrison surrendered to the Croatian National Guard 'my homeland': 'VARAŽDIN'S WAR DAYS – FOR THE FREEDOM OF THE CROATS! 13-9-1991 – 22-9-1991'. Aside from the support of the people from Čepin, it is interesting to note that very few Varteks fans joined the White Stones in singing ('My Homeland'), which suggests that patriotic pathos means much more to ultras than to other Varteks fans. (see Plate 7)

Generally, politics is not a frequent topic among supporters. Despite this, it is apparent that there is a variety and pluralism of orientations on the personal level. The apparent cynicism of Seven should be viewed in this light when he discusses politics in Croatia, mentioning that Ivo Sanader (prime minister from 2003-2009), who has been involved in court proceedings for years for political corruption during his time in power, is his 'political hero': 'One politician I admire is Ivo Sanader… (laughter) The man is educated, he speaks five or six languages, the man fucked over Croatia completely, the man fucked over half the Balkans, the man did everything someone can do. He did steal, that's true, but I admire him.' Speaking generally of the position of the respondents as a specific group of youths in Varaždin and Croatia, it can be said that feelings of political marginalisation and a lack of faith in the outcomes of youth political participation are present among them.

3.6 Life in Varaždin

Within the context of Croatia, Varaždin is a very important industrial city. The parents of the majority of our respondents work in this sector, primarily in non-graduate jobs. The fathers of some work abroad, and the majority of respondents live with their parents. Many of them are aware that they can realise a future for themselves exclusively by relying on their own strength and on their families. Some respondents, such as 1990 and Wild Boys, have years of experience

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defence of citizens have received wide media coverage. In elections 2015 they won their first won mandate, and next year Human Wall won eight mandate in Croatian Parliament.

working abroad. Older respondents mostly have families and children. Some of them are financially secure, while some, such as Tomahawk, bear witness to the difficulties of life on a worker's salary and express resignation and feelings of luck at having found full-time employment at all: 'And when you pay for food and bills, what do you have left?' (Fieldwork diary, 14 May 2017, Nedeljanec). Stijena has a similar experience: 'I can't say that every month is great for us, no, I think we all have some months that are really hard.' All respondents believe they had a happy childhood in Varaždin, and NK Varteks and White Stones played an important role in their socialisation. Their fathers most often played a key role in their connection to football and NK Varteks. Seven says: 'I remember that my dad would always take me to matches. Going to a match, it was like a holiday!' They frequently mention that young people are not offered many opportunities for an 'economically secure future', and they all mention that they have very many friends or relatives who have emigrated from Croatia. Tuljan describes why his friend emigrated from Croatia:

> Unless something changes dramatically, I don't see why young people would stay here. Take my friend, for example, he was working on a professional apprenticeship for 220 euros the state gives you. And when it expired and he was supposed to get a normal salary for his work – they told him, if you want to stay for 220 euros, you can. And he had learned to do everything and did everything. (Tuljan)

Despite criticism of low salaries and job opportunities, some older respondents claim that some young people are not interested in finding jobs and working. Serviam and Đoko, for example, believe that the difficult circumstances of some young people serves as a 'good excuse'. The respondents believe young people have an inappropriate position and role in the local community, but also that the citizenry in general does not look kindly on activism and protests, or even on benign expressions of dissatisfaction. Members of White Stones frequently emphasise this as the main reason why the local establishment can hold their current policy, within the framework of which NK Varteks is stigmatised as a 'hooligan' club. Random is one of those who is very disappointed by this:

> I think everyone in Varaždin takes the path of least resistance. No one wants to fight for anything. Just like in the rest of Croatia, actually, everyone just wants to sit back and watch someone else solve their problems. I think supporters are the last so-called subculture that hasn't been destroyed. I mean, not that it hasn't been destroyed, but all others are on thin ice. We're the only ones fighting against something. (Random)

Respondents rarely mention poor experiences with teachers in school in connection with their belonging to the supporter subculture. Their bad experiences are primarily tied to matches and the police, as well as to a lack of understanding for the goals and methods of NK Varteks both from their fellow citizens and their employers.

3.7 Being young in Varaždin

Youth have always been in a position to receive and transmit the heritage of their own culture, gain experience, and build their relationship towards institutions and society. It can be said that youth, led by various motivations, has frequently been the bearing force of social changes. The socialisation of youth in Varaždin, amidst the unstable circumstances of economic transition, has been and remains burdened by economic and political difficulties. The important aspect of socialisation represented by how teenagers spend their leisure time should be interpreted in this context. The majority of respondents, aside from by their school friends, were significantly defined

by trends from their neighbourhoods or street. Musical preferences and football were most often key in this phase of life. 1990 provides an example from this part of his life:

> All of my neighbourhood friends were 80% punks and the rest were metal heads. So we were an alternative crowd, we even had a neighbourhood band that was playing yesterday when I was walking through town, my old punks, we grew up together, and so my neighbourhood friends with whom I hung out a lot was also based on music. (1990)

Music has enormous significance for teenagers in the creation of a group identity. A large number of respondents were more or less part of the local punk scene during this phase of their lives (1990, Đoko, Walker, Whatever, Random, Klokan 1312, Žilac). However, the supporter and ultras identity eventually prevailed.

> As a kid, high school came with All-Stars[9], long hair, I hung out in the park, I listened to punk, hung out with punks, rockers, metal heads, but I went to matches that entire time. Then I cut my hair and stopped going to matches, I was a supporter, but I would still say hi to those people in town, talk with them, I didn't go out with them, but it's not like I would hate them for that. (Whatever)

However, music is completely unimportant to particular individuals (Drava and Malac 1). Alcohol is strongly rooted in the dominant culture. Wild Boys says: 'This is the kind of town where alcohol is omnipresent. It's in every pore of society, it's become the culture. Even though it's uncultured, it's the culture.' There are numerous examples from our field diaries that bear witness to large quantities of alcohol at matches or when socialising. We also, as researchers, sometimes reluctantly and sometimes gladly, joined in the rituals that are one of the key characteristics of the White Stones. Rare members, such as Tuljan, are teetotallers who drink only water, or like Whatever, who emphasises that he always drinks in moderation. The respondents are quite critical concerning the places that are currently available to young people for evening outings in town. Individuals clearly emphasise the status significance of particular places, cafés, or discos available to youth in Varaždin. Such statements also point to the identity and solidarity shared by the White Stones.

> Interviewer: So, what is it like to be a young man in Varaždin? You're among the youngest in WS.
>
> Mali Narkoman: It's alright. It's the same with young people in Varaždin, it's all about money, the cliques are split between the elite, those who supposedly have lots of money, who go to the expensive cafés, and us who don't have a lot of money and struggle to make ends meet – it's all divided.
>
> Interviewer: And where do those with lots of money go?
>
> Mali Narkoman: Well, there are clubs like Mea Culpa, for example, where they spend loads of money – when I come there they look at me and tell me I can't go in, they judge everyone there.
>
> Interviewer: So Mea Culpa is a symbol of the posh crowd and the elite, as they say?

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[9] Chuck Taylor All stars is a model of casual shoes first developed in the early 20th century by Converse Company. In socialist period, it was certain mark of subcultural belonging.

Mali Narkoman: Well, most of the people who go there... For example, underage kids aren't forbidden as far as I can tell, the two of us when we go there we see kids younger than us with collared shirts, fat wallets – they let them in immediately, [but] they grab us and push us out immediately.

Drugs are not a frequent occurrence, but it is apparent that marijuana use bothers no one, regardless of their own preferences or use.

Interviewer: Does it bother you if someone lights up, takes a drag?

Tuljan: No, it doesn't bother me in the least.

Interviewer: You don't worry about it?

Tuljan: It's their business.

3.8 White Stones and being young in White Stones

The White Stones were founded in 1990, when Varteks played in the Yugoslav Third League. At the time, Dinamo Zagreb supporters dominated in number, and the BBB[10] Varaždin group was also active. Key figures from this group in the 1980s later founded the White Stones. A 'BBB VARAŽDIN' banner was even later used to make a banner that read 'VARAŽDINCI' (en. 'citizens of Varaždin'), which the White Stones later took to national team matches.

[...] The group placed banners at the stadium. Serviam shows us a banner reading 'VARAŽDINCI' and explains that the last two letters 'CI' are actually in a different font, I wouldn't have noticed this but if you look hard you can see it. A part of the first group from the time who made this banner, which used to read 'BBB Varaždin', gave up on Dinamo, and they cut out the 'BBB' and added 'CI' on the end, so it read only 'VARAŽDINCI'... (Fieldwork diary, 5 March 2017, Jalkovec)

The oldest of our respondents were founders of the White Stones (Kapelnik, 1990, Tomahawk). They still play a key role both in the stands and in the club.

Of course, I was a kid, I was only allowed to go to home games as a kid, I wasn't allowed to go to away games yet, but that older crowd, they were more or less all Dinamo supporters. On Saturdays they would go to Third League games, to see Varteks, but on Sundays the group would go to Zagreb to watch Dinamo, to bigger matches, Dinamo, Zvezda, Partizan. and Hajduk. I went to a few matches with them too, but after that I only followed Varteks. (1990)

Younger generations travelled their path as supporters with NK Varteks as members of White Stones. As a First League team, NK Varteks enabled both home and away matches and encounters with other supporter groups. One idiosyncrasy of their actions in the First League were good relations between members of the older generations of White Stones and the members of Armada from Rijeka at the time. White Stones thus became the central point of a subcultural youth lifestyle in Varaždin. Serviam remembers his fascination with the atmosphere at the stadium, as

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[10] The Bad Blue Boys is an ultras subculture group, founded in 1986. they are supporters of Dinamo Zagreb. Together with Torcida (supporters of Hajduk Split) they are the biggest groups, far bigger than any other similar group. Apart from Zagreb, BBB are present in all northern Croatian areas, except the city of Varaždin.

well as with the relationships within the group, which also brought conflicts in the 1990s because of which he distanced himself from the stands at one stage of his youth, when he fully identified with the supporter style (spitfire jackets, shawls, hairstyles, caps, typical clothing brands of the time, and all other accoutrements). Simultaneous to their role on the terraces White Stones also ran an association and organised various activities. There were phases during which the group experienced crises and upturns; boycotts and protests were also organised in the late 2000s due to the poor management of the club. It is thus logical that the nucleus of the group of founders of the 'Supporters' NK Varteks' was led by key figures in White Stones. Members of older generations consider there to have been no classical leader of the group; instead, there were a few important figures who made up the group's informal leadership. Our field diaries bear witness to the significant level of spontaneity in leading the cheers of this generation of the group – decisions on which songs and slogans will be performed on the terraces as well as agreements on various actions ranging from those closely tied to the terraces to those tied to contributions to the club. They are not coordinated by one 'leader' (see Plate 3).

> At the start of halftime, the intensity of songs faltered somewhat, the group is small, and when most of the group doesn't give their all it sounds bad. Walker, with a WS tattoo on his calf, yells: 'Are you going to cheer or are you going to go root for Varaždin?' By which he means – are you ultras/Stones, or are you posh spectators? The group breaks out loudly into a chant… Fly, who goes to get beer every so often, climbs up dead drunk on the fence, two others can barely hold him up as he sings in his sunglasses, yelling, and Kapelnik tells me: 'That's how it should be! Pure heart! Without any airs or pretending … Walker argues with Tomahawk about a song, and Tomahawk tells him not to stop the song halfway through. He says, if you want, climb up on the pole and lead the cheer Therefore, there is no classical leader, it's fairly spontaneous) (Fieldwork diary, 9 April 2017, Novi Marof)

White Stones made their full comeback to the terraces of the 'Supporters' Varteks' in 2013. Because of the bankruptcy of the old NK Varteks, the group had become quite passive. Volunteering and contributions to the club by older White Stones members were key during this phase. Simultaneously with this, new, young ultras gathered alongside older generations.

> In early 2013, for the 23rd anniversary of White Stones, the White Stones reactivated and began following all the matches. For the first two years of the 'Supporters' Varteks', they didn't follow every match, but then we decided to devote ourselves a bit more seriously to the supporter group, I got involved again, and here we are, I'm still here today. Although this might sound a bit arrogant or what not, I think that I have the most matches of the new Varteks under my belt of all those people. That means from early 2013 to 2017, until today, I've missed maybe two or three matches. (Eminence Grise)

NK Varteks has an official Facebook profile (10,600 followers). White Stones has one as well (3,600 followers). As a result of the current media relationship towards the club and supporters, these communications channels are of key importance in informing the public and mobilising supporters.

3.9 Identity: AMF, The City of Varaždin, 'Supporters' Varteks' , Patriotism

Today's identity of our respondents is composed of a few important elements, of which some old ones inherited from the 1990s have been relived and adopted by the younger generation, while

some are newer and relate to the past few years and the existence of the supporters' club. One of the old elements that has won over the newer generations is the group identity of 'White Stones', which is shared by the majority of our respondents, but not necessarily by everyone who is involved in 'Supporters' Varteks'; also related to this is a feeling of belonging to the city of Varaždin and Croatia. More recent identity elements belong to a broader supporter movement known as Against Modern Football, embodied in the local environment and in activities tied to the supporter club.

3.9.1 Against Modern Football (AMF)

AMF as a part of the identity can be explicitly expressed for the most part (as some respondents did), but it is most often present as an implicit group of sensibilities. It is a kind of 'feeling structure' that points to resistance against the domination of money and corporate football on not only the global level, but the local level as well – although there are no large corporations or wealthy clubs, there are followers and symbolic representatives of this world. The people responsible for the ruin of the old Varteks who run NK Varaždin today are supported by the football and political establishment – by the Croatian Football Federation and other actors connected to it – which, in light of the recent selection of the new Croatian national team's head coach from Varaždin (Dalić), is additionally seen as a conspiracy of representatives of modern football (the Croatian national team players play in the best, wealthiest clubs) on the European level with local representatives of the football establishment and its nomenclature.

> A week ago, I was having a debate with some people twice my age, they could be my father, and they're all so smart, former policemen, and I was explaining to them that if Varaždin played against Barcelona there was no chance I would go watch that match, even if they gave me a ticket for free. And you can't explain to them why you wouldn't go watch Barcelona. It's not that I wouldn't go to watch Barcelona, but I wouldn't go out of principle because of the people running this NK Varaždin, and it could be Barcelona playing, it could be Manchester, anyone, I wouldn't go. Not a chance. Give me Varteks and Zelengaj or Rudar 47 and I'd rather go see that, hang out with the group, cheer, have a beer, and that's that. But Varaždin – Barcelona, no way. (Đoko)

Walker simply stated: 'Against modern football – that's us.'

3.9.2 The City of Varaždin

The city of Varaždin has always been an important element in the identity of White Stones and other Varteks supporters, and so the city's main motifs (the old city walls, the old city council building, the coat of arms) frequently appear on the tattoos of our respondents and in symbols of the group. As Tomahawk notes, it is difficult to identify with a regional identity such as Zagorje or Podravina, both in a geographical sense and as a supporter:

> So we can't say we're from Zagorje, why would we say we're from Zagorje when we really aren't Zagorje, we're the region around Varaždin, in Zelina they have a fifty-metre Bad Blue Boys Zelina graffiti mural, so why would I say I'm from Zagorje. (Tomahawk)

Regardless of positive identification with the city, our respondents are ambivalent towards the mentality of people in the city, as they believe that the city mainstream is too passive towards manipulation by the political and football establishment.

3.9.3 'Supporters' Varteks

In addition to having written numerous times in our field diary entries how much the 'Supporters' Varteks has become an important part of the identity of our respondents, we also put this question to them during our interviews, and many of their answers were clear and explicit. To the question of what was most important for the identity of White Stones, Malac1 answered, 'The fact that we founded a club'; when asked what made White Stones special or recognisable, Tomahawk answered, 'At the moment, we're definitely most recognisable by the club we support, that's a fact.' To Drava, the supporter club is also a symbol of the fight against HNS:

> Just our action against the Croatian Football Federation, the entire group, as a supporters' club, as a club fighting against politics, as a club that has made it clear that it doesn't recognise them; I think we've made it clear what we're about. That we're fully a part of the 'against modern football' thing. (Drava)

3.9.4 Croatia

All of our respondents respect the Croatian War of Independence and participate in celebrations marking important events from the war. Some respondents state that they are strongly patriotically oriented, but they will also express a critical distance towards the politicisation of patriotism and the abuse of patriotism for political ends. The feeling of belonging to the Croatian nation is a part of their identity, but it is not an end in and of itself, nor does it pass into politicisation or some form of extremism in the majority of respondents. As their song simply states, 'I love Croatia, I love Varaždin, I love Varteks and I'm proud of that'.

4. Conclusions: Conflicts, stigmatisation and social innovation

The creation of the Supporters' NK Varteks in 2011 was characterised by prior conflict between supporters (including both White Stones and other Varteks supporters) and the players, management, and other actors in the football and political establishment who violated the true ethos of old NK Varteks, fixed matches, changed the club name to NK Varaždin, and finally led it to bankruptcy. For the first time in Croatian history, supporters created something new out of this kind of conflict – a new football club with the old name, which had over time become a modern symbol of the local community – and begun competing from the lowest league. Thus, this conflict resulted in a social innovation: the creation of the Supporters' Varteks . Even had the club lasted just one season, it would have been remembered as interesting, worthwhile, and inspirational, and it would have had far-reaching consequences. However, this innovation turned into a club that has existed for seven years and advanced to the Croatian Football Federation's Third League A part of the innovation that resulted from the creation of this football club is in fact the creation of a new social actor, today known as NK Varteks; this social actor came about by joining the White Stones group with non-ultra supporters who are usually known by their place in the stadium – 'West Left' (implying that they sit on the left-hand side of the western stand). Out of these two groups, a social actor came about that brings together a number of generations and informal groups, and it can be referred to by the name of the club – Varteks. Regardless of the differences between the ultras subculture and other types of supporters, the majority of the people involved in the club share the same values and common sensibilities that can be referred to as a part of the broader common denominator that is the 'Against Modern Football' social movement.

Supporters (especially ultras) have been and remain stigmatised among the Croatian public as hooligans, extremists, drug addicts, good-for-nothings, fascists, and terrorists – in short, as deviant actors. This stigma has remained present in good part, and the basic conflict the White Stones had with the football establishment became deeper and more visible in a situation in which conflicts with other supporter groups ceased almost completely. However, the founding of the supporter club, the enormous efforts invested into this project (including volunteering and donating money in accordance with one's means), along with the symbolic potential that lies in the new life of the old name *Varteks*, have enabled the club to attract new young people. Despite the stigmatisation and the unfriendly surroundings of the football establishment and the local economic and political elite, the social innovation attained through the founding of the supporter club, on the basis of the democratic 'one member – one vote' principle, has provided an additional source of identification for the club's members and given meaning to their continued work.

The social actor 'Varteks' consists of a few informal groups and many different generations. We mention here the basic groups on the basis of their type of action: there are people who are active in the club management who are not active on the terraces as supporters; there are people who are active in management who are equally active on the terraces and there are people (the youngest members and a few of the older ones) who are active on the terraces but who are not involved in management. The very fact that Varteks is a 'Supporters' club' enables an understanding of the relationship dynamics of these basic groups, as well as of the fact that the president or secretary of the club are active supporters (or even lead cheers) on the terraces, and that some people contribute exclusively to supporter activities without any broader inclusion in the club's administrative and economic framework.

One of the key findings of this research is certainly an awareness of the inaccuracy of the stereotype that regularly appears in both the mainstream media and the academic community concerning supporters – a stereotype of violence and extreme right-wing political orientation. Our respondents represent a social actor that includes both representatives of the ultras subculture and other supporters who share the sensibilities of the 'against modern football' movement and who oppose corruption and crime in the Croatian Football Federation. A significant majority of our respondents also differ completely from the widespread media stereotype of violence and extreme right-wing politics. Rare conflicts or expressions of patriotism certainly cannot be sufficient to affirm these stereotypes.

A great deal of sociological research on youth participation in society across Europe has displayed either a very low level or a complete lack of participation (Pilkington et all, 2018). Youths (and those who are no longer youths but who are a part of the same social actor) in our research show many similarities to their other peers as concerns disappointment in the system, especially in the political sphere; they share the everyday life of Croatian society marked by the search for employment and economic and social security. However, there is one important difference – an active relationship and enthusiastic involvement in activities concerning NK Varteks.

Therefore, the findings of this research point to the respondents' exceptional criticism of the passivity of the citizens of Varaždin and their explicit tolerance of the numerous affairs (legal cases; convictions, accusations etc.) tied to the local and national political establishment. Our respondents are turned towards the future, new challenges, and new achievements. They don't want to continue from the compromised past, they don't want to participate in the NK Varaždin activities because it is not new, it is repetition and reproduction of the same people and same corrupted model of activity. This is where the roots of the lack of intergenerational understanding in Varaždin should be sought. Although some of our respondents belong to the older generation, there is strong similarity, in fact unity with the majority of young respondents in rejection of the compromised past, symbolized by NK Varaždin and there is common orientation towards 'new club and new beginning'. It is thus unsurprising that the majority of our respondents showed an openness to new solutions to the problem, despite the resistance of older generations and social institutions, and their dedication to their work involving NK Varteks should be observed in this context.

Our respondents did not give in to apathy, they did not give up, but they also did not reach for certain models of radicalisation or extreme, violent action as a desperate answer to the current state of affairs. Unfortunately, the unfriendly action of the football federation and the local establishment, for whom the club is a 'thorn in the side', could lead to the destruction or failure of their social innovation (the club). The results of this for a fair portion of the respondents would be disappointment and a descent into apathy, and likely the desperate radicalisation of a small number of activists. Ultras subculture in Croatia, frustrated by the dictatorship in CFF, already tried several desperate attempts to draw attention to the problem, by trying to stop important matches of the national team; flares on the pitch in Milano (2014) during Euro qualifying match with Italy, designing swastika on the pitch in Split (2015) before the match with Italy, (when the match was played without spectators), flares on the pitch in St. Etienne (2016) during the Euro championship match with Check Republic etc.

5. Future analysis

For cross-case analysis within the WP6 cluster 'Economy/Leisure', it is significant to observe the similarities and differences in forms of activism considering the forms of the actors' economic development (or mere survival) and their social innovation. In our case, regardless of how close or involved the actors are, less of them are involved in forms of economic survival (usually the older respondents), while the younger respondents follow their own models of activism, which are frequently external to the economic aspects of the sustainability of the project they are involved in. One of the questions that arises from this problem is whether explicit or implicit models of negotiation around the roles of each generation of activist exist within the project.

As concerns triangulation with quantitative data, we suggest attention be focused on similarities in the expression of dissatisfaction with (or a lack of interest in) the system – specifically, on the perception of the social-political environment shared by youths from a representative sample and youths from our ethnographic research, in order to shed more light on the difference in approaches to action between 'inactive' groups (which we assume to be the majority) and our 'active' group. The hypothesis is that shared perceptions do not necessarily share an approach to action, or rather that a shared opinion about society and politics does not produce the same type of (in)action. What is it that drove our respondents to action, despite the perception (which they share with the majority) of a corrupt society and politicians who are all similar to one another? This is one of the questions that should be put, and the answer should be sought in a comparison of our case with the answers of youths to questions about society and personal involvement.

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Appendix 1: Table of respondents' socio-demographic data

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Ethnicity (self declared)	Educational status	Employment status	Family status	Residential status	Relationship to organization
1990	M	41	Croat	Completed vocational education	Sesonal employment	Single	Lives alone	Full active
Bumbarica	F	16	Croat	Pupil	Pupil	Single	Lives with parents	Full active
Drava	M	20	Croat	Student	Student	Single	Lives with room mate	Full active
Đoko	M	32	Croat	Completed vocational education	Employed	Single	Lives with girlfriend	Full active
éminence grise	M	21	Croat	Completed elementary school	Unemployed	Single	Lives with parents	Full active
Ghetto boys	M	37	Croat	Completed vocational education	Sesonal employment	Single	Lives with grandmother	Full active
Jarni	M	27	Croat	Completed secondary education	Employed	Single	Lives with parents	Full active
JK 47	M	27	Croat	Completed secondary education	Employed	Single	Lives with girlfriend	Full active
John	M	27	Croat	Completed vocational education	Employed	Married	Lives with his Family	Full active
Kapelnik	M	46	Croat	Completed vocational education	Employed	Married	Lives with his Family	Full active
Klokan 1312	M	16	Croat	Pupil	Pupil	Single	Lives with parents	Full active
Malac 1	M	16	Croat	Pupil	Pupil	Single	Lives with parents	Full active
Mali narkoman	M	17	Croat	Completed vocational education	Employed	Single	Lives with parents	Full active
Random	M	22	Croat	Completed vocational education	Employed	Single	Lives with girlfriend	Full active
REX	M	26	Croat	MA degree university	Employed	Single	Lives alone	Partially active
Serviam	M	33	Croat	MA degree university	Employed	Married	Lives with his Family	Full active
Seven	M	26	Croat	Completed vocational education	Student	Single	Lives with partents	Full active
Stijena	F	32	Croat	Completed vocational education	Employed	Divorced	Lives with her kids	Full active
Tomahawk	M	41	Croat	Completed vocational education	Employed	Married	Lives with his Family	Full active
Totti	M	25	Croat	MA degree university	Employed	Single	Lives with parents	Full active
Tuljan	M	21	Croat	Completed secondary education	Employed	Single	Lives with parents	Full active
Walker	M	29	Croat	Completed vocational education	Employed	Single	Lives with parents	Full active
What ever	M	27	Croat	MA degree university	Employed	Single	Lives with girlfriend	Full active
Wild boys	M	29	Croat	Completed secondary education	Employed	Single	Lives with parents	Partially active
Žilac	M	24	Croat	Completed secondary education	Unemployed	Single	Lives with mother	Full active

Appendix 2: Plates

Plate 1. Graffiti in the Neighborhood

Plate 2. Away Match in Slakovec and conflict with police (22 October 2016)

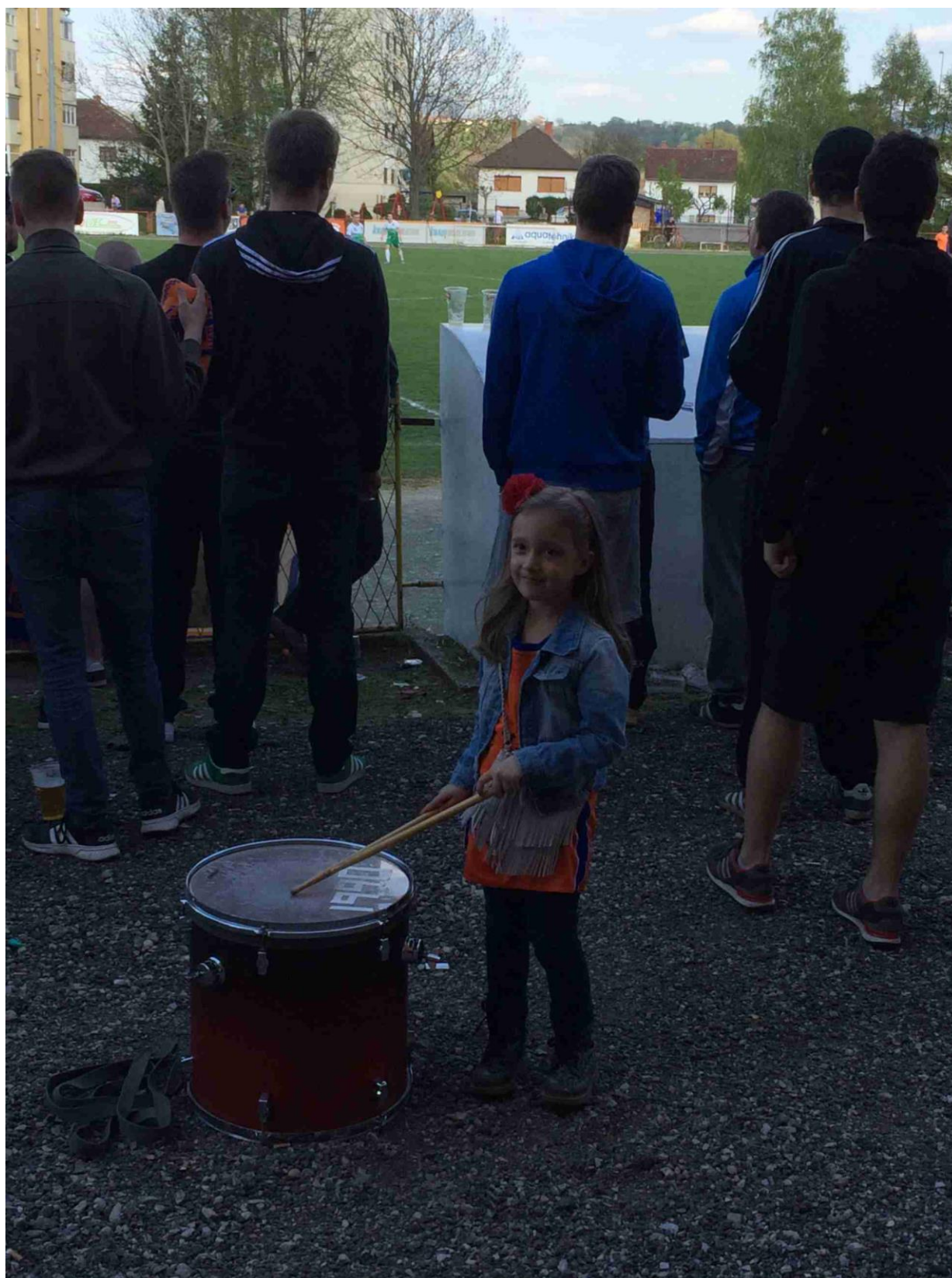Plate 3. Away match in Novi Marof (9 April 2017)

Plate 4. Mobilization a day before the city derby with NK Varaždin (16 May, 2017)
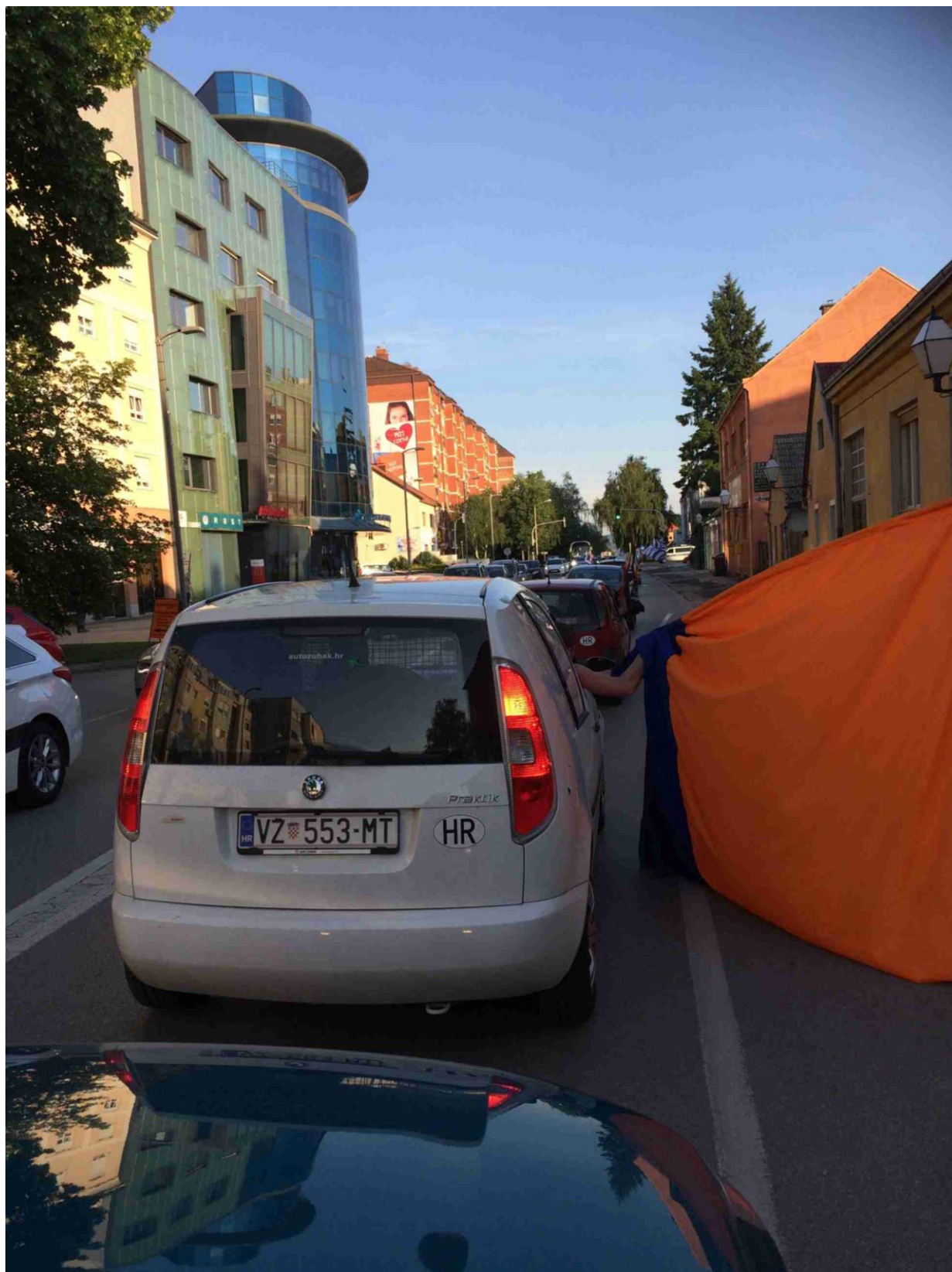
Plate 5. Home match with NK Varaždin (17 May 2017)

Plate 6. Coreto on the Streets of Varaždin (30 May 2017)

Plate 7. Home match with Čepin (23 September 2017)

Plate 8. Friendly match with Hajduk in Split (14 January 2018)

CLUSTER 4: ECONOMY/LEISURE SPACES

- ➢ Young Muslim Women: 'Neo-Muslims'? Social engagement of devout young female Muslims – Germany

- ➢ Young gender activists – Portugal

- ➢ Young motherhood in multicultural Finland – Finland

- ➢ Grassroots initiatives, conflicts and solidarities of LGBTQ scene of St. Petersburg – Russia

- ➢ Grassroots initiatives, conflicts and solidarities of the feminist scene of St. Petersburg – Russia

- ➢ Zagreb Pride LGBTIQ NGO - Croatia

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Young Muslim Women

'Neo-Muslims'? Social engagement of devout young female Muslims

Germany

Iris Dähnke

CJD Nord

Executive summary:

In academic literature and the media a new type of young Muslim woman has emerged in the last 15 years – the so-called neo-Muslim woman. The term was coined by sociologist Sigrid Nökel in 2002 after conducting biographic interviews with second-generation post-migrant women. It described young women who had 'returned' to religious practices and dress codes and at the same time successfully participated in higher education and aspired to a professional career. Being both migrant and German, the young women are holders of hybrid 'this as well as that' identities. Their multiple affiliations are challenged and perceived as mutually exclusive dichotomous identity categories – in particular by the so-called 'majority society'. By wearing the Muslim headscarf they demonstrate belonging to the Muslim side of their identity: a transnational neo-Muslim identity potentially transcending national categories, which can represent a third option beyond the either-or identity dilemma.

We spoke to devout young Muslim women who are actively engaged in society and want to 'make a difference'. They want to co-shape society as visible Muslims and their choice of dress represents an expression of agency. We look at the wearing of the headscarf as a social practice of identity and investigate contexts of conflict: in school, work and public areas. The young women experience discrimination and stigmatisation on the basis of their clothing practice and alleged ethnic belonging. As 'representatives of Islam' they are subject to stereotypical ascriptions and assumptions of an essentialised and stereotyped collective Muslim identity. These often gendered ascriptions and assumptions are perpetuated by members of the so-called majority society, but also by members of their religious or ethnic community. Their body becomes subject to essentialising discourses.

Against this backdrop we want to investigate their individual and collective engagement: They are volunteers in various fields – youth sports, Islamic girls' groups, religious encounter events, refugee support and poetry slams – to name but a few. Their engagement reflects their wishes for cooperation and social cohesion, their fight against prejudice and for belonging and for positive identification as Muslims.

Contents

1. Introduction

The target group of this case study were young Muslim women who had taken the decision to wear a Muslim headscarf and were actively engaged in different social contexts. This target group was chosen for a number of reasons: firstly, a few years ago reference to the so-called 'neo-Muslims' ('*Neo-Muslima*'[1]) started to appear in the media and in the specialist literature. In empirical studies at the beginning of the millennium Siegfried Nökel coined the term in her qualitative study '*Die Töchter der Gastarbeiter*' (Nökel, 2002) where she conducted biographic interviews with young Muslim women aged 18-28 and semi-structured interviews with representatives of Islamic associations in the Frankfurt and Bielefeld area in the mid-1990s. She described the lifeworlds of the young women, referred to as 'neo-Muslim women', as being characterized by the conscious confrontation with the more traditional Islam of their parents, through which they have acquired their own viewpoints, often in intensive critical engagement with Islam. They wanted to find an individual standpoint between the tradition of their parents and the culture of the host society. Women whom we can describe as 'neo-Muslims' tend to be sceptical about religious authorities. According to Nökel, their rational approach to religion leads them to feel suspicious about having an Imam or Hoca as authority figure and they follow their own feminine perspective (Nökel, 2002: 51). Many young Muslim women of 'neo-Muslim' orientation make a conscious decision to wear a headscarf and see no conflict between their chosen religious way of life and their educational and professional aspirations. They see their future in Germany and see no contradiction between the headscarf and their sense of belonging to the society in which they live (cf. also Rommelsbacher 2002, Dinç, 2014).

We understand young Muslim women as 'young people in conflict' primarily when they wear a headscarf, as their belonging to society is called into question amidst Islamophobia and constraints in the world of work. Broad sections of German society, as in many other western countries, are marked by increasing scepticism towards or even rejection of 'Islam', whereby the latter is often portrayed as the opposite of 'their own' by definition modern, democratic, liberal and egalitarian social order. This construction of Islam and Muslims as the embodiment of 'otherness' is part of a long tradition of Eurocentric constructions of foreignness. One of these is the discourse on orientalism, in which the Muslim world is portrayed as the antithesis of the western world, which is understood to be enlightened and modern. 'The West' and 'Islam' are constructed as a dichotomously contrasting pair, whereby both are essentialized (Said, 1979, 2009). Surveys show that anti-Muslim feelings and fears extend into the mainstream of society. For example, 40 percent of those questioned in the so-called *'Mitte'-Studie* ('Mainstream Study') of 2016 stated that Muslims should be prevented from migrating to Germany (Decker et al, 2016: 50). An anti-Islamic mood and the 'fear' of Muslims manifested themselves in Germany as a result of the resonance and success of anti-Muslim and anti-immigration publications, such as the one by the former Head of the *Bundesbank* Thilo Sarrazin: '*Deutschland schafft sich ab. Wie wir unser Land aufs Spiel setzen*', ('Germany is abolishing itself. How we're putting our country on the line', 2010), anti-Islamic movements like PEGIDA and the success of the right-wing populist party 'Alternative für Deutschland' (AfD). The debate about Muslim life in Germany is also reflected in the political discourse of the established parties: for years the so-called people's parties have been playing out a battle of interpretation around the question of whether Islam 'is part of' Germany *('Der Islam gehört zu Deutschland'*), or not. The expression 'Islam is part of Germany' was used by the then

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[1] The term *Neo-Muslima* coined by Nökel is feminine and referred only to women. Since in English no feminine version of 'Muslim' exists we use the term neo-Muslim. We also use the term 'neo-Islamic' at a later point in a gender-neutral sense.

(CDU) President in 2010, but was refuted by leading politicians in his party. Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU) repeated the phrase in 2015 and recently the new minister of the interior (CSU) stated publicly when taking office in 2018, that Islam 'is not part of' Germany. One reason for this symbolic statement is surely the attempt to win over right-wing voters after the success of the AfD. With regard to the almost five million Muslims that actually and permanently live in Germany, and are therefore 'part of' Germany, the statement can be understood as a symbolic one, which is, however, relevant for the identification and self-perception of many people living in Germany. The discussion about the symbolic belonging or non-belonging in Germany affects the Muslims living here and has a negative effect on their sense of belonging and 'being part of'.

With the Muslim headscarf this discussion acquires a gendered dimension. Approximately 30 per cent of the Muslim women in Germany wear the headscarf, and about 50 per cent of those that call themselves 'very religious' (Haug et al, 2009). In her work '*Anerkennung und Ausgrenzung*' (Recognition and exclusion', 2002) Birgit Rommelsbacher analysed continuities and fractures in the construction of 'otherness' in Christian-European culture. She described how the headscarf was regarded in western colonial times as a sign of backwardness and the repression of women. From this point of view the headscarf is understood in the 'Western' interpretation as a symbol of the repression of women and the removal of the headscarf is equated with liberation (Rommelsbacher, 2002). This interpretation is also propagated in Germany by prominent feminists, such as the journalist and publicist Alice Schwarzer. According to the linguist Reyhan Şahin the headscarf is usually seen in public discourse in Germany as a 'traditional Muslim symbol' and/or as a 'politico-Islamic symbol' and as such is associated with the 'backwardness' and fundamental stance of the wearer (Şahin, 2013). At the same time, many of those of the second and third generations in Germany who wear a headscarf are young, educated women from an urban environment. Against this social backdrop there have been almost twenty years of legal battles at the national and federal state levels over the right of Muslim women to wear a headscarf or not in their profession.

In many public service occupations the wearing of a Muslim headscarf is forbidden, as it is regarded as a religious symbol which contradicts the secular neutrality of the state. This applies, for example, to judges, public prosecutors and police officers. Discussion about whether to allow or ban the headscarf for teachers has been ongoing since 1999; an across-the-board ban was declared illegal by the Federal Constitutional Court. The issue continues to be discussed at the federal state level and many decisions have been delegated to schools in individual cases. From a legal point of view, the state's imperative of neutrality is in conflict with the right to religious freedom assured by the constitution. The position of women who wear a headscarf is difficult in many areas of the private labour market, for women who wear a headscarf are at a disadvantage when applying for jobs. An experiment carried out by the Institute for the Future of Labour showed that applicants who had the same level of qualifications, but wore a headscarf were much less likely to be offered an interview than applicants with a German name or foreign name, but did not wear a headscarf (Weichselbauer, 2016). Employers are therefore allowed to ban the headscarf because it is a religious symbol, as long as they ban all religious and political symbols at the workplace as part of company policy. If this is not the case, a hijab-ban is not permitted. [2] However, as it usually cannot be proven that an applicant has been rejected because she wears a

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[2] Ruling of the European Court of Justice in 2017. See e.g. www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2017-03/eugh-kopftuch-verbot-arbeitsplatz-urteil
This study focuses on the hijab, which is most common among Muslims and was worn by the participants. Other types of headscarf like the niqab, which cover more of the face and are banned in public in some European countries, are not considered.

headscarf, access to work is beset with obstacles for hijabis. Rommelsbacher writes that the discrimination of Muslim women on the labour market is founded on the assumption that they

> are traditional and family oriented and therefore incapable of developing professional ambition. In contrast, German women are seen as emancipated; as this is identified with intelligence and professional competence, they are chosen in preference to other women (Rommelsbacher, 2009).

The lifeworlds and backgrounds of Muslim women living in Germany are heterogeneous and there are many different reasons for wearing a headscarf. For many, the decision to follow religious rules plays an important role. The wishes of the family or husband, peer group orientation or fashion trends are also reasons for wearing – or not wearing – a headscarf. Empirical studies on the attitudes of hijab-wearing women contradict the assumption that they are generally 'repressed' or 'not emancipated' as understood in western thinking. For the women who wear them, the headscarf has a number of different meanings, such as: a symbol of their religiosity, a sign of their belonging to the Muslim community, a symbol of their femininity, an expression of their humility, a sign of their abstinence before marriage, their non-availability to men and protection from their gazes[3] (Mirza & Meetoo, 2018). The headscarf has different meanings in different contexts. In countries where the headscarf is obligatory, such as Iran, not wearing one can represent an act of resistance, symbolic liberation and self-empowerment for women. For young Muslim women in western societies, however, wearing a headscarf can represent a confident expression of their own religiosity, an act of self-empowerment. In spite of resistance in society and – in some cases - the family, many young Muslim women in western countries wear a hijab as a sign of their religiosity and belonging (cf. Rommelsbacher, 2002, Thon, 2004, Şahin, 2013, Hoque, 2017).

'Neo Muslims' are usually second or third generation immigrants. Youths and young adults of second-generation immigrants are often described as holders of 'hybrid identities': they enclose a sense of belonging to various ethnic, cultural and national places. With the culture of origin of their parents, their multilingualism, socialization in German educational institutions and local and transnational cultural reference frameworks they have a diverse identity reference system that they can draw upon. 'Hybrid identities' describe the simultaneity of multiple affiliations to various social roles. This means, for example, that a person can be an athlete, legal practitioner, homosexual, female and politically conservative at the same time. The pressure to assume one clear identity at the expense of another is disappearing in post-modern societies. This simultaneity of various identities is likely to be denied to migrant and post-migrant youths. They have multiple affiliations which, according to the validity claims of large parts of the so-called majority society, are mutually exclusive: simultaneous national and cultural affiliations often exclude each other in a viewpoint that is based on nation-state tradition and cultural homogeneity: a person cannot be Hessian and Anatolian, German and devout Muslim. At the same time, persons labelled as migrants, i.e. persons who phenotypically, on grounds of their clothing, their name or accent are recognized as not belonging to the German so-called majority society, are denied this status of 'being German' by the othering discourse, experiences of othering and everyday discrimination. In post-migrant societies where a struggle takes place on the issues of integration, identity and the 'recollection' of an imaginary, supposedly homogeneous identity from a time before immigration, 'macrosocial negotiation processes continue in the personal interior of holders of hybrid identities' (Foroutan, 2013: 86).

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[3] There is a certain controversy on the last issue in the Muslim community since not all Muslims follow the interpretation of 'protection' from men

The game of affiliations (to another country, another culture, another region) between self-experience and ascription […] as well as the constant negotiation and the self-thematization […] of their own identity in this spectrum can be described as core elements of hybridity. In the biographical core narrative, different reference systems play a role which become relevant at different moments, and this gives the hybrid subjects […] a situational and transitory identity' (Foroutan, 2013: 91)

Neo-Islamic identities can be a match of these hybrid identities if they include an open and participative development of the individual in society. They can be seen as an attempt to form new frames of reference beyond identification with the parents' culture of origin and the affiliation to an ethnically homogenous German culture, in which being German, being Muslim and the accommodation of different cultural practices are compatible in everyday life. Those who hold hybrid identities are constantly challenged to 'negotiate their loyalties, question their affiliations and come to terms with the crossing of boundaries' (Foroutan & Schäfer, 2009). With their potentialities of multilingualism, capability for empathy, negotiation mentality and ambiguity tolerance hybrid identities afford opportunities for meeting the challenges of changing post-migrant societies.

Against this background we chose young Muslim women, who have consciously chosen to wear a headscarf and who are actively involved in society, as the target group for this case study. We want to present how and where conflicts in the lifeworlds of these young people arise, and how they deal with these conflicts. We set out from the hypothesis that, as outwardly recognizable Muslims in a climate of increasing Islamophobia, the young women experience conflicts in their everyday lives in the form of rejection, animosity and other types of discrimination. Furthermore, we assume that the headscarf is a cause of conflict when choosing a career or looking for employment or training. Their active involvement in society is regarded against the backdrop of their self-positioning as visible Muslim women. In the context of their 'hybrid identities' we can see the young women's negotiation processes with their families, their peers and in some cases with their migrant or religious communities concerning their lifestyles, values and religious practices.

2. Methods

During the empirical research we interviewed a total of 15 Muslim women individually and visited 16 events[4]. We wrote seven field diaries with participant observation and documented some, predominately public, events photographically. The 15 individual interviews were conducted face to face in line with the interview guideline and tape-recorded. The interviews lasted between one and three hours. The average length was 100 minutes (overall interview minutes: 1524). A number of personal and telephone conversations were held with experts and at events, which were not recorded on tape. These included two academic experts and a journalist and blogger. Additionally, although not documented as such, we regularly took note of blogs, home pages, Facebook pages, Instagram pages and tweets of various Islamic (youth) groups and hijab-wearing activists on issues relevant to our research for information purposes and used them only in part for documentation purposes. This includes the websites or Facebook pages of Islamic girls' organizations, an Islamic students' organization, an Islamic network on Muslims who are socio-politically active (*Zahnräder*), Muslim youth associations, the Ramadan event and the Young Islam Conference and the twitter accounts and websites of the bloggers Kübra Gümüşay, Mervy Kay and Betül Ulusoy. Furthermore, we consider a recording of a conference on Islam and feminism entitled `feminislam´ which took place at the Young Islam Conference in Berlin 2017, and a written documentation of a conference on Muslims' social engagement organized by the `*Zahnräder*´ network, also in 2017.

The recorded interviews took place face to face. Approximately two thirds of them are held at the office of the CJD. Other interviews took place in cafés, at the researcher's or interviewees' homes. The interviews took place in three North-German cities. The women selected for the interviews are not representative of the Muslim women living in Germany and they are very heterogeneous at the same time. They are characterized by their above-average level of school qualifications. Their educational ambitions correspond with the image of the `neo-Muslim woman´ described above. All of them had attained a university-entrance level of qualification – the German *Abitur* – or were just about to. Common to them all is that the Islamic faith plays an important role in the way they live their lives. They incorporated various practices of their faith in everyday life, such as praying, fasting or wearing a headscarf. Ten of the young interviewees were born in Germany to second-generation immigrants and a further four immigrated as young children. Only one interviewee immigrated as an adult. The of origins of the families, in descending order, are Turkey, Afghanistan, Tunisia, Iraq/Iran, West-Africa and South-East Asia. The sample includes the children of former `labour migrants´ as well as women whose parents arrived as refugees. The women were aged between 18 and 35 years old, with the average being 23.6 years; two thirds of the women were aged between 18 and 22. At the time of the interviews eight women were at university, two were in full-time employment and one was still at school (more details in appendix).

For this study, we looked for young women who had chosen to wear a headscarf and were actively involved or wanted to be actively involved in society. The acquisition of interviewees and access to the field turned out to be long-winded and more difficult than originally expected. Some websites and groups, such as *Styleislam* - described by Dinç as a neo-Islamic fashion producer – and the *Cube Mag* magazine have ceased production or are temporarily inactive. Many attempts to contact Islamic groups were protracted or simply failed. Emails to a local contact person at the

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[4] 3x Islamic girls' planning meeting in mosque, 4x weekly women's class in mosque, 1x Islamic women's action meeting in community centre, 1x youth boxing in sports hall, 3x Ramadan encounter event (2x planning meeting in community centre + 1x public event itself), 3x Islamic academics' networking meeting in library, mosque and community centre, 1x poetry slam event at a school.

Young Islam Conference were left unanswered, but we did manage to contact the federal office. A multiplier in an Islamic women's network did not `have the time´ to disseminate to stakeholders or possible interview partners; other queries were also left unanswered by associations. Two experts who were asked to be interviewed (journalist/blogger and academic expert) turned us down due to `a lack of time´. Contact with an Islamic girls' group was successful thanks to the institutional contacts of the CJD to the group's Islamic funding association. At an event eight women gave their e-mail address and let us know that they were interested in taking part in the interviews. Six of them did not answer the subsequent e-mail, so only two interviews resulted. We spoke to several women at events. In five cases they signalled their interest in an interview. This was later withdrawn and the loosely arranged interview was cancelled on grounds of `lack of time´. Furthermore, three other interviews were cancelled at short notice. Reasons were Reasons were` lack of time´. The 15 interviews that did take place and were tape-recorded came about as follows: direct approach by the researcher at events (2 women), volunteering at Muslim youth groups, at a mosque event and the Ramadan Encounter Event after the researcher had introduced the project (5 women), private contacts by the researcher (1 woman), professional contact of the researcher (1 woman) and six women were approached by the interviewees themselves in the 'snowball' system.

We can only speculate about the reasons why many institutional and private players hesitated to take part in PROMISE. Two of a number of reasons given by institutional players are 1) young Muslims are currently being over-researched in the context of conflict and 2) a mistrust of players from the so-called majority society, as Muslims fear being `misrepresented´. In this respect, one associational representative told of how media reports had used photographs of young Muslim women in their association as imagery in a report on radicalization. A sense of mistrust felt by some members of the community towards Non-Muslim players for fear of misrepresentation could be a reason why several women, who had signalled interest in the project when first contacted, withdrew their interest after a few days – perhaps after speaking to relatives or friends. This theory is supported by the fact that a relatively high number of interviews came to fruition via the Muslim interviewees themselves when they acted as disseminators. The researchers themselves were not Muslims. This was described as an obstacle to participation in field access by Muslim members of the NPPN. 12 of the 15 interviews were conducted by a female interviewer. The difference in identity between the researchers and the interviewees – religion, age, gender, ethnicity – was thus reduced by one category. The opportunity, as a woman, to participate in women's groups was a positive one, as there is strict gender separation at Muslim events which take place in mosques.[5] With one exception, the Christian researcher was the only woman not wearing a headscarf in the women's group at the mosque. It was very helpful that individual contacts had taken her there and were very welcoming, which made her feel that she was not a `stranger´.

The interviewees gave feedback after the interviews and emphasized how important the issue of the engagement of young people in general, and young Muslims in particular, was to them. When asked their opinion about the difficult acquisition of interview partners, they speculated: a lack of time; the feeling that it was pointless; mistrust in the unknown institution of the majority society; bad experiences in the community; shyness of the young women.

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[5] Gender separation also takes place in mixed-gender Muslim groups, such as in student meetings. Women and men sit on different sides of the room, whereby there's often a kind of mixed area in the middle where couples sit together (cf. Nökel, 2002).

All of the interviewees gave their consent in writing. We did not include field notes on groups which were private (i.e. upon invitation) when not all participating individuals were informed of our `mission´ as researchers. No other ethical issues arose.

All interviews were transcribed and coded in NVivo in a total of 298 nodes. The material was analysed in accordance with the PROMISE themes. The links between mosque associations and initiatives with other domestic and foreign-based political players, the so-called `political Islam´ and internal Islamic differences (e.g. between Sunnis and Shiites) were not broached in the interviews and are not part of the analysis.

3. Key findings

3.1 Hijab-wearing as a social practice of identity

The majority of the young women we interviewed were between 11 and 19 years of age when they started wearing the hijab. There were only two exceptions: one of them - a first-generation immigrant from the Maghreb – had first begun to wear a headscarf in her late twenties after being in Germany for several years. Another young woman did not wear a headscarf at the time of the interview, but intended to start doing so upon getting married.

For these young women donning a headscarf represented a part of a process. For the majority of them thinking about wearing a headscarf and then finally deciding to wear one came at the end of an intensive examination of their religiosity. The interviewees came predominantly from families that pursued religious practices such as praying or fasting. They had experienced this as children with their parents or grandparents and often went to the mosque with their parents. The only exceptions were Mara, 31 and Madiha, also 31. Mara told us that her father was explicitly non-religious and that after the family migrated from Turkey to Germany he banned her mother from wearing a traditional headscarf. For her, the decision to wear a headscarf meant a rejection of her father's ban. Madiha grew up in Tunisia with her Muslim family. She explained that she had seen her grandmother praying, but beyond that, religion had had no bearing on her family life. When she was growing up in Tunisia, wearing a headscarf was prohibited. All of the other interviewees described in different ways, how they had experienced religious socialization in their birth family. When in their youth, religious practices such as praying and reading the Koran 'becalmed' them, took away their 'inner unrest' or did them 'good'. This positive effect on their well-being strengthened their ties to their religion and deepened their analysis of it. This analysis took place, for example, in Koran lessons, in the mosque, by reading the Koran, through books and Youtube videos of various Imams. In their search, some of the interviewees tried out several mosques, looking for answers to their questions and the approach to their religion that felt harmonious to them. For some young women it was important that lectures in the mosque were given in German. There were diverse reasons for this: Selma, 21, would have liked to take along peers from her 'multicultural circle of friends'. She was not able to as the lessons in her first mosque were taught in Turkish. For Banu, 21, her religion only became comprehensible and plausible when she started to read books and watch videos in German about it. Amira, 22 years-old and from Indonesia, enjoyed going to a large Turkish mosque, as the lectures there were in German and therefore accessible for her.

Some had already felt the desire to wear a headscarf at age 10 or 11 - years before they actually began to wear one. It was often the parents who advised them to wait until they were 'mature' and 'confident' enough to wear a headscarf. One exception to this was the now 26-year-old Teslime, who began wearing a hijab at 12, as she wanted to emulate her big sister.

> Well then my sister started wearing [one], then my mother, and then me … and okay I was a bit early, but my parents disapproved. They said wait till you're 17 or 18, at an age when you're really mature, when you understand what it's all about. Thinking back, really I only wore it because it was fun or fashionable. I liked it; my sister wore it, my role model, and my mum, too. […] In retrospect, of course, I could have waited a year or two. Perhaps, although I don't regret it, but it is good, you're mature, you understand more. But it was left up to me, my parents said, fine, if you want to take it off, if you want to put it on. You can at any time. (Teslime, 26)

For many young women who had already begun to wear a headscarf at school or when in vocational training, their decision was also a means of asserting their own convictions over their parents. Approximately half of the interviewees stated that at least one of their parents advised them to wait before wearing a headscarf when their daughter informed them of their decision. Many parents feared that if their daughters wore a headscarf, they would be discriminated against by their teachers or would have difficulties entering into employment. In addition to the fear of discrimination, the parents also doubted whether their daughters were ready to accept the restrictions that a headscarf would bring and deal with any difficulties that may arise.

> The funny thing is: my mother wears a headscarf as well, [but] in the beginning she was against it. […] my mother [wanted] to be a nurse, but wasn't allowed to at the time, because of her headscarf. […] that's why she said 'you should really do your training course first, start working and then do it'. I said 'mum, when I've finished my training and I start work, they'll tell me not to do it then, too'. And so [we'd] already had a bit of a discussion about it then, too. But after about a year, when she saw that I was really serious about it and that I had also found some peace of mind and was no longer so rebellious, a bit calmer […] and […] my lifestyle had not taken a 180 degree turn, I hadn't become extremely withdrawn or anything, which does happen. She then realized that it was a good decision. And I think that was the moment where she began to be proud of it. (Selma, 21, began at age 19)

> I wanted to start wearing a headscarf much earlier. I was only in class 5 (year 7) at the time. […] But my parents were against it. They said, 'no, you're still too young. It would cause you too many problems'. And so I wasn't allowed to wear one. It wasn't until I was in class 8 (year 10) that I said 'mum, but now I really want to', she said, 'okay, it's your decision. Do what you think is right for you.' (Melek, 19, began at age 14)

> My father was all for it, but he […] said: 'Find a training course establish yourself in a job and then sometime, when you're 25 or 26, you can still decide to do it. But not right now, at such a crucial time at school.' I listened, of course, and thought it over, but still did it. And I think that's also a part of growing up, when you decide which direction you want to take in life. (Banu, 21, began at age 16)

As such, donning a headscarf represents an important turning point on the way to becoming an adult, assuming responsibility and making one's own decisions. In deciding for the headscarf, the

young women were expressing agency. By wearing a headscarf they were deciding to make themselves visible as devout Muslims and face the challenges that this would bring within and outside of the Muslim community. In the eyes of many others, wearing a headscarf in public made them 'representatives of the religion' (Selma) and therefore exposed them to the resulting judgments (see below). They made their decision knowing they would be faced with difficulties, discrimination, obstacles and prejudices. This step was a courageous one. In contrast to these implications of wearing a headscarf, which are present in their own environment and extend into the whole of society, for these young women the decision is primarily a personal one. The realization that practising their religion raised their sense of well-being, led many to feel the desire to follow the commandments, including the interpretation of the sura, which explains the reasons for wearing the headscarf. The decision for the headscarf was described as an 'inner' process […] which is visible from outside' (Emine, 20), 'like a tattoo. It's an inner decision. I would like to have one, you convince yourself. It's also something that stays on your skin all your life that people see' (Banu, 21). Emine expressed feelings of being 'more complete' in a headscarf. Madiha described how she felt:

> Before I wore a headscarf I was still a devout Muslim. The headscarf was taboo in [my country]. […] Since coming to Germany, I have experienced so much in life […] I was also at an age, where I said […] what's important for me and what's not […] important for me, […] the first reason [for the headscarf] was to see if I have the courage to follow a path that the others haven't taken. […] Of course it's only a piece of material, it doesn't change my character or my attitude to life from before, but it is a sort of step, a proof: Okay, when you take such a step, then you're strong enough to achieve other things, so to speak. (Madiha, 31)

The headscarf had various meanings for the interviewees[6]: Many of the young women described how, as a result of wearing a headscarf, they felt 'more confident' and 'stronger' to overcome the challenges of life in other areas, too. Some said they were 'proud' of themselves for not taking off their headscarf, in spite of the hostilities and difficulties they were faced with. The headscarf was also a kind of 'protection': for some this meant protection against men and against sexual harassment by men (cf. for example Necla, Marvie, Melek). Some found that when they wear a headscarf they are treated with more respect by some boys and men. Mara does not agree with the interpretation of the hijab as protection from men and asserts 'if men have a problem, they should start with themselves, not with the woman'. Selma and Necla understood protection also a form of self-control: protection from oneself, inappropriate aggression 'so you didn't just freak, like you did when you were a teenager' (Selma) and protection in order to give up certain behaviours (such as going out at night). Wearing a headscarf also expresses their belonging to the Muslim community. Alina, 19, told us that she had already begun to wear one at age 11, because as a West-African she had 'always' been taken to be a Christian, of which she 'had enough', and said to her mother: 'No, mum, I want to start, I want everyone here to see that I'm a Muslim. The Muslim headscarf serves as a distinguishing mark for other Muslims, too, that connects them with other women who would otherwise be complete strangers[7], 'you see each other, greet each other

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[6] At this point, it is important to emphasize that the meaning of the headscarf was different for individual interviewees and that they did not share all the viewpoints expressed by them.

[7] Simultaneously with its function as a connecting element the headscarf can also symbolize differences, as the various Muslim groups have differing styles of tying the headscarf. The classic Turkish headscarf is tied in a completely different way from Arab or African ones. This means that the headscarf wearer can be assigned to a particular ethnic group. In addition, there is the semiotic aspect of various outfits, such as the modern jeans style or orthodox items of clothes such as the chador and other clothes. For more on this see Sahin, 2013.

and say: I am also one of you' (Marvie). For these women of 'multiple nativity' ('*Mehrheimigkeit*') (Foroutan, 2013, see also Foroutan & Schäfer, 2009) donning a headscarf represents an affirmation of the Muslim part of their identity – which does not mean, however, that they feel any less German (see below). Selma explained,

> Then I started praying, i.e. tried to pray five times a day. [When praying] you put on a headscarf and […] long clothes […] Then, [after two or three months], I thought 'have I got two personalities at the moment?' At prayer and during ceremonies I somehow feel completely different from when I'm outside. Because I've always been like that, all or nothing, I then left wearing short clothes. […] It was like I had a bit of a conflict inside me. And then I made a decision and said 'Okay, I'll put on the headscarf as protection for me, as a symbol for me, of my honour and pride and self-confidence' (Selma, 21)

Furthermore, our interviewees believe that putting on a headscarf signified a departure from a fixation on outward appearances. For some of them it represented a conscious dissociation with the pressure on women to comply with a particular ideal of beauty, to consume particular beauty products and to subject their body to its evaluation by others. They felt the idea of being judged more according to their words and their character instead of their appearance, their clothes or their figure as satisfying and empowering.

3.2 The school experience

For almost all of the interviewees, putting on a headscarf signified a turning point. Almost all of them reported that the reaction to the headscarf of people in their environment ranged from irritation to rejection. Of the eight women who had already started to wear one at school, six described the reactions and behaviour of individual teachers towards them as hurtful, degrading or stigmatizing. Four women reported that on the first day they wore a headscarf at school, some teachers had asked them if they had been 'forced' to wear it. The women reacted to this question differently, which appears to depend on the context and their personality. Amira, 22, was 17 when she started to wear a headscarf and when asked by teachers why she was wearing one and if she had been 'forced' to do so, she explained her motivations, the teachers expressed their understanding and their relationship had remained positive. Ermine, 20, who started wearing a headscarf at 15, felt hurt by the question, because the teacher 'knew that my parents were such really lovely people. […] She didn't ask me at all why *I* had chosen to wear one and stuff'. For Selma and Banu the question was the expression of a knee-jerk viewpoint: 'If I had been forced to, then not at 19, but at 11, 12, or, I dunno, 13' (Selma), '[my teachers] actually didn't understand at all that a 16-year-old could also choose to of her own free will' (Banu). The attention of the teachers was perceived more positively when the interest as to 'why' was expressed openly compared with when there was an insinuation of force. Many interviewees felt the need to distance themselves from the idea of 'force'. Five of the young women outlined situations in which they were devalued, humiliated or marginalized by some teachers because of their headscarf. At the same time, it must be pointed out that the interviewees often received support from other teachers or the head of the school, who defended them against discrimination and provided assistance. Two of the women, who had already been wearing a headscarf at school, experienced no problems with authority figures there at all.

> [I wore my headscarf on the first day and we had theatre club. I was supposed to play
> a part in the first scene] and then, in front of the whole class, […] and with such an

undertone, she just said: 'Well, we're in the theatre here, not in the house of Muslim women.' And I was just so shocked in that moment, because it was just so, pfff, directly aimed at me. I was […] a good pupil […] and popular with the teachers. It was just so unheard of for me, that a teacher would speak to me like that. […] I was really hurt by it. (Banu, 21)

[I said to the teacher] can you say that again, because I didn't understand, then she just said, 'well, take the headscarf off, then you can hear better,' for example. That was it then for me, as far as that teacher was concerned […] (Mara, 31)

Then in a politics lesson we talked about how I could say 'no' to IS and how I didn't have to join up with them, although it was clear anyway that I don't speak for that group, […] but my teacher thought it important to broach the subject with me in front of the whole class. […] [My other teacher said] that I had to take my headscarf off once a month, because I had to give him the freedom to see my hair. (Melek, 19)

I had many, many problems […] with my teachers. I came back to school after the summer holidays wearing a headscarf. I didn't quite know at the time, how to combine the two things. I wore a pink skirt […] and a pink headscarf and my make-up was subtle. […] [We had breakfast together], my teachers came in and at first just looked at me. 'Cause I'd always been this sassy chick ('*Tussi*') who used to brush and braid her hair in class. […] They looked directly at me, my teachers, and said: 'What's all this then? Well, really […] And I […] thought to myself: Eh? What are they talking about and then they said: 'Take it off!' I said: 'I am not going to take it off! I've chosen to wear it myself'. And honestly, for two or three days they gave me funny looks and when I put my hand up, they just ignored me. They never said hello, never said goodbye. Completely and utterly different. And I'd always been really, really good with my teachers. I […] never regarded them as teachers, but as friends. […] [After three days] we wanted to take photos of the class. And then [my teacher] said to me: 'You don't fit in with the class image.' And that was that was the moment, where I had to bite my lip, because I thought to myself, okay, don't get aggressive. I'm a very, very cheeky person, I openly admit that […] [but] I had such a lump in my throat that I nearly had to cry. (Necla, 19)

The women were irritated by the often perceived assumption that since wearing a headscarf they had 'suddenly' changed – the headscarf was for them primarily an externally visible symbol of an inner process. Some described their irritation and disappointment that the teachers, 'who do actually know me' (Melek) had changed their attitudes towards them, no longer said hello to them, or ignored them altogether. Furthermore, in the experience of the interviewees headscarf wearers are perceived to be less capable. Banu and Necla found that their school grades went down after wearing a headscarf at school. Both requested a performance review. Necla was given the support of the head of the school and was put into the parallel class, so that she could 'have some peace', Banu had previously been the best pupil in German and after donning a headscarf, slipped into mediocrity until she spoke to the teacher -

And then at the next grade review she actually said: 'Yes, I've paid a bit more attention to you and this time I've given you the best grade of all […]' And then I thought: […] Why now and not before I raised the issue with her? So that showed me, that without

this headscarf she would have kept a completely different image of me in her mind. (Banu, 21)

3.3 Professional expectations

The interviewees see no conflict between being a working woman and their religious beliefs. Almost all of them have specific professional goals: the students and graduates want to be doctors, architects, psychologists, social education workers, lawyers, engineers or go into development cooperation. Those who already have jobs work in the health sector, in the software industry and in social work. Only one of the women would like to be a housewife and mother and be involved in voluntary work. All of the respondents are aware that wearing a headscarf makes it more difficult to enter into a profession. The fear of rejection on grounds of the headscarf goes hand in hand with the uncertainty of not knowing whether or not the headscarf is the reason for not being offered an interview after making a written application.[8] This fear is based on the experiences of friends and relatives, as well as `hear-say´ from women who have been rejected or bullied because of their headscarf. Several respondents had stories of their experiences to tell: when applying for a part-time or holiday job or training course they were rejected on the grounds of the hijab respectively were offered the job on the condition they do not wear it (vocational training in a sports centre, sales in cosmetics and clothes shops). A common reason given was that the headscarf may irritate customers. The comment made by one of the respondents that the headscarf could also be a signal of acceptance for Muslim customers did not convince the boss. In some cases, unspecific criticism by the line manager about wearing a headscarf placed the criticism on the behaviour of the woman wearing one: The question `Do you really have to?´ or the comment that the `attitude´ did not fit in with the company call in to question the decision-making capacity and conduct of the headscarf-wearer. The interviewees felt that other reasons for rejection were based in their view on imputations that were, however, not made explicit. These included the assumption the headscarf wearer was not capable of working in a team, not up to everyday working practices, `didn't speak to men´ (Madiha), were `repressed and can probably only do what their parents say´ (Marvie), were not trustworthy, were politically suspect or wanted to impose their own religious convictions on others. These are all prejudices and ascriptions that are being circulated in current Islamophobic discourses. The fear of the `Islamization´ of other people is evident above all in pedagogical occupations.

> I worked in a *Kindergarten* and lots of kids suddenly wanted [the headscarf] for a short time to put it on, try it out and stuff. When that happened I was scared stiff, because I thought, oh, no, please not that. Not that I wanted people to come and say I told you so. But with children you can't do it any other way – it was just like, 'yeah, I want to do it too, now'. The thing is, they just liked me […] so I think, if I'd had my hair plaited at the time, they'd probably have wanted to plait theirs, too. (Banu, 21)

On the other hand, the interviewees spoke of line managers who explicitly tolerated headscarves, strongly rejected discrimination and protected the women from the scepticism of customers or other staff. Entry into the world of work and acceptance as a headscarf wearer is therefore accompanied by uncertainties, whereby the women affected do not know if they will be rejected

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[8] In Germany it is still usual to include a photograph with a written job application. As described above, women who wear a headscarf have to write three to five times as many applications as women with a German name who do not. Applications without a photograph are on the increase, but the interviewees are sceptical about this as they want to be accepted with a headscarf and this would be visible in the interview anyway.

because of their headscarf or not. The respondents try to rationalize the rejection they expect to receive in order to increase their chances of predicting success. This does not succeed as the ban on headscarves is not based on logic and there are no clear patterns: in some cases involving customers headscarves are tolerated, but in others they are not; the respondents believe that the reasons for their rejection do not make sense. This leads to a sense of insecurity and the expectation of discrimination: `there might be other reasons for turning you down. But you think it had something to do with the person. Or because you wear a headscarf (Selma).

Not wearing a headscarf is a difficult option: `You have to choose between religion and the job´ (Amira). The feeling of not being accepted for the person you are creates an obstacle and a reason for not taking a job that demands that you take off your headscarf, for `there's also an identification process behind it. [...] when I [...] know I am only accepted and respected because I've taken it off, then for me it also means they don't really respect me´ (Banu). The knowledge that they, as headscarf wearers, have to `perform better´ gives some of the interviewees the feeling that they want to `prove´ that they can achieve their goals *with* the hijab. This narrative is supported by success stories of women whose employer was at first sceptical, but whose performance ultimately dispelled these doubts and made a career possible. This meritocratic view places the individual at the centre and hopes that individual performance can overcome structural discrimination and prejudices. Personal success stories are indeed very motivating for the young women, but do place a great responsibility on the individual to fight social prejudice.

3.4 Discrimination in public places and transport

Hijab-wearing women face multiple discrimination: as visible Muslims they are affected by the constructions of foreignness and current terrorism discourse as mentioned in the introduction. As women of Islamic faith, they are regarded as the unemancipated embodiment of a `non-European´ gender inequality. As people labelled as immigrants, they are stigmatised as `foreign scroungers´ and rejecting integration. In addition, they are potentially subject to racism on account of their skin colour. These multiple stigmatizations are often reflected in rejection and animosity in public spaces and on public transport. Eleven of the women we interviewed said they had had such experiences. These ranged from hostile looks, insults and abuse to actual physical attacks (attempts at pulling off the headscarf, spitting). The abuse often takes the form of sexist insults regarding their headscarf (`headscarf slut´) or racial abuse regarding their skin colour. Furthermore, some women had experienced being called `terrorist´ or overheard being referred to as extremists or assassins. Several women experienced people on public transport making loud derogative and stigmatizing comments about `foreigners´ or `Muslims´ while looking in their direction without directly speaking to them: `The Muslims don't want to integrate at all, the typical stuff, [...] they're backward and always so aggressive´ (Selma) or `they all want to get their hands on our money´ (Necla).

> Outside the Jobcentre, sometimes I have to pass through or pass by, I hear it all there: 'No surprise to see her here'... [The thing is] I work [in the Jobcentre] and I'm not one of those who [receives benefits]. (Mara, 31)

> [I was 13 years old] and alone in a train carriage. And there were three drunken people [...] they were right next to me, [...] the man was just drunk, so I don't take it seriously anymore. But it was a really threatening situation, because I was just so young. [...] [The drunken man] said: `I suppose you think you look prettier like that? I don't think

so. I think you're just as ugly in it.' […] And then the man opened the door with the train still going and threatened to throw me out to see if God would protect me. (Marvie, 18)

An old lady sat [at the bus stop] and was talking to some small children […] I stood there beside them [and waited for the bus] […] 'They're only here for our money, they just want to rob us. And why do they wear a headscarf? It looks so ugly.' [And then I said]: 'Listen. You can say it to my face; you don't have to prattle on to twelve-year-old kids.' […] And then she said she didn't understand. So I said: 'You don't need to understand. I'm the one wearing it, not you! I understand and that's all that counts.' – 'Yes, but when I look out of my window I see masses of headscarves', she said. 'But that's great. Then you see colourful heads […] so what's the problem?' And she just couldn't say what the problem was and at some point she didn't know what to say anymore, so she spat at me and got on the bus. (Necla, 19)

I know that it is difficult, because many people still don't understand that you can be a free person and wear a headscarf. […] I'm absolutely not doing anything wrong. I'm not depriving anyone of their liberty. So why do people want to take my liberty away from me? (Melek, 19)

The aim of discrimination and debasement is often to deny affiliation to the autochthonous society. With comments such as `go back to your own country´, `what do you want here´ and `in Germany you don't stand on the cycle path´ the recipient is being denied affiliation to German society. This contradicts the feeling of being `just as German´ (Necla) as those being discriminative. Necla, who described herself as a former 'sassy chick' ('*Tussi'*), reported by far the most insults and hostilities of all the interviewees. She told us that she was insulted `four, five or six times a week´, which had become `normal´ for her. Her mother, who started to wear a headscarf after her daughter did, is virtually never insulted. Outwardly, Necla appeared very fashionable, striking and figure accentuated. Whereas the others dressed in long, baggy clothes, in a casual jeans look or classic chic with modest make up, Necla wore very fashionable clothes, jewellery and striking make up. It is possibly the combination of headscarf and glamorous look that `disrupts the image' and gives rise to even more `irritation´ than the `simple´ headscarf to potential aggressors.

3.5 Young Muslim women between expectations and ascriptions

Further areas of conflict arise for the young women from the diverse role expectations and attributions that are ascribed to them by various actors. Restrictions on female behaviour are based on stereotypical gender ascriptions and traditional conservative or patriarchal social order systems. The young interviewees have had to fight against the ideas heaped upon them, such as `a young Muslim woman […] should not box´ (Selma), young women should not travel without male accompaniment or a lower level of education would be sufficient for a woman (Fieldwork diary, 16 March 2018). As headscarf-wearing Muslims the women have traditional conservative lifestyles and family models ascribed to them. When they do not fall in line with the expectations and, for example, are not married by a certain age or categorically reject the provider-marriage model, they cause irritation for both Muslims and Non-Muslims.

The generalization that headscarf-wearing women less `emancipated´ and `independent´ than women without a headscarf is an important basis for discrimination at the workplace and an

important basis for the above-mentioned assumption that women are `forced´ to wear a headscarf by a man, i.e. father or husband. The notion of headscarf-wearing Muslims being subordinate to men in a hierarchical gender model influences actual gender relations. When women put on a headscarf, they experience a change in the role expectations that men place upon them. Gender-hierarchic ascriptions can also cause conflict in partnerships.

> I also noticed that with young men from my Arab environment […] that the men view me differently now. That I'm somehow this woman who doesn't say boo to a goose, the typical Muslim woman – the idea that very many men have – who doesn't have an opinion in life, nods her head and says 'yes' – and I can't be doing with that. That's not what I wanted to achieve. That's just not me. (Madiha, 31, has been wearing a headscarf for two years)

> [People think] when she wears a headscarf, she expects to have children and stay at home and is a housewife. A woman can choose to do that, of course, that's not the problem – the problem is that this is the assumption. […] it's clearly a challenge for because it suits such a lot of men, it's just easier for them and they think that we've accepted it, but they don't know how we really think. And that's also the reason why so many Islamic marriages fail. A huge number fail, because Muslim men haven't come as far as Muslim women. (Mara, 31, has been wearing a headscarf for 16 years)

The interviewees believe that the fundamental equality of men and women is also corroborated in their religion - accordingly the Koran describes the equality of man and woman before God, but on account of their biological differences ascribes complementary roles to them. Islamic duties apply equally to men and women. The experience of the interviewees was, however, that they, as headscarf-wearing women, appeared to have the duty of correct religious practice ascribed to them. Patriarchal and sexist structures favour women being subjected to stricter rules than men of the same age. The demands for the same freedoms and duties for their daughters present a huge challenge for the generation of parents, some of whom come from a patriarchal rural environment where women were `a bit like servants´ (Selma).

> I think it's sad that boys say: 'That's right, as a girl, a Muslim girl, you can't have a boyfriend, but we can, 'cause we're men.' There's no mention of that anywhere in Islam. It says women *and* men aren't allowed to. […] but they just don't understand. I think it's down to their culture. (Necla, 19)

Not just for the majority society, but also for their community, the Muslim woman in a headscarf both embodies and represents her religion. If she does anything wrong, this is immediately associated with her religion. As the journalist and blogger Kübra Gümüşay put it, `when I go through a red light, Islam goes through a red light´ (Fieldwork diary, 16 March 2018). In their own communities, women are also subjected to social controls and the policing of behaviours deemed to be wrong in the dominant discourse of the community. The headscarf necessitates an increase in self-control.

> With a headscarf on you have to be careful with your opinions. Because opinions always sort of [get judged], 'ah, the one in the headscarf. They're like that.' (Madiha, 31)

I walked through the amusement district after dark with my husband and received a few looks. As if to say, 'what's she doing here at this time of night in a headscarf?' […] Okay, the Germans didn't say anything, they looked at me too, but our people had other things going through their minds. They were thinking, 'she's up to something, no doubt about it, she's not just passing through.' They're just so prejudiced. (Teslime, 26)

The interviewees also experienced conflicts with people who interpret religion differently, for example, when they encountered Salafists. Also, in their day-to-day social engagement liberal and conservative religious ideas had to be negotiated in organizational matters, such as the separation of women and men in rooms. It is also interesting in the context of this case study that two interviewees reported that their work in their independent established Muslim youth association was described by authority figures of the local Mosque associations as `haram' – i.e. prohibited. Their association was labelled as a `sect´, which was unfathomable to the young women. They described their interpretation as `Islam of the Middle Way´. It was important to them that their work in the association was compliant with Islam.

3.6 Coping Strategies and supporting agents

The women we interviewed cited their family – above all their parents and husbands – as their most important supporting agents. Relationships with their parents were largely free from major conflicts and they spoke with about their families love, appreciation and respect. Many of the women saw their parents as role models as regards their career plans, their commitment, or when dealing with conflicts. The young women's friendships were mostly characterized by diversity – for the younger ones especially, the diversity of their school friends was akin to the diversity of their peer group at school. Overall, the friendships described were supportive and open-minded and were an important source of strength for the young women. Friends and fellow schoolmates with diverse backgrounds – Atheist, Muslim or Christian – sided with them in situations where they were subjected to discrimination. Friends and schoolmates `spoke out´ against discrimination.

> For instance, when they're in a group of young people or even older ones and someone suddenly starts saying bad things about Islam and Muslims in Germany, I know I can count on my friends [Susan] and [Charlotte] to stand up and tell them they're talking rubbish. Our best friend is also a Muslim girl. (Melek, 19)

The teachers, lecturers and other authority figures (e.g. sports trainers, school heads) that accepted and encouraged them are also contexts and agents of support for the young women. They described positively their experience of an open, tolerant and non-discriminatory environment at school or at university. Moreover, they attached great importance to individual encounters with acquaintances, fellow students, colleagues or strangers. If there was an element of understanding in these encounters and they felt they were viewed as individuals, could break down prejudices, or had the feeling there was understanding for their religious practices. These encounters served as confirmation for them for their fundamentally positive attitude towards society.

In the context of everyday discrimination and hostility in public places, the women employed various coping strategies which helped them to reduce the burden of these experiences: they tried not to take unfriendly treatment personally (Banu), `laugh about it later´ […], rationalized incidents and viewed them in a differentiated way (`there are bad people everywhere´, Serpil) and told

themselves that others had it worse, who `cannot change the colour of their skin´ (Emine). People who changed seats on the bus, looks, and `funny comments´ were described by some of the interviewees as `normal´ and they played down the significance of the incidents.

> This daily discrimination, for example, where you're insulted or called a bloody foreigner or something like that, yeah, just like anyone. (Morsal, 22)

> I've sort of noticed that people, well, that some people always give me such funny looks or that they don't want to sit next to me on public transport, for example. But in the end, I don't get wound up about it. It's just sort of a bit like: 'Okay, why do you do that?' I just find it a bit odd, but really, I suppose, it does get to me a bit, but not to the point where it bothers me [that much]. (Amira, 22)

In some cases the negative experiences led to a kind of defiance not to let to let things `get them down´. Especially after the first few months of wearing a headscarf and enduring the accompanying difficulties the women felt a sense of pride, belief in their own power and an increase in self-confidence. The knowledge that they themselves had made the choice – calling up one's own agency – helped the women to endure the discrimination. By refusing to assume the role of the victim, they retain agency. An important resource for the young women is their faith. As a meaningful conviction, it involves, amongst other things, the idea of divine justice which means that `in the end evil loses and good wins´ (Mara). Painful experiences can be reinterpreted as tests, thus making sense of negative incidents. For some of the interviewees, their social engagement was directly linked to their desire to act against prejudices. By doing so, they wanted to show that `not all Muslims are the same´. Their engagement was consequently a form of `taking action´ against discrimination (see below).

3.7 Self-identification as a young German Muslim

The interviewees went through identity negotiation processes in which they sought to unite their cultural, national, religious, local and family affiliations in one harmonious construct. As described above, the headscarf was an element of these affiliations and an affirmation of the Muslim part of their identity. The vast majority of the interviewees felt `happy´ and `at home´ in Germany and above all in the city where they lived. Although they had feelings of belonging to their parents' country of origin, they saw their future in Germany and wanted to help shape society as German Muslims. Overall, they were satisfied with their current life situation and had a very optimistic view of the future. They described life in 'here' as full of opportunities `to work, to study, to become involved´ (Selma), `network with people who think the same as you do´ (Morsal) or `to test yourself in different areas. To find yourself, what you would like to do, an ideology of life that you would like to follow´ (Melek). `For young women in particular […] so that people no longer have that typical man-woman way of thinking´ (Selma). They made comparisons with other countries and with previous times and in this context appreciated the political situation and the freedom from which they, as young people, profited. The respondents who lived in a large city furthermore valued its `cosmopolitan attitudes´ and the `multiculturalism´ of the area in which they lived. The local and Islamic identities form a backdrop against which hybrid identities are constructed[9].

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[9] Alienation and othering are also facilitated by the recurrent symbolic statement that `Islam is not part of Germany´. On day after it was stated by the new Home Secretary that 'Islam is not part of Germany' we visited a women's group

[I am a] biogenetically Anatolian [daughter of this city]. (Serpil, 35)

My parents, for example, […] they still want to go back to Turkey, because they still don't feel so comfortable living here, because they don't feel accepted. And I think if I'd been born earlier, it would have been the same [for me], because these people had loads of problems here. […] Yeah, I mean I'm really free, I feel very comfortable in Germany (Marvie, 18)

My parents were born in Turkey. I haven't got a Turkish passport, but I would still describe Turkey as my homeland. I mean, my roots are there, but I still wouldn't consider returning at any point in time, because I believe we're needed here, especially us young Muslims, because there are so many misconceptions. (Melek, 19)

I don't feel like an Afghan at all […] I simply feel I'm completely German. […] I would also stay here forever. […] Everyone is just so free here, as free as they want to be. […] I can go out when I want […] go where I want to. I don't feel any battle between nations. If I were in Afghanistan now and was friends with an Iranian girl, I would get stared at. And that just doesn't happen here. […] in Germany you can stay young, you can be free; you can enjoy your youth. […] (Necla, 19)

In a diverse peer group the opportunity arises in a best case scenario to experiment with various aspects of identity and to experience affiliations which are understood as dichotomous in the public discourse. The young women experienced no ongoing conflict with regard to their affiliations with their parents. Although the parent-child relationships experienced some friction and negotiation processes, it usually did not extend beyond puberty. In the opinion of the interviewees, conflicts of affiliation are more when likely parental attitudes are not compatible with participation in German society. Living `between two worlds´ (Serpil) is more difficult for those, who do not have `open´ parents (Emine). Conflicts become more intensive when individualistic views are confronted with come face with collectivistic ones.

The life of the `Bio-Deutsch´ (native Germans), put it this way, has a lot to do with individuality, you know. […] nobody can tell you what's what. You're free. [For us] it's more a case of the family and it's more group centred. It's just the way we are. [And] when you've got parents who, let me put it like this, are not like mine, who are not so open-minded, then you've got, how can I put it, a much bigger problem with identity. (Emine, 20)

Their relationship to the social media and the associated technologies is ambiguous: the interviewees firmly believe that it is almost impossible not to participate as daily social interaction patterns are permeated by social media and smartphone usage. Two of the interviewees are themselves active users of Instagram. Necla wants to use her presence as a confident and fashionable Muslim woman to increase the self-esteem of other young women. The other respondents use social media primarily for information purposes and organizing activities, but tend to be sceptical of the prevalence of social media among their generation. They regard self-presentation on Instagram as a youth peer pressure in which young people compete about appearance, followers and the possession of consumer goods. They believe that the goal of many youths is only `superfame on Instagram´ (Morsal). The interviewees criticized the adoption of

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in a mosque. This issue was being discussed there and it caused a lot of anger: `For as long as I live here, Islam will be part of Germany´, asserted one respondent (Fieldwork diary 16 March 2018).

opinions and behaviours from the social media and the pressure to take part for fear of missing something and of not belonging. Morsal believes that youths lack the support of adults who inspire them to go their own, new way in life. She and Selma would like to see adults taking young people and their ideas and views more seriously and being less patronizing towards them.

3.8 Social engagement

Almost all of the women we interviewed are involved in different kinds of voluntary work. They would like to see young people in general, but young Muslims in particular, to become involved and play an active part in society. It is exactly their generation, the young second generation migrants who `were born and grew up here, gained their qualifications here and want to stay here´ that they regard as the ones who should be moving society forward, improving the position of Muslims and migrants and fighting for the reduction of prejudices. The generation of parents often do not believe `that it makes any difference´ (Melek). The parents feel they were not `accepted´ in their youth and they were scarcely able to `react to prejudice – maybe they didn't even understand what prejudice is´, because their German was just too poor (Banu). The respondents were involved in various areas: most activities are connected to national mosque associations and Islamic communities (e.g. IMGM) or are run by organizations which are part of networks of the major Islamic communities. Only two of the respondents are involved in an explicitly Islamic association – it does, however, act independently of the mosque associations. The association's goal is to activate young Muslims as professional players in German society. The activities supported by the traditional associations include working with groups of young girls in the mosque, people-to-people events with Non-Muslims, and thematic youth events and workshops. In addition, the interviewees are involved in associations founded by themselves that provide support to refugees (Selma, Amira). There is also the `Young Islam Conference´ initiated by Humboldt University and financed by the Mercator Foundation, civic youth forums and voluntary work in the football club. The activities carried out by the women in their voluntary work are diverse: they provide information to interested non-Muslims about their religious practices, organize and oversee (Muslim) youth events, advise Muslim girls about everyday matters, give language lessons for refugees, organize charity concerts, give boxing lessons to youths, and take part in rounds of discussions and poetry slams. Approximately half of the respondents are involved in more than one area of voluntary work.

On account of the diversity of their engagement it is difficult to classify their objectives. None the less we would like to highlight two objectives pursued by the women in their activities. These are:

(1) To reduce prejudice and promote social cohesion
(2) To improve solidarity, the sense of identity, and counselling among Muslims
(3) Being a role model and promoting engagement and agency of others

3.8.1 Reducing prejudice and promoting social cohesion

The dialogue between Muslims and Non-Muslims and co-operation in projects should reduce prejudice and promote social cohesion. Many of the interviewees attach very high importance to changing the public image of Muslims. They also want to show that they are `not all like […] the media portray us, […] like these odd [Salafist] brothers with beards and stuff, who insult everybody´ (Necla). They are also involved, for example, in a public Ramadan celebration with the

aim of inviting Non-Muslims to learn about the religion, provide them with information, reduce prejudice, and `remove the fear of Islam´ (Fieldwork diary 25 February 2018). The event is organized by a mosque community and run predominately by youth volunteers involved in various clubs. The respondents spoke of individual encounters and conversations at the last annual event in which there was a good exchange of ideas and understanding. Although the interviewees were disappointed that so few Non-Muslims attended the event, thus reducing the exchange of ideas to a level lower than they had hoped, the individual encounters as well as breaking the fast were a success.

In another Europe-wide action called 'I'm Muslim, pleased to meet you.' (`*Gestatten, Muslim*') predominately young Muslims hand out roses and flyers to passers-by. The flyer provided information on in which Mohammed as the 'prophet of compassion'. This annual people-to-people action is organized by the Islamic community Milli Görüs (IGMG[10]) and is viewed as `a readily-accessible opportunity for the people to talk to us. […] The aim of the action is to begin a dialogue with fellow citizens, and break down mental barriers and prejudices´ (IGMG website[11]). At this point, we do not want to speculate about the possible motives of the IGMG for this annual action – such as improving their image or the mobilization of youth – as this is not part of this study. Many Muslim youths participated through their local mosques, who are partners of IGMG. The two young women who took part in the action through their mosque communities described it as an action for understanding, `against hate and for love´. However, they were disappointed with the level of success, because many of the passers-by did not take a rose and very few conversations took place.

The reduction of prejudice between Muslims and Christians or between the various Muslim groups is the stated aim of further people-to-people events, such as open-house days in the mosques and shared mosque-community actions, where for example Turkish and African mosque communities collaborate. The aim of the individual encounters is to break down generalized ascriptions at the micro-social level.

> There's always girls in the [Islamic girls' organisation] as well, who say: 'Yeah, he's like this, or they're like that. The teachers are all the same. The Germans are like this.' I don't think that's right. […] And right now we want to talk to other communities, […] starting with other Muslim communities, because unfortunately they also have people there who say, oh, the people from so and so community, that community is no good at all. The people there are this or that. There's that as well and I just don't get it. So the first thing we want to do is show them, we're people and we're all equal. And we all just want to get along with each other. (Marvie, 18)

The focus on the micro-social level, on individual encounters through which prejudices are to be reduced, can also be understood as a reaction to the generalized labelling of Muslims in the media. For the respondents, `the media´ are the main culprits when it comes to negative social ascriptions with regard to Muslims. Many of the interviewees expressed understanding for

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[10] The IGMG is still considered controversial, as it was for many years under surveillance by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution for suspicion of Islamistic and anti-democratic stances. The association, which was founded in the 1970s, has in recent years become more active in activities focusing on social work and dialogue. See www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/verfassungsschutz-milli-goerues-koennte-aus-der-beobachtung-herausfallen/11990882.html

[11] www.igmg.org/gestatten-muslim-strassenaktion-gegen-vorurteile-erreicht-200-000-menschen/, access on 11.5.2018

prejudices that form in people's heads as a result of media discourses, when the people themselves have no contact with Muslims. The bias of media discourses about Muslims, the lack of positive everyday images of Muslims, the portrayal of Muslims and Islam as foreign, and the debates about Islamism and refugees all contribute to the formation of prejudices. The interviewees believe that people who have no contact with practising Muslims are particularly susceptible to this stereotyping.[12] It is therefore logical that the interviewees opt for personal encounters with Non-Muslims in order to confront these prejudices with another reality – their own – and to disprove them. At the same time the focus on individual encounters and their successes can also be understood as a reaction to the situation in a society where the acceptance of the headscarf is stagnating and Islamophobic sentiments are on the increase, rather than decrease.

> You can always achieve something, even in small steps, and it's enough when someone takes something with them or when you can help someone. (Alina, 19)
> In the sense of us, as Muslim girls, gaining more acceptance and more understanding, I don't know if I can say that that's really happening. From individual people, yes, […] but on the whole we get precious little. We even have
> the feeling that it's not really taking us anywhere, except backwards. (Melek, 19)

Some participants took part in the `Young Islam Conference´. The annual national and regional conferences comprise workshop events and regards itself as a 'forum for dialogue' which unites young people of different faiths to discuss and confront social issues for a 'constructive living together on equal footing' (*Junge Islamkonferenz* website[13]) Reyhan, who participated in the conference, describes her experience there and as a poetry slammer:

> [It's this idea of] I need to become part of a group and the others are the outsiders and they're the bad ones. And I wanted to sort of criticize that [with my poetry] because people can be quick to start seeing things as black and white and say: Yep, I've got my community, my group, or whatever. We're right and you've got it wrong, you're the outsiders. [At the Young Islam Conference I'd like to] show people […] that it can work. I mean, there's a lot of us and we're very different from each other. But together, regardless of our religion or where we come from or whatever, we can still get something off the ground. [I want to] get that across so that people understand it.

3.8.2 Muslim community: belonging and identity formation

The *Umma*, the `Islamic Community´, unifies all Muslims. For many Muslims the local mosque is where they feel this sense of belonging: `a place to meet people, of contemplation, joy, sadness, peace and cohesion´ (IGMG, 2017). Muslim are youths – as are Non-Muslim youths – searching for identity, belonging and direction. Muslim youth groups address these needs. Approximately on third of the interviewees were involved in their Muslim community in girls' or women's groups. The groups usually meet once a week in the local mosque. Together they organize future events and plan trips. They organize an annual 'Hijab Day' which includes talks about the headscarf and a fashion show. According to the interviewees, they organise events relatively independently with ample freedom regarding form and content given by the mosque authorities. A number of times during this study we visited a women's group in the local mosque whose main concern was lifeworld and religious education. The group meetings and events for girls and women serve as

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[12] Andreas Zick how prejudices are fostered by the media by a lack of positive imagery of Muslims (Zick, 2017).
[13] www.junge-islam-konferenz.de/

leisure-time activities, religious and lifeworld orientation and the creation of community. In the girls' group the young women experience a sense of belonging and enjoy interacting with other girls who share their experiences of being a Muslim girl in Germany. In addition, they can work through conflicts and everyday problems together, for which in certain circumstances the parents have little understanding: `She's in love. She wears a headscarf. She's not on a training course. She's not doing work experience. […] But how's a mother supposed to help, when she knows nothing about these things?´ (Serpil). In the groups, lessons, and talks in the mosque and at the events organized by Islamic and mosque associations, youths and young adults receive information about their religion and the meaning of religious practices and laws, guidance on the meaning of religious values in everyday life and advice about problems. Events specifically for youths deal with the issues arising from their lifeworlds. In the community, the youths learn that `you can be how you think´ (Marvie, organizes girls' groups). The religious education raises self-confidence and conveys the idea `you are valued […] in Islam´ (Necla, attended Islamic youth courses).

Many of the interviewees, who participate in the girls' groups as 'big sisters' and organizers, had themselves been socialized in similar groups at age 12 or 13. Feelings of community, connection, belonging and togetherness are central aspects of the Muslim community, which they also find in religious festivals such as the joint celebration of Ramadan. The women's group that we visited was characterized by togetherness and warm-hearted exchanges. The women called each other `sister´ in accordance with the Muslim understanding of sister, embraced each other when meeting, touched each other on the arm, back or shoulder. The researchers were quickly welcomed into this warm community atmosphere. While sitting on the soft carpet in the mosque, the women handed round the food they had brought with them. During the group discussions, they spoke of `very personally and emotionally moving things […] of successes and failures that had moved and left their mark on them not only as Muslims, but also as people´ (Fieldwork diary, 16 March 2018). The groups offer mutual support, practical help in daily life and the opportunity to make friends. They are a safe space for the women, in which experiences can be shared with like-minded people.

3.8.3 Being a role model and promoting engagement and agency

For many devout Muslims, `doing good things´ and helping other people belong to their religious self-image. To work for the good of all people is a part of a life which is pleasing to God: ` [our] prophet says the best person of all is […] the one who is most useful to others´ (Emine, active in Islamic girls' group), as Necla so casually put it, `sins are extinguished´ by acts of charity. The respondents draw a significant amount of motivation for their engagement for other people from their faith.

> God does say that everything we have and what happens to us always has a sense and a purpose. […] I was born in Europe for a reason, live in a country where a woman has many opportunities […] The meaning of my life lies in continually learning and using this knowledge to help other people [in other countries, too], benefit them. (Morsal, 22, Muslim engagement)

It became apparent in the interviews that the border between engagement and the private becomes blurred: through their active involvement as Muslims, they want to make a change in society. They want to convey a positive image of Muslim women, bring people together in everyday life in order to help improve understanding between Muslims and Non-Muslims – for example by patiently informing others about their religious practices -, or be(come) advisors and

role models for other Muslim women. Through her poetry slams and Instagram platform, Necla would like to share her experiences as a headscarf-wearing Muslim and therefore support others in being true to themselves. She gives insights into her inner life and expresses her subjectivity. On her Instagram platform she wants to reach as many `followers´ as she can, share her travels, fashion and her hoped-for occupational successes, then `it motivates others´ because they think 'well if she can, then so can I'´ As a sports trainer, Selma would like to be a role model for children of the 'confident woman' and broaden their ideas of the role of Muslim women: `Because they see, 'hey, she looks like my friend's mum, but she doesn't just stay home''´. As a solicitor, Seda hopes she can be a role model for other young Muslims, Marvie wants to become a doctor and would like to show `you can do it. [That others also see] that I'm […] not a repressed woman, that I can be independent, study what I want […] and maybe work as a doctor´ (Marvie). Banu would like to show that `Muslims actually do something about concerns affecting us as a society´. She sees herself as a mediator and would like to have a leading position in the social sector and help to improve the inclusion of migrant families in disadvantaged low-income neighbourhoods. Alina hopes that that she will never `just be [interested] in myself´, but `that I will always have this awareness and this feeling of duty also to do something for others´.

The aim of several of the young women's activities is the promotion of the agency of others. The target groups for the activities were in particular people with whom they shared elements of their own hybrid identities: migrant and Muslim youths, women and refugees. Many were engaged in refugee assistance work with language lessons, sport and swimming courses for women and support in everyday situations (e.g. dealing with authorities).[14] Through their engagement for disadvantaged youths they would like to help them in their personal and professional development, increase their confidence and inspire them to follow their personal and professional dreams. One association in which two interviewees were actively involved has the mission to motivate young Muslims to active societal participation: to shape society and strive for leadership positions. In their independent association they invite speakers of various backgrounds to give talks on topics such as female leadership and visionary thinking. They focus on a young Muslim public, to invite them to unite their self-image as devout Muslims with engagement in society.

> A lot of Muslims have potential, but keep themselves very much to themselves. […] Many say Islam is just about praying and reading the Koran and that's it. But we Muslims – above all because we live in a country where life is really good – can make great use out of what God has given us. I mean, for society. (Morsal, 22, Muslim engagement)

Similarly, the journalist Kübra Gümüşay would like to see young Muslims braking free of their role as 'explicators' of Islam in order to become 'storytellers' themselves. Gümüşay suggests solidarity with other marginalized groups (*Zahnräder* conference 2017). The fight against stigmatization and stereotyping prevents young actively involved Muslims from pursuing their own and personal interests in society. Looking back on her own career as a public figure and the challenges she faced, Gümüşay would like to see more own agenda-setting of young Muslims instead of reaction to stigmatising discourses.

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[14] According to a Bertelsmann study, in 2016 approximately 44 percent of Muslims in Germany were involved in voluntary work for refugees. Their engagement in this respect is therefore two to three times higher than that of Christians (21 percent) and the non-denominational (17 percent) (see www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/es/presse/pressemitteilungen/pressemitteilung/pid/fast-jeder-zweite-muslim-in-der-fluechtlingshilfe-aktiv/)

4.   Conclusion

To some extent, the young women we interviewed as part of this case study correspond with the stereotype of the Neo-Muslim woman described above. They see no contradiction between their religious way of life, their career aspirations and their self-image as independent female players. On the contrary, in their understanding of religion they see confirmation of their educational goals and gender equality. They had experienced a phase of intensive engagement with their religion, which has resulted in their choosing to follow religious practices such as wearing a headscarf. In many of the contexts they described, donning a headscarf can be understood as an act of self-assertion and expression of agency. The headscarf is an element of self-constitution and self-positioning, which can be incorporated into the construction of a hybrid identity. Their religiosity is a resource from which they personally draw energy and which motivates them to take an active part in shaping society.

The process of the young women's `self-Islamization´ (Nökel, 2002) is described as a largely inner process of finding and development. The young women derive individual meaning from this. Nevertheless, this process has a great outward influence. Especially by wearing a headscarf they experience different types of stigmatization, essentialization and ascription. The young women's engagement is characterized by their position as (visible) Muslim women in a Non-Muslim society. In their descriptions, they use individual-centred discourses of choice and freedom. The motif of individual choice is contrasted with the motif of `force´ from which the interviewees explicitly distanced themselves. The crucial thing for them is `the question of being recognized as subjects who are willing and able to shape their authentic self and to act according to it´ (Nökel, 2002: 20). They `fight´ (Melek) to be accepted as visible Muslims and regarded as individuals. They would like to break through ascriptions and portray Islam as `peace-loving´ (Necla), Muslim women as not repressed. They themselves want to incorporate this. They take up a discursive position in relation to the prejudices in circulation and make use of explanatory models of personal choice and self-realization. Nökel describes this as

> the logic of the Non-Muslim other, or a rationality which, an aspect of the idea of choice, demands a plausible explanation for certain behaviour patterns´ the women therefore find themselves `duty bound to act´ […], to clarify and construct the difference in the existing semantics. (Nökel, 2002: 56)

They are under pressure to justify themselves, to make themselves legible within dominant discourses.

Unlike in Sigrid Nökel's study, the interviewees in this study – at least during the interviews – there was no recognizable doubt cast on religious authorities or rejection of the established male-dominated mosque associations. Religious instruction took or takes place in the mosque. However the aspect of the `choice´ of the right mosque played a role for some respondents. Two of the interviewees were involved in an independent Islamic association, but at the same time they were participants in one of the Muslim groups with close links to the IGMG and ensured that in their own association, a religious authority would be consulted if controversial religious questions arise – which has not yet happened. This lack of distance to male-dominated associations and religious authorities, as the interviews suggest, can have various reasons. Firstly, we should ask ourselves if we can clearly differentiate between the `neo-Muslim' woman and the `classic associational

Islamic identity´ - a stereotypisation suggested also in recent classifications (Dinç, 2014). Furthermore, it is feasible that the scepticism towards and distance to religious associations were simply not mentioned, as this was not focus of the interviews and/or the young women did not want to speak negatively of their religious community. Another reason could be, that there has been actual change regarding the inclusion of girls and girls' issues in the established associations. Nökels interviews were conducted twenty years ago and since then there has been a change in leadership in the established associations from the first to the second generation migrants. This was partly accompanied by modernization, an increased commitment to German society and integration of the interests and life realities of the trans-migrant and post-migrant Muslim youth population. This was reflected in the services of associations (el-Menouar, 2017). Whereas the religious education for the neo-Muslims interviewed by Sigrid Nökel took place in private 'sister-meetings', the Islamic girls' groups and sister-meetings investigated in this study have rooms, as well as financial and moral support from the mosque communities. We can therefore speak – at least concerning our respondents - of an *institutional incorporation* of the process of self-finding of their (neo-)Muslim identity.

Engagement in Muslim associations is also an expression of the search for belonging, exchange with like-minded people and an environment in which they are not reduced to the Muslim part of their identity and to their headscarf. As a result of their multiple affiliations to various identity reference systems, the women become holders of hybrid identities. As such, they `sit between the chairs, or on a third chair´ (Foroutan & Schäfer, 2009): they are under pressure to adapt from different agents. They reject strongly the labelling they receive on the grounds of certain characteristics and affiliations that are denied or ascribed to them. Hybrid identities are laden with conflict, because they cause aggression among those who demand clarity. From the point of view of holders of non-hybrid identities, the `this as well as that´-identities of the young women give rise to contradictions: devout and science-oriented, German and Turkish, hijabi and boxer, feminist and Muslim, divorced and pious, headscarf-wearer and fashion blogger – to give just a few examples from the sample from the interviews. They reject the demands for clarity and one-sided loyalty. The conflicts can manifest themselves in racism and discrimination faced in everyday life. For post-migrant youths of the second or third generation it can lead to a problematic multiple non-affiliation: on the one hand they are not recognized as Germans, on the other, the parents' or grandparents' culture of origin creates an imaginary affiliation to a country which they hardly know. In this respect the holders of hybrid identities may be faced with re-ethnicization and self-ethnicization, which can also result in a neo-Islamic identity. Naika Foroutan and Isabel Schäfer describe how this, depending on the circumstances, can also lead to disintegration, non-participation and the rejection of German society. For them `neo-Islam´ therefore includes `both the tendency towards a politically open, participative personal development, as well as the possibility of radicalization and withdrawal depending on which influences and which group structures neo-Muslims turn to (Foroutan & Schäfer, 2009).

In the last few years the change to the second generation in the large Muslim associations, who run girls' groups and people-to-people projects to reduce prejudices, has resulted in an increased commitment to German society and lobbying activities to be recognized as equals in the shaping of society. The identity politics of the associations aim to improve the position of Muslims in society, to fight marginalization and discrimination and to offer Muslim youth positive identification patterns. In identity politics there is always the danger of re-essentialization, whereby other differences such as class, ethnicity or sexual orientation are disregarded and multiple affiliations neglected. Empirical studies have shown many instances of the desire for social change which goes beyond personal interests. The interviewees value cooperative projects,

which, for example, bring different ethnicities or Christian and Muslim youths together. In the new alliances – such as between different groups of women who are the victims of violence on the streets – mutual reservations are removed and prejudices counteracted[15]. The blogger and journalist Kübra Gümüşay hopes to see `more young Muslims who believe they can change something and want to make the world a better place for everyone´ (Fieldwork diary, 16 March 2018). In the position of `Islam-Wikibear´ young Muslims feel wedged between `racists and fundamentalists´. When pushed to explain Islam, a large symbolic construct is placed on the subject and the `radical right to be "me"´ is placed in a charged relationship with the `you´ (*Zahnräder* Conference 2017)[16]. The young women we interviewed cited many examples in their discursive descriptions of how they transcended and augmented identity categories and recognized multiple affiliations as well as differences. Their actions often had a humanistic approach. They wanted to see the definition of identity categories relaxed, the (over)loaded significance of the headscarf to be put into perspective and society shaped jointly along shared goals and interests.

> [At the Ramadan encounter] a new awareness of 'we' and 'us' is generated when people simply talk [to each other]. Then the 'we' refers to those who like to cook for instance, Muslims and Christians, […] I always found that really, really important. Yeah, to show we're *all* [this city]. (Banu, 22, Ramadan encounter event)

> Well I once saw a picture, a picture of the world. And the caption read: 'There are no They'. So there is no 'they', only a 'we'. And that totally inspired me, because we always speak about the others, even though we're all just people. This text was a result of this inspiration (Reyhan, 19, poetry slam)

> When you describe someone, you shouldn't say, this person is a German, this one is a Turk. When I describe this person, I can't describe them according to where they come from, because they can't choose where they're born. I can of course say, okay, this person is Muslim, but that shouldn't be the main thing. When I describe a person, I should describe them as confident or, I dunno, timid or reserved, I mean, that's the kind of thing you can say to describe people. But not something which places them in a group. (Marvie, 18, Islamic girls' group)

Young second or third-generation Muslim women often grow up with multi-ethnic peers in group situations in which they can negotiate, play and try out roles. At best they experience the tolerance of ambiguity and the acceptance of multiple affiliations there, which are not always shown to them by the members of the majority society and of their own ethnic or religious community. The recognition of hybrid identities and multiple affiliations creates opportunities for the development of the whole of society. Multilingualism, flexibility, empathy, mediation skills, transnationality and ambiguity tolerance are characteristics which are ascribed to holders of hybrid identities as positive resources. These make them pivotal actors in the shaping of post-migrant societies. If they were to relinquish them, this would lead to assimilation on the one hand, or to disintegration on the other. In the light of this,

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[15] One example is a neighbourhood project involving a Muslim women's group which, with other groups, was concerned with fighting violence against women. Both prostitutes and hijabis were affected by this in the neighbourhood. In a round table the actors jointly developed a manifesto of demands to improve the safety of and respect for women.

[16] www.zahnraeder-netzwerk.de/zahnrader-podiumsdiskussion-2017-engagement-von-muslimen-in-deutschland-zwischen-chancen-und-grenzen/

> resonance space of multiple resources, identities and integration strategies, into which the resources of hybrid identities enter equally […] For there are precious few powers of decision over someone who does not want to integrate, but very many destructive powers regarding those who are have for long been inside, but are continually considered as 'outsiders' (Foroutan, 2013: 99).

5. Future analysis

Several themes of this case study can be identified which would be interesting for future analysis in a cross-case perspective in the PROMISE project. This includes both themes elaborated in this report and themes which were only touched upon here. An important theme is the issue of belonging and community and the interplay of individualism and community. There is particular relevance for stigmatized young people who find belonging and self-confidence in a group. How does the common denominator of the group influence their individual self-perception and identity? In relation to hybrid identities: How do new identity patterns emerge in the interplay of stigmatization and the invented and `ascribed´ group identities? How are hybrid identities challenged by conflicts experienced with those who demand `clarity´ or those who deny them belonging for other reasons? Furthermore, of interest is the role of peers and the family in this identity construction and conflict/support matrix.

Two topics which were only touched upon in this case study but may be elaborated in a cross-case analysis, are issues of gender and gender roles, and of media and stigmatization. The issue of gender roles includes gender expectations, which the respondents assign to themselves and those assigned to them by various other players. Self-regulation of the body and of behaviour and their regulation by others are the consequences. Female bodies and female behaviour are most affected by this regulation. The supposed private bodies of headscarf wearers become the focal point of identity discourses and therefore lose their privacy. The private decision in favour of the headscarf lifts the body out of its sphere of privacy and places it in social, religious and political discourses about the meaning of the female body.

The next issue, the role of the media in `stigmatization processes´, includes the question of how media discourses influence the individual's self-perception and their positioning in society as a stigmatized individual. This may lead to an individual reaction against this stigma – as in the case of many of the interviewees here – or to a withdrawal from society and resignation. Seeing the media as the source of stigma can be understood as a coping mechanism, as it helps individuals to explain stigmatization by others as a result of `ignorance´, their negative coverage, and their lack of real contact with Muslims.

The issue of how and where marginalized and/or stigmatized youth become active is cross-cutting in the case studies. In cross-case analysis it would be interesting to compare the experience of being young with a focus on positive/negative understanding of opportunities as a young person, reaction to stigma and construction of agency and their self-positioning in current youth media practices (e.g. Instagram).

The above themes can be found in the following nodes (level 1/level 2): Activity benefit/community & benefit/self-confidence, activity experience/community, Agency/active in society & creating encounters, barriers to social involvement/all, context of conflict/community & challenges to belonging, Identity gender/all, experience of being young/all, wearing hijab/force and choice & protected from men, Muslim identity/all, hijab/all, stigmatization/media.

Most interesting for the triangulation of the quantitative data is how the experience of discrimination, religious affiliation and the desire for social change are linked. A core question is, which conditions and factors support the agency and social participation of stigmatized young people and which factors support them in establishing a positive identity construction and social participation (in contrast to disintegration).

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File name	Age	Gender	Education	Employ-ment	Residen-tial Status	Family Status	Ethnicity	Country of birth	Religion
B01 [Selma]	21	female	at university (f/t)	p/t	Lives with husband	married	2nd generation of Turkish descent	Germany	Muslim
B02 [Melek]	19	female	Completed A-levels	no	Lives with parents	single	2nd gen. Turkish descent	Germany	Muslim
B03 [Banu]	21	female	at university (f/t)	no	Lives with parents	single	2nd gen. of Afghan descent	Germany	Muslim
B04 [Necla]	19	female	School (f/t)	p/t	Lives with parents	single	2nd gen. of Afghan descent	Germany	Muslim
B05 [Marvie]	18	female	completed A-Level	no	Lives with parents	single	2nd gen. of Turkish descent	Germany	Muslim
B06 [Serpil]	35	female	A-levels, left university	no	Lives with grand parents	single	2nd gen. of Turkish descent	Germany	Muslim
B07 [Emine]	20	female	at university (f/t)	no	Lives with sibling	single	2nd gen. of Turkish descent	Germany	Muslim
B08 [Amira]	22	female	at university (f/t)	no	Flatshare with student (f)	single	immigrated as child	South-East Asia	Muslim
B09 [Teslime]	26	female	at university (f/t)	p/t	Lives with husband	married	immigrated as a child	Iraque	Muslim
B10 [Madiha]	31	female	A-levels	p/t	Lives with parents	Single	immigrated as adult	Tunisia	Muslim
B11 [Mara]	31	female	A-level	f/t	Lives independently	divor-ced	immigrated as a child	Turkey	Muslim

B12 [Morsal]	22	female	Currently at university	no	Lives with parents	single	immigrated as child	Afghanistan	Muslim
B13 [Alina]	19	female	at university (f/t)	no	Lives independently	married	2nd gen. of West African descent	Germany	Muslim
B14 [Seda]	26	female	graduated from university	yes	Lives with parents	single	2nd gen. of Turkish descent	Germany	Muslim
B15 [Reyhan]	19	female	Completed A-levels	no	Lives with parents	single	2nd gen. of Turkish descent	Germany	Muslim

PROMISE
promoting youth involvement and social engagement

PROMISE: Promoting Youth Involvement and Social Engagement: Opportunities and challenges for conflicted young people across Europe.

WP6: From Conflict to Innovation: Ethnographic Case Studies

Young Gender Activists

Portugal

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Executive summary:

This ethnographic case study report focuses on young gender activists in Portugal, and presents the main ideas related to this type of activism, as well as its evolution among Portuguese activists. In the study, 20 young gender activists aged between 17 and 32 years old have participated. Participants were recruited from two organisations that are related to gender activism and are part of the Portuguese Promise NPPN, as well as from initiatives related to gender equality and then through snowball sampling. Participants are from several geographic areas of Portugal. All participants were asked to answer to a semi-structured interview that was voice-recorded, transcribed, anonymised and then analysed with Nvivo. Main results highlighted several aspects that are important to better understand the group of gender activists and gender activism in Portugal. It was possible to understand that conflicts experienced by these youth are related to gender, sexuality and activism and that they are often stigmatised for it. Gender activism is a response to gender-based social conflicts that these youngsters perceive in society and they feel that they are somehow effective in promoting social change through their actions. Regarding their relations with older generations, the overall experience is that intergenerational relations have impact in causing, but also in overcoming conflicts. Finally, the gender activists feel that their experience can be transferred to others, namely to other young people, through media, and by avoiding radical views and positions.

Contents

1. Introduction

In the scope of Work Package 6 of the PROMISE project, the Portuguese research team carried out an ethnographic case study on young people aged 17 to 32 who were engaged in formal or informal activities that aimed to promote gender equality. This particular group of young people is considered to contribute to the general aim of the PROMISE project as they actively question, confront and try to change social norms and social inequalities based on gender and/or sexuality. The research under this case study focuses particularly on young adults who identified themselves as gender activists aiming to promote social change, whether through involvement in formal organizations and/or actions, or through their daily practices and interactions.

In Portugal, the 20th century was deeply marked by the *Estado Novo* dictatorship period (1933 to 1974). While in many other countries remarkable political, social and cultural changes were occurring, Portugal remained a marginal and stagnated country. During the *Estado Novo* period, Portugal was characterised by a conservative, religious and family-oriented culture, with a protectionist economy mostly based on subsistence agriculture and incipient industry, and a majority of rural illiterate population (Barreto, 2002). By then, young people faced several difficulties, and in the last decades of this period, there was a massive emigration flow of youth to more affluent countries like France, Switzerland, Germany, Luxemburg, Brazil, Venezuela and the U.S.A. This youth mobility greatly affected the already impoverished Portuguese socioeconomic landscape. At the same time, the Independence Wars in many of the Portuguese African colonies at that time forced many young men to enlist in the military forces and, consequently, contributed to the enhancement of emigration movements and the social and economic depression of the country (Arroteia, 2001; Matos, 2016). The political repression and persecution, the absence of freedom of expression and the conservative values not only hindered participation in social life, but also prevented people from having a voice to claim their rights or even those that were aimed, especially at women. In this context, only a minority elite or upper middle-class youth could access prolonged school trajectories and get in touch with new experiences and ideas. Such students were particularly relevant in forging and supporting anti-fascist and anti-colonial structures and initiatives in the 1960s and early 1970s.

Besides all the adversities that young people faced, after the democratic revolution (April 25th 1974), major efforts were made to reduce poverty and social inequalities, enhance economic growth and raise the educational standards of the general population, which raised the population's general wellbeing and social mobility aspirations (Barreto, 2002). After 1974, university students were again pivotal in social change, engaging in political parties, community level initiatives, cultural collectives and alphabetisation campaigns. This was a period where pro-democratic political activism, alongside literature, architecture, visual arts and musical movements, were defining trends of a strongly involved young generation that would become a national symbolic reference in the decades to come in many social dimensions (Pappámikail, 2011).

Gender was one of such dimensions and, thus, there were improvements in the gender balance in education, in the labour market, in law and in family life. In fact, after the 1974 revolution, several efforts were made towards women's greater social, cultural and political participation in Portuguese society. For example, careers in public administration (e.g., diplomatic and judicial careers) opened to women's inclusion, several rights of men over women were abolished and women finally had the right to vote without any restriction. We can say that gender activism started to gain social relevance in

Portugal with the second and third feminist waves that occurred in the late 1960s, 1980s and 1990s and these changed the way Portuguese people understood women's rights. In this context, a new feminist trend emerged, characterised by economic and political struggles, while defending diverse identities in which subjectivity is an element of reference.

Over the last decades, most Portuguese youngsters became more aware of the social and global challenges faced by women. And, even though youth social engagement tends to assume less structured and more individualised forms, youth involvement in social and cultural initiatives and causes has grown (Pappámikail, 2011), namely in gender equality. In this arena, several social intervention projects and organisations are taking steps towards equality between genders and respect for all sexual orientations. Despite all the above-mentioned changes, at the present moment, significant gender inequalities in income, job opportunities and family responsibilities remain. The differentiated access of men and women to top positions, either in the private or public sector (Matos, 2011) can be presented as an example of persisting inequalities that indicate that despite the gradual changes in society, feminist activism is still needed. As Banyard (2010) argues, we are living in an era of *equality illusion,* given that the mainstream discourses incorporated gender in the agenda, conveying the message that feminist struggles are no longer necessary, but, in fact, they are still necessary as inequalities persist.

According to Tarrow (1994) and to Bagguley (2002), there are "cycles of protest", consisting of periods of more intense protest interleaved with periods of low activity. Concerning gender activism, it seems to be currently quite dynamic in various regions of the world (Redfern and Aune, 2013). Portugal is going through a period of greater intensity regarding public tendencies for gender equality and respect for the different sexual orientations. In fact, initiatives to gender equality are rising and gradually impacting more, increasing the social awareness of this issue among people of all ages. Regarding youth activism, though it is known that young people are developing more street and online activities in favour of gender equality, there aren't academic studies providing characteristics of youth involved in gender activism in the country (e.g., how many, who, when, why).

Globally, activists in gender issues tend to be young people who are more educated (Johnstone et al, 1994; Offe, 1985), more politically mobilised (McCarthy and Zald, 1987) and more concerned with belonging or being close to networks and collective identities that align with these types of activism (Melucci, 1989). The current movement of activism, in Portugal, is characterised by an alliance and "transversity" and not by a unique identity that women share and that intersects with class, race, age or nationality (Krolokke and Sorensen, 2006). The main goal of gender activism, at the moment, is to deconstruct categorical thinking, aiming at a position of multiple difference rather than a position of equivalence (Budgeon, 2001). This activism follows a politic of dialogue and cooperation recognising that women and other people have different identities but also come together over specific issues (Cockburn, 2007) such as their concern with intersectionality (Davis, 2008).

A few years ago, in Portugal, there was no deep theoretical discussion about gender arising from research (Grünell and Kas, 1995). More recently, gender studies have started to focus on new themes, that were until now barely visible, such as sexual work (Duarte, 2012; Oliveira, 2011); polyamory (Cardoso, 2010), transgender studies (Rocha, 2012; Saleiro, 2010); and queer theory (Coelho and Pena, 2009; Oliveira, 2009; Santos, 2013), and some changes occurred, enhancing the visibility of gender issues, namely in two domains: political – the introduction of "gender" in the discourses; and

public - several organisations, movements and initiatives developed and began to gain more visibility. However, the literature evidences that there is still an absence of major public discussion regarding gender, which is only starting to be more frequent in private contexts (Pereira and Santos, 2014).

In order to contribute to empirical studies on gender activism in Portugal, the present study aims to answer to the following research questions:

1. What are the sites, agents/agencies and forms of conflict encountered by young gender activists?

2. What are the consequences of and constraints on young gender activists resulting from stigmatisation as problematic or conflict-prone?

3. What forms do young gender activist's responses (individual and collective, online and offline) to conflict take? What meaning do young gender activists attach to them? Do young gender activists feel these responses can effect change? What is the innovative potential of these responses?

4. How effective are these responses are in mobilising and implementing young gender activists' drive for social change? In what cases do these responses constitute social innovation? How are they perceived as innovation by young people/older generations/authorities?

5. What role do intergenerational relations play in both causing and overcoming conflict and producing social innovation and change?

6. How might the experience of groups in finding creative responses and driving social change out of conflict be transferred to peers?

2. Methods

In order to address these research questions, data were collected over a period of 5 months (August to December 2017) using semi-structured, voice-recorded interviews as well as participant observation of gender activism events. Observational data were recorded in field notes and voice-recorded interviews were transcribed. Both sets of data were anonymised, coded (using Nvivo11) and analysed thematically.

2.1. The case study

The group of young gender activists was chosen for being a group of people who do not conform to societal norms regarding inequalities between genders. Youngsters who are engaged in this type of activism aim to have a society where all genders are considered as equal, with the same rights, duties and salary. Nowadays, not only the rights of women are defended but also gay, lesbian, transgender and queer, as well as some men's rights such as more time for parental leaving, leading more men to join this type of activism. In Portugal, the number of organisations that are concerned with gender equality increased, leading to more attention for this type of activism. More youngsters are now involved in actions, namely street demonstrations, meetings to talk about the problem, and activities where they demonstrate an active voice in the defence of those who need help. Therefore, this group of youngsters displays its conflicts both in private (e.g., the family) and public sites (e.g., the street),

frequently with adults (e.g., parents and other family members and peers) and institutions (e.g., services and organisations). These young activists do not conform to society and the way it passively accepts gender inequalities.

2.2. Interview locations and characteristics of the sample

Data were collected from people with any kind of involvement in gender activism. Because participants were not all from the same geographic area nor from the same organisation, interviews were carried out in several locations, in Porto and in Lisbon. The majority of the interviews were held in the University where the study is being conducted, or in a place that the participants requested (e.g., cafés, organisations).

Respondents were recruited, initially, through two organisations that are part of the Portuguese National Policy and Practice Network (NPPN) (some participants are members of these organisations), and through an event that one of these organisations prepared. Then, other participants were recruited through an event that was held in the facilities of another organisation that is also a member of the Portuguese NPPN, and after this initial stage, respondents were recruited through snowball sampling.

Overall, participants can be grouped, at the time of the selection to the interview, into three types of gender activists. The first group includes 11 participants who, at the time of the interview, were members of direction boards, other members or former members (but in contact) of gender activist's organisations. In the second group are included seven sympathisers/occasional participants in gender initiatives (e.g., feminist festivals, workshops, manifestations, gender meetings) that are not directly involved with any organisation or that were in the past but left because of disagreements regarding gender ideas. Finally, the third group includes two "independent activists" that have been close, in the past, to gender activist's organisations but left, and now are very active in an independent way (e.g., editors of gender zines, owners of feminist brand clothing).

In total, 20 youth (5 males) aged between 17 and 32 years old were interviewed. Of these, 3 were 20 years old or under, 8 were aged between 21 and 25 years old, 6 were aged between 26 and 30 years old, and 3 were aged between 31 and 32 years old[1]. The majority of respondents (11) have a bachelor's degree, three have a master's, three completed secondary education, one has a PhD, one completed 9th grade and one has completed a professional course. The majority of participants (9) were in full-time employment, seven were in full-time education (including all those that completed lower-higher education or upper-higher education), one was in part-time employment, one was in part-time education, one was in full-time employment but also in part-time education, and one was in part-time employment and in part-time education. Most participants (10) were living with the family (e.g., parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents), four were living with friends, and four were living with a boyfriend or girlfriend, one was living with his mother and girlfriend, and one was living alone. All the respondents lived in Portugal though two were not Portuguese citizens. A socio-demographic profile of each respondent is included in Appendix 1.

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[1] Due to the recruitment procedures adopted in this case study, several gender activists who were willing to participate were over 29 years old. The research team considered this as a reflection of the demographic profile of gender activists, especially of those who have a stronger involvement in activism. Hence, the age limit was not considered a strict exclusion criterion and a few participants over 29 were included in the sample.

2.3. Interview

The interview schedule was closely based on the common 'skeleton interview scenario' of the ethnography work package (WP6) adopted by the PROMISE partnership, in order to allow cross case comparisons and analysis. It was designed to stimulate a structured yet adaptable conversation with respondents. Divided in four sections, the interviews addressed different topics related to how gender activists are engaged with this type of activism: 1) background information about the respondent – why they are involved in the group or activity and what happened before that prompted their involvement; 2) information of any experience of stigma and conflict and location of the sources of stigma or conflict – identification of stigmas rather than assuming specific stigma, inclusion of intergenerational conflict; 3) respondent's understanding of the activity they are engaged in (e.g., street art, youth club activities) – description on what participant's do, with who and what advantages it has for them, as well as how others perceive the activity or organisation (e.g., peers, older generations, authority); and 4) indications about what the activity provides/could provide for other young people and how it can be shared. All interviews were voice recorded (with a minimum length of 45 minutes, a maximum length of 111 minutes and an average duration of 63 minutes, producing a total of 1,261 minutes) of interviews, and transcript (in a total of 730 pages).

2.4. Ethics

All respondents were asked to sign an informed consent before the interview, and in the case of the youth that is under 18 years old, parental informed consent was also requested. All participants were given an information sheet outlining the research, providing contact details of the researchers, and assuring that they could withdraw from the research at any point. Confidentiality was ensured to all participants.

2.5. Positionality

The positionality of the researchers was important in this case study. Half of the participants were participating in education, either at school or university, and nine of them have experience in higher education. The two researchers that conducted the interviews are university educated (PhD) and are middle class women, sharing education, gender and class with most participants. None of the researchers is involved in gender activism organisations, but one of them investigates in the area of gender, particularly in the fields of women in prison and gender and migrations control. The positioning of both the researchers and the prior experience of one of them in studying gender issues legitimated their presence and facilitated their participation in this research. In fact, the participants felt very comfortable throughout all stages of the field work, particularly during the interviews.

2.6. Data analysis

All interviews were anonymised and coded using Nvivo11 and all respondents were given pseudonyms. The interviews were coded into 26 level two nodes that were provided by the coordinating team of the PROMISE project and discussed within the whole consortium. Level two nodes were informed by theory in order to produce a number of main themes to which the researchers agreed and used in the key findings section. The level one nodes were developed by means of an interactive process of coding interviews, discussing in team and getting final agreement. Nodes reflect the contents of the interviews rather than just being predetermined by the structure of

the interview. One interview was first coded by all Portuguese team members and then coding was discussed. After that, though most interviews were coded by one single researcher, the one that did most of the interviews, the coding process was systematically discussed with other researchers.

3. Key Findings

In this section, the key findings will be organised by six main themes: conflicts around gender, sexuality and activism; experiencing stigma and fighting against it; 'activisms' as a response to social conflicts; effectiveness in promoting social change; the role of intergenerational relations in causing and overcoming conflict; and ways of transferring experience to peers.

The themes, which meet the research questions described earlier, emerged from the qualitative data analysis. Throughout the text, we will include quotes from the interviews, as well as indicate numbers of sources (and occasionally numbers of references) in order to illustrate the consistency and relevance of some results.

3.1. Conflicts around gender, sexuality and... activism

When analysing data to understand what sites, agents and forms of conflict are encountered by young gender activists, four main themes emerged: critics of the dominant discourses on gender roles and sexual orientation; resistance to activism; sexual orientation as a conflict; and the conflicts within activist organisations.

3.1.1. Critics of the dominant discourses on gender roles and sexual orientation

Criticism of the dominant social discourses, conservative in terms of gender roles as well as sexual orientation, is very much present in the discourses of these young activists. Though only 9 of them (15 references) criticise this explicitly, throughout all the interviews, it seems to be assumed as a relevant conflict that is at the basis of these young people's work as activists. They describe gender inequalities and male dominance and their specific impact on women's lives (e.g., less freedom of expression, feeling less secure). According to Francisca, 'girls are educated to be fragile…to appear more fragile, so as not to express too much opinion'. The lack of security for women in public spaces is mentioned frequently as one of the major problems arising from male dominance. But the respondents also argue that making it an issue reinforces such dominance and weakens women's position:

> ... The other day, I don't remember who, but someone who is also a feminist, was saying that what made her become a feminist was that she realised the lack of security there is when you walk on the street or go out at night as a woman. And that messes with me a lot. Why is there such a danger? ... I'm not saying that I don't worry and that if I have a daughter I will not worry either. But the fact that this is an issue bothers me a lot. (Rosário)

The respondents also describe a false sense of change and acceptance, as they consider that, although a discourse of equality and of changes at this level is more present, Portuguese society is not

ready to make fundamental changes. Take the words of Marília, for instance: 'I think that our society is not ready to accept. With all the problems that I've heard, all the legislation … I think it is not. I think there's so much bureaucracy, so many difficulties to achieve something …'.

3.1.2. Resistances to activism

When describing the main conflicts they experience, the participants mention resistance to activism itself. They point out that sometimes, there are conflicts in a more intimate sphere, for example, when their relatives, boyfriends or partners do not understand their less conservative ideals in terms of gender and sexual orientation nor their engagement in activism.

> … it is not something that I feel like sharing with them [family] they will not even understand what feminism is. (Carmo)
> Then, I had that boyfriend that told me "you will not be a feminist, because if you are feminist I will be sexist" and he created a lot of confusion that I, in some point in time, even before ending that relationship, stopped seeing him because I didn't even want to be with him. (Francisca)

They also describe resistance in the contexts where their gender activism takes place. Schools are one such context, as teachers often resist rather than support their initiatives, especially when they present topics about sexual orientation.

> There is also this LGBT component that is not very well addressed in schools yet. Schools started now to have a few cases pointed out as "Case A" of the school. Even the employees and the teachers are not prepared. (Marília)

3.1.3. Sexual orientation as a conflict

Sexual orientation is also described as a conflict by five respondents. According to them, having a sexual orientation other than what is socially expected is not only a reason for conflict within the scope of the family or globally in society, but is also a reason for inner conflicts. Likewise, there are reports of isolation and despair associated with the discovery of homosexuality:

> … when I discovered that I was gay it was a shock to me because I thought that I was the only gay in Portugal. Very clever. [Laughs]. Then I felt isolation, despair, sadness, thinking that it was something that just happened with me, and I remember that I saw on TV that there were pride LGBT marches all over the country. (Lucas)

The possibility of various forms of conflict, such as physical or verbal aggression, occurring in public spaces is described by some respondents:

> … for example, in the issue of LGBT, … gender is a concern. If we are talking about a boy, he will suffer much more physically when compared to a girl. Although there are also cases of very specific violence, it is not just comments, and the person has the ability to deal with it. Violence itself. (Rosário)

3.1.4. Conflicts within activist organisations

Although it is only referred to by two participants, it is worth mentioning that the context of activism is pointed out as a site of conflict in itself.

While a young woman points out that there is not always a consensus as to the type of activities to be developed (for example, the marches), another young woman describes how it can be difficult not to have conflicts in activism, especially in an associative context. In the opinion of this young woman, there are often intrigues and some activists try to become the main protagonist, placing their ego above the cause for which the associations fight:

> I think yes, all people, one of the great conflicts that there is in activism and even among young people ... and in groups and in associations, is this [egoism]. We have to realise that everyone is right and sees things in a way, and it's a pity that does not happen. (Manuela)

3.2. Experiencing stigma and fighting against it

We sought to understand the stigmatisation experienced by young activists and the consequences arising from these experiences. Two main themes emerged from the data analysis: discrimination because of gender and sexual orientation, and for being a gender activist; and constraints resulting from stigma.

3.2.1. Discrimination because of gender and sexual orientation and for being gender activists

Almost all young activists (16 sources/61 references) referred to having had experienced some kind of stigma. Among them, nine mentioned it happened because of their gender, as was the case of Marlene:

> For example, if I commit, I am driving, if I make a mistake in driving "it is because I am a woman" "it is obvious that it is a woman", I don't know, if I do something wrong when parking my car, people will think "it is obvious that is a woman". (Marlene)

Twelve reported having been discriminated against for being a gender activist.

> I have already been treated differently. I've felt discrimination for that, ok? For saying that I am a feminist because at some point, being a feminist in some academic circles, is considered bad ... bad ... cruel ... people do not accept ... people see it as an eccentricity. And to assume, in a congress, that you have a feminist perspective or that you are going to present work on a feminist perspective, I think you have to have courage because for a long time I almost said it very quietly. (Francisca)

Finally, six young gender activists say they have been stigmatised because of their sexual orientation. Take the words of Teresa, below:

> I think the way they treat me differently is because knowing that I am involved in these things, they assume that I am also part of the LGBT community, that I am a lesbian or that I am bisexual or trans, that is, they assume this, and so they will treat me differently

because they assume that I am part of that minority as well, and so the issues of discrimination appear. (Teresa)

Still regarding stigma, according to the young gender activists, youth is, in general, seen negatively (9 sources) – 'There is a major discrediting of young people's thoughts; so the adults think that what they consider to be right is how things should be' (Francisca). Thus, the discrimination these young people experience in relation to their gender activism may also intersect with discrimination because they are young.

Young activists also mention that there are other important dimensions that contribute to a major or minor discrimination, hence, intersectionality seems to be an important lens to analyse these stigmatisation experiences.

> Ok, this is why feminism also helps me in this, and this, the concept of intersectionality, is exactly that. Feminism itself is for all women, or in this case, for all people who are part of minorities and who are below patriarchy and … and then within feminism there are also other issues that make certain people more affected by the rules of society and I think in this case the young people also have, there are also groups that are more … fragile, more vulnerable than others. (Carmo)

3.2.2. Constraints resulting from stigma

The young gender activists that shared having experienced stigma (for being a gender activist, because of gender or sexual orientation), mentioned some constraints in their lives, such as becoming more active in gender activism (10 sources) – 'It is always demotivating, at least at an early stage, but I think that afterwards the person begins to realise that it is not worth it and, that the important thing is to keep fighting and continue to do their part and hope that it will be acknowledged.' (Marília); or experiencing psychological distress (2 sources)

> On a psychological level, it was very hard from a very young age, because I had to take the bus to get home, which means that I would go to a lot of public places from a very young age and, I was often approached by men and boys who were verbally and sometimes physically aggressive and that impacted me a lot. It really did. (Gabriela).

3.3. 'Activisms' as a response to social conflicts

When analysing data to understand young gender activists' responses to conflict, three main themes emerged: diversity in the level of involvement and formalisation of activism, and in the types of activities, rewards of gender activism, and difficulties of gender activism.

3.3.1. Diversity in the types of actions, level of involvement and formalization of activism

The young people in this case study are, by definition, involved in several actions towards society aiming to change the dominant discourses and expectations about gender and sexuality. However, the analysis revealed that their involvement in this type of activities may vary.

On the one hand, while 13 participants are involved in organisations, the remaining seven describe

developing gender activism without this formal involvement. Among the 13 members of associations, nine had or still have leading roles.

On the other hand, considering the types of activities they participate in or organise, the diversity is evident: Street activities, such as, for instance, "Marches" (6 sources) and "Street protests" (2 sources); Cultural and artistic activities, like theatre, cinema, music or art projects (7/20), or the edition of publications ("Zine") (2 sources); Educative activities, including "Workshops", "Conferences" and "Debates" (7 sources), developing "projects with children and youth" (mostly in schools) (4 sources), teaching about gender (2 sources), and 'academic activism', with the development of thesis in gender topics (2 sources).

It is interesting to note that 13 young people report that they have been, or are still currently, involved in other kinds of activism, besides the gender related one. The main causes that they fought for were human rights and animals' rights along with political activism, thus displaying an overall engagement towards the promotion of better living conditions in society that connects gender related issues with wider social justice concerns. Seven respondents, however, mention that they have never been involved in activism besides gender.

3.3.2. Rewards of gender activism

We have also analysed the way these young activists experience the activities they are engaged in and found that most of them (16) cite it positively. As they describe, activism is globally a positive experience ("only had good things") that makes them feel "proud" and that gives them "gratification" or "rewards".

In order to explain the positive aspects of the activities they are engaged in, several participants describe the importance of the impact of activism on others ("makes other people feel good"; "Changes perspectives") as well as on themselves ("Makes me feel good"; "Makes me feel useful"; "gives meaning to my life"; "I feel I am respected").

The positive feelings linked to gender activism may also arise from the sense of belonging to a community or group, or may be related to the type of activities they do within activism, which they tend to like.

> … I like to be part of it because I think our own meetings are in an atmosphere of dialogue, where we try to understand what would be most interesting to talk about. And even see the opinions within the group itself, the core itself. I like to take part, we also talk a lot, we talk. Each one gives their own opinion. (Guilhermina)

There are two references concerning the "passion" for the theme of gender. This passion is referred to by two respondents as one of the reasons why they experience gender activism so positively.

> ... the passion I have for this topic ... makes people want to hear, right? Then they hear me too, and many ... I've left many people completely stunned, right? With the things I say, like I do. I really like the subject, right? And that's why they listen to me, right? (Agostinho)

3.3.3. Difficulties of gender activism

The young people in this study also mention less positive aspects of their experience as gender activists. In fact, 11 of them cite difficulties linked to their engagement in activism.

First of all, they say that if it is not that difficult to participate in one event, as lots of young people do, it is much more difficult to be an activist on a daily basis. In this case, there is a constant effort, sometimes hard to manage. In the words of Rute, '... well it is not an easy task, it is a difficult and daily thing, is not it? It's a daily struggle, it's a bit difficult, it's difficult and it's especially hard on the little things, you know?' Moreover, according to them, it is mandatory to know the field very well (i.e., the institutions, the politics, the activists, the public), and how it changes over time, in order to be successful in gender activism.

Reference is also made to the difficulty of working with political parties as well as of working with other activists, because political or individual interests may surpass the interest in defending the cause of gender equality.

Additionally, some young activists argue that when organising activities they tend to face several obstacles. For instance, the official institutions that should help (e.g., City Hall) may be very bureaucratic. Then, they face resistance because gender roles are deeply established making it very hard to change mentalities. For instance, according to Agostinho, "it is very difficult for a man to be a gender activist".

When the activities take place, they may feel frustration because of the lack of interest or participation by others in the activities they organise. Or they may feel misunderstood as frequently others do not understand the message.

Finally, activism is described by nine respondents as something that occupies much of their time, more than their jobs or studies. But most of the time this is not described as something negative. With the exception of one reference of it being exhausting when they take on the leadership of activist organisations.

> Yes, in the last year I was 100% active because I was part of the administrative board of the organisation and I'm in almost all the activities of the organisation, some very intense. I volunteer 100% in the organisation, but sometimes it takes up more of my time than my work does, which is 40 hours per week. (Lucas)

3.4. Effectiveness in promoting social change

Trying to understand if young gender activists consider having an impact on others, it was possible to observe that some of them think that their actions have an impact on other people and they are globally able to identify benefits to them and to others as a consequence of their actions. However, such impacts are recognised mainly in those who are closer to them.

3.4.1. Do others recognise the importance of gender activism?

The majority of the young gender activists (14 sources) feel that society acknowledges their impact and potential of innovation. However, seven of them consider that those who in fact acknowledge the

impact of their actions are people who are close to them, such as family and peers.

> Ah ... yes, I think the people that surround me, anyway, and also those who do not surround me personally, but know what I'm doing. Above all I think they give me a lot of motivation and they encourage me a lot. I do not know if this is a way of acknowledgement, I would say yes, in fact they encourage me a lot, give me a lot of support. Sometimes people say "wow this is you! That's really your scene! "Well, I think so, that this is also a form of recognition. (Susana)

In contrast, two activists are not confident that their actions have an impact on others or make a difference globally on society. One of them, Teresa, says:

> The value of what I do… maybe not because, myself, if I am not working and I am organising the logistics and things like that, and not in contact with people, I do not see the value myself. Only when I get feedback and I see that there are real changes, I see, okay no ... this has value and all of this work makes sense. And, so, ah ... maybe if often I don't see value, they will much less because they don't see the feedback that exists. (Teresa)

There is one young activist who considers that others do not understand his activism, but instead admire it.

> Humm..... I think people in general admire more than understand, I do not think so ... ah, "yes, that's good that you are doing this", but when I say that I'm working on an education project for human rights, I do not think that much relevance is given to it. Sometimes people ask, oh, those are minor things. But I think there is more of a feeling of admiration than proper understanding. (Renato)

Nevertheless, these considerations on what youth think about their impact on others/if others and society recognise their activism, they are able to identify benefits to them and to others as a consequence of gender activism.

3.4.2. Benefits to others

Regarding the benefits that gender activists consider promoting on others (14 sources), the most frequently mentioned are changing ways of thinking and mentalities, and changes to everyday behaviours.

> In other situations there is receptivity, openness and understanding, and it is often great and very rewarding to see changes in opinion, behaviour, towards a more respectful attitude and this is gratifying as a human being. (Lucas)

> It is a small paradigm shift, in which more and more young men are identifying themselves as feminists and being more and more aware of how they act and how they react in their daily lives. (Susana)

3.4.3. Benefits to themselves

The respondents are also able to identify benefits of the activism on themselves: changing their thoughts and behaviours and growing as a person (14 sources); increasing their own self-esteem and perception of self-efficacy (9 sources); and improving their capacity to establish relations with others (3 sources).

> It helped me to create my own identity, and from the moment we can identify ourselves with something that makes us feel good and that makes us feel comfortable with ourselves and that we do not have to be part of a standard, we don't have to follow norms to fit into a box. This makes our confidence and self-esteem much higher and I think that nowadays I can do certain things that I never dreamed of doing, such as doing this interview, and then I think that these kinds of ... of things have helped me immensely to improve my self-esteem and confidence in this case. (Carmo)

> It was by making friends through the zines, through the theoretical production, also because I was able to find a group of people with whom I identified, so all these people give me encouragement and give me motivation to continue creating. (Rute)

3.5. The role of intergenerational relations in causing and overcoming conflicts

Intergenerational relations seem to play an important role in overcoming social conflicts. Data analysis evidenced that older generations contribute, at the same time, to cause and to solve young people's conflicts. It also evidenced that, according to these youngsters, gender differences have been slowly decreasing through generations despite remaining significant in school and in family contexts. Finally, participants reveal various perceptions of support to their activism, from older generations.

3.5.1. Are we overcoming gender inequalities through generations?

Almost all participants (15 sources) argue that gender inequalities and discrimination based on gender persist in current societies. According to them, gender inequalities are very much rooted in older generations and this is a barrier for social change towards equality:

> We have an older generation that still has very assumed gender roles. It is very clear in the domestic sphere, in which women have a lot of tasks. This older generation might have some resistance and some difficulty in deconstructing all these ideas.... (Rute)

And, as referred to by one participant, 'there is still too much discrimination on the street, in schools, in family.' (Renato)

Nevertheless, as the same respondent argues 'somehow, people are becoming more conscious'. (Renato). In fact, according to the majority of respondents (13 sources), some modifications occurred regarding gender inequalities, though slowly and gradually.

> Socially, I think it has evolved, albeit very slowly. At this level, for example, I think we are exactly, not exactly the same because there are more and more people thinking differently, but I think we are evolving very slowly on a social level. At a professional level

I think we are, there has been evolution, even in areas that were traditionally dominated by men, women are increasingly appearing, which also has to do with the change in the education of children, ok? But I think it's a very slow evolution. Faster than it was, but still slow. (Marlene)

As a result of the already accomplished changes, nowadays people tend to fight less for rights and more for equality:

Formerly maybe they felt that, the situation of the housewife, and that would have ... now the feeling that women can do more things, but they still do not realise that is equal, they will not fight for their rights, women have rights, and equality for both ... some men begin to think, getting worried that they will be discriminated against, but I think the goal is to fight for equality, never be superior to anyone. (Marília)

3.5.2. Family as a context that reproduces inequalities but encourages activism against it

Family tends to be seen by the respondents as a paradoxical context in terms of gender. Youth feel that they are not sensitised for gender equality by their family and that their education is biased by gender expectations (5 sources) – 'Even my parents were always careful with me, and I knew perfectly well that it would not be the same had I had a brother.' (Francisca). However, other youngsters see family as a context where they were exposed to gender activism (7 sources) - 'Even at the level of… my parents always had a fairly open mind, a very open mind and so they always made me think about these issues and with them I think I've never felt any kind of difference.' (Marlene)
 Moreover, sometimes family simply inspires young people for equality (3 sources):

'One of my aunts, she married a black man, in the 60's, also in [island name in Portugal] and she's very faired skin with blue eyes and he's black from [country name in Africa] and she's one of my biggest inspirations, because at the time they were also not well seen by everybody and they were mistreated by family members and everything and they continued together and so I do not think even my aunt realises any of this ...' (Carmo)

And family is also mentioned as supportive in their activism (15 sources/25) – 'My family usually say, "Dude, what you do is an amazing thing" So, they are very proud and all this kind of thing, right? Above all, my mother.' (Agostinho); I have a wonderful relationship with my brothers and they understand very well and ... they like it and ask for an opinion, and when they know of an issue, or an article they send it to me ...' (Luciano)

3.5.3. School biases in terms of gender and sexual orientation

Like family, school is, at the same time, a context where youth feel that they face bias by authorities regarding gender and non-acceptance of other sexual orientations (8 sources) and a context where they can be more informed and be aware of gender inequalities (7 sources).

I think that in school and in teaching, I have always had the idea that girls are seen as those who strive, those who have to strive to get somewhere. Boys are much more ... if they do not strive and get good grades; or the case of the boys, the girls study humanities and the boys study other areas of exact sciences. (Gabriela)

I remember at school, there was an English teacher, with who we talked about the suffragettes in England. And so there, ah ... maybe it was. As I recall anyway. It's more remarkable to talk about issues. She would ask questions and if, I remember well, I think that was it, I think it was at that time that there were women who burned their bras. I remember her perfectly asking me if anyone here was also burning and I think at the time I said yes (laughs) ah ... and so there we talked a little bit. (Rosário)

3.5.4. The role of older generations in supporting gender activism

A few respondents (5 sources) report feeling supported by older generations in their gender activism, while six report they don't feel this support. In the case of the latter, they believe that this lack of support is linked to the fact that they are young, and young people usually are not taken seriously

They support when they need support for anything, some of them, obviously there is always that black sheep that will say no, but I think they also want to give continuity, especially those who, when they were that age already did, they want to help for there to be continuity. (Marília)

That's what I was telling you, I think that older people think that if young people are active it's because it's a matter of rebellion. (Francisca)

Yes, I suppose they think the values are a little changed. That the concerns are as well… but for example, if it is an elderly person who does not understand the issues of inequality they do not give it value, and probably will find that young people have a normal attitude and that there is not much to do. I do not know, I also think it is a relative issue. (Micaela)

Half of the participants felt that older generations could have an important role in motivating young people to this type of activism, namely through sharing their stories with younger generations (10 sources).

 ... adults have these interesting experiences that we want to know about but they end up not telling us because they think we have no interest, right? And to see someone older who knows what you are talking about, I think it would be interesting ... also parents, at home, try to reinforce this behaviour, or that perspective. It would help a lot, of course. (Guilhermina)

... I think we have to work on an intergenerational logic, that does not make sense ... I see a lot of this in LGBT activism. There was a gap among older activists, who were present in the 1980s and 1990s when HIV was on the table, and these younger generations ... suddenly there was no passage of witness between these two generations and today we are maybe living things about HIV, in particular, that we would not be living if there had been a more direct contact with who was in the forefront 20 years ago. (Renato)

3.6. Transferring experience to peers

When analysing data to understand what are the strategies that could be used to transfer experience to peers, gender activists firstly consider that they aim to reach those who are close to them or need more support. In addition they discussed their ideas of how to get more youth involved in activism, which will be explored in the next sections.

3.6.1. Being heard by others

In this case study, the respondents assume to be in conflict with the social norms related to gender, thus, being activists in this area as a way to promote social change to overcome this conflict. Many youngsters (14 sources) feel that their discourses are heard by other people, namely by people that are close to them and know they are gender activists or at least that they have a different standpoint about gender and/or sexual orientation.

> But a very small group of people and only those who are already interested [in gender activism]. Who already have knowledge of what I'm talking about. Those people who are outsiders and do not know what I'm talking about, they still do not want to know. But I have a small group of people that want to listen. (Guilhermina)

In contrast, six young people feel that they are not heard at all or that they are not heard by others in general regarding their activism.

> It depends a lot on the other person. There are people that a person feels no, not worth it and that's it. And I honestly do not know what to do in these cases, because if it's not worth it, it's sad but we have to wait, it's not that the person is a minority … but generally yes, I always try to have conversations. Sometimes it depends on the cases. (Rosário)

3.6.2. Impact of gender activism on others

Besides some young people's experiences of not being heard, the majority of them (13 sources) indicate that they perceive their activism has an impact on others on a micro level, such as friends, and that, gradually, a chain effect occurs.

> In other situations there is receptivity, openness and understanding, and, often, it is great and very rewarding to see changes in opinion and behaviour, towards a more respectful attitude and this is gratifying as a human being. (Lucas)

> It's a small impact but it's as I say. When I talk to a friend and this friend talks to another friend of his who talks to another. How is that phrase? Acting locally… "Acting locally, thinking globally" because if each one, in passing, has an impact on one person, it will have an impact on another person. I think it's all a chain of help and solidarity. (Guilhermina)

In line with the argument of their activism having micro impacts, the influence that participants perceive they have on others is mainly related to the change of behaviours and attitudes towards gender and sexual orientation differences.

Yes, and then they start questioning. I already hear my colleague talking about cases that happen, she might not have been attentive before, but after our discussions, after our friends ah ... they had that influence on us. Before, it probably did not even exist and now she begins to question, saying this is not right, she already identifies these inequalities. (Cristiana)

3.6.3. Strategies for transferring experience to other youth

Regarding approaches that these young people use for transferring their experience, the most referred are: discuss the theme of gender equality with children in order to sensitise them to these issues (3 sources); encourage activism through social networks (2 sources); be open about their own sexual orientation (2 sources); and talk/discuss the theme with relatives, friends and others (2 sources).

They defend the importance of discussing these ideas with children in order to produce social change, given that they will be the youth of the next generations. In parallel, children are in many contexts and in interaction with several adults contributing to claim their attention to many social problems.

To my students because I feel it is ... there is a group so different that goes to such different places, family, home, friends, I feel that this is a kind of nucleus from which a change of perspective may come. And they share everything that happens daily, and then the younger ones are ... come home and "Look the teacher spoke of this". If it is a continuous work, it will reach their uncles and then friends and ... if things are taken in an appropriate way to their age they may even think like this and in the future, one of two cases, see that something is wrong or want to do something about it. I think that's the main thing. (Florbela)

Social networks, as expected, are seen as crucial to disseminate ideas and promote social change because through them it is possible to get to many people, namely youth.

Yes, for example, I have a friend who is very active on twitter, it's a way, I think, because it reaches a lot of people, and it gets a lot of viewings. I do not know how it works; I do not even have twitter. (Elisabete)

Finally, being proud of their own sexual orientation and sharing it with others is something young people also consider that can make a difference. Discussing other relevant themes about gender and sexual orientation with relatives and friends is also pointed out by the respondents as a good strategy to promote social change in regard to gender.

At a nuclear level, I think we make a difference by saying that we're gay, especially because when we ask people, who do not accept LGBT people, if they know any LGBT people, they tell us they do not. And why don't you know? Because maybe they never expressed openness and people, for sure they know someone who is LGBT. However that person will never say that they are LGBT if they realise that the person will not accept it. (Lucas)

I think so, taking the example of the Angolan that we were talking about, when I told him, or that person, about this kind of thing, he already had a different vision, so when another person comes to him to talk about the same thing, he's already talking to someone else, generating a difference of opinion, right? As I have already said in lectures, I already have all the people with whom I have interacted, it is a small change, and I can't say that what I do is shocking, right? But it's a minimal difference, right? At least it's changing people's thinking. (Agostinho)

3.6.4. Strategies to involve more youth in gender activism

Some participants present ideas on to how to promote the involvement of other youth, specifically, in gender activism. One of the most referred to ideas is the use of media to disseminate gender activism ideas, to reach young people through media (11 sources) – 'Yes, probably yes, ah... they could stay, if they see it they would get curious. It's the same with publicity, isn't it?' (Micaela)

Another idea is that it is relevant to bring gender activism close to every youth (9 sources) by demystifying what feminism is - this concept may not be clear to youth that are not engaged in this type of activism. It is also important to use simpler language when talking to other youth, as well as to pass on the message of gender activism more effectively and the activities that take place and where youth can get involved to better know this reality.

> ...what could motivate more ... Sincerely, I do not know. I think that, often, people get stuck, especially women, girls. Like the friend who said, "Ah, I'm not a feminist, I believe in gender equality" and often do not want to go to these organisations because they already know they're going to talk about feminists and now feminism is such a bad term, "I do not want to be associated with it." I think we demystify these taboos and actually speak correctly. I think they might have more ... less shame to take those positions and they do too. (Guilhermina)

Another strategy that can be used to involve youth is to use school as a context where gender issues are discussed and gender equality is promoted (4 sources), namely by having teachers that are aware and well informed of this theme or by promoting debates about gender equality and sexual orientation.

> I think young people have to be educated to these issues from an early age. This work is being done, but very slowly. We do not yet have programmes in schools that are focused on such issues so intensively and during the course of education. We also have projects that are developing very specific actions of awareness, and that is not... that is done from an already considerable age group. We are already talking about young people from 13, 14 around there. I think it is necessary to invest in the education of these issues, such as equality issues, but also respect for other people, from a very early age because I think that only in this way can we change something, but I think that this role will and is being made, but they are also issues that should be addressed by politics. And there is not much ... no matter how much a person wants to do, it is already very limited. But I think that the role of education is fundamental for us to change them and for young people to take

another stance and I think they have an increasingly different stance and that is to be welcomed. (Norberto)

Attracting young people to gender activism would be facilitated by not having a radical position or by showing that the ideas of others are understood (3 sources).

I think it's in the language. I think language is highly important. In humility too, knowing how to listen to people, knowing how to listen to them, I think it's highly important, I've never arrived with my flags, and it's not, so to speak, without listening to the other person. And stop talking to someone else. And try to figure out why the other person thinks in such a way. (Manuela)

Finally, participants mentioned that social media are extremely important to disseminate gender activism ideas (3 sources).

But I think that despite of this, the dissemination of these opportunities is not very well achieved, even if it is publicised on Facebook, I often see pages of youth associations, associations of ... organisations… whatever they publish, even publish two or three times and have one or two views, three likes or something like that. I do not know what is missing, I think maybe what is missing is, it is always contexts where too much is disclosed, and maybe young people, X, Y and Z do not care about those 10 activities or to what will happen that month. And then what happens? They are not attentive and they do not follow the page, I am speaking of this in a very online sense because I think it is the easiest way, at this moment, to reach young people and I think it is inescapable to speak of this. (Elisabete)

4. Conclusions

The key findings presented in the previous sections allow us to draw some conclusions that contribute not only to characterise (youth) gender activism in Portugal, but also to meet the overall aims of the PROMISE project. Namely, we expect to contribute to understanding young people's experiences of conflict and stigma around gender, sexuality and activism, as well as the role of 'activisms' as a response to it and as a way to promote social change. The paradoxical role of intergenerational relations both in causing and in overcoming conflicts will also be highlighted as a conclusion of this case study.

To begin with, the youngsters in this case study are involved in several actions towards society aiming to change the dominant discourses and expectations about gender and sexuality. The findings revealed that their participation in activism is diverse in terms of types of actions, level of involvement and formalisation. They also revealed that most young activists tend to be engaged in different activism domains besides gender and sexuality, such as human rights, animals' rights and political activism, thus pointing to the possibility of different activism experiences reinforcing each other and fostering wider social engagement (Louis, Amiot, Thomas, and Blackwood, 2016).

As expected, the critics of the dominant social discourses in terms of gender roles and sexual orientation are very much present in the narratives of the young activists. These are the conflicts that mobilise them for social participation in order to promote change for greater equality of opportunities between genders and greater tolerance and acceptance of difference, particularly in terms of sexual and gender identities which, in their narratives, are clearly articulated. The call for attention to these issues, however, is seen by the youth of our case study as something that may reinforce male dominance and weaken women's position, thus they consider they need to be very careful in their actions.

Gender inequalities and lack of tolerance towards diversity and difference are, then, the social conflicts experienced by young people in Portugal that most concern and mobilise the participants. They suggest that some positive changes have already occurred at this level, though slowly and insufficiently, and believe that many rights have been achieved in some decades of activism. However, as these rights are not fully respected, current activism tends to be more focused on fighting against inequalities.

In fact, the young activists argued that gender inequalities are still very much rooted in older generations, which is a barrier for social change towards equality, and that there is still too much discrimination on the 'street, in schools and in family'. Family tends to be seen by the respondents as a paradoxical context in terms of gender as they feel that children and youth are not sensitised for gender equality by their families and that education in this context is biased by conservative gender expectations; however, they also see family as a context where they were exposed to gender activism and that supports it. Like family, school is seen as both a context full of gender inequalities and non-acceptance of other sexual orientations and a context where young people can be more informed and be aware of gender inequalities.

Globally, we can say that for the respondents there is a false sense of change and acceptance, as they believe that, although a discourse of equality and changes at this level is more present, Portuguese society is not ready to make fundamental changes due to the persistent reproduction of unequal gender roles through intergenerational relations in major socializing institutions like the family and the school.

Intergenerational relations, however, also seem to play an important role in overcoming social conflicts. The findings evidenced that older generations contribute, at the same time, to cause and to solve young people's conflicts. For instance, participants perceive support from older people to their activism, but at the same time, describe much resistance to activism by older generations despite the growing number of people engaged in and committed to this cause. They pointed out that sometimes, resistance occurs in a more intimate sphere, when their families and partners do not understand their less conservative ideals in terms of gender and sexual identity; they also described some lack of support by teachers when they develop actions in schools, especially in actions about the latter topic.

Data analysis also revealed that activism can be a site of conflict in itself, not only because it creates resistance from society, but also because conflicts may arise within activist associations or between activists. For instance, older activists, who tend to be seen as key actors for young people's involvement in activism, are also seen as competitors for more visibility and for preserving the work

they have done. Consequently, this makes it difficult for young people to have their space within activism to try to continue the work of older activists. Once again, we go back to the importance of intergenerational relations as cause and / or response to youth conflict.

A very relevant topic in this study refers to experiences of stigmatisation. At this level, almost all the respondents reported having experienced some kind of stigma either because of their gender or sexual orientation, or for being gender activists. However, according to them, as youth is, in general, seen negatively, it is difficult to identify one single reason for the discrimination they experienced: was it because they are activists on gender issues, because they are young, or because of both conditions? Moreover, other important dimensions may contribute to a major or minor discrimination (e.g., class, ethnicity). Hence, an intersectional lens should be adopted to understand the discrimination and stigma experienced by the young activists. Indeed, this concept, which is a key feature in some feminist discourses (Brah and Phoenix, 2004), was mentioned by some respondents in the interviews: first, when they argued that the discrimination they experience for being involved in gender activism intersects with discrimination for being young; also when they referred to the concept of intersectionality as crucial in their activity because "feminist activism is not just about women but also about minorities and other people affected by the rules of society". Thus, the way young people are involved in gender activism seems to value the intersection between gender, class, ethnicity, age or nationality (Cockburn, 2007; Krolokke and Sorensen, 2006). In general, we can say that the participants' discourses reinforce the argument of Phoenix and Pattynama (2006) that it is necessary to continue developing intersectionality theory when addressing gender.

In relation to being exposed to stigma, the young gender activists mention two main results: they may find in stigma the motivation to continue and work harder as activists or, on the contrary, the stigmatising experience may have a major psychological impact that interferes with self-esteem and self-efficacy. So we conclude that activism presents itself alongside a series of obstacles and difficulties, sometimes being a source of suffering. However, it seems to prevail as an activity experienced positively by young people, who describe feelings of reward, gratification and motivation to continue.

The findings evidenced that the positive experiencing of gender activism relies first of all on the impacts of their actions on themselves (e.g., growing as a person, increasing their own self-esteem) and on others (e.g., changing mentalities and behaviours). The latter are recognised mainly in those who are closer to them, as a first step to reach a wider audience. The positive feelings linked to gender activism may also arise from the sense of belonging to a community or group (which seem to surpass the conflicts that occasionally occur in this site), or may be related to types of activist activities they engage with, which they tend to enjoy.

Finally, data analysis revealed some strategies that the young people of this case study consider to be most effective in the involvement of more youth in gender activism. The main strategies pointed out were: to use media to publicise this type of activism, particularly social media and networks to disseminate ideas and events, to discuss gender issues with children from an early age, to be open about 'different' sexual orientations, and to talk systematically with those who are closer to them.

In Portugal, studies focusing on young gender activists are scarce. Therefore, we believe that, besides its importance for the cross-case and transnational analysis, the key findings of this case study are an important contribution to the Portuguese state of the art on the topic.

5. Future analysis

Regarding the future cross-case cluster analysis, given that in our case study gender was very much intertwined with sexual identity and the LGBTI issues, it will be interesting to develop a comparative study about the experiences of conflict, involvement, stigma and innovation, with young people with similar paths, but located in different countries and cultures (e.g., feminist and LGBTQ scene of St. Petersburg - Russia; Zagreb Pride - LGBTIQ NGO - Croatia).

Below, we list specific questions that could be answered within the cross-case comparative analysis:

- Is activism in itself a site of conflict across the case studies?

- Can we identify different paths in activism and different 'profiles' of gender activists in each case and across similar cases? Are those paths and profiles linked to different sets of social and personal factors?

- Are there different experiences of stigma and their internal and external, positive and negative constraints, across the case studies?

- Are there different actions and levels of involvement and formalisation of activism across the case-studies? And do the young activists experience activism differently across the cases? Do they recognise different impacts of their actions?

- Is the role of intergenerational relations in causing and in overcoming conflict similar in the different case-studies?

We also believe that the comparison of cases could be a good context to discuss the theme of social innovation, which was difficult to analyse with the data of a single case.

Finally, the data gathered in this case study could also be further explored if analysed in triangulation with data from WP4 and WP5 of the PROMISE project.

Considering WP4, we could explore experiences of stigma and types of constraints, levels of involvement and formalisation of activism, and types of impact resulting from their activism. For WP5 data, we suggest exploring sociodemographic data (specifically gender differences), civic engagement, formal political participation, and everyday engagement.

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Appendix 1: Table of respondents' socio-demographic data

	Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Education	Employment Status	Residential Status	Family Status	Participant's type of involvement in activism at the time of selection to participate
1	Agostinho	27	Male	Bachelor	In full-time education	Lives with friends	Single, no children	Sympathiser Occasional participant
2	Carmo	29	Female	Bachelor	In full-time employment	Lives with friends	Single, no children	Editor of a zine
3	Cristiana	22	Female	Bachelor	In full-time education	Lives with parents and one brother	Single, no children	Sympathiser Occasional participant
4	Elisabete	19	Female	Upper-higher education	In full-time education	Lives with grandparents and one aunt	Single, no children	Member of an organization
5	Florbela	22	Female	Bachelor	In full-time education	Lives with parents	Single, no children	Sympathiser Occasional participant
6	Francisca	25	Female	Master	In full-time employment/in part-time education	Lives with parents	Single, no children	Member of the direction board of an organisation Responsible for a branch of one organisation
7	Gabriela	23	Female	Bachelor	In part-time employment/in part-time education	Lives with mother and one brother	Single, no children	Sympathiser Occasional participant
8	Guilhermina	23	Female	Bachelor	In part-time education	Lives with mother and one brother	Single, no children	Member of an organisation
9	Lucas	31	Male	Bachelor	In full-time employment	Lives with boyfriend	Single, no children	Member of the direction board of an organisation

10	Luciano	29	Male	Bachelor	In full-time employment	Lives with a friend	Single, no children	Member of the direction board of an organisation
11	Manuela	31	Female	Professional course	In full-time employment	Lives alone	Single, no children	Founder of an association
12	Marília	17	Female	Lower-higher education	In full-time education	Lives with parents	Single, no children	Member of an organisation
13	Marlene	25	Female	PhD	In full-time employment	Lives with boyfriend	Single, no children	Sympathiser Occasional participant
14	Micaela	20	Female	Upper-higher education	In full-time education	Lives with parents and one brother	Single, no children	Sympathiser Occasional participant
15	Norberto	29	Male	Master	In full-time employment	Lives with parents	Single, no children	Responsible for a branch of the organisation
16	Renato	29	Male	Master	In part-time employment	Lives with friends	Single, no children	Former member of the direction board of an organisation
17	Rosário	24	Female	Bachelor	In full-time employment	Lives with girlfriend and mother	Single, no children	Sympathiser Occasional participant
18	Rute	30	Female	Bachelor	In full-time employment	Lives with girlfriend	Single, no children	Editor of a zine Owns a feminist clothing brand
19	Susana	32	Female	Bachelor	In full-time employment	Lives with boyfriend	Single, no children	Member of an organisation
20	Teresa	22	Female	Upper-higher education	In full-time education	Lives with parents	Single, no children	Member of the direction board of an organisation

PROMISE: Promoting Youth Involvement and Social Engagement: Opportunities and challenges for conflicted young people across Europe.

WP6: From Conflict to Innovation: Ethnographic Case Studies

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Young motherhood in multicultural Finland

Finland

Marja Peltola

Finnish Youth Research Society

Executive summary:

In the era of 'prolonged youth', young motherhood is subject to many contradictory discourses. While the trend of increasing mean ages of first-time mothers has given rise to societal worries, becoming a mother at an early age is associated in public discussions with many risks and concerns. The case study *Young motherhood in multicultural Finland* studied how young(ish) mothers themselves see young motherhood and how they position themselves as mothers and as young women. While the research participants – 18–25-year-old young women, pregnant or mothers of 1–2 children – share a life situation, they neither form a uniform group nor share a self-identity as 'young mothers'. What is shared, instead, is a self-identity of a competent, caring mother; and to claim this position, many emphasise their maturity and adult role. The participants' life situations, with accumulated gendered care responsibilities served to narrow their possibilities – and partly even their desire – for social activities outside of their homes. Yet, the case study shows how important it is that the ideas of citizenship and social participation are not understood *only* as activities taking place outside of the private domestic sphere. While the participants claimed also other identifications besides that of a parent (e.g. that of a young woman, a spouse, a friend, a student, and a worker), their activities in the domestic sphere were, in this life situation, an inseparable part of how they saw themselves as citizens and the kind of contribution to society they wished to make.

Contents

1 Introduction

Major trends analysed in the social scientific literature, such as prolonged youth (e.g. Côté, 2014), individualisation (e.g., Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) and precarisation (e.g. Standing, 2011), have changed the ways in which individual trajectories and youth-to-adulthood transitions are shaped and understood. While parenthood, and the timing, ideals and norms related to it, cannot merely be reduced to phenomena shaped by the demands of education and the labour market, the ever-changing social context with prolonged transitions through education to work has undeniably helped to shape these aspects as well. In Finland, as in many other countries in Europe, trends have for many decades included the decrease in birth rates and increase in the mean age of first-time mothers (Miettinen, 2015). In 2016 in Finland, a mother's mean age by first birth was 29.1 years (OSF, 2017). In 2010, among 15- to 19-year-old women, the birth rate was 9/1000, and among 20- to 24-year-old women around 60/1000 (Halonen and Apter, 2010). The anticipated 'ideal age' for becoming a parent, according to surveys, has increased, too, standing at 26.7 years for women and 28.5 years for men in 2015 (Miettinen, 2015). In this case study, the transition to parenthood – and to motherhood in particular – is the prism through which young adults' life trajectories and possibilities for social engagement are examined. My aim is to shed light on how young(ish) mothers and some fathers interpret their life situations, and what kind of positions they have, take and are given in their closest social networks and in the institutional context, designed to support the transition to parenthood.

Despite the societal changes, parenthood remains both an expected and highly controlled benchmark of adulthood (Lahelma and Gordon, 2008; Thomson et al, 2004). Transition to parenthood is a gendered, classed and ethnicised process that carries significant short- and long-term consequences for young adults' trajectories, identifications, social networks and well-being (e.g. Jones *et al*, 2006; Kehily and Thomson, 2011; Kelhä, 2009). Yet, it has received relatively little attention within youth studies. In this case study, young parenthood – and young motherhood in particular – is chosen as the prism through which young adults' life trajectories are examined.

Alongside the societal changes related to parenthood, motherhood, age and life trajectories, the increasing ethnic and cultural diversity in Finland is another major contextual factor this case study seeks to acknowledge. While Finland has never been the mono-cultural nation of the nation-building myths (Tervonen, 2014), larger-scale immigration to Finland started as late as the end of the 1980s.[1] The demographic change means that now, for the first time since the World Wars, the young generation growing up and transitioning into adulthood in Finland is deeply multiethnic.[2] The change has raised discussions and disagreements related to Finland's self-identity as a nation, many of which are interlinked with the Nordic welfare model and gender equality ideals and policies. The Nordic welfare model has a reputation for being 'woman friendly', while the equality policies are a source of national pride (Mulinari, 2007; Tuori, 2009). However, gender equality

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[1] The share of the population with foreign backgrounds remains modest: 6.2% in the country as a whole in 2015. This population is concentrated in the bigger cities in Southern Finland; for instance in Helsinki, where this case study is situated, the percentage is 14.3%. The most common background countries include Estonia, Russia, Somalia and Iraq (OSF, 2017).

[2] Unlike in older age groups, among younger age groups a quite considerable proportion of the population 'with foreign backgrounds' is Finnish-born: one-fifth among 20- to 24-year-olds, 40% among 15- to 19-year-olds, and on the rise among younger age groups (OSF, 2017). Hence, the multi-ethnicity of the young generation is not reducible to immigration (only), but is 'homegrown'.

policies are themselves a contested terrain, where conservative and anti-feminist discourses continue to maintain a foothold. At the same time, in the discussions related to multi-ethnicity, 'Nordic equality' is also used in a negative way as a discursive tool for building and confirming racialised hierarchies within the nation, by representing 'us Finns' as those already possessing the knowledge and practices related to gender equality and 'Others' as those allegedly engaged with traditional and patriarchal non-Western cultures, and who thereby lack gender equality (Brah, 1996: 72–76; cf. Mohanty, 1999 [1984]; Mulinari, 2007; Tuori, 2009).

According to previous research conducted both in Finland and internationally, becoming a mother at an early age is associated in public discussions with risks and concerns, such as increased economic challenges, disrupted trajectories through education and employment, and a lack of the necessary moral parenting competence, while the public discussion on young motherhood involves class-based stereotyping and the normalisation of a middle-class lifestyle (e.g., Kelhä, 2009; Phoenix, 1991; Wenham, 2016). In the era of prolonged youth and the emphasis put on education as a prerequisite for employment, young parenthood is a deviation from the age-related norms of life trajectories. Even though decreasing birth rates also trigger concerned headlines in the media, parenthood is neither an expected nor desired part of youth (Kuortti, 2012: 46–50) – at least not prior to other milestones of adulthood being reached. While the concerned discourses apply to all young mothers regardless of their ethnic backgrounds, representations of young mothers with ethnic minority backgrounds tend to be even more emphatically problem-oriented. Besides the other concerns, young mothers with ethnic minority backgrounds are often seen through a cultural lens, potentially suffering from cultural constraints, or even coercion within their families or other close communities (e.g. Keskinen, 2009). In the light of the hierarchical divide between 'us gender equal Finns' and 'the patriarchal Others', young motherhood may even be seen as an expected turn in the life trajectory of a young woman representing an ethnic minority; yet, understanding ethnic minority young mothers merely as submissive to 'their' cultural norms ends up reinforcing the racialising stereotype. These racialising representations have been criticised for ignoring both the existing gendered and sexualised social control of ethnic Finnish women, as well as ethnic minority young women's agency and their own interpretations of their life trajectories.

The research task in hand is, therefore, twofold: 1) To examine how young women see young motherhood and how they position themselves as mothers and as young women; and 2) to examine the resources and networks that young mothers have at their disposal, as provided by their personal relationships and the institutions of Finnish society (especially the maternity and child health services). I will also try to assess whether ethnic/migratory backgrounds influence the relevant experiences, positionings and resources, and if so, how. Regardless of their backgrounds, the respondents in the case study are in a life situation that demands restructuring their daily routines, and that is constrained by gendered and age-related structures and expectations. In this case study, it has been my aim to be sensitive to the potential vulnerabilities involved in the life situations, while avoiding making assumptions about problems at the same time.

1.1 Services and financial assistance related to parenthood in Finland

In Finland, as a part of the universal public health and social welfare services, maternity and child health services are provided for all resident mothers or couples during and after pregnancy, until the child reaches school age. These services are central to this case study, with the clinics where they are provided acting as the location for both recruiting the respondents and the observations that form a part of the data. Maternity and child health services are free of charge and voluntary.

They are widely available and regularly utilised; the estimated percentage of children using these services is as high as 99% (the estimation is based on the vaccination registers and consequently does not reflect the proportion of children who use the services regularly) (National Institute for Health and Welfare, 2017). The services are regulated by the Health Care Act (1326/2010) and the Government Decree on maternity and child health clinic services, school and student health services and preventive oral health services for children and young people (338/2011). The maternity and child health clinic system is based on the preventive and advisory approach, and aims at supporting new mothers, families and children (National Institute for Health and Welfare, 2017).

Social allowances and benefits designed to compensate for the (potential) loss of income resulting from pregnancy and child care at home include a maternity, paternity and parental allowance, and child home care allowance. These allowances are part of the universalist social welfare system and are duly paid to all parents regardless of their socioeconomic status. Maternity allowance is paid to the mother for a total of 105 working days (approximately four months). Parental allowance is paid to one parent (provided that she or he lives in the same apartment as the child) for a total of 158 working days (approximately six months). Paternity allowance is paid to the father (provided that he lives in the same apartment as the child) for a total of 54 working days (approximately nine weeks). Part of the paternity allowance (1–18 days) may be used at the same time as the other parent is paid maternity or parental allowance, while the rest of the allowance can be obtained only after the parental allowance has ended (Kela, 2017). After the parental allowance ends, a child home care allowance – which is considerably lower than the parental allowance – may be obtained until the child turns three, if the child is not in private or municipal child care (Kela, 2017). While parental allowance can be paid to either parent, it is received almost exclusively by mothers; only 1–3% of fathers receive an allowance for a longer period than that defined by the paternity allowance. Mothers also use 97% of the child home care allowances (National Institute of Health and Welfare, 2017). Additionally, the guardian (either mother or father) of a child is paid a child benefit of approximately 100 euros per month, which continues until the child turns 17. The entitlement to child benefit is based on residence. A parent who lives alone with one or several children can get a single-parent supplement in addition to the child benefit for each child (Kela, 2017).

2   Data and methods

The data for the case study consists of interviews with 16 young mothers and two fathers, conducted in the metropolitan region of Helsinki, which is among the most multi-ethnic areas in Finland. Sixteen semi-structured interviews were conducted individually and one with a couple. Additionally, for the purpose of obtaining contextualising data, ethnographic fieldwork was carried out in maternity and child health services in two cities. The ethnographic fieldwork included a total of 51 visits to seven different maternity and child health clinics, a considerable number of which were short visits made in order to meet the professionals, agree on the research practices and/or recruit the respondents. Detailed field notes were taken during the thirteen appointments that respondents and their children had with nurses and two with doctors. Each appointment lasted between thirty minutes and slightly over an hour.

Prior to gathering the data, access to the field was negotiated in a multistage process. Firstly, ethical clearance was sought from the Social and Health Care Services in the two cities. Secondly, access to the maternity and child health clinics was negotiated with the head nurses of several

districts in these cities. During the third stage, I visited the nurses' meetings in several local maternity and child health clinics, presenting the study and recruiting the nurses. The subsequent stage was dependent on whether the nurses decided to allocate some of their time to requesting preliminary permission from their clients so that they could inform me about the upcoming appointments with potential respondents. When the nurses informed me about the appointment times, I visited the clinics again, informing the potential respondents about the study and asking for their consent.

Hence, the recruitment process involved several 'gate-keeping' stages (see e.g., Aaltonen and Honkatukia, 2012) and was time-consuming as a result. The potential respondents were given information on the study, their role in it, and the data management, both orally and on paper. It was possible for them to sign the Informed Consent Form at this point or later. It was up to the respondents to decide whether they wanted to give their consent for the observation only, for the interview only, or for both. Eventually, I observed the clinic appointments of two respondents, who opted out of the interview, and interviewed five respondents who either opted out of the observations, or did not have appointments during the six months (approximately) that I was actively engaged in data gathering. Out of the potential respondents reached this way, nine rejected my request to participate; four of them did so after having already signed the informed consent form (it was explicitly explained to them that this was their right). Not all of them gave a reason for non-participation, but among the reasons cited, lack of time and/or energy to participate was the most common. Other reasons included lack of interest in the study and an uncomfortable feeling related to participating in research more generally.

An important observation concerning the recruitment process is that the young women's life situation, with most of them having very young children and some being heavily pregnant, did not favour their participation in the research study. On several occasions, an appointment – either a nurse's appointment or a pre-arranged interview – was cancelled or there was a no-show, resulting from various reasons related to the young women's child care responsibilities and the health of their significant others. Either the mother or her baby sometimes fell ill. On other occasions, unexpected responsibilities cropped up: taking care of a hospitalised mother-in-law, finding a new apartment and needing to move on a tight schedule, or looking after a friend's sick dog. Appointments were also simply forgotten in the midst of other priorities in the respondents' everyday lives. While this is all very understandable, it poses extra challenges for research. Even more importantly, these challenges reflect the respondents' situation in life, which was both in flux and characterised by multiple care responsibilities.

Choosing the maternity and child health clinics as the location for recruiting the interviewees had several implications for the formation of the target group. Firstly, given that the clinics offer their services the most frequently during pregnancy and during the first six months of new-borns' lives, most of the interviewees were either pregnant (with their first, second or third child) or had a young baby. Secondly, in terms of the age and ethnic background of the interviewees, I was largely dependent on the kind of clients that visited the clinics at the time of data collection and the kind of clients that the clinic nurses informed me about. As suggested by the research frame, I aimed at recruiting young mothers from various ethnic backgrounds, representing both the majority population and different ethnic/racialised minorities. The fathers were invited to the interviews in cases where they were actively present in the recruiting setting at the maternity and child health clinics; however, no extra efforts were made to recruit them in cases where they were not present or did not show any interest in the research.

A 'young' mother in this case study refers to a woman whose age at the birth of her first child is below the average age for first-time mothers (29.1 years in Finland in 2016). The targeted age

range was set at 18–25 years of age. Underage mothers were outside the scope of the study for ethical and practical reasons (0.3 % of mothers of new-borns were under 18 in 2015). All but one of the interviewed mothers fell within the defined age range, but the upper end of the range was represented more frequently than the lower end (see Appendix). One 27-year-old mother was also interviewed. The two interviewed fathers were 24 and 34 years old respectively. This means that the respondents were older than in some other studies on 'young mothers' (see e.g., McDermott and Graham, 2005). Being of age, the vulnerabilities related to the category of 'teen' or underage mothers did not concern them – except as a point of disidentification. However, this is not to say that age would not have been an important point of reference and reflection.

In terms of ethnicity, six of the mothers were ethnically Finnish, one was of mixed heritage (Finnish-other) and nine represented various ethnic minorities in Finland. Their background countries were Bosnia (1), Estonia (1), Iraq (1), Jamaica (1), Latvia (1), Russia (2), Somalia (2) and Thailand (1). These backgrounds represent relatively well the ethnic heterogeneity present in the maternity and child health services and in Finnish society more generally.[3] In ten cases, the fathers of the children were of the same ethnic background, while in six cases, they were of different backgrounds. One of the interviewed fathers was of Finnish ethnicity, and the other had a Somali background. In terms of ethnicity, both fathers were in endogamous relationships.

Most of the interviews were carried out outside the clinic setting; in the respondents' homes (5) and in public or semi-public places like cafés (6), libraries (2) and a park (1), according to the respondents' preferences. In three cases, the interviews were carried out on the premises of the maternity and child health clinics, which was in these cases suggested as the easiest and most accessible place by the interviewees. The interviews were semi-structured with a list of themes (or an aide-mémoire), which were nevertheless covered in varying order and detail and paraphrased in different ways with different people. By the same token, the pre-defined themes did not prevent other themes from arising during the course of the interview. In addition to the interview themes agreed on for the PROMISE project, other themes included family life and relationships with various 'significant others', the relationship with the father of the child, daily routines and ideals of child care and parenthood, reconciling family and work/education, the childhood family and experiences of belonging to an ethnic/racialised minority (where relevant), among others. Most of the interviews lasted between an hour and an hour and a half, with some slightly longer and shorter exceptions. All of the interviews were carried out in Finnish, apart from one, which was conducted in English. All of the interviews were recorded, transcribed and anonymised.

Observing the appointments with nurses in the maternity and child health clinics was the most significant form of ethnographic fieldwork. I negotiated with each respondent (and nurse) separately on how and when the observations would take place: for some, the observation preceded the interview, for others vice versa, depending mostly on the timetables of the respondents and the clinics respectively. The groupings in the appointments varied: besides myself and the nurse/doctor, in five cases there were only the respondent mother-to-be; in one case, the respondent mother-to-be and father-to-be; in six cases the respondent mother and her child (in one of these cases, a student nurse was also present); and in one case the respondent mother, the child, and the child's father. During my recruitment visits to the clinics, I observed young mothers coming to the appointments accompanied by their spouses, friends, several children, or their own mothers; most commonly, however, appointments were attended either by an expectant mother alone, or by a mother accompanied by her child(ren).

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[3] The most common background countries of people with non-Finnish nationality in Finland include Russia (or the former USSR), Estonia, Somalia and Iraq, with nationals of the countries of the former Yugoslavia forming another large group.

Due to the highly structured nature of the clinic appointments, the observations included hardly any participatory element on my side. In most cases, after chatting with the respondents in the waiting room, greeting the nurse and agreeing where I would sit, I did not intervene in the appointment or discussions at all, and confined myself to note-taking. The appointments were strongly shaped by the respective positions of professional and client (e.g. Hiitola and Peltola, 2018), and part of the content is pre-defined (i.e., ways and timeframes for monitoring the pregnancy and the growth of the child, parts of the information and advice given). When observing the appointments, I paid attention to three different elements: firstly, the material environment in the appointment room; secondly, the content of the spoken communication of the nurse, the respondent(s), and the child(ren); and thirdly, any other elements in the interaction between these participants. In this report, I concentrate on the last point, the interaction, and the position of the client mother within the clinic setting.

The analysis has drawn on qualitative thematic analysis. The interviews were read through several times as a whole, at different points in the analysing process, in order to grasp the general storyline articulated by each respondent. The most important part of the analysis work, however, was the thematic coding of the interviews and other material, which took place in two stages. In the first stage, the material was coded in a data-driven way, keeping the coded themes relatively narrow and letting new themes emerge spontaneously. In the second stage, the coded themes from stage one – 249 altogether – were thematically reorganised into larger, more analytical themes. A number of the themes utilised in the second stage were pre-defined and determined jointly by all PROMISE partners, while others were case-specific and defined based on the findings of the coding in the first stage (see the Introduction to D6.1 for further details).

3 Key findings

This section draws together key findings from the interviews and ethnographic observations, focusing on four broad themes. After briefly introducing the interviewees, I will firstly discuss how questions related to age and the category of 'young mothers' were evident in the data. Secondly, I will take a look at the respondents' encounters with the maternity and child health professionals and how they discussed these services in the interviews. Thirdly, attention will be paid to the social networks of the mothers, especially to their intimate partnerships and intergenerational relationships. Fourthly, I will analyse ethnicity, migration and racialisation, where explicitly and implicitly present in the data. It must be noted that these themes are far from exhaustive in terms of the richness of the data, and other potentially significant themes have inevitably been omitted from this short report.

In the data extracts, MP refers to interviewer, and all the other names to the respondents or to the nurses working with them. All the names used are pseudonyms.

3.1 Respondents' backgrounds and current situations

Seven of the 16 young female respondents were pregnant: three with their first child; two with their first child but having been in the position of a step-parent for some years; one with her second child, and one with her third child. Ten of the young women had one child at the time of

the interviews; their children were aged between two months and three years (most of them were aged under one year). One of the young women had two children, the oldest of whom was three. Two of the young women lived as a part of 'reconstituted' families and had one stepchild each (although they interpreted their position in relation to this child very differently), aged four and seven.

Five of the young women were married to the father of their child(ren); eight were cohabiting in a marriage-like relationship. Two were living alone independently, although one was in a long-term relationship with the father of the child. One was living with her own mother and mother's spouse, but was also in a steady long-term relationship with the father of the child. The majority of the pregnancies had been planned or 'allowed to happen'; for five respondents, the pregnancy had come more or less as a surprise.

The two interviewed fathers both had a partner who was expecting their first child. One was married, and the other was cohabiting in a marriage-like relationship with their expectant partner.

The socio-economic situations, educational and employment backgrounds of the respondents were heterogeneous. The respondent with highest education in this dataset had just completed a degree in a university of applied sciences. Two respondents had received different levels of post-secondary training. Two had attended general academic secondary school and seven held a vocational secondary qualification. Two were currently studying at university, one was in post-secondary training, one in vocational secondary school and one in general academic secondary school. Two did not have any secondary education. Their young(ish) age, combined with parenthood and, for many, unestablished position in the labour market, made their situations precarious, as many of them pointed out. What is noteworthy, however, is that the respondents differed from each other markedly in respect of the levels of education and kind of positions they were aiming for in their lives. While a minority in the data, there were five respondents (four mothers, one father) who emphasised that they already had both the qualifications they needed, a position in the labour market, and even several years of work experience. These respondents adopted a rather functional approach to their work – while it was not the most important part of their lives, they were doing decent, meaningful work that enabled them to support themselves, as well as their children in the future. In a similar vein, these respondents did not share the feeling of precariousness harboured by many of the other respondents.

The respondents largely described their situation in life in positive terms. For many, pregnancy had been anticipated and wished for, and the change in life it had brought about was considered rewarding, albeit challenging. Moreover, those respondents whose pregnancy had happened in a less planned way had, by the time of the interviews, adopted a positive attitude towards it. The role of a mother/parent was very important for all of the respondents, and the change was often described as a learning process involving challenges at the beginning, but one that became rewarding and 'natural' in time. The self-identity of a competent, caring and sensible mother/parent was important for all respondents.

3.2 On being a 'young' mother

The original theoretical interests, the outline of the PROMISE project and the pre-defined interview themes have directed the case study to be sensitive to age-related questions and experiences of being 'young'. In the data, however, this theme proved to be an ambivalent one. While many of the respondent mothers acknowledged themselves as being 'young' when

measured in years and compared to the mean age of first-time mothers in Finland, at the same time, they distanced themselves from many characteristics often attached to the categories of 'youth' and 'young mothers'. Much delicate balancing was related to discussing age and being a 'young mother'.

From previous research, we know that becoming a mother at an early age is associated in public discussions with risks and concerns, such as increased economic challenges, disrupted trajectories through education and employment, and a lack of necessary moral parenting competence (Kelhä, 2009; Phoenix, 1991; Wenham, 2016). Young mothers tend to distance themselves from the problem-oriented discourses by emphasising their competence as parents and the rewarding aspects of their life situation (e.g., Higginbottom *et al.*, 2006; McDermott and Graham, 2005; Niemelä, 2005; Wenham, 2016). These themes were central to this case study as well. While most of the respondents were sensitive to the individual differences in the life situations of people their age, they also saw their own age as a 'good' or 'normal' age to become a mother, and as being appropriate in their own situation at least (see also Niemelä, 2005):

> Well I have always thought that I'd like to have children already at about … or before I'm thirty. It's a hard question because at this age, people can be in very different situations in life. But this age feels very natural to me. I feel I'm ready for this. But then again, I know that this situation with a reconstituted family has influenced my thinking a lot. (*Elina, expectant mother, 24*)

> MP: Have you ever felt that you're young to be a mother in any way?
> Agnese: No. I think I'm the perfect age and, like. Then when the children are older, I won't be worn out. I'll still be able to enjoy my life. And my mum had me when she was 21, and my grandma had her when she was 20. So I'm just following them. (*Agnese, mother of one, 21*)[4]

'The right time' was reasoned on the grounds of feeling ready and mature, and often linked to the respondent's relationship status and circumstances more broadly; very much in line with the expectant respondents of varying ages in Homanen's study (2013: 105–106). Respondents in this case study, however, also referred to their wish to have children before getting 'too old'. Like Agnese above, some of the respondents positioned themselves in the chain of generations and compared their age to that of their female relatives (especially mothers) when starting a family, duly reasoning that it was 'ordinary' or 'good' timing. Some ethnic minority respondents also drew comparisons between their former home countries and Finland, remarking that it was customary to have children at an even younger age in their country of origin (see Section 3.5). In the two cases in which the mothers had more ambivalent thoughts about the timing of the pregnancy, it was not so much their age that made them feel insecure but their situation in life more generally: being unemployed, not having completed their schooling, or considering ending the relationship with the child's father.

Hence, while there was a broad consensus on their age not being a problem, most of the respondents were aware that other people might see them as 'too young'. While experiences of their parenthood being directly questioned because of their age were rare, many of them had taken this issue into consideration, for instance when preparing to disclose the news in their social networks. Tiia, for instance, had a planned pregnancy at the age of 17. As it was obvious to her that 'nobody' would be supportive of her plan, she decided to delay disclosing it for as long as

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[4] In the quotes, MP refers to the interviewer/researcher (Marja Peltola). All the names are pseudonyms.

possible: 'I wanted it (the pregnancy) but I hadn't told anybody about it in advance. I was so young and I thought that nobody, nobody thinks like, "Well, of course". (…) So I decided to reveal it when the time was right. (Tiia)

Unfinished studies and an unstable position in the labour market were commonly discussed as age-related challenges when it came to life situation and the main concerns about the future. For some, their precarious socio-economic position was connected to potential economic challenges – yet, the respondents emphasised their ability to overcome these challenges and how sensible they were when it came to handling money. A number even had savings that they intended to use to compensate for the loss of income while staying at home with the child. It is noteworthy, however, that about one-third of the respondent mothers did not consider their position precarious in this way; they had completed secondary education and some had already been in working life, even for several years. Having sustained themselves as sales clerks, practical nurses and in other positions sometimes for a number of years, these young women often identified themselves as adults (instead of young people). According to Jones and colleagues (2006), young adulthood may be seen as being polarised between the middle-class 'slow-track' transitions economically supported by parents, which involve not only deferred entry to full-time work but also delayed partnership formation and childbirth, and the more common economically unsupported 'fast-track' transitions that may be seen as a continuation of working-class practices and involve early school-leaving and partnership formation (see also Käyhkö, 2006). Hence, the respondents' lack of identity as *young* mothers may also be interpreted in part in the context of 'fast-track' transitions and a lifestyle in which prolonging youth and extensive periods of education was not considered particularly appealing.

> MP: What do you think, is having a child something that makes you an adult? For instance, nowadays even if a woman is in her 30s, she may think she's young, so…?
>
> Agnese: No. In my opinion, it doesn't make you an adult. Even before the child, I felt I was entirely adult. I had, however, left home at the age of 17 and lived my own life. I took care of all my own business. (*Agnese, mother of one, 21*)

The respondents recognised several negative characteristics often attached in the public imagery to the category of 'young mothers', and 'teen mothers' in particular. These included irresponsibility, being childish or child-like instead of mature or adult-like, having habits that were not ideal (e.g. alcohol consumption, partying), being sexually irresponsible, and having babies 'by accident'. The respondents made clear distinctions between themselves and these stereotypes – as has also been found in earlier studies (McDermott and Graham, 2005; Niemelä, 2005) – by emphasising their 'right age', responsibility, maturity, stable relationships and supportive social networks, and stable situation in life generally. While the respondents did not necessarily explicitly repeat the negative assumptions attached to young mothers, their awareness of and distinction from the category had, at times, the effect of constructing 'youth' in negative terms. For instance, 24-year-old Emma said:

> I don't see myself as young. I'm in such a good place in my life. My situation has been good for a long time, regarding work, regarding home, regarding my partnership, regarding money. I don't have, like … The only thing that could be different is the working hours. (*Emma, expectant mother, 24*)

When constructing an image of herself as a person in a stable situation in life, capable of taking care of a baby in the near future, Emma implicitly constructs youth as antithetic to stability and a 'good situation in life'. Despite the fact that all the respondent mothers were below the average age for becoming a mother in Finland, they too used the negatively-defined category of 'young mothers' as a discursive tool for constructing a positive self-image and for distinguishing themselves from problematic 'Others'. For the respondents, a 'young mother' was a construct referring to someone else, typically a 'teen mum' younger than 18. For instance, Stina made a distinction between herself and those aged 18 or under, who could be labelled 'teen mums':

> Well no, I'm not especially young. I am, however… I'm no teen anymore. Well okay, an 18-year-old is (legally) an adult, but, like, I don't know. I wouldn't have wanted a child back then, like, to get that teen mum label, like someone who can't do anything. (*Stina, mother of one, 20*)

Another respondent, Melisa, constructed a 'teen mum' as someone who is very young, potentially sexually irresponsible, and less likely to be able to offer a child a stable environment:

> Often those who are 15 and pregnant, they are a bit like those kinds of girls who don't necessarily even know who the dad is, or even if they do, I don't think they are capable, since you are a child yourself, and when you turn 18, you'll go through a phase like, 'Hey, I want to party, I want to see and do things'. Usually it's the child who suffers then. (*Melisa, mother of one, 23*)

Much of the ambivalence the respondents expressed in relation to questions of age and 'young' and 'older' mothers is summarised in a quote by 20-year-old Emilia below. The quote is also a prime example of the balancing work engaged in by the respondents when constructing an image of themselves as responsible and 'right-aged' parents, and how this image may derive from various, even seemingly contradictory sources:

> For sure, it's a bit like people think that young mothers handle the issues in a poorer way – like they're more negligent, and less strict. But the way I see it, when you have a child when older, the child becomes your pet. It's my experience that young parents can differentiate, like, how to treat children according to their age. And, in a way it's also about … it's not so long ago since you've been young yourself, and when the child is in adolescence, there's not a huge gap. (…) But in a way, older people, they know the deal, how to take care of it. (…) It depends on … say you've been a terrible binge-drinker in your youth, then of course if your life has been really colourful, you don't want the colourfulness to end with the child. So, I do understand that those (kinds of parents) are judged, but then again, if you really try, then I don't understand (why you're judged) … (*Emilia, expectant mother, 20*)

First, Emilia recognises the negative stereotypes relating to 'young mothers' and distances herself and other young parents from them, claiming that being young actually has its benefits when it comes to parenthood. However, she goes on to actually reaffirm the negative stereotype herself by referring to 'a binge-drinker youth', allegedly unable to change their ways. Hence, the categories of 'older mothers' and 'binge-drinking young mothers' can both be simultaneously utilised as points of distinction.

3.3 Encountering maternity and child health service professionals

During pregnancy, the maternity services aim at ensuring the health of expectant mothers and foetuses, identifying risks and providing care and support when needed. The child health services aim at monitoring and supporting the healthy growth, development and well-being of children. Both seek to support parenthood and the well-being of families, and to promote a healthy lifestyle (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2017; National Institute of Health and Welfare, 2017). While clearly designed to provide support for children, parents and the transition to parenthood, these services also have a great potential for social control, as they represent 'professional knowledge' concerning ideal parenthood (Homanen, 2013).

Professional encounters are, inevitably, never encounters between two equal partners, but shaped by power hierarchies and the positions of client and professional (Hiitola and Peltola, 2018). According to the observations made during the appointments with nurses and doctors at the maternity and child health clinics, these hierarchies and positions shaped the interaction between the clinic nurses and doctors and the respondents (both mothers and fathers) rather strongly. Part of the content of the appointments is predefined by law, government decree and Ministry of Social Affairs and Health regulations, which also structure the interaction. The structured nature of the appointments means that the positions left for the clients – the mothers, fathers and children – are rather restricted and passive. The communication below between Leena (the nurse) and Katja (the client) is typical in that the interaction mostly consists of active questions, comments and advice given by the professional, with reactive responses and short narratives contributed by the (young) mother:

> Leena (the nurse) asks how things are going for Katja (the client) and her immediate family. Katja answers 'Well', but adds that Petja (the baby) has slept badly in recent weeks, and may wake up five times a night. Leena asks if Petja has cut any teeth yet. Katja answers 'No'. Leena says teething may cause restless nights, explains that the time period varies from child to child, and describes the possible symptoms. Leena asks if Petja has been crankier than usual. Katja answers that he hasn't but may sometimes become irritable during the day. Leena advises Katja to try to give Petja some paracetamol in the evening to see if that makes him sleep better: 'Of course you shouldn't give it for no reason, but it is no more harmful than if you think of taking one yourself'. (Field notes 11.5.2017)

In my field notes, I summarised observations on several appointments as follows:

> I have not once seen a young mother openly questioning something that the nurse says during an appointment. However, there are a couple of mothers who ask questions more often than others or initiate discussion on some themes. (…) The interaction at the clinic appointments often follows the question–answer–comment/advice model, with the nurse asking a question, the mother answering, and then the nurse commenting or giving advice. The nurses have certain predefined issues that they go through with every client, and the majority of the appointment time is taken up with these issues. (Field notes 21.6.2017)

However, I have also noted in the field notes how the nurses, despite the occasional time pressures at the clinics, use their time and energy to make their clients feel more at ease, to create a relaxed and trusting atmosphere, and to reaffirm the clients' confidence in their parenthood. For instance, the following communication between Pirjo (the nurse) and Stina (the client) reveals several things. Firstly, Pirjo enquires about Stina's feelings in a rather light manner that does not

presume problems, and Stina's answer shows that she feels confident enough to disclose that some days are better than others. Secondly, Pirjo knows about Stina's life situation and is therefore able to ask whether Stina is still studying while taking care of the baby. Pirjo's comment on Stina's answer subsequently affirms that it is understandable that combining baby care responsibilities with studies is potentially too demanding:

> Pirjo: How's mum doing?
>
> Stina: It varies. There are good days and then sometimes not so good ones.
>
> Pirjo: Are you still studying?
>
> Stina: Not really.
>
> Pirjo: (*in an understanding voice*): Well, at least you've dropped that. (Field notes 15.5.2017)

Despite their position as the professional, coupled with the structured content of the appointments, the nurses are left with some time and possibilities – that many of them use effectively – to 'lighten up' or make the atmosphere less official through chatting, talking about everyday issues not confined to baby care, and joking. I also heard the nurses verbally reaffirming their clients' competence as mothers. Added to this, many of the nurses actively and explicitly repeated the ideas that there is no one 'right way' to act as a mother; that mothers and children are individuals, and that one is allowed to trust one's feelings. It is part of the nurses' professional competence to make the mother (and the child) feel safe, (self-)confident and unjudged; I observed genuine attempts to achieve this goal, although the interviews with the respondents also show varying degrees of success.

In their work, the nurses also acknowledge to some extent the importance of the social relationships of the respondents – also beyond the nuclear family. Besides encouraging, for instance, shared child care responsibilities of the parents, or at least participation of both parents in child care, they encouraged spending moments of 'quality time' with one's spouse away from the child (e.g. going to the cinema), meeting friends and other people sharing the same life situation, and enabling close relationships between the child and the grandparents. These messages were often delivered in a casual way, as a part of the chitchatting and probably consciously avoiding giving too strong opinions. For instance, a nurse Päivi and a heavily pregnant mother-to-be Amina had the following discussion at the same time when Amina was taking off her clothes to get ready for monitoring the heart beats of the fetus:

> Päivi says 'Well it starts getting exciting now. Do you feel you are ready for yourself to give birth?' Amina answers 'yeah, I don't feel like carrying on like this anymore' Päivi agrees that the late pregnancy is a hard time. She asks 'Do your relatives ask much about the baby?' Amina says that her mum calls every day and asks whether the baby is born. Both laugh. Päivi says that it is very good to have support networks of grandparents and other relatives, since they can be of great help after the birth of the baby. (Field notes 19.9.2017)

On the other hand, the respondents' other roles beside of that of a parent were taken into account only in narrow ways. For instance, in the extract above with Stina and Pirjo, Stina's role as a student is acknowledged, but only to the extent that it is stated to be highly time-consuming to have to balance between the student role and the mother role and, therefore, it is very understandable to drop the student role. Friend and peer relationships also were spoken about mostly as something that were potentially able to support the parent role and therefore to be

encouraged. In another discussion extract between Pirjo and Stina, Pirjo seems to encourage Stina quite strongly to look for peer support. Pirjo agrees that it is good to meet other mothers in an informal way, but the way the discussion continues suggests that she would prefer even more organised activities offered by a NGO:

> Pirjo asks Stina, whether she has been to any playgrounds, to meet other mothers. Stina recounts that a couple of days before, she met with some mothers and joined a WhatsApp-group with them. They have met in the centre of Helsinki, walked with the prams and drunk Coke. Pirjo says 'wasn't that nice then after all?' Stina agrees. Pirjo goes on 'What about the (NGO offering services for young mothers in particular)?' Stina says that it doesn't appear to be her 'thing' and even the place is far away from where she lives. Pirjo says 'but you just met the others at the centre!' (hinting that the city centre is even further away). Stina agrees, but says that they decide the meeting place according to where people are and where it is easy for them to come. Pirjo asks if the mothers that Stina met were also young. Stina says that they were about the same age as her. (Field notes 15.5.2017)

The respondents' experiences of the maternity and child health services were discussed during the interviews. The services were generally considered useful and necessary, and most of the respondents had predominantly positive experiences. Many seemed to have unproblematic relationships with the clinics, which were partly reflected in their neutral, rather concise evaluations of the services:

> MP: What about the clinic? What kind of experiences have you had there? Have you received good service?
>
> Chailai: Yes. Yeah, she's really good this nurse. Nice and friendly. (…)
>
> MP: Has it been easy, or … Do you think you're able to raise issues there if you're wondering about something?
>
> Chailai: Yeah, with her, you can always ask for help. It functions rather well. If I'm worrying about something or something like that. (*Chailai, mother of one, 20*)

When asked, most of the respondents raised points of criticism, too. Some wished for a more down-to-earth approach when being offered advice, some pointed out that different nurses may give different advice, some had hoped for even more structured and information-based interaction, some considered advice on some specific issues (e.g. breast-feeding) was either lacking or too normative. One respondent had the experience of being left alone when considering an abortion, despite her wish for support. Another felt that repeatedly being offered peer support gave the impression of them being 'in need of help' even though the respondent himself did not experience such a need, and that such a message hinted at mistrust towards him and his partner as parents.

> Dalmar: Of course I understand that when people are first-timers, or have their first child on the way, then like, they assume that these people need more help, even if that is not the case. And at times, at the clinic, I think that they are sometimes too… like, not worried, but like, they try in a way to help all the time, give all the information, and they try to get everybody to participate in, for instance, what is this, like a kind of parents' peer support group or something, for fathers. And, like, I don't need any peer support.
>
> MP: So they may appear even too keen to try…?

Dalmar: Yeah, yes! It's not, like… Of course you're able to refuse if you don't want but like, but at times I feel like 'I think we're managing here'. (*Dalmar, spouse of expectant mother, 24*)

Hence, the points of criticism and wishes for certain services varied and were often even contradictory and related to individual situations. The experiences and points of criticism that were raised also seemed to vary according to the nurse they happened to encounter, as practices seemed to differ, with the very 'chemistry' of the relationship between client and professional seemingly being either good or bad.

In criticism expressed towards the atmosphere conveyed within the services more broadly, two of the respondent mothers spoke about a feeling of being judged. Tiia interpreted her feeling as part of a more general tendency to feel insecure as a mother and consequently of being sensitive to criticism:

> I easily start, like, kind of blaming myself. (…) I know that their aim is to help and give advice, but for me, it sometimes feels like a kind of accusation. If I was doing something differently, like breast-feeding back then, and it didn't really work out, so I felt that I was a bit worse mother. (*Tiia, expectant mother of one, 20*)

Melisa, on the other hand, interpreted this feeling as being connected with the prevailing attitudes within the services, especially towards young(ish) parents:

> Sometimes I got the feeling… I don't know how to explain this in a sensible way, but for instance when I went to the maternity and child health clinic for the first time, I felt judged because I was so young. I felt that many people stared at me because of that. (…) I feel that people look at you more when you're a bit younger, like, how you bring up the child. In a way, I got … like they were waiting for you to screw up. That kind of feeling. (*Melisa, mother of one, 23*)

It is noteworthy, however, that Tiia's and Melisa's experiences were rather exceptional in the data.

In recent decades, one point of development identified within the maternity and child health services has been the position of fathers. Nowadays, fathers are welcomed to all clinic appointments, and there have been attempts to support their involvement and agency within the clinic setting, right from the beginning of the pregnancy. According to my observations, it was, however, still more the exception than the rule for a father to be present during the appointments. The two fathers that were interviewed had quite different experiences. Both of them expressed general satisfaction with the services in general, but whereas Dalmar (quoted above) had experienced frequent invitations to take part in different support groups, Johannes had experiences of being ignored:

> Well she did, like, leave me to one side, the nurse. Yeah. She didn't really… she didn't even introduce herself to me. I got the feeling that you should introduce yourself when you're going in – that's what you always do (*shakes hands with an imaginary person*). But she didn't and then I just sat a bit to one side, behind the computer. (…) Well, she did give me the forms, and I filled them in, so maybe that was my time to be able to show that I'm the father. (*Johannes, spouse of expectant mother, 34*)

Some of the mothers also commented on the father's position, saying that even though he may be welcome, the majority of the interaction is targeted towards the mother: 'He is with me, just *is* there with me… but they only speak to me' (Galina, mother of one, 25)*.* One of the respondent mothers brought up the idea of individual appointments for fathers – at least one – that would allow them to concentrate on fatherhood in particular, instead of mother-centred communication, which is also inevitable during the pregnancy to a large extent.

3.4 Social networks: lived and imagined families

The transition to parenthood is a special phase of life that restructures many of the networks of the (new) parents: the intimate partnership and what is considered 'the nuclear family', but also intergenerational relationships and relationships with friends (e.g., Kehily and Thomson, 2011). The immediate social networks of (young) mothers are significant since, for instance, the expectations imposed on these mothers are socially transmitted, but also, and importantly, because they define concrete possibilities to share the burden of care responsibilities – which, in turn, also influences the young women's possibilities to engage in activities in a role other than that of a mother.

In this data, the restructuring of social networks was visible, for example, in the emphasised importance of the respondents' childhood families (especially their own mothers), disruptions to their friendships, and in some of the ambivalent feelings related to intimate partnerships. The emphasised importance of intergenerational relationships – instead of peer relationships – was visible particularly in the sources of practical help in everyday care-giving tasks. The respondents' life situations rendered their private, domestic sphere, the main arena for their daily activities in a way which seemed, to some extent, to reduce the opportunities for other relationships. While for many respondents, friendships still provided important opportunities for sharing experiences with peers and providing some respite from the parental role, several respondents also described disruptions to friendships after their pregnancy. These disruptions were often due to the fact that the respondents could not continue to engage in the type of lifestyle – including partying and/or spontaneous decisions to go out – that was customary for some of their friends, and which is often considered a 'normal' or expected part of youth and young adulthood. Some of the respondents even seemed to be somewhat lonely, especially in cases where their childhood families were living at a distance and could not participate in their everyday lives:

> MP: Do you wish you had other mothers as friends, or something like that here?
>
> Kadri: It doesn't need to be mothers but, yeah, it would be good to have someone nearby, and to have friends here, too.
>
> MP: Yeah so you would like to have more (friends)?
>
> Kadri: A couple would be nice. (*Kadri, mother of one, 23*)

The respondents' social networks were approached in the interviews by introducing themes concerning each respondent's spouse (or ex-spouse), their family and significant others, friends, and childhood families. The respondents considered a large range of people – family members, relatives, friends, colleagues and so on – as part of their 'network'. When looking at the people the respondents regarded as closest to them, an interesting finding is that there was not one case where this 'closest network' would have equated with the nuclear family ideal, that is, would have consisted of only a mother, a father and their child(ren). While in each case the child and the spouse were seen as part of the closest circle, the respondents also included their own parents (one or both), their siblings, and/or their friends. This may be interpreted as a sign of the nuclear family unit being only at the formative stage with the birth of a child; however, it can just as easily

be interpreted as describing people's conceptions of family and closeness that do not conform to the nuclear family archetype (see e.g. Finch and Mason, 1993; Smart, 2007).

I will firstly take a closer look at the respondents' intimate partnerships, especially from the viewpoint of gendered care work distribution, and secondly, discuss the respondents' childhood families, particularly their relationships with their parents (mothers).

3.4.1 Intimate partnerships and gendered care

All but one of the respondents were, at the time of the interviews, in a relationship (two others had a more strained relationship, whose continuation was uncertain). Most respondents named their partner as the person they were closest to, and he or she was always mentioned in the respondents' 'inner circles', even when the relationship was more strained. Several of the respondent mothers said that it was important for them that parenthood and the responsibilities involved were shared, and 'not the mum's business alone' *(Stina, mother of one, 20)*. The partner was also named as the closest source of emotional support for many. Furthermore, being in a long-term, steady relationship was often regarded by the respondents as a prerequisite for feeling 'ready' and able to cope with the challenges of parenthood. While intimate partnerships were, therefore, important and, for most of the respondents, defined in many positive terms, ambivalences, conflicting interests and difficult emotions were also attached to this issue. Here, the importance of partnerships is examined first and foremost from the viewpoint of the (gendered) distribution of care responsibilities.

Some respondents reported being satisfied with the way in which the care responsibilities were divided between them and their partner. It is noteworthy that since only one parent is entitled to parental assistance (apart from a period of 18 days), and since – following the general tendency of mothers being the recipients of almost all of the parental allowances paid (National Institute of Health and Welfare, 2017) – in these cases it was the mother instead of the father who was on parental leave, dividing care responsibilities equally demanded special circumstances:

> MP: To what extent have you discussed the ways in which you share the care responsibilities? You are of course at home, but have you agreed on what he does and what you do and things like that?
>
> Galina: Well, he was laid off for a period and so for five months he took care of [names child] with me as we were both at home. Generally, we took turns, like he took care of her for half a day, and then I did the same for the other half. So we alternated. One nap time for him, one for me. He did one feed, and I did the other. (…) He did all the same things as me. (*Galina, mother of one, 25*)

Although most of the respondents shared the ideals of gender equality within the private realm – including the idea of equal distribution of child care work – much more common was sharing the caregiving responsibilities in varying ways, which nevertheless left the majority of the concrete caregiving work to the mother. The gendered caregiving work distribution was seldom agreed upon in an explicit manner between the spouses, but only 'happened'; it was seen as the 'easiest' way or even the only option available. Eeva Jokinen (2005) argues that gender imbalance in the distribution of childcare or housework is based on habituality: while men and women alike can carry out practices understood as 'feminine' (such as caring work), countering the habitual gendered practices demands reflection and effort, while following them may take place in a more unreflected or 'natural-feeling' way. The gendered work division was most often described as not ideal by the respondents, but defined by the demands of the conditions: '[names spouse] is always

at work. He works long hours and we have a high rent and everything, so he can't be there as much as he would like to be' *(Tiia, expectant mother of one, 20).*

It should be noted here that the respondents' children were small. Some of the respondent mothers were breast-feeding their children, which contributed to tying them closely to the child's feeding schedules. Some respondent mothers anticipated that the caring role of the father would increase as the children grew. For instance, Stina explained that since breast-feeding was the only way to get the baby to eat, she had seldom sought to engage in activities without the baby:

> I know that I'd feel stressed all the time about how [names child] is doing – is she eating anything, and so on. Well, mostly about eating. I don't think that others would be able to take care of the baby or something. So it's about that mostly. [names spouse] has hardly been together with [names child], just the two of them, because I haven't gone anywhere. Or if I have, then he's been at work. (*Stina, mother of one, 20*)

She comments on the work distribution by pointing out that her spouse does his share by preparing food and doing other household chores:

> Well, we haven't actually agreed on it (the distribution of work) but it sort of goes, like, I do the feeds and change the nappies, but on the other hand I don't mind because [names spouse] takes care of the food, and he often washes the dishes and cleans up. So if I start complaining about the fact that he doesn't change nappies, then I think I might find myself cleaning, and so I don't mind.

Because the bulk of the caregiving responsibilities fell to the mothers, the role of the fathers was sometimes narrowed to the extent that they appeared to be merely 'helping' the mother. In these cases, it was possible that, besides caring for the child, the mothers had to cope with the responsibility of 'teaching' the fathers how to 'help' them.

> I do love being with [names child] at home, there's no question about that. But she has been more irritable lately, and now I feel she may be teething, so you really need to entertain her, like doing cartwheels so that she'll stay calm. There are days when I feel that nothing is enough for her, so by the evening, I may have a headache and when [names spouse] comes home, I'd like him to take her for an hour at least so that I could just rest. But then somehow anyway, if he comes home at six or thereabouts, then there's only an hour before we have to start the evening rituals. Just the other day I suggested that he could do the evening bath. Well, he couldn't do it because he has never done it. So he said, 'I'll come and watch you do it'. So I said OK, you just watch today so you know how to do it, as it's something you need to be able to do. So he watched and now in principle he could do it. (*Salla, mother of one, 24*)

All of the respondents with babies said that they enjoyed their childcare responsibilities and found them rewarding. As the above quote shows, however, being with the child on a constant basis was demanding and tiring. While most of the respondent mothers saw their caring role as 'natural', the gendered imbalance in work distribution also caused friction between the spouses:

> MP: Do you have any idea about how much time you devote to caring for the baby, and how much the father devotes? Do you try to aim for 50/50, for example?
>
> Agnese: Well, we sort of try, but I've whined a lot, like 'It's always me with (Baby)!'' But that's only normal.

MP: Yeah, I guess it's easier said than done. How has (Spouse) reacted then?

Agnese: Very well. He's, like, 'Yes, of course we need to figure out a way (to share the workload)', but then however, he has this and that appointment arranged … (*Agnese, mother of one, 21*)

While most respondents shared the ideals of gender equality, deeply gendered care work was, thus, a central part of their everyday routines. While most of the respondents didn't discuss this as a structural issue, Salla brought up the fact that the caring role of the mother was also a cultural expectation:

If a mother doesn't want to stay home with the baby, then she's frowned upon; if, for instance, the father stays at home and takes care of the child from early on, or if the mother is only at home for a month before returning to work. Here (in Finland) it is maybe more likely that the mother will be judged if she returns to work too early. (…) Even if one goes back to work right after the parental assistance has ended, someone may condemn that. (*Salla, mother of one, 24*)

One of the respondent mothers explicitly stated that she thought that baby care was the responsibility of the mother (rather than the father) – which also gave her the right to make decisions about the child's welfare and education:

MP: In the future, how would you like to share the responsibilities with the baby's father? I mean, do you think it's mainly the mother's responsibility to take care of the baby?

Katja: Yes, I want to be the one who makes the decisions.

MP: Okay, yeah. So you don't consider that, quite a lot is said today about sharing equally?

Katja: No. [*Laughs*]

MP: Have you nevertheless discussed ways of bring him up?

Katja: Well, yes we have, but I'm still the one who spends more time with [names baby]. (*Katja, mother of one, 21*)

This mother was living with her baby, her own mother and her mother's spouse, while still being in a long-term relationship with the baby's father, whom she described as a reliable and responsible person and father. Their situation illustrates that family formation and care responsibilities may be – and indeed are – understood and organised in varying ways, which do not always coincide with the nuclear family model.

3.4.2 Childhood families

The respondents' childhood families were a significant part of their personal networks. Their relationships with parents, and sometimes also with siblings, were in most cases described as among the closest, alongside relationships with their intimate partners. In some cases, proximity to the childhood family had even contributed to choosing where to live, so that physical proximity would enable frequent contact.

Johannes: My parents and my sister are, I think, the closest (people). (…)

MP: Are you in contact with them a lot? Do they live nearby?

Johannes: Yes, we have a lot of contact. They live right next to us… 300 metres away. And my sister also lives there, 400 metres away. So they live quite close. (*Johannes, spouse of an expectant mother, 34*)

Jamila: Son is now one year old and I live with my family.

MP: So, with your husband and child. Are there others too (in the family)?

Jamila: Yes, my family. That means my mum and dad, and sister and brother, yeah. It's a good thing that they live in the same block of flats. They live on the second floor and I live on the fourth. (…) Mum helped me a lot at first since I didn't have any experience. (*Jamila, mother of one, 24*)

Not everyone had the opportunity to live close to their parents or childhood family, however. Particularly when circumstances had forced the respondents to move further away from their parents, the separation had proved to be tough:

My family lives in Somalia, or rather my sister lives here, but the rest of my family lives in Somalia. It's quite hard to be without them. (…) I miss them. (…) Mum, she's worried all the time. She knows that… it's (my) first baby and I don't know everything. And in our culture, mothers always help us. (*Ayan, expectant mother, 22*)

As illustrated in the quotes above, a noteworthy observation on the personal networks of the respondents is the central role given to the mothers of the respondents (the grandmothers of the children), especially in offering practical help with baby care. This finding has been repeated in earlier research, and has been highlighted, for example, in McDermott and Graham's (2005) review of research on young motherhood, as an important part of young mothers' construction of competent motherhood, and as a factor supporting 'resilient mothering'. The mothers were not only consistently present in the 'inner circles' of the respondents, but they were also extensively discussed in the interviews, in ways which highlight the emotional – and practical – significance of this relationship.

I am really close with my mum. Back then, especially during [names first child]'s babyhood, the first year, she was a truly great support. Particularly when the break-up occurred, she intervened at once and I moved back home and she was there a lot. Like, she sometimes slept with the baby through the night so that I was able to sleep. (*Tiia, expectant mother of one, 20*)

MP: If you need help, practical help baby-sitting, for example, who do you ask?

Galina: Well, I think the first one is my mum, because she's the one who brought me up and so on. (*Galina, mother of one, 25*)

The respondents' parents not only offered practical help and emotional support when it came to baby care, they were also important for the respondents' identities and practices as parents. Reflecting on the parental practices of their childhood families was one of the ways in which the respondents made sense of the kind of parents they wished to be or to become; their own parents duly acted both as positive role models and as points of distinction.

While the majority of the respondents enjoyed close relationships with their parents and especially their mother, this was not always the case. Some respondents had more strained relationships with their parents, and some shared painful narratives from their childhood,

including parental use of corporal punishment, and parental substance abuse and judgmental attitudes. An important observation, however, is that even difficult experiences in childhood did not disrupt the relationships in most cases; the parents were nevertheless considered significant, even close. As Smart (2007: 154) argues, familial relations are resilient by nature; the relationship and loyalty involved are not easily severed. Troubled relationships with parents also sometimes found new expression and significance with the pregnancy and transition to parenthood. For instance, Tiia described how she felt abandoned by her parents after disclosing her pregnancy, since her father had such strict ideas about what the life situation of a young expectant mother should be:

> [When disclosing pregnancy to parents] Well, my dad told me, he generally reacts in such a way that, one has to make a plan. So he said that I have to move in with the child's father before the child is born. So that we'd know what it's like to live together. (…) And that nobody, [in a moralizing tone] 'no pregnant mum lives at home'. Like, my situation meant that I had to move out and start living independently. So, I felt like they were abandoning me. (*Tiia, expectant mother of one, 20*)

However, a pregnancy and a baby sometimes had the effect of making the relationship with the spouse's parents closer than they used to be. For Agnese, for instance, the newly formed relationship with her mother-in-law compensated to some extent for the lack of closeness she experienced with her own mother:

> MP: So I guess it's a big thing for you; I mean, it's sad if you have such a tense relationship with your mum. Is it something that you think about a lot?

> Agnese: Well yeah, I have thought about it lately. But then again, [name's spouse's] mother is really lovely and I can be with her. So now I just think that maybe it will get better at some point. (*Agnese, mother of one, 21*)

3.5 The influence of migration experiences and ethnic background

There is a tendency in both public discussions and in research to examine 'immigrant families' or families of ethnic minorities as groups that are separate – and allegedly different – from families of the majoritised ethnicities. In what I have written above, I have endeavoured to avoid such a tendency because it easily reaffirms, explicitly or implicitly, the hierarchies that exist between families of minorities and families of majorities, and in so doing, ignores many similarities and shared experiences (for further discussion see Peltola, 2016). Hence, it is worth pointing out that the key findings highlighted thus far – the ambivalent relationship concerning the category of 'youth' and 'young mothers', the centrality of the childhood family, the gendered caregiving work, and the relationship with professionals, together with the over-arching experience of the uniqueness of the life situation, and the positive, rewarding experiences afforded by parenthood, were widely shared in the data across the ethnic boundaries.

Migration experiences and/or a minority ethnic background did, however, add some themes to the transition to motherhood/parenthood that were not apparent in the narratives of the respondents representing the majoritised population, or were present in different ways. Such themes discussed below include differing ideas on the 'normal' age for first-time motherhood, some of the content related to the child's upbringing, and experiences of racism.

While the norms and interpretations of what constitutes a 'normal age' for becoming a mother vary within nations, variation between nations and areas also exists, related to different histories

among other things. Given that the ethnic minority respondents in this case study were a heterogeneous group in that some had moved to Finland as small children, while others had lived in Finland for shorter periods, it is hardly surprising that one of the dividing lines in opinions on this 'normal age' reflected their migratory histories. Those with a shorter personal history in Finland tended to assess what is 'normal' in reference to their native countries, whereas those who had been living in Finland since early childhood, alongside native Finns, tended to see this issue in reference to Finnish society and its norms. This difference, in some cases, even rendered the whole question of the respondents' own experience as a young(ish) mother irrelevant. Hodan, for instance, saw her own age of becoming a mother – 18 – as perfectly ordinary when compared to the Somalian situation, where girls as young as 15 may become mothers:

> MP: Of course there are many ways to go about it, and all are equally good, but some people might think that you were quite young when you became a mother at 18. What do you think about this age question? Is 18 generally a good age?
>
> Hodan: Yes, I think it's a good age. Because for us in Somalia it's not … even a 15-year-old might have a child. And sometimes even younger.
>
> MP: So that it's ordinary.
>
> Hodan: Yes it's ordinary. (*Hodan, expectant mother of two, 22*)

Even more explicitly than Hodan, Ayan and Dalmar, whose roots were also in Somalia, distanced themselves from those Somalian traditions that allowed very young girls to marry and become mothers, and considered the timing of their own parenthood as appropriate, partly in relation to this background:

> Ayan: And I didn't have any obstacles. I had prepared a lot and for a long time, and so I decided 'Now I want to start a family'. But in Somalia, a girl might start a family when she's 14 or 15.
>
> MP: At what age do you think someone is too young to be a mother?
>
> Ayan: Fourteen. In my opinion, that's terribly…
>
> Dalmar: Way too young. I think even 18 is too young to be a mother.
>
> Ayan: I think 20 is OK. (*Ayan, expectant mother, 22, and Dalmar, father-to-be, 24*)

Twenty-four-year-old Jamila, who had previously lived in Iraq and Syria, also examined the issue of the 'right time' for motherhood vis-à-vis her 'own culture'. While Jamila did not mention early marriages, she too saw motherhood for young women under 18 as too early. The expectations of a 'good age' to get married and expectations of pregnancy taking place within the years immediately following marriage may, however, leave a rather narrow margin for the 'appropriate' timing of the first pregnancy:

> Jamila: In our culture, they say that when a daughter or a woman gets married at 20 that's a good age, and if she wants to wait a bit, for instance two years, until 22, that's a good age to become a mother. She understands what it is to be a mother, and whether she wants to become one. I decided at 22 that I wanted to become a mother, at 23 I was pregnant, and now I've turned 24.
>
> MP: And do you think there's an age at which one would be too young to be a mother?

Jamila: Eighteen, or under, is too early in my opinion. But others may consider, or like being pregnant even earlier. But I think it's not appropriate because a woman should also have some life of her own before having a baby. (*Jamila, mother of one, 24*)

Ethnic minorities in Finland and in Europe at large, especially those originating in Africa and the Middle East, face negative labelling that makes assumptions about them representing 'backward' and patriarchal cultures and at least potentially engaging in practices that repress (young) women (Mulinari *et al.*, 2009). The reflections of Hodan, Ayan, Dalmar and Jamila may be interpreted in this context also as a way to distance themselves from such problematic assumptions and from the position of 'victimised minority women'. At the same time, they are constructing their own values and practices as reasonable and claiming agency that can and should be respected in Finnish society.

While distancing themselves from those cultural habits considered problematic or harmful was important, it was also important for most of the minoritised respondents to maintain and pass on some other cultural habits or content interpreted as part of their non-Finnish heritage. The issue most commonly referred to here was one's native language. Language was an important issue since it was 'part of one's heart' (*Jamila, 24 years*), but also because it was considered important for the child to be able to communicate with her/his relatives when growing up. It was also an issue that caused some concern for the respondents when thinking about the future: would it be possible for the child to maintain fluency in the native language in the midst of the Finnish societal context? Jamila, for instance, says that she is 'worried' about the issue, although she also points out certain efforts of the Finnish schooling system to support maintaining minority languages and religions:

> MP: Since you live in Finland and Arabic is not widespread here, do you ever worry about forgetting the Arabic language or culture?
>
> Jamila: It doesn't affect me, but I do worry about it because, in our home country, you know it's a different thing when you're (living) in an area where everybody speaks Arabic. But it doesn't affect me because (in schools) there are Arabic classes every week, my little brother and sister (go to them). Yeah, the school in Finland has everything you need, including a class or two each week on our culture or religion. But it a little-, however, when it's part of your heart, it's not like being worried all the time, although I am a bit worried. (*Jamila, mother of one, 24*)

However, such concerns were not entirely shared among all the ethnic minority respondents. Agnese, in particular, stated that her thinking had changed to the extent that she now considered values other than passing on the language or culture more important:

> MP: What aspects of your culture are important for you when bringing up your child?
>
> Agnese: Well, I used to think that it's important for him to learn Latvian and things like that, but I don't anymore. I think in Finnish myself and I speak Finnish so it's very hard, you know, to talk … well, I've tried at times to talk Latvian to him but it's really hard so I think he won't learn it for real. So maybe the most important thing is just that [names spouse] and I stick together and bring him up together, because I don't want [names child] to go through the same things that I did, with his parents separating when he's little. (*Agnese, mother of one, 21*)

Other matters that were interpreted as related to one's (minority) culture included respect for one's elders, which was mentioned in several interviews as an important (cultural) value that the respondents wanted to pass on to their children. Religion was also mentioned by many as something that they wanted the child to acquire, yet recognising the child's freedom of choice to a considerable degree was also associated with this issue:

> MP: Are there any practices or customs related to the Thai culture that you'd like to pass on to your child?
>
> Chailai: Yeah!
>
> MP: Okay, what would you like to teach her?
>
> Chailai: Well, to respects adults. And then, yes, to respect her parents, as well as other adults. And I've thought that when [names child] is big and goes to school, then her religion will be, that of Thailand's. And then, if she doesn't want that, then she can decide for herself and start being a Christian or … I would never force any faith upon [names child]. (*Chailai, mother of one, 20*)

Hence, the respondents reflected on the identities and cultural resources of their children in future-oriented ways and saw themselves as playing an important (albeit limited) role in passing on such resources. As stated by Erel and colleagues (2017), mothering/parenting can, thus, be considered an important part of active citizenship, in the sense of contributing to society through bringing up future citizens, equipped with suitable resources (see also Berg and Peltola, 2015). While this applies to all of the respondents in the case study – and indeed to all parents more generally – the respondents with ethnic minority backgrounds had to achieve a balance between legitimate minority identity and 'enough Finnishness' in this task (Erel *et al*, 2017).

A further issue that was discussed only with the ethnic minority interviewees was their experiences of racialisation and racism. While these experiences were not related to their position as parents, they cannot be overlooked as, for many, they had concrete consequences for their social circles and feelings of belonging. Galina, for example, mentioned that the racist bullying she had suffered throughout comprehensive school had the effect that when she subsequently moved to the metropolitan area, she mostly sought friends among other Russian-speakers:

> MP: Is your circle of friends mostly Russian-speaking?
>
> Galina: Yes, it is, yes. Russian-speaking. Unfortunately, at school, I was always bullied at school, starting from the first grade up to secondary school. They said things like 'Give Vyborg back' or 'You killed my grandpa', or something like that. It was like that throughout school. Maybe in (Town) there weren't so many foreigners at that time. And I was the only foreigner at my school. (…) So maybe this had some kind of influence. (*Galina, mother of one, 25*)

The Muslim respondents had experiences of racist encounters that often had Islamophobic undertones. For instance, Jamila spoke about such encounters with a mixture of feelings of being hurt and of a certain hopelessness that rendered all responses other than ignoring the taunts ineffective:

> Jamila: But sometimes the scarf has the effect that many many times when I'm in a grocery store, or walking down the road, they say bad words. (…) It feels hard, and is a bad thing in my heart. I say what can I do, I'm a refugee here, and sometimes I respond

by saying, 'Why are you doing this?' or 'Why are you saying this?', but sometimes I don't react.

MP: So you don't feel like responding?

Jamila: Yes, Nothing, I just go on like nothing has happened. (*Jamila, mother of one, 24*)

Melisa – who also identified herself as a Muslim – reflected on the issues surrounding racism in depth. Besides those encounters she had had herself, she was concerned about how Finnish people would react to her parenthood later when the child was a bit older. She referred to the stereotypes of migrant families as being overtly strict, even violent in their educational practices, and thought it would be difficult in the future to balance between her principles when bringing up the child and her wish to avoid being unfairly labelled as a 'violent' migrant mother, and in need of an intervention:

> Melisa: Somehow I think about it, when she grows up, and if it happens, for instance, that I snap at her in a public place because I won't let her grow up to be a child who throws herself on the floor there and makes, I'd probably go mad, it is, like you need to be to that extent strict that a child don't throw herself on the floor to make a show of herself. So I've been thinking, like, if she did that and I did tell her off, how many people would immediately come up to me and say something. Because I know that when my elder sister's son was about to run under a metro she grabbed him and yelled at him, and a Finn came to her telling her not to shake the child. So she asked this person, like, whether letting him run under the metro would have been a better option. (*Melisa, mother of one, 24*)

A few moments later, after describing an encounter at a grocery store where an older lady had hit her baby carriage with her shopping trolley, telling her not to take up so much room and to go back where she came from, she concluded that the atmosphere in Finland made her doubtful about her daughter's future: 'I do get terribly stressed about what kind of place Finland will be when she grows up.' Besides being hurtful and harmful for the respondents in their other roles in life, racism and racist encounters may also impact the way in which ethnic minority mothers feel able to fulfill their parenting responsibilities, and maintain a (self-)image as a capable and respectable parent, as well as their feelings of belonging and security in Finnish society.

4 Conclusions

This case study has focused on 18–25-year-old young parents, and mothers in particular. It is evident that, regardless of age, becoming a parent is a special life situation that in many ways disrupts the earlier life style and practices related to it. Yet, as many of the respondents emphasised, often this change is welcome and sometimes even long-awaited. While child care responsibilities with a young baby took up the bulk of many respondents' waking hours, there was a strong will to represent their everyday life as satisfying and rewarding. The widespread individualising discourses in Western society have been analysed by several scholars (e.g. Brannen and Nielsen, 2005), and the respondents in this case study were largely engaged in this discourse and tended to interpret their life situations, the related challenges and joys, and their past and present circumstances as matters of individual choice.

The young mothers interviewed for the case study neither formed a uniform group nor shared a self-identity as 'young mothers'. They were a highly heterogeneous group in terms of both their current circumstances, material and other resources, past trajectories and future orientations. What was shared, instead, was a self-identity of a competent, caring mother; and to claim that position, many emphasised their maturity and adult role. When seen together, the rejection of a self-identity as a 'young mother' and the claiming of a self-identity as a mature, adult and competent mother may be interpreted as a counter-strategy – either conscious or unconscious – in response to the problem-centered and stigmatising public representations of 'young mothers' noted in several earlier studies (Phoenix, 1991; McDermott and Graham, 2005; Kelhä, 2009; Wenham, 2016) and recognised by the (female) respondents themselves. This interpretation is also in line with previous studies according to which young mothers resist the negative stereotyping attached to this category through defining young motherhood in one's 'own way' (Niemelä, 2005) and constructing various resources such as close relationships with one's childhood family as a part of competent and resourceful mothering (McDermott and Graham, 2005). Thus, given the stigmatising public representations, it seems to be hard to combine 'youth' with 'competence' and 'responsibility' when claiming an identity as a parent (mother), and thus the latter are emphasised at the expense of the former.

Two observations are to be highlighted in this context. First, age and gender especially, but also social class and ethnicity, intersect in public discourses on parenthood and family life, which not only describe people's private spheres, but have implications for their social positions and roles as citizens that are available to them (Peltola, 2016). Second, the young respondents counter the public discourses and seek to reposition themselves in ways that highlight their active agency.

In the maternity and child health clinic setting, age implies contradictory meanings. In medical terms, the probability of risks increases with age and so pregnancies among young women are less 'problematic' than pregnancies in older women. Homanen (2013, pp. 242–243) has stated that nurses may even consider their younger clients to be 'easier' than older, well-educated clients, while simultaneously attaching to them expectations of less ability in managing their daily independent lives. The ethnographic observations in the maternity and child health clinics showed that the young mothers' agency in the clinic setting was rather narrow and strongly shaped by the position of a client. Yet, while the predetermined content concerning the practicalities of child care was often pointedly present, the nurses in the social services also tried, and partly succeeded, to convey an atmosphere that was tolerant and supportive of the different situations of individuals and families. There were, however, also respondents who felt that they were being judged by the maternity and child health services. The maternity and child health clinic services focus on supporting the role of a parent, sometimes even so much so that the other roles of the young adults seem to be forgotten or treated only as potential burdens to the parent role.

The transition to parenthood restructures the closest relationships of the new parents (e.g. Kehily and Thomson, 2011). It is noteworthy that the respondents' understandings of who belonged to their closest networks was not restricted by the nuclear family model, and following the earlier research on young motherhood, the respondents' own mothers held a special position in the networks (e.g. Kehily and Thomson, 2011; McDermott and Graham, 2005). While Finland is regarded as a nation with a long tradition of advancing gender equality in its policies, it is also striking how strongly gendered the care responsibilities related to parenthood still are in the everyday lives of young women and men. The care responsibilities are all too easily organised according to habitual gender practices (Jokinen, 2005), and this tendency seemed to be shared among the respondents with different educational and ethnic backgrounds.

Thus, the maternity and child health clinic professionals and young parents' personal networks including their parents both have the potential of acting in supportive roles in young parents' attempts to maintain a positive self-identity as a parent (and in making their everyday responsibilities easier by offering professional advice or concrete help), and these supportive roles were, indeed, emphasised in many parts of the data. However, the data also included examples of relationships with professionals and parents that were also sites of conflict where the young respondents sometimes felt excluded, abandoned, undermined or hurt.

Many of the most prominent themes in the data – the ambivalent relationship concerning the category of 'youth', the gendered childcare work, the importance of respondents' own mothers and the narrow client position within the maternity and child health services, together with the over-arching experienced uniqueness of their life situation, and the willingness to represent oneself as a competent mother – were widely shared in the data across ethnic boundaries. This finding emphasises the need to build research frames in further studies that enable an examination of similarities alongside differences, to help counter some of the stereotyping easily attached to migrant or ethnic minority families (Peltola, 2016).

However, remaining sensitive to ethnic variation and its diverse implications also retains importance. The respondents' experiences of racialisation and racism were not only individually hurtful incidents, but had effects on their feelings of safety and belonging more broadly, and on their abilities to present oneself as a competent parent. According to Erel and colleagues (2017), racialised migrant mothers are often seen as transmitting the 'wrong' kind of values to their children, hindering their children's integration into the receiving society and, thus, polluting the reproduction of the nation. They are thus to be 'forced' into citizenship (ibid: 69). Instead of the 'failed integration' interpretation, Erel and colleagues advance the interpretation of racialised young mothers' parenting and caring practices reframing citizenship. Along the same lines, I found that the racialised young mothers did not simply seek to reconstitute the cultural resources they have, but to equip their children with resources that draw both from the Finnish culture and practices and those of their 'own' culture. As is also case for the respondents representing the Finnish majority, the mothers considered parts of the parenting practices of their own parents, for instance, as beneficial and parts of them not beneficial, and adopted influences in their own parenting practices from multiple sources including their own parents, the professionals, literature, media and peers. Thus their parenting cannot be understand only as transmitting something that has been transmitted to them but a more innovative process deriving from multiple sources and involving moral and practical evaluation.

The life situation of becoming a parent – a mother – is a profound change in one's life, and one that most definitely has implications for one's citizenship, societal involvement and social engagement. Citizenship and participation have been traditionally analysed as phenomena 'happening' only outside the private sphere of home. If reducing the notion of societal involvement or participation in activities like political participation, it is almost unavoidable that this life situation brings with it reduced possibilities for participation. For instance, according to Bhatti and colleagues (2018), childbearing and childbirth have a strong demobilising effect for electoral participation, which, however, is mostly temporary. This case study has also shown that at least the young parents involved in this research did not have any urge, for instance, to get organised or to strive for more rights for themselves, either as parents or in some other role they had, at least not in any collective way. When speaking about young people's or young adults' opportunities for social engagement and societal involvement, this case study shows that it is very important to take into account also their different life situations and potentially accumulating (gendered) care and familial responsibilities. In feminist theorisations of care, it has been

acknowledged that caring work – whether unpaid or paid – should be seen as a citizenship practice and not something that is separate from political theory and public sphere (e.g. Tronto, 2013). This case study highlights the significance of this notion also within research on young people's citizenship and engagement.

While the respondents did claim other identifications besides that of a parent (e.g. that of a woman, a friend, a student, and a worker), their activities in the domestic sphere were, in this life situation, an inseparable part of how they saw themselves as citizens and the kind of contribution to society they wished to make.

5. Future analysis

This case study highlights the importance of varying life situations in young adulthood, gendered familial/care responsibilities, and continued significance of intergenerational relations in young adulthood. Potential themes for analysis within/across WP6 clusters are, thus, connected with these points. Is young parenthood unique life situation in its effect to turn attention to the private sphere and to limit the activities in the public sphere? Are young people's or young adults' care responsibilities gendered at a more general level – or is this something unique to parenthood? What other care responsibilities do young people have? What is the importance of intergenerational relationships – especially relationships between young people and their parents – in other kinds of life situations? How do they intertwine with living arrangements and care responsibilities, for instance? Are they gendered in a similar way as the intergenerational relations in this case study seemed to be?

Potential issues analysed through triangulation with quantitative data sets include the effects of (young) parenthood to living arrangements, family compositions and intergenerational relationships. Is it so in other countries as well, as it is in most cases in Finland, that young parents most often live independently – either together with their spouse and child or together with their child – but remain in many ways (inter?)dependent on their own parents (e.g., economically, emotionally, in terms of sharing care responsibilities)? What is the significance of different national policies concerning parental leaves and parental allowances?

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Appendix: Table of respondents' socio-demographic data

Pseudonym	Age (years)	Gender (f/m)	Education	Employment	Family status	Residential status	Ethnicity	Country of birth	Religion
Tiia	20	f	Currently in general academic secondary school	Parental leave, previously in full-time education	Cohabiting, one child, pregnant	Lives independently with a partner and child	Finnish	Finland	Christian (other)
Chailai	21	f	Completed vocational secondary school	Parental leave, previously in full-time education	Single, one child	Lives independently with child	Thai	Thailand	Buddhist
Katja	21	f	Completed vocational secondary school	Parental leave, previously in full-time employment	In a long-term relationship, one child	Lives at home with parents and child	Russian	Russia	Christian (Orthodox)
Emilia	20	f	Comprehensive school only	Unemployed	In a long-term relationship, pregnant	Lives independently alone	Mixed heritage	Finland	Not known
Hodan	22	f	Comprehensive school only	Parental leave, previously parental leave with older children	Married, two children, pregnant	Lives independently with a partner and children	Somali	Somalia	Islam
Stina	20	f	Currently in university	Parental leave, previously in full-time education	Cohabiting, one child	Lives independently with a partner and child	Finnish	Finland	Christian (Evangelic Lutheran)

Galina	25	f	Completed post-secondary training	Parental leave, previously in full-time employment	Married, one child	Lives independently with a partner and child	Russian	Russia	Christian (Orthodox)
Anna	27	f	Completed post-secondary training	Parental leave, previously in full-time education	Cohabiting, pregnant	Lives independently with a partner	Finnish	Finland	Not known
Johannes	34	m	Completed vocational secondary school	In full-time employment	Cohabiting, partner pregnant	Lives independently with a partner	Finnish	Finland	Not known
Emma	24	f	Completed vocational secondary school	In full-time employment	Cohabiting, pregnant	Lives independently with a partner	Finnish	Finland	Not known
Elina	24	f	Completed university	Parental leave, previously in full-time employment	Cohabiting, pregnant	Lives independently with a partner	Finnish	Finland	Not known
Agnese	21	f	Completed vocational secondary school	Parental leave, previously in full-time employment	Cohabiting, one child	Lives independently with a partner and child	Latvian	Latvia	Not known
Salla	24	f	Currently in post-secondary training	Parental leave, previously in part-time employment, part time education	Cohabiting, one child	Lives independently with a partner and child	Finnish	Finland	Not known
Jamila	24	f	Currently in vocational secondary school	Parental leave, previously in full-time education	Married, one child	Lives independently with a partner and child	Arab	Iraq	Islam
Kadri	23	f	Completed general academic secondary school	Parental leave, previously in full-time employment	Cohabiting, one child	Lives independently with a partner and child	Estonian	Estonia	No religion

Ayaan	22	f	Completed vocational secondary school	Parental leave, previously in full-time education	Married, pregnant	Lives independently with a partner	Somali	Somalia	Islam
Dalmar	24	m	Currently in university	In part-time employment, part-time education	Married, wife pregnant	Lives independently with a partner and child	Somali	Somalia	Islam

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Grassroots initiatives, conflicts and solidarities of LGBTQ scene of St. Petersburg

Russia

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Executive summary:

As the aggressive promotion of a conservative ideology in Russia has increased dramatically in recent years, LGBTQ people have been pushed out of the public sphere. The critical discussion of 'different' gender and sexual identities in the mass media has led to the impossibility of public speaking. However, the pressure on non-heterosexual individuals has become also an incentive for the development of LGBTQ activists' associations and initiatives.

Empirical data drawn on in this report are 14 in-depth interviews with LGBTQ respondents and 16 days of participant observations in St. Petersburg. LGBTQ people are fighting against gender-based discrimination by organising protests, educational projects and other activities. The LGBTQ scene is constituted through a reflexive, often conflicting discussion of issues that have fundamental importance for the community such as status of sexuality, public actions, power and hierarchy, as well as new sexual and gender identities. The participants represent a decentralised, informal social movement, interacting in a flexible communication network.

Public actions, and participation in them, become a kind of a coming out both for activists and for the community. Bringing LGBTQ issues into the public space is an important element in the development of civil society, despite all the dangers and risks for participants.

The LGBTQ scene is a heterogeneous space of various organisations, initiatives and places. LGBTQ activists assess the effectiveness of their actions in different ways, depending on the goals and methods of action. The discussion of these topics reveals weak points, for example, risks and security of activism, power and solidarity within the scene, and the inclusion and exclusion of participants in the scene.

Local activities aimed at supporting community members are recognised as most effective at the moment. The possibility of change at the structural level is considered only in the long-term.

Contents

1. Introduction

In contemporary Russia, we can observe a quite aggressive discursive advancement of conservative ideology, including strict regulation of gender and sexuality. In this context, the problematisation of LGBTQ communities and gender 'non-conventional' identities by the media becomes increasingly intensive. The models of 'correct' sexual behaviour and family life are produced discursively with the central image of a heterosexual family, based on a registered marriage and having many children, where sex and sexuality are reduced to reproductive functions. There are moral panics about sexual manifestations that go beyond the 'normative' model. At the same time, democratic values, including values of tolerance and gender equality, are considered in federal Russian media as Western – alien to Russian mentality and way of life. In the present-day Russian context, such values are defined as opposing 'traditional values' and are perceived as a possible threat to the future of Russia and Russian youth.

This ideology is supported by Russian legislation. In 2013, the State Duma supplemented the Code of Administrative Offences by Article 6.21[1]. These amendments have become famous as the so-called 'Gay propaganda law'. This law prohibits informing minors about 'non-traditional sexual relations' and their equality with 'traditional' ones. It has influenced the rhetoric about LGBTQ people and led to the almost total impossibility of speaking publicly on the theme of non-heterosexuality. If the policy of the USSR regarding LGBTQ people can be defined as a policy of silence, the present-day policy of the Russian state can be described as a policy of exclusion (Shulga, 2014, p. 119). The Russian state is represented as heterosexual, with official rhetoric tending to exclude all non-heterosexual citizens from the notion of 'citizen' (Stella, 2007: 161). As a result, LGBTQ youth (18+) becomes a stigmatised social group in public space, both discursively and within practices.

However, at the same time, the so-called 'Gay propaganda law' has become a kind of incentive for LGBTQ activists to form a community for joint action (Lapina, 2014: 167-168; Soboleva and Bakhmetjev, 2014: 220-222; Sozayev, 2010: 99-100). In recent years, the number of online and offline initiatives has grown, the repertoire of events has expanded considerably, and new issues have been raised within the LGBTQ scene.

Therefore, the key research questions are following: how is the LGBTQ activism space organised in St. Petersburg, taking into account situation of stigmatization of LGBTQ people, who are involved in it and what actions do they take? How is the agenda for LGBTQ activism built up, what are the places of conflicts and solidarity within this agenda? How do activists evaluate the effectiveness of their actions?

2. Methods

This study of LGBTQ activism was carried out in St. Petersburg, a metropolis, which, on the one hand, accepts different lifestyles and identities, but, on the other hand – at the political level - demonstrates an extreme level of homophobia. St. Petersburg was, for example, one of the first administrative regions of the Russian Federation to pass a law on 'gay propaganda' at the city

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[1] Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation, Article 6.21. Propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations among minors (introduced by Federal Law No. 135-FZ of June 29, 2013).

level, even before the federal law was passed. The study was carried out within the case study methodology and included participant observation, interviews and analysis of online community activity. The empirical base was 14 in-depth interviews with LGBTQ activists and 16 field diary entries. Data were collected from October 2016 to February 2017 in St. Petersburg. The duration of the participant observations were 58 hours. During the observations, I was involved in various activities within the LGBTQ scene in St. Petersburg, participating as a volunteer and attendee in the work of groups and organisations.

Interviews were conducted with representatives of the LGBTQ scene aged from 18 to 37 years (3 people from 18 to 20 years, 7 people from 21 to 30 years, 4 people from 31 to 40 years). Such a wide distribution in age can be explained by the involvement of different generations of activists in the present-day LGBTQ scene in St. Petersburg. In my opinion, it was important to take several interviews with activists who have been involved in the community for a long time. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, it was important to include in it not only 'active' and public LGBTQ people, but also 'former' activists, and those LGBTQ people who are on the periphery of activism. They may not be particularly salient, but they are also part of the LGBTQ scene. Average length of interview is 94 minutes.

Informants who took part in the study can be referred to as belonging to the middle class, based on their educational status and current employment. Respondents included, for example, a volunteer, a student, a graduate student, a teacher of foreign languages, and a resuscitator. When specifying the gender of the informants, their self-identification and in what way the informants preferred to refer to themselves were taken into account. Gender identities of the interviewed participants of the LGBTQ scene included people identifying as men, women, non-binary and transgender. There were no informants with bigender or agender identity. The religious beliefs of the research participants were varied and include an atheist, an agnostic, a Catholic priest and an Orthodox.

Because there was a preliminary understanding of what LGBTQ initiatives exist in the city, it was assumed to start research with them. I learned about LGBTQ festivals, which would take place in the fall of 2016, and participation in them became the first entry into the field. The first observation (meeting) played, in my opinion, a key role in establishing contacts. Over time, informants began to trust me. A month later, I started to get in contact with activists who did not belong to LGBTQ organisations, but took individual actions. It opened up access to a new part of the scene, which had been closed before. The search for informants was carried out also through the social networks of the researcher and the snowball method, when the informants who had already taken part in the study offered contacts of other people within the scene. It is important to note that there were several entry points into the field, which allowed the collection of unique material concerning the space of LGBTQ activism in St. Petersburg.

3. Key Findings

3.1 Structure of the LGBTQ activism field, activities and hierarchy

The LGBTQ scene in St. Petersburg is a mosaic consisting of different initiative groups, organisations, and independent activist groups. The unifying factor is the awareness of the need to undertake a particular activity to improve the lives of LGBTQ people in contemporary Russia:

> If we take cohesion ... it's the result of some kind of aggressive laws and so on. Some bills that this crazy printer [State Duma] starts. Then some common actions begin, well, of different organisations. Well, in general, all do their own things, bend their own line, this is about the active part. (Katya)

Despite some cohesion of the scene, its participants are dispersed depending on the chosen methods of action, the degree of non/formality, and the purposes of activism. Key players of the LGBTQ activism space are represented by mapping of initiatives in online space. The network was built on the basis of open data on activity in the social media VKontakte by using the information system VKMiner_2017. The map includes 12 public pages (groups), which are important for activists in St. Petersburg. These public pages were repeatedly mentioned by informants during interviews (see Figure 1).
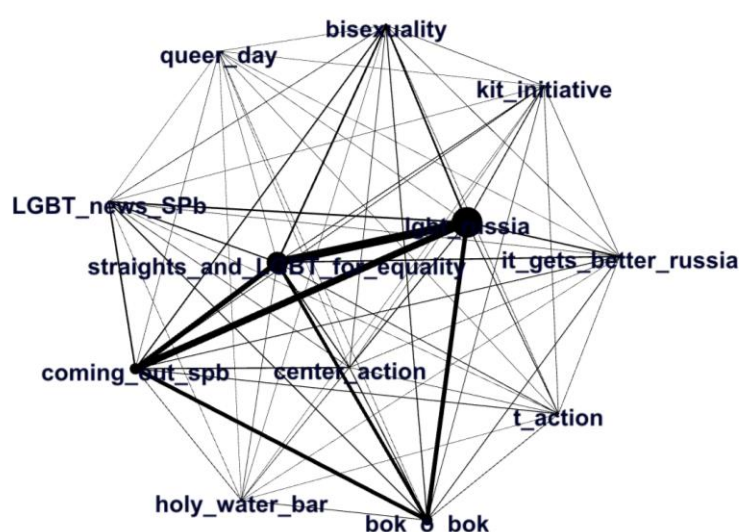
Figure 1. The map of online communities on LGBTQ scene in St. Petersburg

The thickness of the line on the map depends on the number of people who are simultaneously in two groups. The thicker the line, the more people are members of these groups. The size of the node in the network is determined by the number of participants in the public page/group.

The core of the scene, according to the results of the research, consists of the most numerous groups; the core part of them are LGBTQ organisations operating both in online and offline spaces: 'Russian LGBT network' (the 'lgbt_russia' on map) has operated since 2006 and defines itself as All-Russian and the largest LGBT organisation in the country, and has branches in 14 regions; LGBT initiative group 'Exit' ('coming_out_spb') that has existed in St. Petersburg since 2008 and implemented many projects; Centre 'Action' ('center_action'), which provides free of charge services of a psychologist and psychological groups and focuses also on the medical problems of transgender people and people living with HIV; and the International film festival 'Side by Side' ('bok_o_bok') held annually in St. Petersburg (since 2008) and Moscow (since 2012).

The periphery of the scene is formed by groups and public pages focused on more narrow topics. Here, we see groups acting online and offline. An example is the discussion of non-binary gender identities within the groups 'queer_day' and 'KIT – Be Yourself' ('kit_initiative') that are initiatives oriented primarily towards trans-, intersex- and queer-people. This includes also the Holy Water Bar ('holy_water_bar'), a saloon that is considered now by LGBT activists as 'their' place, where they can spend time comfortably and safely. There are also important initiatives for the LGBTQ

scene that exist only in online spaces, including: 'Bisexuality', an initiative group of bi-activists; 'LGBT News in St. Petersburg' ('LGBT_news_SPb'), a group that accumulates the latest news of LGBT life in St. Petersburg and is an important source of information for the LGBTQ community; and the project 'It_gets_better_russia', the official representatives of the American initiative 'It gets better' in Russia, creating positive content about LGBTQ in Russia through the videos that support LGBT+ youth around the world.

Online space is a large platform for interaction between activists, constituting a particular sphere of 'Internet activism'. Many LGBTQ activists regularly cover their activities or the activities of their organisations. The Internet space expands the possibilities of public activism, providing it with a new and large arena. But, at the same time, there is a likelihood of isolation of Internet activism in the case when the audience of a blog, an online community or a website turns into a closed group.

Besides organised groups, initiatives and NGOs, the 'independent activists', a group of people who do not officially belong to any of the organisations, are also important participants in the LGBTQ activism space. The segment of independent activism within the LGBTQ scene is rather narrow, that is why almost all independent activists are familiar with each other. Most often, they become organisers and participants of public actions. 'Independence' of activism means that participants do not need to agree with others (colleagues, leaders) on the purpose, method and form of action, as happens in LGBTQ organisations, thus, they have freedom of action. At the same time, all emerging risks such as possible detentions, physical attacks and psychological pressure they take on themselves.

In addition to active participants, the scene is also constituted by LGBTQ people and their sympathisers who, being in the shadow, act as consumers of events and Internet content.

The LGBTQ activists solidarise with other civil groups. One of the important directions for cooperation and building horizontal ties for LGBTQ is the grass-root feminist scene of St. Petersburg. LGBTQ and feminists use common spaces for events, initiate seminars and discussions with representatives of both scenes, participate in joint actions. However, despite the intentions of consolidation and mutual development, these spaces are quite autonomous, support their borders and do not always come to a consensus. Another group with which LGBTQ activists try to develop and maintain relations is the 'Green', which becomes a resource for LGBTQ in the situation of urban mass marches and events, as they are ready to include the participants of the scene in their green column.

Being engaged in LGBTQ activism in most cases is on the basis of personal experience of harassment and discrimination caused by sexual orientation and gender identity; individuals choose different ways in their activities. We can distinguish two key areas of work: service activism; and public activism. Service activism works most often with the LGBTQ community itself, and most of the activity is concentrated within the scene. The main directions are provision of psychological and legal help to LGBTQ people, organisation of cultural/educational/entertaining events. Service activism is also referred to as an activity of centres that provide HIV prevention, medical and information support to people living with HIV.

Public activism includes street actions, pickets, performances and rallies to draw attention to issues that are significant for the LGBTQ community. Through public actions, on the one hand, the ideas of equality and tolerance are brought to the whole society. On the other hand, solidarity is formed within the community through demonstrating the dignity and pride of belonging to 'one's

own', including those members of the LGBTQ community that are 'in the shadow'. Those involved in public activism are convinced that changes are possible only if regular, public actions are taken: *'You see, it's frightening, they will detain you, but it's even more frightening to go on living in such a situation'*. (Oxana)

LGBTQ activism is varied in terms of institutionalisation and stability. For example, some activists work independently and using their own money, others are salaried workers in organisations, while still others are volunteers in funded projects, having their main employment and income outside the scene, but not investing financial resources in LGBTQ activities. At the same time, the positions towards volunteering are contradictory. On the one hand, volunteers are seen as an important element and stage within individual biographies, the development of civic activism in the LGBTQ space:

> Yes, but, damn, in any case, but that is, for example, volunteers [Event] – it's some kind of a separate race of people, that is, for many it's an entry into activism. As well as the volunteers [the name of the organisation], in general, these kinds of events, in addition to the fact that they give some information, they are very good at bringing people together. Well, I also came into activism, because I volunteered at the festival, yes. (Anna)

On the other hand, they are regarded as temporary, not very reliable and, therefore, not serious employees and associates:

> But this is all such work, they, volunteers, there is an opinion in the community that people who do that are like… well. There are now people, who have been volunteers for a long time. They just go there when they have free time. And the new ones come when, with (the name of the event), who decided: 'Oh, come on, I'm going to do something about it'. But more or less serious human rights defenders do not do it anymore. (Artem)

The hierarchy in the LGBTQ activism space is based on the importance of someone's activity for the LGBTQ community from the point of view of the activists themselves. Respect is given to activists who organise risky but spectacular actions that receive a wide public response. The people-mentors who supervise large volunteer teams of festivals, pickets and rallies are also leaders within the scene. Formal heads of organisations often do not receive activist recognition, since they are characterised not as 'real activists', but as ordinary individuals doing managerial work for a wage.

In addition, there is a hierarchy of organisations based on allocated funding, since there are a number of LGBTQ organisations receiving support in St. Petersburg, but the volume of this support is different. It has caused conflicts between the leaders of organisations, and further between employees about 'unfair' distribution of funds between organisations or about how to spend the allocated money. For example, almost all informants who said that they are involved in public activism and associate themselves with it, believe that LGBTQ organisations spend money allocated to the community not on what is necessary.

It is important to note that among activists, there is no common idea of what a LGBTQ community is. Some say that LGBTQ community means uniting people of all gender identities and

orientations. Other activists suggest that the LGBTQ community, as a whole, does not exist at all. And the existence of the community is the result of activism, but not a condition.

Thus, it can be said that the field of LGBTQ activism in St. Petersburg is a heterogeneous space of various organisations, places, initiatives aimed at different groups of people with non-conventional sexual and gender identity. At the same time, LGBTQ activists build solidarity ties with other initiatives and movements of the civil sector. By engaging in activism, the individual not only chooses the form of participation (formal place of work, volunteerism or independent activity), but also the direction of the activity – orientation to work inside or outside the community. The main hierarchies within the LGBTQ scene are associated with the recognition and distribution of funding.

3.2 Conflicts and solidarities in the space of LGBTQ activism

LGBTQ activism is a space of periodically arising internal and external conflicts. This leads to a revision of the agenda relevant to the LGBTQ community, to a critical evaluation of each other's actions, and to a search for new solidarities and consensuses:

> It seems to me that people who… they just see how to improve the situation differently, constantly argue about this and because of that do not like each other. I don't understand, it seems to me, this is absurd. Like some people from [name of organisation A] do not like [name of organisation B] because they think that they work there, but they are not visible, you need to go out, draw attention. And so to say actions are our everything. (Vera)

The majority of contradictions, internal conflicts and disapprovals relate to four areas: the status of sexuality; public actions; control and accountability of organisations/initiatives; and gender and sexual identities.

One of the main divisions within the LGBTQ scene is between the understanding of sexuality as private, that should remain in the personal space of the individual, and the understanding of sexuality in the context of 'personal is political', implying the actualisation of sexuality is a resource for political change. Depending on how activists define their own sexual identity and sexuality in general, they refer themselves to one or another part of the LGBTQ scene, which is characterised by certain methods of action/inaction. Thus, those who perceive sexuality as a personal and intimate part of life choose nonparticipation in public actions, closed organisation of lectures and meetings, develop the 'shadow' zone of the LGBTQ scene. Those who perceive sexuality as part of the social and political regimes of society move from the organisation of the quality of everyday life to the level of national/international issues such as struggle against discrimination and stigmatisation, protecting human rights, recognising diversity, and engage in a broader democratic agenda.

A big discussion is built around public actions and events in general. On the one hand, participants using flash mobs, actions, performances etc. can influence the dissemination of information about themselves, present the LGBTQ agenda to wider audiences and promote the development of solidarity within the community:

> And when we go out into the street, we do not go out in order that somebody, I do not know who, will see us and pass the law or will not pass it. We go out in order that our own people will see us. I go out to be seen. (Anna)

On the other hand, carrying out public actions and events is criticised in terms of impossibility in the present political situation in Russia to ensure security for participants, both during the actions (for example, there are risks of arrest) and after them (for example, harassment and violent outing):

> If there are any communications, I feel very uncomfortable, even if they are positive, not to mention negative ones, I do not even know how to behave. Now, I'm not so afraid of any attacks, because it seems to me that it's very unlikely, given that I'm a girl, it's unlikely that any homophobic people will immediately attack me with their fists. But anyway, there can be all kinds of comments. (Vera)

Another difficult and conflictual issue, in many respects related to the above one, is the issue of control and accountability. Thus, within the internal discussions of activists, the monopolisation of activities in the sphere of protecting the rights of people with non-normative gender or sexual identity is problematised. For example, the organisation 'Nuntiare et Recreare', which unites religious gender and sexually non-conformist people, announced its withdrawal from the 'Russian LGBT Network' because of the need to report. The following statement was published on the official website of 'Nuntiare et Recreare': 'We consider as groundless the demands of the Council of the Russian LGBT Network to provide an annual report and plans for the organisation of a collective participant from organisations that are virtually independent and uncontrolled by the Council of the Network.' Discussions are also provoked by the actions of Russian activists that were not coordinated with other participants on the city scene.

The gender identities that are new in the Russian context are being increasingly discussed in the St. Petersburg LGBTQ community: intersex, asexual, people with non-binary gender identities. On the one hand, within the LGBTQ-scene, there is a discussion about the privileged position of one part of the community and the oppressed position of another. Based on the analysis of the interviews and the participant observation, it can be said that there is a tension between people with non-binary gender, etc. identities and cisgender people[2]. Cisgender homosexual people are accused of holding a privileged position in a common culture in relation to 'new' identities, monopolising speaking and acting on the scene, and ignoring the specifics and problems of non-binary, queer, etc. people:

> Yes, after the recent [name of the event], it was fuel added to the fire, [name], in short, with his dislike for everything that is queer, as if ... more precisely the opponent of this word, the opponent of non-binary transgenders, apparently, too, very much, well, it touched me, well, that is, what he writes it's, in short, quite hard. He wrote an article of the type: 'Queer must die', in short. (Vadim)

On the other hand, due to an unclear definition of queer identity or non-binary gender identity, the process of elaborating a common and universal activist position becomes more complicated. Both non-binary and queer people are accused of blurring out boundaries of the movement and non-participation in activism:

> Ah, look, [name of the organisation] has now started on another very fashionable European theme of non-binary identity, yes. Non-binary identities for Russia, just like

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[2] Cisgender is the term referring to people, whose gender identity matches the biological sex. Non-binary is the term referring to any gender identity that is outside the binary dichotomy 'man – woman'.

the queer theory, are purely, yes, philosophically, yes, and not at all a matter of practice, yes. (Vanya)

The heterogeneity of the LGBTQ activism field and the presence of individuals and initiatives with different interests, goals and identities has led to difficulties in the setting of a universal and consensual agenda. Despite the existence of some general ideas about common tasks including struggles against discrimination and for the rights of LGBTQ people, the LGBTQ scene is constituted rather through a reflexive, often conflicting discussion of issues that have fundamental importance for the community.

3.3 Participants' views on the effectiveness of LGBTQ activism in St. Petersburg

Participants in the LGBTQ activism field in St. Petersburg are united by the fight against various forms of discrimination. Despite this, the activists set multiple goals, choosing different means of achieving them and taking various collective actions. As a result, they assess the effectiveness of activist practices in different ways.

Some LGBTQ activists evaluate their actions as effective if they contributed to a strengthening of the community. The senses of pride and unity become a goal for activists to carry out and participate in actions and events: 'And when we go out into the street, we do not go out in order that somebody, I do not know who, will see us and pass the law or will not pass it. We go out in order that our own people will see us. I go out to be seen'. (Anna)

Effectiveness is also evaluated in reference to raising awareness among community members and to improving the human condition in each situation. The proposal of concrete solutions to problems and the departure from the level of abstract goals on the LGBTQ scene is considered by a number of participants as an opportunity to achieve changes in the present or near future:

> Interviewer: What is more effective in your opinion, if I may put it that way?
> Informant: The formation of a comfortable environment in order not to prove that we are such, that we exist. And to form a community of those who understand, accept and so on, yes, where it's comfortable. But for this it's necessary to do a huge amount of work on the community as a whole, yes. Because it's necessary to make the community something that people would like to join. (Efim)

For the scene participants who are involved in public activism, the criterion of success is broad media coverage of the action. The event is produced to reach the media with the maximum coverage.

Criteria for success/failure include also the notion of safety. For instance, the organisers of the annual flash mob perceive the action as well-conducted, if all participants managed to come freely to the action, to be at it and to leave. That is, a 'peaceful' presence in a public space is evaluated as a success.

The number of people who attend an event or festival is, in itself, an indicator of success for the actions, the purpose of which is education. At the same time, public independent activists evaluate the effectiveness of their actions in the way: 'the brighter, the cooler'.

The possibility of change at the societal level is not something that activists believe in, at least not in the near future. Participants in the scene say that the present political situation does not contribute to positive change and that some time must pass before such change can materialise. One of the reasons why change, according to the activists, will be slow is the fear and passivity of the majority of LGBTQ people and LGBTQ sympathisers, including fear of getting involved in activities, participating in actions and exercising educational initiatives.

LGBTQ activists assess their effectiveness on various grounds including the number of participants in the action, the coverage of the media and the security of the event. In terms of development and strengthening of the community, effectiveness is assessed through a solidary response to a particular problem and assistance to a particular person. However, in general, LGBTQ activists do not make optimistic prognoses and do not expect rapid social change. The barriers to such change are both the government policy and cultural codes of the majority, and the fear and passivity of ordinary members of the LGBTQ community itself.

4. Conclusion

The advancement of conservative ideology, the rhetoric of 'traditional values' and the regulation of sexuality, including through legislation, lead to the problematisation of LGBTQ communities and 'non-conventional' gender identities and their almost complete exclusion from public space in contemporary Russia. However, the pressure on non-heterosexual individuals has become an incentive for the development of LGBTQ activists' associations and initiatives.

The space of LGBTQ activism in St. Petersburg is a heterogeneous space of different organisations, places, initiatives aimed at different groups of people with non-conventional sexual and gender identity. Initiatives on the LGBTQ scene are aimed both at the development and maintenance of the community itself, and at the transformation of the cultural and social order that determines the status of LGBTQ individuals.

The heterogeneity of LGBTQ activism leads to difficulties in the setting of a universal and consensual agenda. The LGBTQ scene is constituted rather through a reflexive, often conflicting discussion of issues that have fundamental importance for the community such as status of sexuality, public actions, power and hierarchy, as well as new sexual and gender identities.

The hierarchy within the scene is set by various configurations of organisational affiliation, symbolic capital and recognition, financial opportunities and the identity of the initiative/activist. This hierarchy provides some participants of the scene with the voice and the opportunity to speak on behalf of the community while taking that voice from the 'others'. For example, the identity of an 'independent' activist or the status of a cisgender person gives the right to speak publicly about the problems of the LGBTQ community as a whole. At the same time, people with non-binary gender identities often form more local groups and associations, where in private and closed milieus they share their feelings and experiences.

Nevertheless, LGBTQ activists solidarise in the face of symbolic, mental and physical violence and coercion from the state and social institutions, as well as from the homophobic population. The answer to social exclusion is the struggle for the rights of LGBTQ people. Public actions and participation in them become a kind of coming out for both the activists and for the community.

Bringing LGBTQ issues into the public space is an important element in the development of civil society, despite all the dangers and risks for participants.

LGBTQ activists assess the effectiveness of their actions in different ways. For example, both public action that attracted high-volume media and an event that took place without any psychological and physical consequences for the participants are considered to be successful. Given the space heterogeneity, actions that contribute to consolidation and mobilisation of the community are defined as successful and effective. In general, local activities aimed at supporting community members are recognised as being more effective at the moment. The chances for change at the structural level are considered only as something on the horizon in the longer-term..

5. Future analysis

For future analysis within the gender/sexuality cluster, I would like to propose several topics:

1. *Politicisation of gender / sexual differences.* In what contexts and in what ways do the external and internal (for the activist field) politicisations of gender / sexual identities take place?

2. *Conflicts and consensus.* With regard to what structural, cultural, and political constraints is there a relative consensus about the purpose and ways of overcoming them, and which ones are problematised within communities and cause conflicts?

3. *Solidarisation and integration with other activist scenes.* What are the mechanisms of mutual support, reciprocity, benefits in the interaction of different groups of active youth?

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Appendix

Respondent	Age	Gender	Education	Employment	Residential status	Family Status	Ethnicity	Country of birth	Religion
Anna	22	Female	Studies at University	Job and education	Unknown	Lives with parents	Russian	Russian Federation	Unknown
Artem	19	Male	Studies at University	Education, activism	Unknown	Partner	Russian	Russian Federation	Unknown
Oxana	20	Female	Studies at University	Education, activism	Rent a room	Unknown	Russian	Russian Federation	Agnostic
Vera	22	Female	Studies at University	Education	Live on campus	Single	Russian	Russian Federation	Agnostic
Katya	30	Female	Graduate	Full-time job	Rent a flat	Unknown	Russian	Russian Federation	Baptized, but unbelieving
Natalia	22	Female	Studies at University	Education, activism	Live with her parents	Unknown	Russian	Russian Federation	Unknown
Harold	29	Male	High-school completed	Activism	Rent a flat	Unknown	Russian	Russian Federation	Unknown
Lena	31	Female	Studies at phd at University	Education, activism	Live with mother	Partner	Russian	Russian Federation	Atheism
Ilya	20	Male	High-school completed	Part-time job	Rent a room	Unknown	Ukrainian	Russian Federation	Catholic priest

Pasha	37	Male	Graduate	Full-time job, activism	Unknown	Unknown	Russian	Russian Federation	Baptized, but unbelieving
Vanya	31	Male	Graduate	Full-time job	Live with partner	Lives with civil husband	Russian	Russian Federation	Baptized, but unbelieving
Vadim	23	Male	Graduate	Full-time job, activism	With friends, rent a flat	Unknown	Russian	Russian Federation	Baptized, but unbelieving
Max	26	Male	Two unfinished higher education	Part-time job, activism	With partner, rent a flat	Lives with partner	Russian	Russian Federation	Previously he was a Catholic, he was baptized at age of 19.
Efim	34	Male	Graduate	Part-time job	Lives in his own flat	Unknown	Russian	Russian Federation	Baptized, but unbelieving

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Grassroots initiatives, conflicts and solidarities of the feminist scene of St. Petersburg

Russia

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Executive summary:

The current Russian social and political conditions constitute an environment unfavorable for the development of feminist activities. More specifically, the conservative discourse designed by the power elites contributes to the formation of a patriarchal political culture, which comprises a serious challenge to the growth of grassroots feminist initiatives and facilitates alienation, marginalisation, and stigmatisation of feminists.

Solidarities among the participants of feminist initiatives emerge through teaming-up to protect women's rights. In this case, women are perceived as a social group of the oppressed in a binary opposition to the dominant group of men constructed as 'enemies'. However, the fight for the ideas of basic social justice for all, beyond the constructed dichotomy of 'women's' and 'men's' rights turns out to be no less significant for many informants.

The main vectors of cultural- and values-based tensions among the participants are associated with: acceptance or denial of the dichotomy 'woman'/ 'man' within the framework of building a safe space; polarised perception of commercial sex and LGBTIQ. These vectors allow participants to build the boundaries of feminist initiatives through self-determination with the help of 'us' and 'them' constructions. Moreover, the emerging lines of solidarities and conflict represent a spectrum of often unstable beliefs, manifested not in dichotomous value oppositions, but in fluid, flexible and heterogeneous semantic continuums of solidarities.

Participants desire to bring feminist ideas to the mainstream public through mass protests as lacking the potential for social change. At the same time, most of the participants believe that tensions and ideological differences among them might be effectively smoothed with the help of constructing feminists' solidarity over the struggle against the dominant conservative discourse. The solidarity concerns both the level of collective action in the urban space and the level of building and maintaining the ties among individual initiatives.

Contents

1. Introduction

Gender order in contemporary Russia has an ambiguous nature. The lack of sensibility to gender issues is observed in social opinion and the current power elite's rhetoric concerning such problems as violence against women[1], their reproductive,[2] and labour[3] rights.

According to scholars, the contemporary Russian context is a hybrid regime formed in the conditions of the global democratic decline since the middle of the 2010s. It is characterised by the coexistence of authoritarian elements and elements imitating the democratic processes (Johnson *et. Al.*, 2016; Temkina and Zdravomyslova, 2014). The conservative discourse appears to be particularly strong in women's reproductive rights infringement, repression of LGBTIQ[4], and confrontation to sexual education (Temkina and Zdravomyslova, 2014). On the international stage, Russia appears to be a stronghold of social conservatism and protection of traditional family values, which are constructed as in opposition to European sexual democracy (Stella and Nartova, 2015). Furthermore, the power of conservative ideology stems not only from the official authorities' activities, but also from the activities of some segments of civil society. These segments are supported by the Russian Orthodox Church known for promoting traditional gender stereotypes (Temkina and Zdravomyslova, 2014; Willems, 2014) and for considering the domestic violence laws as destructive for the family values (Johnson, 2009; Johnson *et. Al.*, 2016).

In this context, any manifestations of feminism are constructed as contradicting the 'essentialist traditions' of Russian culture and are considered a threat to the moral foundations and security of Russian society (Temkina and Zdravomyslova, 2014). According to some scholars, such a semi-authoritarian regime excludes any political opportunity for feminist projects in Russia (Johnson and Saarinen, 2013; Kondakov, 2013). Thus, being feminist in Russia on one hand means to be exposed to stigmatization and repulsion from the part of mainstream society, on the other hand such self-identification often implicates labour-consuming and risky practices.

However, despite the pressure of conservative discourse, the popularity of feminist ideas is on the rise in modern Russia. Most often, it is revealed in the mass media; such federal level news portals as *medusa.io*, *colta.ru*, *wonderzine.com* regularly publish materials devoted to gender questions. Moreover, Russian speaking feminist communities spring up in social media[5].

The new wave of grassroots feminist activism in Russia emerged from 2010. It was initiated by young women with diverse class backgrounds, political beliefs, and experiences of participating in street protests. The new wave of activist movement represents a constellation of small feminist groups with overlapping participants (Sperling, 2014). At the current time, grassroots Russian-speaking feminist initiatives are springing up, taking the form of public actions, discussions, theatrical performances, art exhibitions and other collective and individual actions.

The contemporary St. Petersburg feminist scene has an eclectic nature demonstrated in various and often contradictory interests of the participants. The main issues of interest for feminist activism in the city concern fighting against violence, for sexual liberation, for women's

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[1] The All-Russian Public Opinion Research Centre, publication № 3200 15.09.2016
[2] http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/4625720.html
[3] Governmental Decree on February 25, 2000. №162
[4] LGBTIQ - Lesbians, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer
[5] See, for example: 'Bodypositive', 'Shut Your Sexist Mouth Up', 'Check your privilege', 'School of feminism', 'Femics', 'sister to sister! Mutual aid' and others.

reproductive and labour rights, supporting (or refusing to support) the LGBTQ community, supporting sex workers or fighting against prostitution.

On the one hand, feminist initiatives are defined as components of the St. Petersburg feminist scene as a general structure, based on the shared values of its participants and, thus, representing the community. On the other hand, empirical research results show that participants are likely to have conflicts with different agents both inside and outside the feminist scene.

The research questions of the case-study are: which conflicts and problems emerge among Saint Petersburg feminists? How do they respond to these conflicts and problems? How effective is the collective action of the participants?

2. Methods

The research was done as an ethnographic case-study, based on a thorough and detailed study of feminist initiatives in their daily interactions. Participant observations were held from 2016 to 2017 through the researcher's involvement in a number of feminist initiatives: festivals, robotics club, feminist meetups, feminist library, film shows, lectures, exhibitions, master classes. Access to the field was obtained in August, 2016 via participation in the St. Petersburg feminist meetup. Additionally, I took part in selected street actions: the picket for the abortion rights on October 8, 2016; and the demonstration on May 1, 2017. The data obtained during the participant observations are supplemented by semi-structured interviews with participants of feminist initiatives. All audio recordings were transcribed word-for-word and anonymised to preserve the confidentiality and safety of the research participants.

Overall, 21 days of participant observations and 15 interviews with informants lasting from 74 to 202 minutes were collected. The participants were aged between 21 and 39. Most of the interviewees were women aged between 20 and 30. This reflects the age structure of the field and gave an opportunity to speak about the field as of a youth space. All informants identified themselves as feminists. The study involved not only key figures of feminist initiatives, but also less active participants. Most of them were residents of a big city, but with different levels of education, different employment status, ethnicity, class, sexuality, various experiences of partnership and maternity. The main purpose of constructing this heterogeneous sample was to show the diversity of the experiences of Russian feminists.

Proceeding in the participant observation framework, initially, I chose the role of 'observer as a participant' (Gold, 1958) characterised by minimal involvement in the respondents' activities. However, maintaining this position during the field work was problematic. Observing the various feminist initiatives, I designated my role as a researcher. However, without self-identification as a feminist, access to the field would have been problematic. Therefore, I tried to perceive my own identity as a factor, on the one hand, inducing a subjectivity bias and, on the other hand, having research tool potential.

To construct trusting relations with the participants, it was necessary to commit to mutual experience exchanges. Specifically, it was often necessary to talk in detail about my biography and motivation to conduct research on feminism. Sometimes, activist cooperation was an important part of the participant observations. In these cases, rejecting any emotional involvement in the field, maintaining an estranged position as researcher, and controlling my own ideological bias proved to be difficult methodological tasks. To avoid moralising, I wrote detailed field notes that

helped me to reflect the researcher's introspection, to better understand my position as a researcher and to assure awareness of possible bias.

At the same time, the reduction of the distance between me and the research participants as well as collaboration with St. Petersburg gender researchers contributed to the formation of my own feminist identity. After completing the interviews, I took part in a number of public feminist projects. Thus, the new experience of self-involvement in public sociology helped me to build more egalitarian relations with research participants through both giving and receiving 'feedback'.

3. Key Findings

3.1 Feminist Scene Structure and Solidarities

The St. Petersburg Feminist scene represents a heterogeneous field, including different initiatives with flexible borders. The network of feminist online communities depicted in Figure 1 and created using the informational system VkMiner_32, comprises 13 initiatives: 11 feminist and 2 pro-feminist. Pro-feminist initiatives implement activities supporting feminism although feminist values are not defined as prevailing by the participants of the initiatives. Pro-feminist initiatives are included in the network to show the diversity of the feminist scene, involving not only key actors, but also less active participants.

1. Feminfoteka
2. Feminist Meetups
3. Vegan Cooperative
4. LadyFest
5. LeftFem
6. Feminist Robotonics Club
7. Eve's Ribs
8. Russian Socialist Movement
9. Rhythms of Resistance
10. Feminist Martial Arts Club
11. sister to sister! mutual aid
12. Shut Your Sexist Mouth Up
13. Sewing Cooperative
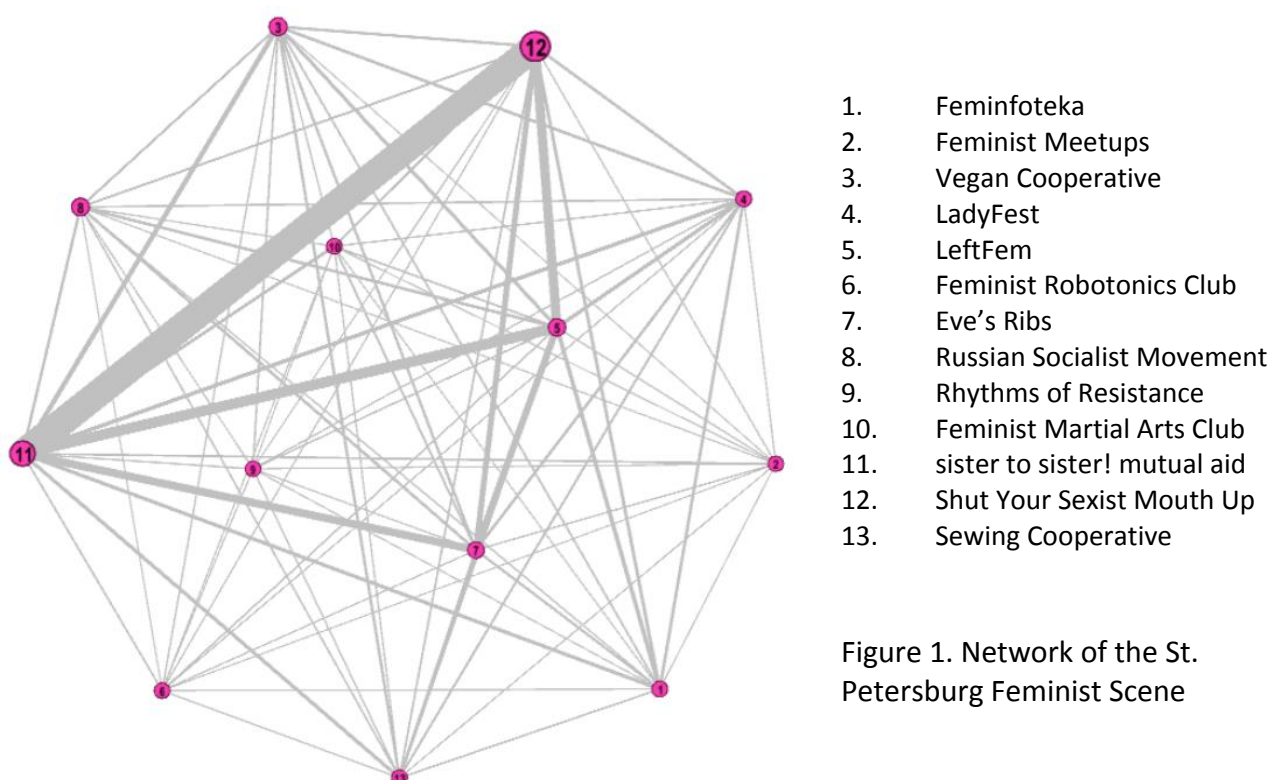
Figure 1. Network of the St. Petersburg Feminist Scene

Line thickness corresponds to the number of participants, simultaneously engaged in corresponding online communities. The largest communities are 'LeftFem' and 'Eve's Ribs', 'Shut Your Sexist Mouth Up', 'sister to sister! mutual aid'. At the same time, communities 'Shut Your Sexist Mouth Up' and 'sister to sister!' include the biggest number of subscribers. These two communities are primarily intended for online-communication.

'Shut Your Sexist Mouth Up' is organised by a young activist from St Petersburg. It is one of the biggest feminist web resources, publishing short anonymous stories on everyday sexism and providing psychological help for the victims of gender violence. 'Sister to sister! mutual aid' is a resource created by St. Petersburg feminists using the model of online communities of DIY mutual aid. 'Sister to sister!' represents a male-free 'safe space' for women, transgender and queer people. 'LeftFem' is a male-inclusive activist project, aimed at working with a wide audience. Group participants organise lectures, movie screenings and publish feminist texts. 'Rhythms of Resistance' is a musical project, organised by non-professional drummers that support feminist actions and rallies. 'Feminfoteka' is a self-organised grassroots queer-feminist library and a space for feminist discussions. 'Feminist Meetups' is an informal discussion club for the reciprocal exchange of life experience and ideas between the participants. 'Sewing Cooperative' is a grassroots tailor-shop and, at the same time, an independent art-project, created by young feminist artists sewing banners for feminist actions. 'Feminist Robotonics Club' is another creative initiative, organised by St. Petersburg anarchists, supporting feminist ideas. They create robots via Arduino language and make non-profit DIY-projects. 'Feminist Martial Arts Club' is a male-free initiative, aimed at educating women to fight. Initially designed as a feminist festival, 'Eve's Ribs' became a sustainable initiative, defined by organisers as a 'social-art project, dedicated to campaigning against gender discrimination[6]'. 'LaDIY Fest' (Lady Fest) is another non-profit festival, organised in St. Petersburg by an independent queer-feminist affinity group. Feminist workshops, performances, lectures and concerts take place during the festival.

'Vegan Cooperative' is a pro-feminist collective of people cooking and selling vegan food. It is based on principles of equality, mutual aid and horizontality, campaigning against fascism, racism, xenophobia, sexism and homophobia. 'Russian Socialist Movement' is another pro-feminist initiative, fighting for democratic values and equality.

Therefore, St. Petersburg grassroots feminist and pro-feminist initiatives represent different activist, educational, creative online and offline projects, that vary depending on the targeted audience (from large mainstream audiences to limited DIY-scene and small affinity-groups), transmitted values, established norms, restrictions, and boundaries.

However, the study participants identify such consolidating points of feminist resistance agenda as labour inequality, violence against women and infringement of reproductive rights. According to the socialist movement activist and contemporary artist, who spoke at the March 8, 2016 protest: 'This system has climbed into the women's pockets, panties, uterus and consciousness, and continues to pull their dirty hands there'. The main slogans voiced at the March 8 meetings in 2016 and 2017 were: 'Same job – same salary, appearance is not the measure of wage', 'Feminism is about decent wages for all!', 'Sexist dress code is a wrong approach', 'By shutting the victim's mouth you support the rapist', 'Whatever I put on, wherever I go, yes means yes, no means no'. This vector of solidarity is inseparably linked to the category of women, constructed by the study participants as a vulnerable social group in the binary opposition to the category of men.

At the same time, for the majority of participants, the modern feminist agenda in St. Petersburg is intertwined with the opposition to multiple discrimination and the struggle for social justice. Such a position is manifested not only in the slogans voiced in feminist actions: 'feminism is about equal and respectful attitude to all', 'while there are rapes, there cannot be any peace, justice, and equality', but also in the narratives of informants. According to a 23-year-old individual entrepreneur Olya, who says, about the formation of her feminist views: 'I was mostly interested

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[6] https://vk.com/rebra_evi

in all sorts of humanity, human rights, animal rights, antifascism and all that' (Olya). For the majority of the research participants, social problems faced by labour migrants in the Russian context are of great concern. 22 year old Anya is the creator of the newspaper for Central Asian women of St. Petersburg and a member of the volunteer organisation that helps children of labour migrants and refugees. She answers the question about her experience in feminist activism as follows: 'I have more experience in some projects... with male migrants, female migrants and there are a lot of feminist projects with them' (Anya).

Participants of feminist initiatives also express solidarity with truckers protesting in the framework of the Russian nationwide strike against the system of paid truck registration 'Platon'. For example, for May 1, the participants of the Sewing Cooperative had created a banner with the slogan: *'Dissatisfied with the food prices? Support the truckers' strike!'* On April 11, 2017, the cooperative organised a master class, entirely devoted to the creation of stencils and stripes in support of the Russian nationwide truck drivers' strike. Furthermore, the cooperative participants took part in an organised visit to the truckers' camp near St. Petersburg on April 8, 2017.

Another important solidarity vector is active cooperation with LGBTIQ initiatives, most often perceived by informants as a part of a broad feminist field. On May 1 2017, feminists marched the city streets with a banner: 'There could be a rainbow here, but this is forbidden'. Moreover, during the March 8, 2017 rally, one could hear the slogan combining anti-fascist, LGBTIQ and feminist agendas: 'Down with fascism, homophobia, and sexism!' Oksana, 31, an independent activist, emphasises: 'whether queer, whether the end of the world! It's the time to move away from norms, deconstruct them and stop holding on them' (Oksana).

Thus, on the one hand, St. Petersburg feminists unite in the struggle for women's rights and for achieving equality with men; on the other hand, the participants of the study are not less concerned with the protection of all the people oppressed on gender, class, and ethnic grounds, disregarding their division into binary categories 'women' and 'men'.

3.2 Key Conflicts and Problems

One of the most important spheres of conflicts is connected to research participants' communication with older generation within their families. Respondents' reflections on growing-up in a patriarchal family have substantially influenced the establishment of the feminist identity. 24 year old Katya argues : 'My patriarchal family has extremely, controversially influenced me, it means that, when I was hearing that girls are a "weak sex", it provoked a bitter revolt, because it is not true!' (Katya). Another research participant, 21 year old Vika endorse: 'I think that I was mostly influenced by the fact that my parents were quite authoritarian, it means that my father was the main authoritarian, and mother obeyed him, and I did not like at all to see such relationships'(Vika).

At the same time, the involvement in feminist activities represents a response to patriarchal discourse, disseminated in social media by conservative grassroots activists. Katya describes her incentives to involve in feminist activities:

> *Respondent:* And then, I run on male movements, all of those 'for patriarchy', I understood the necessity to do something, why do we have only one feminist group on the all 'vkontakte', why? The necessity to do some pickets, meetups… And me with some other girls who were also reading all those horrible groups ВВРЕ [ББПЕ]

> *Interviewer:* What's that?

Respondent: 'Punch female in her face' ['Бей бабу по еб**у']. Yes, when we have seen it, we understood that we had to make a group. We have made five or six groups like this, we were making them very quickly, because we were terrified by those things that we have seen' (Katya).

However, many respondents involve in feminist initiatives after the encounters with patriarchal gender regime and the indifference to women's issues inside large activist communities. 32 old Darya tells about her previous activist experience:

'A female activist came to the meeting, and in the room guys were sitting, and she said, maybe it was the first year when government tried to exclude abortions from legitimate field, and she said 'It's such a trash, look, let's do something!', and they said with their eyes locked on the ground that they are pro-life. At that moment I thought that I would die!' (Darya)

However, the redefinition of gender regimes is timely not only within activist community, but also in everyday communication with groups of friends. Thus, 27 old Polina tells about sexist communication practices among her friends: 'It is the frequent manner, when there is a big group, to choose one's girlfriend as an object of jokes. Disrespectful attitude' (Polina). Katya endorses: 'the chat of my university groupmates, they were writing: "I want and I will obey my man. What kind of rights do women need?" So, people reaction is just incredible' (Katya).

Hence, on the one hand, the identification of patriarchal interaction patterns within activist communities complicates the common solidarization against dominant social discourse. On the other hand, the acknowledgment of proliferating patriarchal values (in mainstream and activist spheres) creates substantial incentives for feminist activism.

Collective actions in urban space often represents the reaction to legislative changes. Thus, first manifestations of collective action within St. Petersburg feminist scene in the last decade were provoked in 2012 by State Duma's initiative on the restriction of women's reproductive rights. The fight for reproductive rights remains a valuable agenda, consolidating St. Petersburg feminists: the picket, organized in October 2016, on one hand, represented a solidarity action with Polish women standing for their abortion rights; on the other hand, the picket was devoted to the similar problems in Russia. In autumn 2016, a state legal initiative against baby-boxes was initiated, while politicians were discussing the exclusion of abortions form mandatory medical insurance.[7] Such collective action experience is represented in respondents' narratives as the source of their marginalization and stigmatization by mainstream society. Katya tells about her picket against ban of abortions in front of one Petersburg hospital building:

'It was one-person picket. There were mass media, they filmed us, they showed us on some kind of TV-channel. Naturally, hospital employees reacted so, they were laughing out loud behind our backs: "they have nothing to do! Abortions!" It was so awful, I stand with that picket sign, I am filmed by journalists and I hear someone laughing at me, it was awful' (Katya).

Other respondents explicitly underline the oppression of feminists and other activists by the State: 'nowadays, when the regime is just cutting out all kinds of protests. They don't do anything else' (Darya):

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[7] https://lenta.ru/news/2016/09/28/mizulina/

'Doing activism in Russia is hard and ungrateful. You will have depression and nervous collapse. And doing something social on gender topic – it is a total darkness and horror, because, OK, you are doing this, and it is an important topic for you, and they suddenly accept this f***ing law, finally. And what, and what to do?! Doing it, not doing it – what kind of f***ing difference?' (Ksusha);

Darya confirms: 'to close everything, to block, to put cameras everywhere, Special Police Force. And when you're in the situation like this, it is not so much about libido, not about this flame of year 68, it is the same as, I don't know, having sex in front of KGBist camera' (Darya).

In such a context the majority of respondents perceive the feminist agenda as interconnected with the following activities: struggling against multiple discrimination, articulation of universal values, unification against different forms of oppression and inequalities, fighting for social equity and freedom.

Despite the solidarity in the struggle for basic ideas of justice, participants of feminist initiatives often follow distinct and often contradictory agendas. Furthermore, the participants' disagreement is most often associated with their perceptions of sexuality. More specifically, the commercial sex debates, which began in 1970s as part of broad feminist sex wars among Western feminists, address one of the current key issues causing confrontation among the participants of initiatives and often leading to open conflicts.

Neo-abolitionist approach supporters or 'Swedish' client criminalisation model adherents define commercial sex as a modern form of slavery and a clearly malicious practice, in which male clients are regarded as rapists and sex workers as victims. 26 year old Asya interprets the experience of her friend working in commercial sex: 'I think this was not her free choice, because she was under pressure and faced a question of surviving' (Asya). At the same time, neo-abolitionists often perceive the boundaries between free-will sex services and sex-trafficking as blurred and see both as violent practices. 25 year old Alyona stresses: 'In general, I'm mostly concerned with the problem of prostitution. Well, it's about the traffic and coercion of girls …the extent to which they are forced to do this' (Alyona).

At the same time, other feminists perceive sex workers as economic agents who receive payment for services and commodify their bodily skills (Nartova and Krupets, 2010). In 2017, St. Petersburg activists created a feminist public project 'Sex work: multiple discriminations and fight for the rights', aimed at organising lectures, discussions and film screenings. Not only queer-feminist activists, but also sex-workers demanding for their rights were involved in the project. Under this approach of 'free contract', commercial sex is defined as a labour that allows workers to exercise their agency. According to this rhetoric, the possibility of free choice turns out to be a tool for sexual liberation, and the emphasis is placed on the importance of the commercial sex workers rights protection.

Nevertheless, many participants of feminist initiatives have a neutral position in the perception of commercial sex. 26 year old Ksusha, the creator of a feminist site, says:

I don't like the idea that it can never be a voluntary choice under any circumstances at all. And exactly this is my position. It's not this and it's is not that. And I do not want to be dragged around. I do not want to argue about this in principle. (Ksusha)

Despite this, the perception of commercial sex turns out to be an important category for the feminist initiatives participants in determining 'us' through building boundaries with 'them'. For instance, 22-year-old Anya, gives the following answer to the question about the people she would not cooperate with: 'Either antifeminist or a person who takes a strong legalisation position in prostitution'. (Anya)

Another issue the feminists disagree about is the perception of the LGBTIQ community. One of research participants, who took part in the action supporting LGBTIQ, emphasises: 'I don't know what else you can do when there is an open genocide of LGBT in Chechnya'. Other feminists insist on the existence of boundaries between feminist and LGBTIQ initiatives, perceiving LGBTIQ as 'others'. 21-year-old Ira emphasises the 'otherness' of transgender people, arguing about the issue of trans-inclusivity in one of the feminist initiatives: 'Well, we don't particularly like trans. Well, I'm neutral towards them, I do not care in principle' (Ira).

At the same time, the self-determination of the participants of the initiatives is often exercised through the construction of men, including F to M transgender people, as 'others', excluded from the feminist field in the framework of the essentialist rhetoric of 'male' and 'female' opposition. For instance, Ira explains the impossibility of men's participation in the feminist fight section, referring to the binary opposition between the categories of 'male' and 'female': 'Well, who is the enemy for a feminist? Well, of course, the man' (Ira).

Arguments for the denial of the inclusiveness for the activists identified as 'men' by the informants are based on the necessity of women's struggle for a space to speak. According to the creator of the feminist meetups, 24-year-old Katya:

> During the organising committee meeting, Vasya P. from [organisation name] spoke for 4 hours, it was almost 90% of the time, and I had to stop him constantly, saying: 'Vasya, this is the organising committee of March 8, be quiet at least a little and give the floor to women'. (Katya)

Participants of the study also often refer to those who are involved in wider activist communities of the left political spectrum within the category of 'others'. In the opinion of the informants, the patriarchal gender mode of dominant masculinity over nonsubversive femininity is reproduced in such communities. Specifically, 32-year-old professor Darya says:

> It's disgusting for me to sit together with them, if they look at me from the position of a man like this, yes, who can say to me 'take it in your mouth' and then: 'I was joking, are you without humor or what?' Well, this is classic, what kind of a prison truck can be common with such people? [какой автозак может быть с такими людьми?] I just won't go to the rally and that's it. As long as things are this way, we won't manage to fight fascism, I see it this way! (Darya)

On the other hand, feminist scene participants supporting inclusiveness policy insist on the need for common solidarity against the dominant gender regime through the deconstruction of rigid binary categories. For instance, 39-year-old Sonya describes her circle of contacts: 'Mostly, there are people, who... who are queer-feminists, that emphasise gender blurring, all those things connected to trans-activism, etc…' (Sonya)

Thus, some of the participants tend to construct 'non-women' as 'enemies' who do not have the right to participate in the feminist struggle, while others emphasise the need for solidarity with all the oppressed outside the binary dichotomy of 'men /women'.

Overall, the main sources of conflicts among the study participants are related to the perception of commercial sex, LGBTIQ, and the construction of 'men' as the dominant 'strangers' in opposition to oppressed women. These vectors of cultural- and values-based tensions coincide with the lines of solidarity with ideologically close 'us' through defining 'them' among the other participants of feminist initiatives.

3.3 Collective Action Effectivity

Existing in the harsh conditions of the Russian conservative context, the feminist initiatives of St. Petersburg are surprisingly ideologically scattered. Moreover, informants often realise the impossibility of changing anything in the short term, as well as the complexity of conveying the ideas of the feminist agenda to the members of the mainstream society. According to Darya:

> All that our generation can do, it seems to me, is simply to put a little brick in the wall on which something will someday appear: a room, I don't know, a floor, some trees. We will not face anything good, I have the most pessimistic expectations. (Darya)

Collective action in the form of street actions, pickets, rallies, demonstrations, during which participants of different initiatives unite through spatial co-presence, offers possibilities for common solidarity in opposing the dominant social discourse. However, the research participants consider such forms of broad solidarisation not as a common practice, but rather as an exception which lacks the potential for social change due to its vague agenda. Most informants perceive such forms of street protest as not effective enough to draw attention of a wide audience to gender issues. According to Katya,

> Nowadays, I don't want to arrange a picket, visible for 3 people. In my opinion, this is not very appropriate now. It is advisable to somehow strengthen the links between feminists, grassroots connections - that's what interests me, and activism is not very interesting to me right now and I have no energy to facilitate it. (Katya)

At the same time, the collective action in the urban space exercised through theatrical performances allows participants to overcome the routine of street protest. The protest becomes a festive event carrying the joy of participation for the participants. For instance, 21 year old 'Rythms of Resistance' drummer Vika says:

> And it's like, people who came to an hour-and-a-half Sunday protest of some kind, picket, I don't know. They get bored, give out leaflets, get leaflets, they are like, 'hello, samba-band, yeahh, we are hanging out, yeahh!' Their mood rises, it is directly felt! (Vika)

At the same time, feminist scene participants perceive practices aimed at the strengthening of their solidarities as more significant than possible social changes. A 25-year-old student, Nadya, talks about the effectiveness of her activist practices as follows:

> Forming around you a circle of people with whom you will spend more time, sharing the same agenda and living in comfort, well, in more comfortable conditions and fight

for our own rights in our own kitchen and ... I don't know, to avoid people who... to feel that you have the right to call an asshole 'an asshole' and fight for your rights in your own little private life – this is super-strong. (Nadya)

In addition, most feminist initiatives often have a semi-closed format. The main purpose of such practices is connected with increasing awareness within the feminist scene and creating solidarity through establishing safe conditions for communication. Examples include feminist reading groups, feminist meetups, clothes repairing workshops, creating robots and self-defense. Accumulation of new competencies, communication and mutual exchange of experience creates room for the solidarities among the practitioners to emerge. Thus, Katya emphasises:

I finally decided that I would just make some cozy feminist meetups, where you can sit and talk, where there is no bickering, without a police truck, where you won't get a blow to your head from a baton, without a massacre, that one wants this poster, another wants that poster and because they want to organise a different rally, they split up – there's none of this. I just made meetings where feminists can communicate, get acquainted. (Katya)

Another example of practices aimed not only at conveying the feminist agenda to the general public, but mostly at developing participants' self-reflection are volunteer performances 'Vagina Monologues' and 'Behind the Stone Wall'. They were made by St. Petersburg activists within the framework of the international V-Day project in 2015. Performance manager, 31-year-old Oksana, argues: 'I personally know almost all participants [of the performance], almost everyone is nowadays one way or another in feminist activism, they are doing something…' (Oksana)

Thus, getting a feminist message to a wider audience through collective action is problematic. At the same time, mobilising feminist initiatives against the external threat of the dominant conservative discourse proves to be important for strengthening the internal emotional ties. In this context, solidarities can emerge either through the shared experience of a broad street protest or through a small-scale local initiative participation experience.

4. Conclusion

The current Russian social and political conditions constitute an environment unfavorable for the development of feminist activities. More specifically, the conservative discourse constructed by the power elites contributes to the formation of a patriarchal political culture, which comprises a serious challenge to the growth of grassroots feminist initiatives and facilitates alienation, marginalization and stigmatization of feminists. Young women are exposed to gender discrimination in their families, groups of friends and broad activist communities. Moreover, feminist activists are stigmatized by conservative patriarchal activists and marginalized by the State that restricts feminist activities. At the same time, such difficulties also provide incentives for feminist collective action as the response to negative changes.

Solidarities among the participants of feminist initiatives emerge through teaming-up to protect the women's rights. In that case, women are perceived as a social group of the oppressed in a binary opposition to the dominant group of men designed as 'enemies'. However, the fight for the

ideas of basic social justice for all, beyond the constructed dichotomy of 'women's' and 'men's' rights turns out to be no less significant for many informants.

The main vectors of cultural- and values-based tensions among the participants are associated with acceptance or denial of the dichotomy 'woman'/ 'man' within the framework of building a safe space and with polarised perception of commercial sex and LGBTIQ. These vectors allow participants to build the boundaries of feminist initiatives through self-determination with the help of 'us' and 'them' construction. Moreover, the emerging lines of solidarities and conflict represent a spectrum of often unstable beliefs, manifested not in dichotomous value oppositions, but in fluid, flexible and heterogeneous semantic continuums of solidarities.

Study participants perceive the desire to bring feminist ideas to the mainstream public through mass protests as lacking potential for social change. At the same time, most of the participants believe that tensions and ideological differences among them might be effectively smoothed with the help of constructing feminists' solidarity around the struggle against the dominant conservative discourse. This solidarity acts both at the level of collective action in the urban space and at the level of building and maintaining the ties among individual initiatives.

5. Future Analysis

For future analysis within the 'Gender and Sexuality' cluster I would like to propose cross-sectional analysis of conflicts and stigmatization arousing among respondents on the base of their perception of gender and sexuality. The possible research questions could be: What role does gender play in contemporary youth activism in Russia? How is the subjectivity of female and LGBTIQ activists constructed in different activist communities? How is commercial sex perceived by different young activists?

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7. Appendix: Socio-demographic profile of respondents

Respondent	Age	Gender	Education	Occupation	Habitation	Marital Status	Ethnicity	Country of birth	Religion
Alyona	25	Female	Studies at University	Job and extra-mural education	With her partner	Lives with her partner	Yakut	Russian Federation	Atheism
Anya	22	Female	Graduate	Full-time job	With parents	Single	Russian	Russian Federation	Atheism
Asya	26	Female	Graduate	Unemployed	With her partner	Married	Russian	Russian Federation	Atheism
Darya	32	Female	Postgraduate	Full-time job	Alone	Single	Russian	Russian Federation	Atheism
Ira	21	Female	Secondary professional education	Part-time job	With parents and other relatives	Single	Russian	Russian Federation	Atheism
Katya	24	Female	Studies at University	Part-time job	Alone	Single	Russian	Russian Federation	Atheism
Ksusha	26	Female	Graduate	Full-time job	With her partner	Lives with her partner	Russian	Russian Federation	Atheism
Marina	36	Female	Graduate	Part-time job	Alone	Single	Russian	Russian Federation	Atheism
Nadya	25	Female	Studies at University	Full-time job, intramural studies	With her partner	Lives with her partner	Russian	Russian Federation	Atheism
Oksana	31	Female	Graduate	Unemployed	Alone	Single	Russian	Russian Federation	Atheism

Olya	23	Female	High school completed	Full-time job	Alone	Single	Russian	Russian Federation	Atheism
Polina	27	Female	High school completed	Economically inactive (maternity leave)	With her partner and child	Married	Russian	Russian Federation	Atheism
Sonya	39	Female	Graduate	Full-time job	Alone	Single	Russian	Russian Federation	Atheism
Vika	21	Female	High school completed	Unemployed	Alone	Single	Russian	Russian Federation	Atheism
Yulia	27	Female	Graduate	Unemployed	With her partner	Married	Russian	Russian Federation	Atheism

PROMISE: Promoting Youth Involvement and Social Engagement: Opportunities and challenges for conflicted young people across Europe.

WP6: From Conflict to Innovation: Ethnographic Case Studies

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Zagreb Pride LGBTIQ NGO

Croatia

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Executive summary:

This report will introduce the results of ethnographic case study on the PROMISE project about Zagreb Pride LGBTIQ non-government organization. The objectives of PROMISE are to explore young people´s role in shaping society (past, present and future) and to investigate their responses to these challenges, as well as transform them to positive social achievement. Organization Zagreb Pride was chosen because of the political and social context of LGBTIQ movement in Croatia, which especially refer to years following the campaign for marriage referendum in 2013 when there was an increase of hate speech against LGBTIQ people in Croatia.

Key findings of the ethnography are the existence of stigmatization as well as experiences of violence and bulling for LGBTIQ community in Croatia. Conflicts young LGBTIQ people encounter in school or college is significant problem noticed in this study, having a result in lack of support in recognition and reporting of bullying. Another common example of conflict is within family because of the traditionally shaped gender expectations, which often collides to respondent´s sexual orientation and/or gender identity. However, with all the above, most of the volunteers in this year´s organizational committee were young people ranging from 16 to 34 years old. This is one of the example how in 16 years of activities in Croatia, Zagreb Pride March empowered LGBTIQ community by creating positive climate for social and political change.

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1. About Zagreb Pride

Zagreb Pride was founded in 2008 following a decision made by the organisational committee of the Zagreb Pride March to establish an organisation. Before then, the Zagreb Pride March was held every year running from 2002 onwards. The first Pride March, called ´Gay Pride´, was organised as a reaction to the first Belgrade Pride (in Serbia) that was held a year earlier, with violent anti-pride protests occurring. Even though public support during those early years was not so strong, the March has been held every year since then, celebrating the 16th Zagreb Pride March in June 2017 with the motto ´A free life begins with Pride!´, gathering more than 10 000 supporters.

Today, Zagreb Pride is ´queer-feminist and anti-fascist organisation which is committed to the achievement of an active society of solidarity and equality, free from gender sexual norms and categories, and any other kind of oppression´[1]. The values of the organisation are queer-feminism, anti-fascism, equality, self-determination, solidarity, secularity and antimilitarism, while the principles of action are: nonviolence, social engagement, promoting vegetarianism and veganism, feminist care ethics, non-hierarchical work, anticlericalism, environmental protection, and resistance to economic inequality and fellowship.

The activities of Zagreb Pride are divided into the three main programmemes of the organisation: Advocating Equality for LGBTIQ Persons; Education, Research and Publishing; and Acting towards and within the LGBTIQ Community. Apart from organising the Zagreb Pride March, some of the most important work that has been done over the last few years includes participation in a working group for the legislative proposal of the Same-Sex Life Partnership Act that passed in 2014.[2] Other than that, Zagreb Pride includes an on-going activity called Pink Megaphone, which is a free legal service helping victims of LGBTIQ hate crimes. This legal service has been active since 2010 and within it, education is being provided for police officers and victims support services so that they can identify hate crimes and provide the best possible help to the victims (Zagreb Pride, 2013). Another Zagreb Pride organised activity is a support group for high school students, Queer Teens, which under social worker supervision gather around 5 to 15 young LGBTIQ people.

Zagreb Pride does not have a permanent base of volunteers, but rather a changing base focused around certain activities which gather between five and 35 volunteers in the Pride March organisational committees. The age range of volunteers is from 15 to 25 years, with the exception of some older volunteers.

The organisation is structured with the Assembly as the main body consisting of nine formal members, a steering committee, council, supervisory board and working team.

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[1] For more on the organisation, its vision, mission and fields of work, see the organisation's official web page - http://www.zagreb-pride.net/en/about-us/ (20 April 2018)

[2] Life Partnership is a family union of same-sex couples enabled through Same-Sex Life Partnership Act. It is equalized with the marriage of different-sex couples, with the exception in adoption of children. More on the Act: http://www.zivotnopartnerstvo.com/en/what-is-a-life-partnership/ (20 April 2018)

1.2.   The social context of the LGBTIQ movement in Croatia

In a study on anti-LGBTIQ violence, discrimination and hate crime in Croatia, Milković (2013) discussed the ´brutal reality´ that LGBTIQ people face in Croatia. She stated that, in the last decade, Croatia had done a great deal to set up a good legal framework for the protection of LGBTIQ rights as well as towards protecting individuals from violence and discrimination. At the same time, the violence encountered by supporters of the first Pride March in the city of Split in 2011 and during the campaign for a referendum on marriage by the initiative ´In the Name of the Family´ in 2013 (which resulted in the amendment of the Constitution of Croatia to include the definition of marriage as a union between a man and woman) are warning signs that progress for the LGBTIQ movement in Croatia is not linear. One of the many results which followed the campaign for the marriage referendum was a record increase in hate speech against LGBTIQ people, as Zagreb Pride (2017) has documented. One example of such hate crime in recent years was the tear gas attack on the Super Super club in February 2017, injuring several people. In a rare display of unanimity, the attack was condemned by all political parties. Nevertheless, and even though the biggest media outlets covered the attack, the perpetrators were not brought to justice.

In 2017 report by one of the biggest LGBTIQ organisation in Europe, ILGA-Europe, Croatia was placed in eleventh of 49 European countries as concerns the achievement of certain legal rights. However, they expressed their concern regarding a reduction in support for both LGBTIQ organisations and independent media outlets as a result of decisions made on the funding of those organisations and media by the Croatian Government (ILGA-Europe, 2017).

Some of the main sites of conflict for young LGBTIQ people include conservative, traditional non-governmental organisations and initiatives, and political parties close to the Catholic Church in Croatia. Some of their activities contribute to the marginalisation and discrimination of LGBTIQ issues in the media space as well as institutional discrimination directed against the rights of LGBTIQ individuals and their families.

1.3.   Why Zagreb Pride?

When discussing attitudes of the general population towards the LGBTIQ community and their rights in Croatia, research results show a mixed picture. Bijelić (2011) discussed the high level of homophobia present particularly among men in Croatian society.. As many as 55% of men participating in the research said that they thought ´homosexuality is not natural and normal´, compared to only 34% of women who agreed with this statement. Similar results in research into the attitudes of high school graduates showed a high level of homophobia among young people. As many as half of the respondents viewed homosexuality as some sort of disorder or illness and thought that discrimination of LGBTIQ people was justified (Bagić, 2011; Hodžić and Bijelić, 2012; Bovan and Širinić, 2016).

The results of a survey of 1200 young people in two contrasting districts of Zagreb, aged between 16 to 25, conducted for the MYPLACE project showed that young people generally had negative attitudes towards homosexuality, even though more positive attitudes were found among youth with higher levels of education and among female respondents without a religious affiliation (Zurabishvili and Pollock, 2013). Interviews later showed that while respondents would most often criticize ´gay pride´, when talking about sexual minorities in general, they also demonstrated a good level of understanding of the issue (Franc *et al.*, 2013).

The clearest evidence of the importance of the inclusion of Zagreb Pride as a case study in the PROMISE project, however, are the findings of the ´Brutal Reality´ study. Research was conducted with of 690 people from within the LGBTIQ community in Croatia of whom 59% were in the age range 19-30. Summarising the results, Milković (2013) stated that 73.6 % of participants had experienced some kind of violence which they attributed to their sexual orientation, sex/gender identity or gender expression. Although this percentage is very high, due to low levels of trust, only a small number of those cases were reported to anyone – either to the authorities or even to a LGBTIQ organisation. Violence would often be experienced in school or in university (21.7%) or in their families (29%). Nevertheless, Milković (2013: 103) concluded that ´LGBTIQ people in Croatia today feel more accepted and are readier to freely live out their identities, which is surely encouraging´.

Because of the Zagreb Pride March consistency over the last 17 years, there are more supporters of Pride Marches every year[3] as well as public statements of support. Their existence in public space for over fifteen years encourages young people to get involved more freely and to work on mobilising for broader social change in understanding and demanding human rights for LGBTIQ people.

2. Methods

Before beginning this research, I worked for the Zagreb Pride organisation as a programme assistant, from May 2016 to May 2017. Since my duties included working with volunteers of the organisation, as well as coordinating one of the teams of the Pride March organising committee, doing ethnography on Zagreb Pride as a LGBTIQ non-governmental organisation seemed like a good way forward. My work gave me access to respondents and the possibility of understanding conflicts and problems that the group often faces in Croatian society (whether in relation to political events, intra-family relations, work and school obstacles, personal relations or conflicts and problems within the LGBTIQ community). Before beginning the ethnographic fieldwork, I explained to my colleagues what the project was about and why I was doing the ethnography. I gradually approached my respondents over the time of the fieldwork and explained the project to them. I gained verbal consent from some of them to conduct interviews, while with others I exchanged a few messages over social networks and e-mail to agree on whether they would like to participate in the project or not. During that process, I did not encounter any significant problems or rejections.

The ethnography was conducted using participant observation. As a researcher, I participated in the organisational committee of the Pride March and kept a research diary. Ethnographic fieldwork took place over eleven months (from October 2016 to September 2017). During that period, I participated in over 39 meetings and made 23 research diary entries. A total of 31 semi-structured interviews were conducted producing over 39 hours of recorded material and over 730 standard pages of transcripts. Interviews ranged from 50 to 97 minutes (see table in Appendix 1 for details about respondents´ socio-demographic data).

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[3] In 2013 the Pride March was organised with the motto ´This is a country for all of us!´ which was a direct reaction to the campaign initiated a month earlier by the organisation ´In the Name of the Family´ in which they started collecting signatures for a marriage referendum. The latest Pride March was the largest so far, gathering around 15 000 supporters. By the end of the year, the referendum had been conducted and, of the 37.9% of the total number of voters in Croatia who participated, 65.87% voted 'For' and 33.51% voted 'Against' adding the clause that ´Marriage is a union of man and woman´ to the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia. http://www.izbori.hr/arhiva-izbora/index.html#/app/referendum-2013 (20 April 2018).

Interviews were conducted with volunteers (the organisational committee of the Pride March, Queer Teens) and members of the organisation, as well as with former members and volunteers from the organisation. Zagreb Pride volunteers are usually young people in their adolescent years or early twenties. The age range in this research was from 16 to 33, with the exception of one respondent aged 40. Most of the respondents were in their early twenties.

At the beginning of each interview, every respondent would receive a ´Participant Information Sheet´ with an abstract of the project and contact details of the researchers in the team, as well as the project leader We would then go through and fill in the socio-demographic form together. All the respondents also signed a consent form before participating in the research.

Most of the respondents had university level education, either having already finished university or currently being at university. Most of the others were currently in vocational secondary education. Of those who are not currently in education, one-half are unemployed, and another half are in full time employment.

The social class background of the respondents was heterogeneous. The majority of the respondents were from working class or middle-class families. Most of their parents did not have university level education, but some were doctors, teachers or lawyers. Some respondents talked about growing up in the city centre, while others lived in social housing and foster homes. Even though some respondents stated that they were privileged growing up, those kinds of privileges were never something they would emphasize, but rather something they would mention in order to talk about those groups in society for which they would say it is harder to gain certain rights and opportunities.

None of the respondents identified themselves as Catholic and only a few mentioned being religious in the past, almost always, due to family tradition. Most of the respondents identify themselves as atheists or agnostics.

This ethnographic case study also employed photo elicitation as part of its methodology. I distributed ten disposable cameras to ten participants who showed an interest in participating in the photo elicitation. Of those ten participants, seven completed the elicitation, producing 77 photographs. The range of successfully developed photographs numbered from two to 21. The age range of the seven participants was 17 to 30 years. They all received disposable cameras for 28 photos, information sheets with additional instructions on this method, and three themes that they should consider when taking photos. Those themes were: (personal) security, inequality, and making a difference. I went through the information sheet and themes with each respondent, explaining the rules they have to look out for when participating in this method, and also explaining that these themes include giving some examples of the possible photographs. Most problems experienced in employing this visual methodology occurred because of a lack of developed photos, in some cases, due to insufficient knowledge as regards the use of disposable cameras.

Interview transcriptions were made using the programme Express Scribe and an analysis of the collected data was made using the NVivo 11 programme for qualitative data analysis. As was explained and communicated to the respondents before they signed the consent form, all of the interviews were anonymised in the process of transcribing and a pseudonym (chosen either by respondents or the researcher) was given to each of the transcripts

3. Key Findings

3.1. Identity

Throughout the interviews, respondents most often talked about their gender identity and sexual orientation and what it means to them in different contexts and areas of life. Even though some respondents would talk about ´still being confused about everything´ (Fox), one of the most important and crucial moments of their lives for the majority of respondents was their coming out to themselves, friends and families. The process of coming out is a process in the true sense of the term because it is something that happens throughout life, in every new situation and with every new person you meet:

> It is lifelong. Every day, every new person, every new job, every new place you come to…every single day. It just became easier with time. (Lara)
> When I came out for the first time, I thought: 'Oh God, will I have to do this every time I meet someone? Will my life be such hell?' (Smilja)

When coming out, respondents received different reactions from their close family members, some of them questioning whether it was real: ´My mum didn't believe me until recently. She thought it was a phase´ (Archi). Others had a hard time believing it themselves: ´I thought: ˝Well I guess this is just a phase or something˝. I will let that go, I am too young´ (Juno).

For two respondents, the reactions they received from their family members were similar: ´Some reactions motivated me to engage more, at least those from people who said ˝Why are you dramatizing, you always have to be special˝´ (Mika). Smilja had a similar experience: ´I came out to my sister last year and it went terribly […] She said: ˝That is just a phase, don't talk shit to me!˝. She literally said that. Like ˝that is a phase, why do you always have to have some kind of stupid idea in your head.˝ So, we didn't talk about it anymore´.

Their own sense of guilt and inner conflicts were often mentioned when talking about sexual identity and coming out because of the religious and traditional environment that people were raised in:

> When I started going through puberty, I realised that I like boys. At that time, I was religious and those religious, how to say, laws… religious dogmas were in conflict with my sexuality and with whom I was attracted to. So that was my inner conflict I had for most of high school. […] Then I joined a dating site where I met other people and talked with them. Entering that community and meeting and talking to other LGBT people helped me a lot. At that time, when I accepted myself, those inner conflicts stopped, and that was at the age of 17, 18. But they [the inner conflicts] were not completely gone until the end of high school and when I was separated from my peers […]. When I separated from them, that is when it all came into place. (Jo)

One respondent who was raised in a smaller community on a Dalmatian island has gone a long way from having a negative attitude towards the LGBTIQ community, to accepting his sexuality and joining the Organisational Committee of Zagreb Pride March:

> Before, I would say I had a negative attitude, but that has changed. It was related to the way I was raised. Not necessarily traditional in a religious sense, but traditional.

Man and woman and that's it! We wouldn't talk about anything else and those questions were not discussable. I had a similar attitude. […] I started to think differently when I went from denying to accepting myself. That is when I started to look at the LGBT community differently, but not completely, because I still had some kind of resistance to it all. But that was just a consequence of internal homophobia that retained that negative attitude and resistance to everything. (Mark)

He also pointed out a feeling of disappointment he is often scared of:

I know they won't kick me out of the house or do something drastic, but I have been really afraid of that feeling of disappointment for them. I don't know why they would be disappointed, but that is a feeling I am scared of the most. This feeling of rejection, being turned down, it is a scary feeling that every gay person is struggling with. Even those who have liberal parents, one part of you is always afraid. So that was also my fear. (Mark)

Another respondent talked about ´always feeling guilty´ because what she experienced is disapproval from parents who are religious and who think that her sexual orientation is her choice. While she talked with her parents a few times, they stuck to their strict beliefs: ´[…] [My mum] thinks that it is a sin because she is Catholic. Like… ´What is wrong with me?´ She said that we will never be equal with straight people´ (Smilja). Even though Smilja has a challenging situation at home, she has a strong sense of understanding and a will to help other people in a similar situation:

I always feel guilty because of that. I think that is something that we all feel, but it felt really strange that no one ever talked about that. And I think that is a way to help young people, especially elementary school students, because I know how that was for me. I didn't have anyone to talk to, no one talked about it, I only thought ˝What is wrong with me?˝. That is when I understood that I need that one person to talk to about that. I would like to do something to help elementary school students so they know they are not alone. (Smilja)

Like Smilja, a few other respondents mentioned the fact that having topics which are not being talked about enough results from the strong heteronormativity in society: ´Those sexual discriminations and that heteronormativity are so strong that you need years to really accept yourself, but also the community´ (Mark). What emerges from this is a negative attitude towards one's own sexual orientation at a young age: ´Lots of LGBT people have difficulties accepting that at a young age because of the normative sexuality that society imposes´ (Jo).

When talking about the ways in which they were raised and their relationship with parents, only a minority of respondents said that they had come out to their fathers. For most of them, talking with their fathers about their sexual orientation and gender identity was not something they felt free to do because ´God forbid that his child come out as a gay. That is something I will never say to him´ (Smilja). Some of them said that ´My dad still cannot… cannot perceive that as something. He just can't. We never talk about it´ (Mika), but in the future the ´relationship with my dad could be better, we could talk more… maybe it will come with time´ (Haz).

An important topic for the majority of respondents was the marriage referendum that took place in Croatia at the end of 2013 when the definition of marriage as a community of man and woman

was added to the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia. During the campaign for the referendum, there was a broad political and media discussion which often led to homophobic statements by politicians, activists and celebrities. That time was especially hard for some of the respondents because at that time they were in elementary or high school and were only beginning to question their identities. The presence of these political issues in everyday life ended up triggering fury and defiance, as well as encouragement because, even though there were a lot of negative comments made towards the LGBTIQ community, there were also reactions that empowered some of the LGBT people to come out:

> Let's start with the marriage referendum, because it really triggered a lot of things for me. One was awareness about my own sexuality, and the other was fury, angry, sadness, a little bit of depression…it wasn't pleasant. You always have the feeling that you are a target and you don't know why. You are only a high school student and you go to school and suddenly every day the newspapers are writing about homosexuals. And that triggered me to get politically conscious. […] That day, that social situation that started, it encouraged me, but also in one moment I understood that there is someone else that is… I mean, it is stupid, you know that all that time, but it is just that in those 16 years, in your whole life, the system, education, everywhere it is hidden under the rug. No one talks about it. (Nikka)

> I actually had two stages of coming out. Once when I was 11, that was when they told me that it is a phase, and then I said ˝Okay, that is a phase, that is over.˝ I buried myself. But then, like, man, you can´t hide with moths in the closet. That is boring. So yes, Markić[4] was quite a decisive factor because she woke up that defiance, that was really important to me. (Saša)

Some of the respondents talked about finding a surprising amount of support in the moment of their coming out, through experiencing a mutual coming out alongside siblings or friends:

> I didn't have a close relationship with my sister until that moment. I told her: ˝I have to tell you something. I have a girlfriend.˝ And she said ˝Great!˝ and continued to get ready to go out and it started to be a really uncomfortable situation. And then I asked her: ˝Hey, isn't that weird?˝ and she just said ˝No.˝ And I asked ˝How come?˝ And then she said ˝Well what do you think? I am also lesbian!˝ And stormed out. […] after that we talked about it and she really helped me in that process of starting to accept myself. From that moment, she stopped being a sister I fight with and started being the only person I trust in my life, and that still hasn't changed. She became my best friend from that moment. We connected through that mutual coming out and it meant a lot to me to know I am not the only one. Because what would I know about it? That there is some other lesbian? (Leia)

> My best friend is gay and he came out to me before I did and it was like some trigger in my head said ˝Okay, that is okay!˝. Because he accepted that before I did, and we became closer because of that. (Tay)

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[4] Željka Markić is president of the organization ´In the Name of the Family´. In 2013 she was one of the initiators and key organizer of marriage referendum in Croatia. See more in Chapter 3.4.5. ´In the Name of the Family´.

A few of the respondents said that they had not come out to their parents nor did they intend to. This was often accompanied by their explanation that first they want to move out and become financially independent:

> My mum doesn't know I am gay. I mean, I told her once, but it didn't end well. She couldn't accept that and I had to take it back. So now, she doesn't know. […] When will I tell her that I am gay? Not now. I will have to work on that and test her points of view on the LGBT population. But coming out to her is not my priority anymore. I have to come out to her and I will, but this isn't my life goal. It is important for me to concentrate on myself and secure myself a good future. I will deal with my mother later. (Jo)

When talking about how being a young person that is part of the LGBTIQ community is harder than being a heteronormative person in Croatian society, one respondent said that she sees a lot of differences around herself:

> Growing up is so much harder for me, as well as misunderstanding and intolerance. And when you see all that violence, how people talk negatively about it, parents won´t accept you, that is terrible. For example, when I asked my mum what she would do if [names sister] and I were gay, she said… like they see it as my sister can come home with any boyfriend, she won´t say anything to her, but I can´t come home with a girlfriend. Like, that girl can be the best girl in the entire world, but she will never accept her because she is girl, which is sad. (Smilja)

Another respondent talked about how being a transgender person is even harder because there is a medical procedure you have to go through, as well as the necessity of coming out, even in situations where you are not willing. Also, you are not necessarily forced to come out if you are lesbian, bisexual or gay:

> […] [As transgender people] we have the whole medical procedure that needs to be done, the whole legal procedure, plus the whole medical procedure, when you go through hormonal changes, is physically and emotionally exhausting […] Also, as a lesbian or gay, you don't have to come out if you don't want to. You don't have to say anything to colleagues in college, or at work about who are you dating. I mean, you will probably want to, at least I say to anyone that I am lesbian, even those who don't know I am trans […] but theoretically you don't have to come out if you are LG if you don't want to. But if you are a trans person, the moment you start transitioning, you will have to come out because everyone around you will see… you can´t avoid that. (Issa)

3.2. Activism

3.2.1 Political activism

Talking about their own activism and how they see it in terms of it being political, only a few of the respondents said that they 'don't know what political activism is' (Juno) or that they ' don't see it as politics' (Medo). For the majority of respondents, the political in their own activism was something they would emphasize, even to the extent of understanding that 'coming out is not necessarily only personal, but also a political thing' (Borka), and concluding that 'coming out is a political issue' (Mika). In a conversation on why he sees his engagement as political, one

respondent went on to explain that if there is a threat to someone´s sense of security in acting and living freely, then activism is pointing out that that problem is political:

> This is political activism. LGBT rights in Croatia and in the whole of East Europe are a political issue and that is what we talked about at the Pride March this year… I think it is important not to fall into the trap that it is a little bit better, so we relax a bit, start being less political and lighter, partly because that would be really dangerous because there is so much to improve. If you see it superficially the situation is okay, that doesn't mean it really is okay because people still can´t hold hands in the centre of Zagreb, you can´t kiss someone without risking being hit in the head. So, there is a lot of work that still needs to be done. (Haz)

Another respondent also mentioned that part of the LGBTIQ community often resents the organisers of the Pride March. His comment referred to understanding the Pride March as something that should be a little less about politics and a little more about fun and entertainment, saying that ´in Croatia Pride is a political issue, it is not a party´ (Mark) but also concluding that in general, today in Croatia ´[…] every engagement is more or less political!´ (Mark). Nevertheless, Gabi said that she thinks younger generations are ´starting to be more progressive´ even though others often comment that the ´political part of the March disappeared´ (Gabi). She added that ´those comments are irrelevant because the person that wrote that didn't read the manifesto. Because in our manifesto we explained why we are there and what is happening, why are we marching. And I think the manifesto is everything but not non-political´ (Gabi).

Just like the majority of respondents, Lars sees his activism as political activism, but adds that he did not choose to be an activist, it was rather something that society made him do. He is a person that experienced bullying that forced him to change school, and he had several experiences of being attacked:

> What I always say is that I didn't start with activism by my own choice. Homophobia forced me into activism. No matter how much I love doing what I do, I didn't wake up one morning and say ´Let´s change the world!´ It was more like ´we will kill you, you have to fight against that. (Lars)

The debate over the Pride March being a political event or being a ´festival´ or ´party´ is an ongoing discussion even among Zagreb Pride volunteers. But for most of them, Lotrius' opinions are something they would agree on: ´Somewhere Pride is a festival. And I think it is a bad thing that people see it as a festival in countries and in places where it is still a protest, where it is still a political message´ (Lotrius). He then went on to talk about the experience he had on the last Pride March when he shouted political messages through a megaphone, and no one wanted to shout those messages back ´not realising that we are still fighting for those things I shouted. So I stopped shouting because no one shouted with me and I felt stupid´ (Lotrius). Reactions to the issue of politics as interfering in the Pride March included the following statement by Bela: ´[…] if someone from the organisational committee of the Pride March were to say that Pride is a political gathering, the community would be disgusted, like ´What politics? Don't mix politics with this!´´ (Bela).

However, another respondent felt that political and economic discussions should not have a place in the LGBT movement because they create divisions between people:

It bothers me that political-economic attitudes started to mix with LGBT activism and… generally I don't like it when that happens because you start to isolate LGBT people that don't agree with you. Because you stop being there for all LGBT people, and only for your small circle of like-minded [people]. (Issa)

She went on to say that those divisions isolate people that do not share the same values and political positions, in the LGBTIQ community:

[…] I think that in Croatia, the LGBT community is not a group of LGBT people anymore, but a group of vegan, Marxist, anti-capitalist, anarcho-communist, queer-theory LGBT people that are not only led by feminism, but by a certain type of feminism and a whole bunch of other things. And then, if you, as a person, don't share all those ideas, then they kick you out of the community, e.g. by not wanting to include you in a certain project or by attacking you on Facebook. (Issa)

Issa also talked about a libertarian group that has come to the Pride March in the last few years, and whose arrival was discussed and criticized on social networks and independent media:

The Pride March should be a place that accepts differences, but what happened in the last few years is that they were attacked because they came. They were yelled at during the March and attacked on social networks because they came, like ´Go away capitalists!´ This is really terrible to me because these are LGBT people but with different values and attitudes. (Issa)

My personal impression was that even though most of the respondents talked about what the political aspect of their engagement means to them, the difference between the political stance of last year's organisational committee which was more politically vocal in the media during the organising period before the Pride March was that:

This year's generation of people in the organisational committee is really young and, for most of them, this year's Pride March is their first march ever in their life, let alone their first political experience as a young person. In one conversation in the office, it was stated that previous years of Pride Marches organizational committees wrote better manifestos and mottos because of the participation of activists who were politically more active and engaged. (Fieldwork diary, 8 June 2017)[5]

3.2.2 Activities and volunteering

Most of the respondents had volunteered in the organisational committee of the Pride March this year or in previous years. One of them described that experience as ´one of the smartest things I did´ (Archi) and went on to say that ´[I] learnt to do many things I didn't know´ (Archi). Similar sentiments were repeated by others.

Just before the invitation to participate in the organisational committee was published, there was a tear gas attack in the club in which an LGBT party was taking place that night. That event was a

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[5] A few days after the 16th Pride March, one of the founders of Zagreb Pride, Gordan Duhaček, wrote an article stating ´How Pride became one big party, in the limits of decency´ emphasising the depoliticisation of the Pride March, stating that the political message was not recognized, thus making it the ´most impotent March so far´ and criticizing the Pride March for having become a *feel-good* event. https://www.crol.hr/index.php/politika-aktivizam/8675-kako-je-prajd-postao-jedan-veliki-party-u-granicama-pristojnosti (20 April 2018)

turning point and ´additional motivation´ (Mark) for some of the respondents to apply to volunteer at the Pride March:

> […] the turning point for me was the attack in Super Super. That enraged me and my stomach turned - how could someone do that kind of an insidious and disgusting attack. And then I thought okay, this happened, it is important now for the LGBT community to stand up, not to have its tail between its legs, but to do something, and I applied. (Jo)

To some of the respondents, participation in the organisational committee gave them lots of practical knowledge, but also a self-awareness about LGBTIQ rights in Croatia:

> […] that is when I started to understand how discriminated we are and how shattered our rights are. For me, that was never… What could I know about laws and marriage laws? I didn't know anything. And besides, I wasn't someone who was regularly in school, I didn't have a basic knowledge of practically anything and Zagreb Pride was really a base where I learnt everything I didn't learn in school. (Lotrius)

One respondent went on to talk about how volunteering in the organisational committee was an important moment in his life ´because I realised that I am an auto-homophobe´ (Oliver).

Even though most of the volunteers were older than 18, an age limit in Croatia above which you do not need parental permission to participate in activities, some of the respondents were younger than 18 and one even brought parental approval to be able to participate. Another shared her experience of not being able to be part of the organisational committee because her parent would not sign a consent form permitting her participation:

> I volunteered for a short time but it wasn't signed for, because I was a minor and when you are a minor, you need parental approval, which I didn't want to ask for, so I volunteered here and there, wherever I could. I was in Medika later on, working on banners and that was it. It was so nice to be part of something and to work on progress. (Lara)

One of the activities in the organisation is a support group for high school students called Queer Teens. Even though a few years back there was a support group established by volunteers and people who worked in the organisation at the time, this group started working a few months before the 16th Zagreb Pride March, under the guidance of a social worker who is also an LGBTIQ activist. Some of the respondents went to the support group and said that:

> […] it is really good because you grow stronger as a person and it gave me a sense of activism, like I want to do something with this… you start to accept yourself, it really includes people, and you connect with people there. There is no hate and that is what I like best. Everyone tells you everything and you can see that we are all honest and no one is spoiled. (Smilja)

Another respondent talked about the support she got from the group after she went through a rough time with her parents: ´Everyone contacted me through Facebook and asked if I was okay, if I needed something…they were really helping me´ (Juno). Lara talked about how much it meant to her to talk openly about her experiences and problems: ´You can come hang out and learn new

things about the LGBT community, and different historical things as well as generally talking about our experiences. We can share our problems and be open´ (Lara).

When discussing the progress seen within the group, one respondent said: ´Those kids… I can´t even imagine that at that age I would have come out to someone, let alone go to lectures, workshops, and they are already conscious about that´ (Oliver).

3.2.3 What does Zagreb Pride mean to you?

When asked about what the organisation and the Pride March means to them, respondents would often answer by talking about the broader significance and what it means for Croatian society. They said that ´Pride is exceptionally necessary´ (Mark) or that ´it is definitely the most important organisation, which is organising the most important LGBT event´ (Mike).
Some of the respondents, when asked about the meaning of Pride to them, went on to talk about the political significance they see in the Pride March:

> The Pride March is a political act where, in that one day, compared to the other 364 or 365 days in the year, the problems of the LGBTIQ community are brought to the fore with the media writing about it, and when there is a strong political and cultural force and the people power that could push things to happen´ (Gabi).

Explaining what Pride means to her, Issa talked about entering into a fight which went viral with someone who said that maybe there should also be a Straight Pride March. She went on to explain that:

> […] as I see it, it is not gay pride, we don't celebrate that someone is born as gay, because you don't celebrate being born with green eyes. You don't need to celebrate it as it is, but it is rather about the social context. Pride March celebrates the human pride of gay people, their pride, our pride not to allow ourselves to be bullied and to be treated as second class citizens, or to have our basic human rights violated. Therefore it is a march for the human pride of gay people, not gay pride of gay people. (Issa)

Lotrius explained the meaning behind the Pride March for him personally:

> The meaning of my Pride, that feeling at Pride is that unity, that acceptance, that possibility for me to be me. Like, it was not good or bad, you are a cool person, yas bitch! I never wanted to be something special because I am gay, I never wanted to be something less because I am gay and Pride was the moment I wasn't anything else, I wasn't gay, I wasn't anything, I was a person that has these characteristics, but not my orientation. I really felt fully accepted. (Lotrius)

Even though the vast majority of respondents talked fondly about what the organisation and the Pride March means to them, there were a few who were more critical, contrasting how they saw it at the beginning when they were more active, and what they see now:

> […]that is my critique of Pride, in general. Zagreb Pride was founded because organisations like Iskorak and Kontra monopolized the Pride March as a brand, as an event, as a project, and that is when everything started to go downhill. Then, Pride as a grassroots [initiative] took it over and gave it back to the community, and that was the

power of Pride in that moment, in empowering the community. […] What is happening now is that Pride is institutionalizing again, starting to be a brand or project of one organisation, and not something that a community can identify with. I see that as a big problem for the March itself. (May)

3.3. Context of support

When speaking about support in their lives in relation to coming out, most of the respondents talked about the support they received from their families, the LGBTIQ community, and friends. Of those who talked about support from their families, in most cases they talked about supportive mothers as well as brothers and sisters. They spoke somewhat less about supportive fathers or extended families. In most cases, respondents noticed that support from their immediate family was often followed by concern for their safety: ´My mum is a different story, she supports me but she was afraid that someone would do something to me´ (Bela). As one way of demonstrating support from their families, respondents mentioned mothers coming to the Pride March or even participating in some of the activities that were organised in Pride Month, such as Mums in Mama (Mame u Mami) in which the parents of LGBTIQ children gather and share their experiences and stories.

Even though respondents more frequently talked about the support they encountered inside their immediate family, they would more commonly seek out support among their friends. Most often, that support was given to them and a few respondents even concluded that they thought that their coming out positively influenced their friends' perception of LGBTIQ people:

> In high school, in the summer when I was in second grade, I went through my coming out, and I decided to come out to my friends. To this day, I haven't lost any of my friends I came out to because I´m gay. Some thought it was weird, for others it was really weird, but I think that in a way I positively influenced some of them because of the things I said (Nikka)

> There was one friend, she is very active in the Church… I was really scared about her reaction, but she was like: ´Okay, I think that all gays are disgusting, that they all go to hell, except for you!´ But yes, she really became okay with everything. She was okay with me, it all became great to her and she changed her opinion, so all in all everyone reacted well (Zele)

Despite support among friends, some respondents talked about wanting to connect to people who they perceived as someone who ´shares the same or similar experiences´:

> Mostly in my life, I have been surrounded by open and free-minded people […] and the majority of them were heterosexual… and sometimes, I just needed someone who shares the same or similar… well it can´t be the same experience… You just come to the point where you say ´I want to meet some LGBT people to have fun´ […] You always want someone to reflect on things with, to talk to, to share things with, even to say ´Hey, are you gay? I am gay. Cool.´ […] Of course that orientation is not so important, but at some point you miss that and you want to hear something else, something different… (Borka)

Other than with families and friends, support is something that respondents often encountered in the LGBTIQ community itself. Some respondents even said that getting to know other people from the LGBTIQ community was a turning point for them:

> I didn't have that feeling anymore that I was part of a community that was bullied and that only some of the members of the community are exposed and fighting, and that I am sitting at home and waiting for someone else to fight for my rights. I felt better because I joined and met lots of great people in the OCZP who became my friends. So that kind of socialization and support meant a lot to me. (Bela)

Besides talking about how meeting other young people from the LGBTIQ community changed many things for him, Lotrius also talked about the meaning that activities organised by the local social network had for his own acceptance:

> I went on hangout[6] and that was a moment that changed everything for me, really everything. Those people were really interested in things I wanted to say, about what I am, who I am and they have never forced me to behave in a certain way, they never put me in boxes, they would always ask, and support me in how I wanted to express myself… they would accept how I wanted to express myself, and what I didn't experience ever before. (Lotrius)

For some of the respondents, support was something they could find at school, among their teachers and peers. One of the respondents even said that the only person she felt free to share the information with, that she was attacked on the street and ended up going to the Accident and Emergency department, was her high school teacher: ´I didn't want to share that with my parents. I told my psychology teacher because I could talk to her about everything. I couldn't talk to my parents and somehow, I kept that to myself´ (Lara). When talking about supportive school staff, it was noticeable that in most cases support was found among psychology teachers and psychologists.

Another context of support which respondents often mentioned when talking about why it is good to be a young person in Croatia today, was the internet as a source of information and networking among young people. One respondent went to a vocational high school where he was bullied. This led him to change high school, saying that the support he got from virtual communities was crucial:

> […] When you have the internet, you find… the whole world is connected through the internet and you can get support from someone in America where it is better than here, and from people who are empowered, and someone will help. If you speak English you can find all sorts of information on the internet and it can be helpful for surviving in Croatia at least on some kind of psychological level. (Lars)

One respondent who is in her early thirties and remembers her early teenage years living without access to the internet or social networks, questions how much this was down the merit of LGBTIQ organisations, compared to the empowerment young LGBTIQ people got from virtual communities:

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[6] LGBT Hangout is activity organised by local social network gay.hr, where people gather and hang out together. Sometimes activities are organised in community centre LGBT centre Zagreb.

Well, that is the Tumblr generation, as I like to call it. The internet really did a lot in terms of empowerment because it is a great tool for those kids who strive for knowledge. They are always online and it gives them hope that it didn't all go to hell. They have Tumblr, they have Instagram, and they are able to connect, to empower each other. I don't think it has anything to do with any NGO, but only with their individual initiative. (Leia)

3.4. Context of conflict

3.4.1 Violence and safety

When asked about physical safety in everyday life, respondents would most often start talking about having experienced street attacks, either verbal or physical attacks. All the respondents talked about experiencing some kind of attacks based on their gender identity or sexual orientation during their life. During fieldwork, one quarter of the respondents experienced attacks, of which two were physical attacks. One of the activities undertaken by the organisation Zagreb Pride is to provide legal help and information through its programme called ´Advocating equity for LGBTIQ persons´.

Through interviews with respondents and also through fieldwork, my impression was that hate speech (with hate crimes also being a frequent occurrence) was even more frequent than could be seen statistically. People would often talk about being physically attacked, but not reporting it because of a lack of trust in the police and a reluctance to come out to the police. Also, problems occur because of the lack of recognition of hate crimes as a legal classification and of the possibility of legal action against it: ´I was attacked more than once and didn't report it to the police […] I didn't think it would change anything ´ (Leia).

One respondent even told a story he had not shared with anyone since then. He and his friends were hanging out near a club in which there was a party called ´Participacija´, arranged by the organising committee of Zagreb Pride, and usually after the Pride March as a closing event of Pride Month or Pride Week. After a short discussion, they were attacked by a group of young men but decided they did not want to report the incident because, ´we didn't want to ruin our night´ (Tay). Such opinions are found more frequently than it may seem, even though all of the respondents talking about their experiences were well aware of the importance of reporting hate crimes.

What I did notice in conversations with respondents was that they would talk about feeling safe and unthreatened in certain everyday activities and situations, but would later on in conversations say that there are certain rules they follow in order to feel safe. Zele mentioned depriving himself of certain things in order to feel safe: ´I would say I feel safe, but not in the way I should feel. I feel safe because I am deliberately depriving myself of some beautiful things´ (Zele). He also mentioned that he ´[…] experiences an expected level of street violence´ (Zele) when compared to other LGBTIQ friends. Another respondent talked about ´knowing how to act´: ´I feel relatively safe. Yes, sometimes I think about what if something would happen to me, to my close ones, to my boyfriend, but as long as you know how to act, you can live normally´ (Jo), while Lara chose to ´pretend to be part of a normal community´: ´I carry pepper spray with me and try to avoid challenging people. I would rather wear less rainbow marks and pretend I am part of the normal community´ (Lara).

In February 2017 there was a tear gas attack on the Super Super club that organised an LGBT party. The next day, Zagreb Pride organised a protest called ´Love Is and Remains Stronger Than

Hate´ at which more than a thousand people gathered to show support to those injured in the stampede that occurred just after the attack. Two respondents talked about being at that party and how it affected them:

> One minute it looked like a great party, and the next a horror movie in which people started to run randomly. At that point no one knew why everyone was running, you only knew something was happening. And then you are choking, tears… your eyes are burning. You are trying to breath and that wouldn't be a problem if you were outside, but when you are in that place where there is only one way out and you can only get to via the stairs… then it is pretty chaotic. (Mark)

Another respondent who happened to be there said that after everything was over, he noticed that he did not feel so shocked or surprised because he, in a way, expected something like that to happen: ´[…] you realise that you live in a society where you expect that could happen. I wasn't so shocked´ (Haz).

One respondent was attacked several times and experienced a lot of street violence and bullying. The latest example of that kind was during one event of Pride Month after having gone to a public toilet with two of his friends in order to change their clothes. After leaving the toilet, they came across a few young men who physically attacked them. They talked about what happened after calling the police:

> […] The police came, they went on with the procedure […] the police outed that boy to his parents even though he has a violent father […] I warned him that he could end up on the street, that he will be beaten. The reaction of the police officer was that if there were any violence, he could contact the police. […] [Names friend] came after us, he had to turn down medical help because he was afraid his parents would find out. He was dizzy, he couldn't stand up, he had blacked out, he was still bleeding, and came by tram to the hospital… he couldn't stand… but he had to turn down medical help […] it is disgusting, you have to choose between risking your life or telling your parents who you are. (Lara)

Lara was one of three who were beaten and she talked about how she did not feel free to tell her parents about what had happened because she would have to explain to them why they were attacked: ´I didn't want to share that with my parents. I shared that with my class teacher, she is a psychologist. I could talk with her about everything. I didn't share it with my parents, I kept that to myself´ (Lara).

Some of the areas of discrimination respondents mentioned were religion and politics, and often they are overlapping:

> In our dear, secular country everything is happening under the white hand that comes from the Kaptol.[7] […] I think that the lack of secularity is a big problem because it affects every aspect of life – education, sport, politics, culture, the political participation of young people, the public administration, the homophobic, transphobic and biphobic legal system… (Gabi)

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[7] Kaptol is part of Gornji Grad-Medveščak district in the centre of Zagreb. It is historical part of Zagreb and residence of Archdiocese of Zagreb and Zagreb Cathedral.

Lota told her story about how she had noticed that the social climate had changed after the HDZ[8] won the election and how that was the first time that someone attacked her on the street: ´[...] We have really reached the bottom with this government... In thirty years no one ever said anything bad to me or kicked me on the street, but this happened when the HDZ won the election...´ (Lota). Beside the above mentioned, respondents talked about certain specific areas in which they encountered conflicts or in which they noticed conflict being something new, that in some way triggered their engagement.

3.4.2 Conflicts inside families

For the majority of respondents, conflicts inside families are still one of the most common issues they encounter. Consequently, a minority of respondents stated that they were out to all of their close family members and almost every one of them said they had some sort of problem with close family members. The vast majority of respondents are still not out to their closest family members.

One respondent told his story of how he came out to his mother but because of her reaction, he had to ´take it back´ (Jo). Another told a story about coming out to her parents that ´didn't go well at home. My parents started to treat me really badly, they would mistreat me, they wouldn't leave me alone, they watched over me all the time... I had the feeling that they don't give me my space for anything anymore´ (Grey).

Another respondent received an even harsher reaction from her parents. When she came out to her parents, ´mum wanted to check my transgender identity, to get a second opinion. When all those experts' opinions came back positive, she threatened me not to do anything as regards that issue, that they will stop financing me, which they did. [...]´ (Issa). Now, a few years later, she lives in Zagreb, while her parents live in a smaller town on the coast. Her relationship with her mother is almost completely non-existent: ´I talk to my dad sometimes, like once every two weeks and then he asks me how I am, what is going on, what is new with college, but he ignores the transgender component of it all. My mum and I almost never talk...´ (Issa).

This kind of relationship is not unusual among young LGBTIQ people, and it only broadens the sphere of discrimination they already face in society:

> How can we live freely when we are afraid of discrimination at every turn? Personally, I am afraid of discrimination in my own family. All the time. So it is not easy for young people because you don't have any tangible protection instruments. Not only is society going backwards, it is running backwards! (Leia)

Ruby is a young person who, when we first met, told me how every year during the Pride March, her parents would take her to their holiday house in a coastal part of Croatia, so that she would not be in Zagreb and would be prevented from going on the March. However, being persistent and strong as she is, she joined this year´s organisational committee and helped a lot. Thus, even though she was not able to participate again this year, she had helped with the organisation:

> [...] This year they didn't take me there [to the coastal part of the Croatia], but I couldn't be on the March [...] So they let me stay in Zagreb this time, but they said a

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[8] The Croatian Democratic Union (in Croatian: Hrvatska demokratska zajednica) is the main conservative and centre-right political party in Croatia, which won the election in September 2016.

few times ´You better not go! If I find out you went, it won´t be good!´ (Ruby)

Even though some respondents talk about having support from their close family, there would be some kind of issue with the wider family, as in Madison's case. He lives with his mother and sisters and has a great relationship with them. They knew he was a part of this year's organising committee and even came to the Pride March to support him. But for him, problems exist with communication and with a lack of understanding or acceptance among his wider family:

> My two aunts and uncle are really… they go to church more than once a week and they are really conservative. I mean, it is really hard for me to talk to them… Besides, they often start conversations about the LGBT community and not in a good way. (Madison)

3.4.3 Double discrimination inside the organisation

During the fieldwork, there were several issues that would often emerge as problems that Zagreb Pride deals with as an organisation. Some of those issues are those discussed in this section of the report (3.5. Context of Conflict) as they relate to conflicts that young people inside the LGBTIQ community often encounter in Croatian society.

However, an additional problem mentioned by respondents was a kind of double discrimination encountered by volunteers; discrimination not only from the outside (Croatian society), but also from the inside (the LGBTIQ organisation). When talking with young LGBTIQ people about their experiences of discrimination and different areas of conflict in Croatian society, some of them would talk about experiencing a similar type of discrimination inside the organisation. It should be noted that some of the respondents were people that had been active in former organisational committees of Zagreb Pride March and had had, as often happens given the dynamics of smaller groups, differences of opinion with the leadership of the organisation.

One of the respondent said that during her active years in the organisation ´we didn't have the right to say anything´ (Bela). This kind of relationship between volunteers and the organisation's leadership came up several times: ´We don't have a chance, we as volunteers. I can´t say what I want, the people that run Zagreb Pride will give me the formal answer that they give to everyone, as if I were some company and not a person´ (Lotrius).

> Some people who are members of the organisation used their power on a few occasions because they were hierarchically above the volunteers and they said in those moments ´Okay, we will not discuss those things, I am putting a veto on this, it will be like this!´ (Madison)

Because of those problems, one third of the respondents are not active in Zagreb Pride anymore, either due to their own decision or as a result of a decision taken by the organisation leadership: ´I don't know if you noticed the vibrations inside the organisation, but lots of good people left. I mean, they were expelled´ (Mika).

> A couple of us had the idea that we wanted to remain permanent Zagreb Pride volunteers, that we want to be an activist group just like Green Action, that we don't necessarily need to be part of the organisation [as members]. We don't need to be in the team or employed. No one wanted to have a position in the organisation, but we wanted to be a group of activists that could react immediately […] And then they said no and it remained at that. (Mika)

What came out as another consequence of this mode of coordinating the organisation was that ´heritage and activist continuity is not retained´ (Mika), with the consequence that ´Pride has a reputation of being an amateur organisation, like really chaotic…´ (Zele). Mika and Leia talked about how much that kind of loss of knowledge slowed down the movement:

> I mean, we did lots of things, I see now that the people before us did, like there is no preserved corpus of knowledge, but rather everything is being reinvented again and again. I think that this is not helping the wider struggle for a more just society because we are falling apart. (Mika)

> Instability is caused by change. Pride functions by constantly changing people as volunteers and in the working team, and because of that nothing can be done properly because everything always goes back to the beginning. (Leia)

A few respondents did not want their specific criticisms to be recorded or used in this report, one of whom said that there is a fear that 'there will be an 'open hunt' and one by one, we will all be thrown out of the organisation´ (Fieldwork diary, 18 October 2017). This kind of caution only raised the question of why there is a hesitation to talk about these kinds of problems among young activists that are engaging in a movement that is encouraging them to speak out against discrimination. When talking about this issue, one respondent that was vocal about the need to talk about it gave her opinion on the problem saying:

> […] That was also my dilemma, that exposure to internal instabilities. On the other hand, that is a strong and weak point of our movement. The right-wing will never fight on the outside and will always have a clear hierarchy, like structured obedience and so on. But the left-wing, now I call it the left-wing conditionally, all these other movements don't have it because everything is based on the fact that there is no absolute trust, that critical thinking is welcome and so on. So we don't have that sense of loyalty to protect the movement, even though the cost is that it is rotten inside […] that is a big strength, but also a big weakness because this is seen on the outside and that is shit! I don't know myself how to solve it, but I think that being quiet about it is not a solution. (May)

As one of the main problems surrounding this kind of issue, May pointed out that ´Pride is an extremely hierarchical organisation. And only worse than hierarchy is implicit hierarchy, not explicit […] I think that it is a non-feminist organisation and that it is based on everything but solidarity´ (May). Leia concluded that the reason for this kind of problem occurring is ´one group in the organisation - even though everyone is supposed to be equal - has imposed itself as the main one […]´ (Leia).

Those issues mentioned above could also be viewed as intergenerational issues, along with problems with the type of leadership present in the organisation. One respondent explained that ´if that person established an organisation and is there for more than 15 years and no one has the courage to confront him or replace him… I don't know, how do you replace someone who was there first? Before anyone else?´ (Bela). Another respondent said that she had tried to talk to the leader of the organisation and explain what younger volunteers think about certain activities, but:

I said that we respect them as older activists but somehow it was always as if I was talking to a wall and then I gave up. I never got the feeling that they respect what people do for Pride. My perception is that there is a big ego problem and they are like ´Pride is ours, we are Pride and you all are kids that are replaceable and we will replace you!´ And so they did. (Mika)

However, respondents did see a way in which those kinds of problems could be resolved:

I am glad that Pride cannot lose its power completely, because it has an influence that was intensively built during seven or eight years, and Pride has confidence in some people, in the infrastructure it built and in people who are loyal. I see it as a good thing, because if Pride decided to come back to some kind of grassroots, activist discourse, it has a large potential to do it. […] I see that Pride has lost a lot of power over the last three years and that it is a two way street now […] (May)

Everything is left to the self-will of a few who think they know what community is […] we have to bring Pride back to be sexy to the community, not to the donors, because Pride is here because of the community. The basic problem is its absolute inertness, the comfortable salaries, positions of certain people in the organisation. (Leia)

3.4.4 School and the education system

One of main issues raised in this ethnography was that of bullying experienced by respondents during some part of their education - elementary school, high school or in college. For most of the respondents, the bullying and abuse was verbal, but for one group of them it was physical. The common conclusion drawn by all of the respondents was that the ´biggest problem is the school system´ (Archi).

Respondents would often talk about their experiences of verbal abuse:

They would surround me and call me names, make fun of me, like vilify me. A classic example of not accepting other people's sexuality, stereotyping, like being feminized, being a feminized boy, being born as a hermaphrodite and so on… (Jo)

Two respondents talked about having to change their high school because of their bullies' persistence. One of them talked about trying to deal with the abuse for some time, before his mother decided to move him to a different school:

They started to write messages in school, but in places where you couldn't see it. Where you would only see ´We will kill you! Death to faggots! Kill the faggots!´ That was really imaginative teasing and jokes, and I kept quiet and tolerated it, but then I snapped. (Lars)

We were in an ethics class when the topic was homosexuality and they started to express their opinions. And they were saying things like ´That is sick, they should be sent to concentration camps! They should be sterilized! Kill them, Hitler… he should finish the job he started… (Lars)

First, I went to an elementary school that was five minutes from my home, but because of the bullying and physical abuse, not only from students, but from teachers as well, I had to change school after fifth grade. (Jo)

However, a lack of understanding and recognition of bullying displayed by teachers seems to be the crucial problem. In one example a respondent recounted how he was asked by a school guidance counsellor ´Is faggot really an offensive term?´ (Lars). Other respondents mentioned that they had teachers who would openly express their opinions saying: ´I had a teacher who would talk openly about how someone should be killed. There were all sorts of people´ (Bela) and ´I was in elementary school when the first Pride March was organised and there was a discussion during religious education and our teacher was horrible, saying things like ´Kill the faggot! Kill the Serbs!´´ (Fox).

Certain other experiences were even more physically threatening:

There was bullying in elementary school. We had a horrible teacher from first to fourth grade and she would slap us… she would line us up in the hall and slap us. She would also throw us in the corner and so on. She was suspended because of that and was fired later on, I think. (Grey)

The school librarian outed me to everyone! […] She decided to out me to my teachers and then they outed me to my mum[…] she slapped me in front of everyone and no one reacted in my school. (May)

The problem of peer bullying is something that is often mentioned in media discourses because of UNICEF and later, a Ministry of Science and Education campaign called ´Stop violence among children´. But what remains less represented when talking about these problems is the lack of education for educators in terms of LGBTIQ topics as well as ´teachers ignoring LGBT topics´ (Smilja). Respondents also often discussed experiences that demonstrated that one of the main contexts of conflicts in school comes from teachers not being able to recognize bullying happening among students and pupils, not only when talking about LGBTIQ bullying, but also failing to recognize participation in the same kind of verbally abusive behaviours:

I think that the context of conflict I never had the courage to address was that I was in the closet during the whole of high school and I couldn't deal with it. I can´t even begin to imagine on how many levels that can create problems. When your teachers are homophobes and you are a child but have that authority in the classroom that is talking against you. And everyone knows he is talking against you. (Haz)

The reaction of older teachers was 'really bad. I would even say, non-existent. For example, my maths teacher made fun of me and because of that I don't like maths… (Jo)

In high school ´[…] I didn't know anyone that was gay and that was hard. In the last year I had a bad experience because one teacher said, not to me directly, but in the classroom, that in his time there were no paedophiles and gays and that is when I got really mad and went to my class teacher[…] I felt a responsibility towards the future generations (Madison)

Zele, who talked about being beaten daily by his peers in school, persuaded himself that it was something with a positive outcome: ´After first grade, they would beat me every day. […] But I don't even see that as a really bad thing because that was a major influence on my character today… I don't know who I would be if that hadn't happened. I think I would be more average, less interested in the world […]´ (Zele). Later on he concluded that ´in elementary school it was a catastrophe, therefore I am an activist today´ (Zele).

3.4.5 ´In the Name of the Family´

In 2013 the organisation ´In the Name of the Family´ organised the collection of signatures in order to conduct a referendum advocating for a definition of marriage as a union of man and woman in the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia. This campaign resulted in a referendum being conducted and in the inclusion of the proposed definition. In addition, during that period and because of the broad political and media coverage of the campaign as well as support the organisation got from conservative political parties and the Catholic Church, an opposition campaign called ´Citizens Vote Against´ was initiated. In this campaign, numerous civil society organisations, politicians and public figures participated in order to raise awareness about the possible outcomes of these kinds of constitutional changes. Even though some of the respondents participated in this campaign, at that time most of them were in elementary or high school and perceived the campaign of the organisation ´In the Name of the Family´ as if ´it was an attack´ (Elza). Remembering that time, some of the respondents said that not only in the media, but also in their schools, ´everyone who was different would be attacked, and that wasn't pleasant´ (Grey), and consequently ´that referendum raised awareness about the society in which we live´ (Issa). Most of the respondents talked about experiences they had in their schools because of the referendum: ´[…] there was a lot of homophobic comments. They weren't addressed to me directly, but rather indirectly. Because in every class you have at least one LGBT person and people would know that and then we would have those awfully big discussions…´ (Grey).

One of the leading persons most recognizable in the media for advocating on behalf of ´In the Name of the Family´'s ideas and goals, was the activist Željka Markić, about whom Jo said that - because of a lack of a faster reaction and understanding about what was happening - ´we are all in a way responsible for her appearance´ (Jo). Another respondent talked about the narrative that the ´In the Name of the Family´ organisation and activists spun, which emphasised the idea of ´protecting the family´:

> She used a narrative whereby if you didn't know what it was about… I mean, who would be against family, for God's sake? You know, she took basic values to destroy other people's lives, which is really a horror. Terrifying, but again wow! So, yes, I remember being really angry and disappointed and I thought about the collective, but also on a personal level this is shit…this is really a bad time to be queer. (Mika)

In one of the first workshops arranged for the organising committee of the 2017 Pride March, one participant talked about being in school and not out to his family and friends at the time the referendum took place. Later on, he added that Željka Markić was one of the best things that ever happened to him because she initiated the coming out process for him. Talking about the referendum and these kinds of perspectives, the vast majority of respondents agreed that this was something that triggered their desire to engage in the movement: ´I heard lots of stories about people who came out to their families just because of that referendum´ (Issa):

The marriage referendum triggered a lot of things for me. One was an awareness about my sexuality, the other was anger, rage, sadness, a little bit of depression… I didn't feel comfortable. Because you always have that feeling that you are a target and you are only in high school and from that moment all newspapers are writing homosexuals this, homosexuals that… It empowered me to become politically aware, because until then I didn't even know what political parties there are in Croatia. (Nikka)

However, one respondent talked about the feeling of guilt she constantly has, even today. It started at the time of the referendum campaign when she was only 12, prompted by the reaction and comments she heard from her family:

Every conversation would end up being about LGBT issues, they would say ´Why do they protest so much, why do they impose that? That is all a trend.´ […] ´Those are girls that can´t be with boys because they are ugly, so they go after girls!´ (Smilja)

Another respondent talked about the perceived stigma that accompanies LGBTIQ people, that was imposed by organisations like ´In the name of the family´:

We are not perceived as traditional, we are weirdos and sickos. And that is all because of the stigma which goes with us. […] we don't have resources to fight against, I would say a 50 times stronger enemy. I know the word enemy sounds disgusting, but it is. The enemies are all those right-wing organisations that work under the Catholic Church and that advocate tradition… (Leia)

However, Haz presented an interesting and more analytical point of view when talking about young ´In the name of the family´ activists, and asked whether it might be possible that those young people are more similar to LGBTIQ activists than everyone is willing to contemplate:

Recently I talked with someone about the motivation of those young people who are joining clerical-conservative organisations… Who are the ´family´ volunteers who collected signatures? And then I got an answer that you don't hear often because you think they are evil, bad, disgusting and you ask ´How can they do such things?´ But that doesn't explain anything […] We have an extremely powerful Church which has a really strong community in every town just like we have an LGBT community that has empowered people and made them politically aware. That is the same way that the Church does it and then you realize we are similar in that way because those are young people that are insecure in a world where they don't know if they will get a job or what tomorrow will bring. So they join those choirs, religious classes in those parishes […] and that would be just fine if at some point it didn't come to that group of people having really bad intentions and on the basis of hating diversity, wanting to attain political power. (Haz)

3.5. Stigmatisation

When asking respondents about the stigmatisation they encounter, they would often talk of hearing comments like ´they only want attention´, ´that is a choice´, ´that is someone who grew up without one parent´ (Grey) when hearing people talking about LGBTIQ people.

One respondent who was bullied by his peers and later on had to change school, talked about how he tried to get away with his gender identity and sexual orientation:

> I fit in, how to get away with it when I need to, how to stand, how to hold a cigarette, how to talk, how to spit... how to behave in a masculine group full of testosterone that starts to grow. How to watch out for every move because you can´t be femme otherwise it won´t go well (Lars)

Another respondent talked about how there is so much pressure placed on LGBT people in order to meet the sensationalized expectations of the media and entertainment industry. He said that he often felt like a ´pet´ because of 'a lack of understanding of LGBT people as people, but as entertainment´ (Lotrius):

> All those boxes that gay people are put into [...] No matter how much we are accepted into a female group, we are still put in those boxes, some kind of standards, stereotypes and that is something that was more harmful to me than being bullied. [...] I would come to school and to all the girls I would be their gay best friend, but no one really had an interest in me... What do I love? What do I want? Who am I? I was only that gay figure. (Lotrius)

He even went on to describe how he was put under the pressure of such high expectations among his female friends that he soon began to skip classes so he would not be under so much pressure to be everyone's ´gay best friend´ (Lotrius). Soon after, he was expelled from school because of his absence. Furthermore, he concluded that ´no matter what good intentions those media platforms have, they are not authentic and I really think they do more harm than good´ (Lotrius).

Respondents often spoke about stigmatisation experienced in their family or among their friends who would think ´in negative terms about my community´ because of their traditional and religious beliefs. Still, one respondent concluded that ´rejecting that identity [LGBTIQ identity] was never an option´ (Madison). Stigma attached to LGBTIQ people, repeated from a young age by close family members is something that can develop into fear and insecurity that is then internalised in a person:

> Your parents talk about gay people like ´Oh God, did you hear? That kid is gay. His poor mother!´ That is the context in which you hear about gay people who are considered rare. You hear about them in curses, you don't see them, they are not here. There are some other people and if they are here, then they pity them, they pity their parents and ask them what they did wrong. And then you grow up in that kind of small community. From a young age it is internalised in you. (Oliver)

Apart from stigma inside the family, there is a certain stigma that often emerges in the context of job and college. One respondent talked about a job interview she had had. When she got to the final round, however, her employers kept asking her about her engagement in Zagreb Pride:

> [...] during the whole job interview they were asking me about Pride, my haircut, about what I worked on in Pride and how I plan to join up my activism and corporate work. [...] In some cases this is my paranoia, I can´t be sure, but sometimes I know what is going on. (May)

Another respondent talked about the ´double life´ she is forced to live because she does not feel safe to come out to her college friends:

> […] emotionally it is a huge pressure that during the day, from 8 am until 2 pm I am in college, I have to watch how I talk, you have to accept some really disgusting heteronormative norms of how men treat women […] and you have to fight with yourself not to let everything spill out face to face[…]. Then you leave those behavioural patterns and go back to your private life, with your friends, clubs, organisations, where you still have to be careful not to address someone in the wrong gender and those two worlds are sometimes emotionally exhausting […] sometimes I feel so hypocritical seeing who I am during the day and then at night. (Mila)

Stigma attached, based on someone's gender identity or sexual orientation, is often accompanied by a reaction that indicates that ´it isn't okay to talk about that´ (Archi). One respondent had an experience whereby she wanted to rent an apartment and the person who was renting it did not want to rent it to her because her girlfriend was with her:

> ´She said that she doesn't discriminate against anyone […] my colleague called an hour later and the apartment was still available. Another colleague called a week later and the apartment was still available, but she told me that she picked someone else. Yet she asked me on the phone ´Are you that lesbian couple?´´ (Gabi)

Another respondent encountered a situation in which she was denied her gender identity to the extent that her parents stopped communicating with her and her siblings as soon as they noticed that they could ask questions about her gender: ´[…] I saw that recently my sister began to notice so she asked me why I talk using female pronouns… then they took her off the phone.´ (Issa)

Furthermore, one respondent talked about how there is a certain stigmatisation that parents have to deal with when their children come out and other people find out about it. He called it a ´secondary coming out´:

> I think that just as I came out to my parents, they have to 'come out' to other people. That secondary coming out, that parental coming out is as hard for parents as it is for us. They are simply scared, they are scared to approach their friends with that fact. So that is a big step for them, too. I think that those parents who now work with parents of gay kids are really valued and necessary because I think that all in all that is the biggest problem every gay person has – their relationship with their parents. (Mark)

3.6.   Being young – experiences and representations

When asked about their experiences of being young today in Croatia, and especially about being a young LGBTIQ person, respondents would often mention geographical differences. More specifically, they would point out the differences between a young LGBTIQ person living in Zagreb and those living in smaller communities and cities. While some say that ´you can always end up in the wrong place at the wrong time´ (Fox), for most of the respondents, ´it depends on where they are. If they are in Zagreb or Rijeka, it will be easier than if they are in Split or in some shithole because [in Zagreb/Rijeka] there is less of a chance to be discriminated against because of their orientation…´ (Issa). Another respondent sees this as ´double discrimination´: ´Of course, there is a difference, class position is important, it is not the same thing to be a lesbian from the middle class

in Zagreb and, I don't know,… some gay person with a low socio-economic status in some village´ (Mika). In her study on non-normative sexualities in small towns and rural communities in Croatia, Butterfield (2017) concluded that narratives of LGBQ individuals do not support an image of those spaces to be homogeneously hostile, homophobic and threatening. Even though there is methodological difference in the selection of respondents, most of my respondents who grew up in smaller towns and rural communities talked about having hostile environment in regard to their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

One respondent that works with young LGBTIQ people highlighted that there is lack of infrastructure in the education system for LGBTIQ youth. She analysed the problem she encountered in her work and concluded that there is a discrepancy between the message the global entertainment industry is sending to young people and the support they are actually able to get:

> I noticed, not only in Pride, but in my job that young people are coming out younger than before and I think that is a good thing. Also, I think there are some traps we are not aware of when we say that it is a good thing. An infrastructure of global trends has been created through which young people get information about LGBT issues via the Internet, because they google, read, inform themselves, they are part of all kinds of global trends, music… and they get the really affirmative message that gay is okay, that coming out is okay, that your friends are here for you… that whole pack of positive messages. On the other hand, what we forget is that this is not our infrastructure, that this is an imported infrastructure that maybe exists in Berlin or Los Angeles or where the production of those things comes from, but in Croatia – we don't have a support system for that. And then you have some girl from Slavonski Brod, who through this flood of positive messages decided to come out at her high school where you don't have an employed psychologist, because the [government] Ministry didn't approve that job. You have a school guidance counsellor buried in papers, you don't even have one expert associate[9] in the school. Her class teacher is a Physical Education teacher and he is a homophobe, […] and ten people in her class bully her and then you have to ask what can be done about that? […] Of course, I think that for your wellbeing it is better to come out as young as possible, but you have to ask yourself, what can be done with those young people? How can they be supported? […] on the one hand it is a positive thing, on the other, we leave those kids betrayed. (May)

When discussing whether or not it is a good time to be a young person today in Croatia, opinions are also different; sometimes even the opposite, although those saying that it is a good time to be a young person today are significantly in the minority.

Some respondents stated that they think that the ´prospects available to us are not so good´ (Elza) and that bearing in mind job opportunities and youth unemployment, ´expectation and reality are totally incompatible´ (Haz). Respondents agreed on the opinion that the main problem for young people is the economy and politics saying: ´[…]our country is economically going to hell, everything is beginning to be more and more conservative and no one will have a pension. Education is bad, the education system is regressive´ (Issa). Another respondent said that the ´essential problem for a young person today is the economy´:

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[9] In Croatian legislation on obligations of teachers and associates in primary school, expert associates are pedagogues, librarians, psychologists, special education teachers, health worker sand social workers. See more on: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/1999_05_51_954.html (20 April 2018)

[…] all those political things, In the Name of the Family, and those organisations, right-wing organisations… I think the problem is not so much about an ideological or value issue, but that it is strictly economic. […] I think that all those organisations grow to hide the situation as it is, as in ´Let's talk about abortions, about ideological issues and ignore what is determining a person's life the most – the economy´. Nothing can determine this more than the fact that you pay your rent and bills, or you don't. We can agree on something about values, but if we don't have enough to pay our rent and bills, we have problems. […] So I think that the essential problem of a young person today is the economy. (Mila)

One respondent went on to talk about not having hope that things will be better for young people, and that the main problems are the divisions he often sees and feels:

I am discouraged, I generally don't have hope for our society because we let ourselves remain divided on the basis of WW2 or the Homeland War and that is… […] personally, I don't know how to fight hate against national minorities and the fact that when you condemn ICC crimes they call you Yugonostalgic and a Commie, but when you condemn communist crimes, they call you an Ustasha… I just don't know how to outgrow those problems. […] maybe we just need to let old generations go away, to die and then we, young people will be the new hope, but then among the reactions of my peers and younger generations I see that on the Norijada [Celebration day when finishing school], 18 year olds march and make Nazi salutes… […] it really leaves you without hope. (Madison)

On the other hand, one respondent said that she would feel hypocritical to leave a country where no one has any rights and move to another country to protest for some other rights: ´So I think that it is really hypocritical to go, I think that it is a great time to be a young person in Croatia!´ (Archi).

When asked about who they see as those who have it better or worse than they do when speaking about rights, the majority would often mention Roma people as the group they see as a minority dealing with more discrimination and stigmatisation in Croatian society: ´People will maybe beat me for kissing my girlfriend in public, but imagine what they would do if I were Roma´ (Leia).

In addition, when talking about young people today, respondents would often mention a new ´wave´ of young people in the LGBTIQ community as well as the fact that the ´organisational committee definitely has a record of young people´ (Lota). But those of them who belong to the younger generation of LGBTIQ activists emphasised that for them, topics like parenting are something they rarely think about, while on the other hand they ´want to have some safe spaces and freedom of speech´ (Archi). A lack of safe places for LGBT youth came up on several occasions during the interviews. One of the respondents even talked about squatting in a place near the city centre with a few other underage LGBTIQ teenagers, so they would have a place in which to hang out, read and live. They stayed there during the Pride Month but were later forced to move out after a right-wing group came in and broke their things. One respondent said:

On the door we wrote ´Don't go out, they don't like us there´. And that was really significant because it was written on the exit to the squat. We all felt safe in that squat

and then every time we would come in or go outside it was like moving between dimensions – one in which you are accepted and another in which you are not. (Lars)

In addition, as concerns young people, most of the respondents were glad that more and more young people were participating in the Pride March as well as in the organisational committee. One respondent said ´I see a new force […] I am really happy about that. I have the feeling that a change of generations is occurring and that now I am the old one.´ (Gabi). Another respondent who was active for a few years in the organisational committees noticed that the new generation is outed at a young age: ´This is a new generation that is out in their seventeens, and even younger´ (Haz).

3.6.1 Intergenerational relations

I noticed during the fieldwork that a lack of intergenerational knowledge transfer would often repeatedly present itself as a problem. When asked about experiences with knowledge transfer, respondents had different opinions, some even stating that: ´We are really bad at that. […] I think that, in comparison with any other organisation I have worked with, Pride has little to no organisational memory. Every year we start from the beginning. It is terribly ineffective´ (Zele). One respondent that was active in the organisational committee for a few years, recognised this problem in interpersonal relationships:

> We never saw them. They barely answered our e-mails, but if they were to send an e-mail, then we had to answer. I think they didn't even read our meeting notes… they didn't come to the meetings. [names co-activist] would come to the meetings of the PR team, but [names co-activist] didn't come. He controlled everything from the outside […] (Bela)

Even though one respondent concluded that ´maybe they were too exhausted, and so they didn't come by so often this year´ (Elza), another explained this intergenerational problem as something that could happen as a result of long-term activist work and a lack of initiative from the older generation:

> On the one hand, people who are activists for a long time are seen as Gods. I also had that issue with [names co-activist]. He is a person I saw on TV and now, I work with him. Like wow! So maybe young people don't feel strong enough to ask for something, for help or similar. On the other hand, I think there is a lack of initiative from us, the older generation, to pass that knowledge on. And then we come to the point where it is too much for us and we feel like we don't want to do it anymore, let´s find someone else to do that, and knowledge transfer isn't completed as it should be. (Gabi)

Although some respondents talked about having problems in communicating with the older generations, some had better experiences: ´It was done really well and whenever you had a problem, they asked you and helped you. And you could come and ask at any moment´ (Juno).

One of the members of this year's organisational committee said that for him ´it was a friendly atmosphere […] because at any given moment we had a feeling that we can talk to members of the organisation, which is great, progress […]´(Madison).

When talking even further about the differences between older and younger generations, one respondent talked about how she sees young people as being raised differently and that difference could be seen in the way people approach their activism:

> Young people up to the age of 24-25, they are activist aggressive, but not aggressive in the way they fight, but in the way they show their teeth. Those over 25 were raised in a nicer way and the authority of parents was different then. They are more tactical, polite, nicer… but that doesn't work, it doesn't work, you have to show your teeth. If you are nice, everyone will trick you as they wish, so all in all I think that those things are changing… we have had enough! (Archi)

3.7. Social innovations

When speaking about innovation in the work of Zagreb Pride, respondents would often mention certain activities such as high school lectures on the Pride March, the history of the movement in Croatia, as well as hate crimes and hate speech. Furthermore, one of the activities that was often mentioned in this context is the education of police officers where people from the organisation and their external associates would talk about hate crimes. One respondent mentioned activities that took place during the first years of the organisation, as well as in the way the organisation functioned at that time:

> Almost everything we did in those years [2008-2015] was innovative. Which wasn't so hard because there was nothing else. It doesn't mean it is less valuable. In 2010, the campaign included a total change of discourse compared to everything that had been done before. In 2010, 2009 we had faces on the banners for the first time […] For me it was really inspiring during that first period. It was a space of freedom and aimed to function totally differently. And for some time, it did function differently from the rest of the world, because no matter how utopian it was, it was never ideal, but it was a pretty good experimental playground concerning how it could work. So the results were really visible and that was motivating for me. (May)

An organisational committee that was open for a community to join was something others also mentioned saying that it ´was innovative when we had it´ (Bela) and that:

> The organisational committee was a new form, that form doesn't exist anymore, but then everyone could join and participate and in that way we assured the legitimation of the community to represent ourselves, and we come from the community… (May)

A lack of recognition of innovation for the majority of the respondents was most often a problem with understanding what innovation in this context would mean, saying that ´it is mostly the same as in other NGOs, those lectures, education programmes, but I´m not sure I would call it innovative necessarily´ (Elza). Other respondents said that they 'don't see it as something innovative, but I see that they are trying' (Lara) and that the problem is in the lack of initiative from the inside because 'there is not enough people and they are preoccupied with words. So I do not think that there is anything innovative' (Tea).

Even though some respondents criticized the ways in which the organisation functions, one respondent linked the lack of innovation with that issue. She talked about seeing the organisation as something that had departed from its initial values:

Innovative… this will sound terrible, but in the meantime, Pride became a project-oriented organisation. Pride totally departed from basic grassroots activism, from the community, and the only thing that is innovative in Pride is finding different ways of staying in that position. […] What was called innovative in Pride was direct democracy and non-hierarchy. Unfortunately, it looks great on paper, but in reality hierarchy exists, democracy is an unknown term and all in all it is a tyranny of one person who has the support of one group of people in the organisation. Pride is innovative only on paper. Innovation cannot be only a word, because then we are all theoretical activists. Innovation has to be about acts. It would be innovative to give the community a free hand to do what they feel right to do and not to have those 'schemers', and those political games that are present in Pride at the moment because some people think they know what is right for the community. Innovation doesn't exist in Pride anymore, everything is a political game and something we all fight against. […] Values are what are innovative, just like principles, but like I said, they are only empty words. […] Pride is not innovative anymore and that is really sad. (Leia)

3.8. Bringing about change

When talking about change in society as a result of Zagreb Pride's activities throughout the years, it is unsurprising that almost all of the respondents talked about change being visible and significant on a social, legislative, as well as on a day-to-day level. Complemented by the activities that Zagreb Pride works on during the year, as well as the consequences of the Pride March, ´media perceptions are changed, visibility is bigger, the community has been built up´ (May), which is especially reflected at the ´legislative level with the Life Partnership Act that would not have happened if Pride wasn't so visible´ (Mika). Due to all this, ´Pride started to be important to everyone´ (Oliver) because change was obvious not only in the work they do, but also in terms of its acceptance by a wider section of society:

I think it is important to say that there is a difference, I mean over 16 years you can see a difference. For me personally, I think that there was something, that people are glad to see it, even those who weren't in the March this year… they waved, took pictures, there was one woman who was fascinated, she was giving us a thumbs up and I was glad… maybe she didn't want to be on the inside, but it is important to hear people from the outside, who don't march, that they are supporting us […] (Elza)

Respondents also talked about how reactions towards the Pride March changed over the years because the ´public in Zagreb have gotten used to Pride […] they learned about tolerance´ (Issa). This has led to more people coming to the March every year: ´the number of people that come [to the March] has grown, the number of those who agree with us has grown, as well as those who support us in our fighting for our rights´ (Jo). What this means on a personal level to young LGBTIQ people in Croatia is that Pride has indubitably helped young people to come out at a younger age and in wider areas of their life:

You couldn't come out before, you wouldn't dare to come out in school or at your job, anywhere…now that has changed, you can. In some schools it isn't well accepted, but either way you feel a freedom, you feel that you can come out no matter what. So that is also something Pride made possible. (Lara)

However, some respondents took a more critical approach when talking about Zagreb Pride's work today and whether it is contributing to change as regards the LGBTIQ movement in Croatia today:

> […] at the moment I think that it doesn't. And this is a methodological issue, over whether someone will agree with me, but I think that the function of Pride and the March is to empower the community and that the community feel that the March is theirs. That March is from community to community. The community is the one that marches and you march for the community […] What Zagreb Pride is really successful in, over the last three years, is in losing influence in the community, because it went in that direction. […] So I think that Pride is not bringing about the social change it should.´ (May)

However, viewing the Pride March as the ´biggest activist act of the whole year´ (Archi), some respondents talked about their experience of their first Pride March as being ´one of the most special feelings I felt in my life. I felt accepted and proud´ (Archi), ´a liberating feeling. You can be who you are´ (Bela) and ´I can´t even explain how empowered I felt, like I belong somewhere. For the first time in my life´ (Lotrius).

Mika talked about how her participation in the Pride March resulted in a discussion between her parents:

> It was a significant moment for me. The drumming and [later on] there were so many photos and I remember that my mom took my dad to the seaside so he wouldn't be here during Pride. He then saw us on TV, because the first rows [of the march] are always on photos and he reacted, like, ´What is she doing there? What is going on?´ And then she told him, ´Let her go, she is a [social science student], she has to be in one of the first rows in the fight for human rights!´ And then he fell silent. (Mika)

Being afraid of their parent's reaction if their parents see them at the Pride March was something that would often emerge as a theme when talking about going on first marches: ´For me it was so stressful because of the cameras, what if my parents see me? That was such a stress for me´ (Mila). During one Queer Teens workshop, the teenagers talked about how they would like to go on the Pride March, but for them, as minors, this was still something they were afraid to do:

> What could be noticed among those kids was that they were really scared. That constantly present fear is something that is strongly expressed. They are all really frightened that their parent(s) will find out, their peers or family… When I asked them if they would like to go to this year's March, they said that they would be so excited to come. (Fieldwork diary, 25 March 2017)

3.9. Visual methodology

In April 2017, disposable cameras were distributed to ten young people who had showed an interest in participating in the photo elicitation and later in the interviews. Of these seven participants completed the photo elicitation, producing a total of 77 photographs. Out of three participants who did not provide photos, one withdrew from participation, while two others were not successful due to technical problems with the cameras. The age range of those participating in the elicitation was from 17 to 30.

All the participants were provided with an information sheet about the project, detailing the visual methodology and explaining the three core concepts that were chosen as the main themes: (personal) security, inequality, and making a difference.

3.9.1 (Personal) security

Personal security was one of the topics that stood out from the beginning. It turned out to be one of the best topics for this kind of methodology because the participants were empowered to think about feelings of security and a lack of security in everyday situations. For most of the respondents, the term security was associated with personal spaces, their private rooms or even with their friends. The lack of security was something they would often link to public spaces, as seen on Plate 1. and Plate 4.

Plate 1. ´I found this graffiti under my window one day […] It was only days after they saw me with my partner […] they attacked me a few times in my street…´ (Lars)[10]

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[10] Signature BBB ZG that could be seen on Plate 1 is acronym for Bad Blue Boys Zagreb, supporters of football club Dinamo Zagreb. When talking about context of conflicts, my respondents would often mention BBB fans as being the ones perceived as potential danger because of their past negative experiences they had with physical or verbal attacks or experiences of others.

Plate 2. ´This is a view from my room, it represents my feeling of security. My room… those are my four walls in which I feel wonderful […] and secure in my room.´ (Medo)

Plate 3. ´This was when, at one point, I turned around and realized I am alone in the tram […] it was a short moment of feeling secure.´ (Ruby)

Plate 4. [We are cannibals! We will slaughter you! Faggots for the last time!]
This was a graffiti that appeared one day, across from the club where we organised an event during Pride Month […] after a while it started to piss me off, even more so because after that event my friend who was there that night, was attacked. Because we had a 'Gender Bender' party […] That unnecessary aggressiveness and my friend who had to get stitches… I don't know, it isn't pleasant. (Ruby)

3.9.2 Inequality

The term inequality was often mentioned when talking about ´outside´ threats. In the examples chosen below, we can see that Lara chose a picture showing a Christian shop near the Cathedral in the city centre (Plate 5). She talked about seeing people, not the religion itself, as those imposing discrimination and stigma on the LGBTIQ community. Lara was not the only participant who linked photos of religious institutions with the term 'inequality', also talking about direct connections the Catholic Church in Croatia has with some of the biggest conservative and traditional political parties, initiatives and organisations.

Other photographs portrayed certain contexts in public space in which they would encounter associations with inequality, such as binary separated public toilets (Plate 6) and crossing points which Saša noticed and talked about in Plate 7.

Plate 5. ´This picture represents Christianity in Croatia, which is one of the main religions here. Christianity isn't a problem by itself, but people who are a part of that are, those who see us as sick and who try to deny us our rights.´ (Lara)

Plate 6. ´This is in front of a toilet in a shopping center […] Once I was there and I watched, like, female right, male left… where should I go now?´ (Lars)

Plate 7. ´We were all together there because of the Pride March organisation and this seems to show two worlds […] like the squat Medika and Westin… it shows two different societies, economically we are different…´ (Saša)

3.9.3 Making a difference

When talking about the idea of making a difference, respondents often emphasised that it was hard for them to remember if the photographs they took were meant to be linked to the term 'security' or the idea of 'making a difference'. For most of them those photographs conveyed the exact same things – physical places in which they felt safe, but because of the context, what was happening in those photographs would often be something alluding to making a difference. The photographs would most often display this year's Pride March organisation and the places in which participants worked during that time (Plate 8, Plate 9, Plate 10).

Plate 8. ´Pride is definitely positive, you don't have to explain that anymore because it is Pride […] when you see in the movie how many people there were at the first March and how it looks today… there has definitely been a change and there is more to come!´ (Saša)

Plate 9. ´As a matter of fact, all the photos that portray making a change, are also about personal security. Because the Pride March organisation was… you could really feel safe and connected with other people … it is difficult to separate it out because Medika makes me feel safe, I couldn't feel bad in this space, it is really [a space of] positivity.´ (Saša)

Plate 10. ´This was during Pride Month, when we had a banners workshop […] you could see people who are part of the community but are not shown in the mainstream media, because when someone says lesbians and gays, people don´t imagine a group of happy people writing graffiti in Medika, so that seemed to be an important moment to capture.´ (Lars)

4. Conclusions

In 2017 Zagreb Pride organised the 16th Pride March for LGBTIQ people and their families, gathering over 10 000 supporters. Over thirty volunteers and members of the organisational committee worked on the Pride March and Pride Month programmes. Most of the volunteers in this year's organisational committee were young people ranging from 16 to 34 years old. This was one of the reasons why the local LGBT news portal reported on a ´new generation of a never younger Pride March: You won´t split up our families and our friendships!´ stating that ´Zagreb Pride grew up, but didn't grow old´[11].

During this ethnographic fieldwork, 31 interviews were conducted with respondents on their experiences of discrimination and stigmatisation, bullying in school, family relations, political contexts, being young today in Croatia, and feeling safe. The respondents were members of the Pride March organisational committees, volunteers in the organisation, members of the organisation, and young people attending the high school support group Queer Teens. Furthermore, they were members of former Pride March organisational committees and the founders of the Zagreb Pride organisation. Their age range was from 16 to 40 years, with the majority of respondents aged from 18 to 28 years.

The most important finding analysed in this ethnography is the existence of stigmatisation surrounding being a LGBTIQ person, as well as experiences of violence and bullying. All the respondents talked about having had some kind of violent experiences, whether verbal or physical, based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Bearing in mind the results of a study Zagreb Pride conducted (Milković, 2013) where over 74% of participants said that they had experienced some kind of violence, the fact that all of the respondents in this research stated that they had experienced violence strongly suggests that the situation is not getting better as regards hate crimes and hate speech. Even more so, Milković´s (2013) results showed a significant lack of trust in the police and judiciary system with only a minority of the attacks having been reported. This result raises a lot of questions for wider academic research into the fields of the judiciary and legal system, as well as potential work for non-governmental organisations on empowering victims to report hate crimes. Yet most of all, basic problems that could be seen in these results tell us that there is a need for the proper education of police and judiciary officers in order to bring about the timely recognition of and responses to hate crimes and hate speech.

Conflicts in school or college are another significant problem that young LGBTIQ people in Croatia face, given the lack of support in recognition and reporting of bullying. Almost half of the respondents mentioned conflicts with educators, which highlights the need for the proper education of educators in order to recognize discriminatory behaviour.

The most common example of conflict among LGBTIQ youth is with family. This problem has already been emphasized (Milković, 2013) in the study 'Brutal Reality', where 29% of the participants talked of having intra-familial conflicts because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

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[11] This article was published on the local LGBT news portal CroL. The author Veronika Rešković concluded that the 16th Pride March was the youngest Pride March to date. She also alluded to the groups of young supporters that participated in the March. https://www.crol.hr/index.php/politika-aktivizam/8669-nova-generacija-nikad-mlade-povorke-ponosa-necete-razdvojiti-nase-zajednice-nasa-prijateljstva-nase-obitelji (20 April 2017)

Researching the LGBTIQ movement in Croatia not only brings visibility to LGBTIQ issues and the community, or recommendations for further work on legislative proposals, but also contributes to social movement studies. Consequently, these results show the growth and development of civil society and democratic changes which have happened over the last sixteen years. Zagreb Pride as an organisation, but also the Pride March, serve as good indicators of that change, demonstrating not only the significant and visible legislative work they have completed through their activities (the Same-Sex Life Partnership Act), but also how their activities have politically engaged and empowered young LGBTIQ people.

5. Future analysis

Through analysing this topic, several issues have been opened up that could provide possible new areas for research.

One possible future topic of analysis could research regional LGBTIQ movements in relation to their political and social contexts, as well as in relation to other post-socialist countries. This research perspective could offer insights into different levels of or the development of movements. Social analyses could also serve as a field review for legislative proposals. Bearing that in mind, a cross-case analysis within the gender/sexuality cluster could offer broader perspectives in relation to this topic. Furthermore, a comparison of views on violence and bullying could be compared and analysed across WP6 clusters, especially in relation to cases in the education/justice/society cluster, as well as the issue of stigmatisation which could be compared to cases in the culture/politics cluster.

After analysing the collected data, a potential for triangulation with quantitative data that will be gathered in WP5 is visible. This could be compared to the data gathered in WP4. More precisely, possible topics that could be further analysed are perceptions of activism, and especially political activism among young people; volunteering; authority figures in young people's lives; experiences of violence and hate speech; feelings of security; bullying in school and stigmatisation. As regards methodological triangulation, the visual methodology offered new perspectives on what safety, equality and making a change means to young people. Those issues could be additionally researched through focus groups and questionnaires.

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Appendix 1: Table of respondents´ socio-demographic data

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Education	Employment	Residential Status	Family Status	Ethnicity	Country of birth	Religion
Archi	18	Non-binary	Currently in secondary education	In full-time education	Lives in care or foster care	Single	White	Croatia	Atheist
Bela	20	Female	Currently at university	In full-time education	Lives independently with friends	Single	White	Croatia	None
Borka	23	Female	Currently at university	Working and in part-time education	Lives independently with friends	Single	White	Croatia	Agnostic
Elza	27	Female	Completed general academic secondary education	Unemployed	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	White	Croatia	Atheist
Fox	21	Female	Currently at university	In full-time education	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	White	Croatia	Atheist
Gabi	26	Female	Currently at university	In full-time employment	Lives independently alone	Single	White	Croatia	None
Grey	21	Female	Currently at university	In part-time employment	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	White	Croatia	Atheist
Haz	27	Male	Completed university	Unemployed	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	White	Croatia	Atheist
Issa	24	Female	Currently at university	Working and in part-time education	Lives independently with friends	Not applicable	White	Croatia	None
Jo	24	Male	Currently at university	In full-time education	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	White	Croatia	Agnostic

Juno	18	Female	Currently in vocational secondary education	In full-time education	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	White	Croatia	Agnostic
Lara	19	Female	Completed vocational academic secondary education	Unemployed	Lives at home with other relatives e.g. grandparents	Single	White	Croatia	Other religion
Lars	19	Non-binary	Currently in vocational secondary education	In full-time education	Lives independently with partner/children	Married or living with partner	White	Croatia	Atheist
Leia	32	Female	Completed university	Unemployed	Lives independently with own partner/children	Married or living with partner	White	Croatia	Atheist
Lota	30	Non-binary	Completed vocational academic secondary education	In full-time employment	Lives independently with own partner/children	Married or living with partner	White	Other	Atheist
Lotrius	19	Non-binary	Did not completed secondary education and left	Unemployed	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	White	Croatia	None
Madison	20	Male	Currently at university	Working and in part time education	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	White	Croatia	Atheist
Mark	26	Male	Completed university	In full-time employment	Lives independently with friends	Single	White	Croatia	None
May	28	Non-binary	Completed university	In full-time employment	Lives independently with own partner/children	Married or living with partner	White	Croatia	Atheist
Medo	21	Male	Currently at university	In full-time employment	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	White	Croatia	Hindu

Mika	27	Female	Completed university	In part-time employment	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	White	Croatia	Atheist
Mike	40	Transgender	Completed university	In full-time employment	Lives independently with own partner/children	Married or living with partner	White	Croatia	None
Mila	21	Female	Currently at university	In full-time education	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	White	Croatia	Agnostic
Nikka	20	Male	Currently at university	In full-time education	Lives at home with parent(s)	Not Applicable	White	Croatia	Atheist
Oliver	31	Male	Completed university	In full-time employment	Lives independently alone	Not Applicable	White	Croatia	None
Ruby	16	Female	Currently in vocational secondary education	In full-time education	Lives at home with parent(s)	Not Applicable	White	Croatia	Atheist
Saša	33	Female	Completed university	Unemployed	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	White	Croatia	Atheist
Smilja	17	Female	Currently in vocational secondary education	In full-time education	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	White	Other	Atheist
Tay	25	Male	Currently at university	Working and in part-time education	Lives independently with friends	Single	White	Croatia	None
Tea	24	Non-binary	Currently at university	Working and in part-time education	Lives independently alone	Single	White	Croatia	Atheist
Zele	23	Male	Currently at university	In full-time education	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	White	Croatia	Atheist