

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/>

Cluster Analysis:

Cluster 4: Gender/Sexuality

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Executive summary:

In this report the results of the meta-ethnographic synthesis of case studies in Cluster 4 'Gender/Sexuality' are summarised. It includes six cases from five countries: Portugal, Germany, Croatia, Finland and Russia (two cases). The cases were selected in accordance with the interest of the PROMISE project in young people who have experiences of stigmatisation or conflict but do not remain passive, but exercise agency in different ways.

During the analysis 17 concepts were derived in response three key questions. The meta-ethnography demonstrates that today young people face different types of conflicts, often instigated by adults. Responding to these conflicts, young people find different ways to be active in their life and change things that seem to them inappropriate. One of the important paths of social engagement is a visibility. However, this strategy can also lead to new conflicts. Young people encounter conflicts not only with those outside, but also within, their groups; including factional or intergenerational struggle or miscommunication. Nevertheless, joining different initiatives helps young people to re-evaluate their experience, accept it, share their experience with people who can understand it and acquire new knowledge and resources.

This report should be read in conjunction with the relevant 'General Introduction' document.

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1. Introduction

The long history of the development of democratic regimes and the struggle for diversity, on the one hand, and the strengthening of right-wing and nationalist forces, anti-immigrant sentiments and Islamophobia, patriarchy, traditional values and neo-conservative turns, on the other, creates a complex social landscape in Europe in which some identities, lifestyles and individual choices become controversial or deemed culturally illegitimate. Issues of gender, motherhood, sexuality and faith - which normally belong to one's private life - become politicised and problematised as key pillars of the social order. This can lead to stigmatisation and marginalisation of entire groups of the population, such as LGBTQ +, women, non-binary people, Muslims, etc. Young people are especially vulnerable in this situation.

The 'Gender and Sexuality' cluster includes six case studies from five countries: Germany, Croatia, Portugal, Russia and Finland. Despite the differences in their histories, political regimes and current socio-economic environments, in each of these countries there are groups of young people who are constrained in their lifestyles and experience exclusion and non-recognition because of their gender, sexual and religious identities.

The Croatian case study 'Zagreb Pride LGBTIQ NGO' (ZP) focuses on young people who participate in the activities of Zagreb Pride, a non-profit organisation in Zagreb. Despite the fact that Croatia has seen a lot of progress in recent years regarding the rights of LGBTQ people, they remain stigmatised and marginalised. Conflicts between LGBTIQ people and conservative non-governmental organisations and initiatives, as well as political parties close to the Catholic Church, are ongoing. Zagreb Pride was founded in Zagreb in 2008, and its primary goal is to combat gender and sexual inequality and other forms of oppression.

The case study 'Young Gender Activists' (YAGI) focuses on young activists fighting for gender equality and LGBTQ recognition in Portugal. While the democratic revolution of 1974 did lead to significant transformations targeted towards social (and gender) equality, there is still a significant gender imbalance observed in both public and private spheres. Young people play a significant part in a number of current Portuguese projects and initiatives whose aim is to combat discrimination and to recognise the multiplicity of people's experiences and positions, regardless of their gender or sexual identities.

The Russian case study 'Feminist Scene in St. Petersburg' (FEM) is a study of grassroots initiatives of young feminists from St. Petersburg. Since the mid-2010s, Russia has witnessed the strengthening of neo-patriarchal discourse, which has significantly redefined the position of women. Russia presents itself as a bastion of social conservatism and traditional family values, the significance of which is constructed in opposition to European sexual democracy. However, despite the institutional and discursive pressure of the conservative discourse, young people increasingly resist neo-patriarchy; they develop feminist Internet communities with content in Russian and there are feminist groups and initiatives emerging in towns and cities.

The case study 'LGBTQ scene in St. Petersburg' (LGBTQ) focuses on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer activism (18+). The current neoconservative ideology in Russia leads to an increased problematisation of 'nonconventional' identities in terms of gender and sexuality, and creates moral panics around homosexuality. As a result, LGBTQ people (especially young members of the community) are virtually excluded from the public space. However, this harsh regulation and exclusion have become a kind of incentive for LGBTQ activists to form a unified community

for joint action. In recent years, the number of online and offline initiatives has increased, the range of events has expanded significantly and new issues have been raised on the LGBTQ scene.

The case study 'Young Muslim women' (YMW) deals with the experience of young Muslim women living in Germany, who have decided to wear the hijab and are actively involved in the life of the society. Germany today is characterised by an increase in anti-Islamic sentiments, viewing Islam in opposition to 'our' (i.e. German) values of democracy, liberalism and equality. Women wearing the hijab are stigmatised and discriminated against at both everyday and institutional levels, even though many of them are well-educated women born in German cities.

The case study 'Young motherhood in multicultural Finland' (YMMF) focuses on the experience of 18-25-year-old young women, pregnant or mothers of 1-2 children in Finland. Despite Finland's active promotion of gender equality, discrimination and stigmatisation of those who violate the conventional gender expectations persist. Thus, childbirth at a relatively early age is problematised in the public debate, and young mothers experience stigmatisation in everyday life.

This cluster includes cases that describe the experience of young people whose social engagement and activism are inextricably linked with stigmatisation stemming from their personal identities and lifestyles. It should be noted that young people in this cluster use diverse means of social engagement. The ZP case study is the only one focusing on members of a single organisation, while the other four (YAGI, YMW, YMMF, FEM and LGBTQ) involve independent activists and young people from various groups and initiatives. The case YMMF includes ordinary mothers, who are not activists, but involved in some social activities.

The meta-ethnographic synthesis is built around three key questions, two of which ('How do young people respond to conflicts they experience and with what outcomes?' and 'What enables and what inhibits the social involvement of young people?') are included in the analysis of all four clusters of the project. However, the third question - 'How do young people experience (understand, imagine and shape) their involvement in (activist) communities and networks' - is exclusive to this cluster. The selection of this third research question stems from the fact that being included in communities and networks of individuals with similar experience is important for young people who are stigmatised and marginalised in their everyday life and deprived of cultural legitimacy and recognition in the public sphere more generally.

2. Scope of the data

2.1 Overview of data

Table 2.1 provides an overview of the scope of the data synthesized by case. The number of interviews ranged from 14 to 31. Despite the existence of a common data analysis strategy, the number of first and second level nodes varied: from 19 to 26 Level 2 nodes; and from 52 to 236 Level 1 nodes.

Table 1 Overview of data by case

Case	Sample (number of respondent memos)	Data collection (number of nodes)		Setting (context of fieldwork)
		Level 2 nodes	Level 1 nodes	
Young Muslim Women (Germany)	15	26	236	Participant observation and interviews
Zagreb Pride LGBTIQ NGO (Croatia)	31	21	121	Participant observation, interviews and photo elicitation
Feminist scene in St. Petersburg (Russia)	15	20	73	Participant observation and interviews
LGBTQ scene in St. Petersburg (Russia)	14	19	52	Participant observation and interviews
Young Gender Activists (Portugal)	20	26	184	Participant observation and interviews
Young motherhood in multicultural Finland (Finland)	18	28	196	Participant observation and interviews
Total	113	140	859	

2.2 Introduction to organisations in the cluster

Below some very brief information about each case study is provided. The full report for each case study can be found at: <http://www.promise.manchester.ac.uk/en/ethnographic-case-studies/>

2.2.1 Young Muslim Women: Social engagement of devout young female Muslims, Germany (YMW)

This case consists of data gathered from researchers' engagement with young women who had chosen to wear a headscarf as part of their everyday practice (alongside praying and fasting) of the Islamic faith). All the young women in this study were also actively involved, or wanted to be actively involved, in society. Across the different types of engagement, three objectives can be distinguished: reducing prejudice and promoting social cohesion; improving solidarity, sense of identity and mental well-being among Muslims; and being a role model and promoting the engagement and agency of others.

The interviews took place in three northern -German cities with women from a range of different social backgrounds. However, it should be noted, that, as a group, they are characterised by above-average level of school qualifications. All of them had attained a university-entrance level of qualification or were just about to. The average age was 23.6 years.

2.2.2 Zagreb Pride LGBTIQ NGO, Croatia (ZP)

Zagreb Pride as organisation was founded in 2008. Prior to that, the Zagreb Pride March was had been held every year from 2002. Nowadays it 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. Current activities of Zagreb Pride can be divided into three main types: advocating equality for LGBTIQ persons; education, research and publishing; and acting towards and within the LGBTIQ community. In recent years, in addition to organising Zagreb Pride March, the organisation has undertaken intensive work for the legislative proposal of the Same-Sex Life Partnership Act that was passed in 2014. Moreover, since 2010 a free legal service helping victims of LGBTIQ hate crimes (Pink Megaphone) has existed. Also Zagreb Pride organised a support group for high school students - Queer Teens - which, under social worker supervision, brings together around 5 to 15 young LGBTIQ people.

The organisation is structured with an Assembly as the main body, a steering committee, council, supervisory board and working team. There is no permanent pool of volunteers. However, different types of activities are done by a changing base of volunteers, whose numbers vary from 5 to 35. Generally these volunteers range in age from 15 to 25 years old.

2.2.3 Feminist scene in St. Petersburg, Russia (FEM)

The contemporary St. Petersburg feminist scene is eclectic and incorporates various and often contradictory interests of the participants. Today the main issues of interest for feminist activism are fighting against violence, for sexual liberation, for women's reproductive and labour rights, supporting (or refusing to support) the LGBTQ community, supporting sex workers or fighting against prostitution.

In this case interviews with feminists from a range of groups and organisation were conducted. Most of the interviewees were women aged between 20 and 30. They varied according to their social background; the common characteristic is that all informants identified themselves as feminists. The study involved both key figures of feminist initiatives and less active participants. Moreover, participant observation in a number of feminist initiatives was conducted: festivals, robotics club, feminist meetups, feminist library, film shows, lectures, exhibitions and master classes.

2.2.4 LGBTQ scene in St. Petersburg, Russia (LGBTQ)

This case was focused on different group and organisations of LGBTQ scene of St. Petersburg. These initiatives can be formally registered or not, have different sources of financing and focus on public or/and service activism. Sometimes these differences and some ideological variances (e.g. the status of sexuality, relationship between non-binary and cisgender people) can provoke conflicts on the scene. However, general ideas about common tasks including struggles against discrimination and for the rights of LGBTQ people unite different initiatives.

¹ For further details of the organisation, see: <http://www.zagreb-pride.net/en/about-us/>

During the research, interviews with different generations of activists were collected (3 people from 18 to 20 years, 7 people from 21 to 30 years, 4 people from 31 to 40 years). This cross-generational approach was important for reaching a better understanding of the scene's specific characteristics. Interviews include not only 'active' and public LGBTQ people, but also 'former' activists, and those LGBTQ people who are on the periphery of activism. Moreover, the researcher took part in various festivals, meetings and workshops as a volunteer and an attendee.

2.2.5 Young Gender Activists, Portugal (YAGI)

Data of this case were collected from people with any kind of involvement in gender activism without focusing on members of concrete organisation. It should be noted that, interviews were carried out in several locations, in Porto and in Lisbon. Respondents were recruited, initially, through two organisations that are part of the Portuguese National Policy and Practice Network (NPPN) and through an event that one of these organisations prepared. Some participants are members of these organisations.

Overall, the recruited activists can be divided into three groups by their type of activity. The first group, which is the biggest one, includes 11 people who are members of different organisations. The second one consists of 7 participants in gender initiatives (e.g. feminist festivals, workshops, demonstrations, gender meetings) that are not directly involved with any organisation at the moment of interview. The third group includes two 'independent activists' (a gender zine editor and a feminist clothing brand owner). The age of the interviewees ranged from 21 to 30 years old.

2.2.6 Young motherhood in multicultural Finland, Finland (YMMF)

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. Underage mothers were outside the scope of the study. 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. 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.

The data for the case study consists of interviews with 16 young mothers and two fathers, conducted in the metropolitan region of Helsinki. Ethnographic fieldwork was carried out in maternity and child health services in two cities. It 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.

3. Key findings

3.1 How do young people respond to conflicts they experience and with what outcomes?

In this part we address conflicts which young people face today and analyse how they interpret them, what response strategies they choose, and what the outcomes are. The analysis has revealed seven concepts. 'Homophobia forced me into activism' is a concept showing that when young people are stigmatised and discriminated against, they perceive social engagement as a necessity. The concept of 'visibility as a political project' demonstrates new forms of social engagement. However, social engagement may result in a new wave of stigmatisation and conflict, which is reflected in the concept of 'increased visibility leads to increased conflicts'. The next four concepts show young people's conceptualisation of their experience of social engagement and what they get from participating. First, it is an opportunity to include one's life in a wider historical context, which is demonstrated by the concept of 'laying your own little brick'. Second, 'engaging in other forms of activism' shows that young people who get involved in one area often become active in other areas as well, and when they plan their future, they often look at career paths in non-profit organisations, as shown by the concept 'I see my future in the social sector'. The last concept is 'I at least feel good about myself', and it reflects the ways in which social engagement and inclusion in a community help young people to re-evaluate their personal experiences in a positive way and develop their agency.

3.1.1 'Homophobia forced me into activism'

In a situation where society is not ready to accept the existence of a wide variety of identities and life trajectories, many young people end up being stigmatised and discriminated against. However, in some cases, the negative experience of one's rights being infringed, of not being accepted by others, and of physical and emotional violence proves to be the motivation for engaging in activism, since it is seen as a way to change the surrounding micro and macro environment. In this case, activism may be perceived as a necessity rather than a personal choice, as evident, for example, in Lars' case when LGBTQ activism seemed the only option:

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 said 'Let's change the world!' It was more like 'we will kill you', [so] you have to fight against that. (Lars, ZP, HR)

Both male and female members of movements fighting for gender equality who express feminist views (ZP, YAGI; LGBTQ, FEM) see the patriarchal regime, traditional gender expectations, and unequal distribution of power between men and women in public and private spheres, which is manifested both online and offline, as a solid basis for social engagement. Being faced with this order of things, which they believe is unfair, sometimes leads young people to civic engagement.

Respondent: And I spent my first year in this group just reading and not writing anything. I was afraid; I thought that I was incompetent. Then, oddly enough, I stumbled upon male movements, the patriarchal ones, and I realised that something had to be done – why do we only have one feminist group for the whole VKontakte², what is that all about? We needed to organise some public events, meetings. And then, together with a few girls who also read those creepy BBE groups...

² VKontakte is a popular Russian social media platform.

Interviewer: What's that?

Respondent: '*Bey Babu po Ebalu*' ['Hit a Woman in the F***ing Face'] Yeah, when we saw this, we realised that we needed to create an online community. We then made five or six of them, we were just churning them out because we were terrified of what we saw. (Katya, FEM, RU).

In the case of Muslim girls, the situation is even tenser since wearing the hijab automatically reveals their identity and therefore makes it almost impossible to avoid becoming part of the Islamophobic discourse. Despite the fact that the hijab is only a 'visible reflection of an internal process' (Emine, YMW, DE), it immediately makes those who wear it visible, attracting additional attention, which often takes an aggressive and offensive turn: 'Yes, I have received "compliments" when I was out – I swear. Well, very often it was "Hijab-wearing bitch. Get out! Beat it! Go back to your country!" But I was born here. I am in my country.' (Necla, YMW, DE)

However, in this case, social engagement does not take place under the pressure of negative experience, but rather due to the influence of significant people who lead respondents to social engagement, primarily through their involvement with the mosque, which encourages social participation:

I discovered it through the mosque. I have to admit it. Well, if I had found it out myself and looked up some information, maybe I would have done something different. But since I went to a local mosque, was active in the community and went to classes, I thought, 'Hey, I will do something here.' (Melek, YMW, DE)

The topic of negative personal experience proves to be significant in all the cases in this cluster, except YMMF. In this case study motherhood takes place under stigmatising conditions, but does not lead to activist/social mobilisation. In other cases personal experience of stigmatisation and lack of recognition is a motivation pushing young people towards social engagement. However, in the YMW case, the girls' social engagement stems not only from stigmatisation but also from their involvement with the mosque, which encourages participation in various types of activities within the organisation.

3.1.2 Visibility as a political project

In this cluster, young people's social engagement and their fight against stigmatisation does not take place through formal political action but rather through making their private space publicly visible and turning it into a new political project. Demonstrating one's sexual or gender identity, as well as religious affiliation, is a form of political struggle. Starting as personal and private the decision to wear the hijab or belong to a community, does not remain private. The political nature of personal decisions was evident also in the cases of FEM, ZP, LGBTQ and YAGI. Coming out – the process of an open and voluntary recognition of one's sexual or gender identity – 'is not necessarily only personal, but also a political thing' (Borka, ZP, HR) which can lead, for example, to creating groups for other people.

The process of demonstrating one's belonging to the LGBT community or supporting it in everyday life in the public space is also considered by some activists to be a political action, which is associated with a negative reaction from a significant part of the society.

This is political activism. LGBT rights in Croatia and in the whole of Eastern 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 face. So, there is a lot of work that still needs to be done. (Haz, ZP, HR)

In this regard, some activists disapprove of, and do not understand, those members of the community who try to keep their private lives in the shadows, wanting to distance themselves from politics and activism as much as possible. In their opinion, inaction is unacceptable in situations where inequality is so blatant.

I can't understand them. I don't understand. Everything is just so obvious – you don't need to be active to face homophobia, dislike. I have experienced it myself many times, this negative attitude. [...] say, some everyday things – you can't get away from them, the society will drag you through the mud, one way or another. I don't understand why they swallow these insults. (Katya, LGBTQ, RU)

As for the YMW case, wearing the hijab in the context of the current Islamophobic discourse automatically turns out to be not only a personal practice associated with certain religious traditions but also becomes a political gesture. It automatically makes Muslim girls extremely visible to people around them, who often view the hijab as a symbol of fundamentalism and otherness and take it as a key factor in judging the person wearing it: 'In the eyes of many others, wearing a headscarf in public made them "representatives of the religion"' (Selma, YMW, DE).

Thus, case studies show that young people come to attach a public dimension to their private life and use it as a tool of political struggle. A significant number of young people turn the demonstration of their religious, sexual and gender identity into a new political project. However, it should be noted that in case YMMF - where pregnancy or a child also puts young women in the public space as mothers – informants did not articulate this visibility as something having political connotations.

3.1.3 Increased visibility leads to increased conflicts

Publicly demonstrating one's identity and belonging to a community often leads to a new wave of stigmatisation and discrimination. For this reason, taking such a step, requires young people to have a certain level of courage and willingness to make their views and/or identity visible to others:

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 ... harsh ... 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, YAGI, PT)

Respondents from every case spoke of physical and emotional violence triggered by demonstrations of their identity, attitudes and belonging to a community. Sometimes stigmatisers are people they know (family members, friends, classmates) who do not share their views and experiences.

Respondent: Like... in geography class they started to provoke me and they said to the teacher like 'Should straight people have a parade also?' Like you can't explain to them and I really tried but then it was even worse, so they said they would beat me up because of that t-shirt.

Interviewer: Really? They said that?

Respondent: Yes...

Interviewer: Because of the Pride t-shirt?

Respondent: Yes, because there is a star on it...

(Smilja, ZP, HR)

At the same time, there are other cases of stigmatisation initiated by strangers in the streets, in public transport and other public places. Stigmatisation can take the form of ridicule, deliberate behaviour, threats, insults or comments:

Well, passers-by, for example. I mean, you are standing there, protesting, you are going to a rally, you know, and everyone is asking, 'How much did they pay you to do that? Why are you standing here?' A friend of mine was even told that, like, the State Department was paying her and that she was 'black', but she is just, you know, she is just dark-skinned – people in Spain thought she was a local. And they just said to her, 'You're black, get out of here.' So, she told me about it a while back, and it is, well, unpleasant. (Yulia, FEM, RU)

The YMW case tells a slightly different story in terms of what exactly leads to stigmatisation and discrimination. As mentioned earlier, girls who choose to wear the hijab immediately become visible to others, regardless of their social engagement, and their religious beliefs automatically become apparent to people around them. And, actually, it is not activism but their religious affiliation that triggers physical and verbal abuse, often in connection with the notion that Muslims are all migrants, and therefore they come from disadvantaged backgrounds: '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, YMW, DE)

In the YMMF case young women also cannot avoid the visibility of their new status. In some situations, informants said that they felt a negative attitude toward to them, because of their decision to have children at a young age. For example, Melisa described her experience of feeling judged when visiting the child health centre: 'Somehow like the first couple of times when I went to the child health centre I felt like I was judged for being too young, like many people gave me hard stares' (Melisa, YMMW, FI).

Thus, by becoming visible in the public space, young people are at risk of running into even more conflicts initiated by both strangers and people from their immediate environment.

3.1.4 'Laying your own little brick'

Despite the fact that more and more young people choose not to participate in direct political action (Ndukwe, 2013; Albacete, 2014), this concept shows that the feeling of having a chance to influence existing social institutions remains extremely important and is sometimes realised through activism. Participation – even just being together 'working on banners' (Lara, ZP, HR) - can make young people realise their own value and see themselves not just as autonomous individuals living their lives but also as people included in current historical processes and who can influence events.

At the same time, activists note that big changes do not usually occur through radical intervention and rapid fundamental changes, but rather through help given to a specific person here and now: '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, YMW, DE)

In this context, what the respondents believe to be particularly significant are the transformations that they see in everyday life, which are expressed through changes in the way individual people think, speak and behave. These transformations prove to activists that their actions do have an impact, and such small changes eventually lead to creating a new society: ‘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, YAGI, PT).

In addition, some activists mention the need to develop various strategies to inform a wider audience about what they do (for example, through mass media coverage) and thereby increase the effect of their actions. Thus, in the LGBTQ case, respondents say that the effectiveness of an event is often measured by its coverage, and, therefore, attracting media outlets becomes a major step in achieving their goals:

We have now come to a conclusion that we really need to give some classes or seminars, either online or offline, to cover various activism-related topics because this form is what we believe in, after all. [...] in terms of getting media coverage, given that there is no access to TV channels, one of the few ways to get into the media is through organising events. Therefore, when we evaluate the effectiveness of an event, of course, we take a look at the number of media outlets, at media coverage. Because there may be several outlets, well, a large coverage, and so we look at the way they convey the message. And, thank God, they have been doing it more or less correctly and satisfactorily lately. (Pasha, LGBTQ, RU)

It should be noted, however, that despite their desire to change the world, young people tend to have a negative view of the immediate future, noting that their generation may not be able to see the effect of their actions. Nevertheless, this view does not cancel out the need to contribute to future change. These fears are voiced particularly often in the Russian cases (FEM, LGBTQ), which may be associated with the conservative turn observed in Russia and therefore a tougher stance on gender and sexual norms (Temkina and Zdravomyslova, 2014; Willems, 2014):

[...] all our generation can do, it seems to me, is just... just lay our own little brick on top of this wall where something will be built one day: a room, a floor – or maybe some trees will grow there, I don’t know. We will not live to see anything good; my forecast is most pessimistic. (Darya, FEM, RU)

Nevertheless, it should be noted that not everyone believes that more people should be recruited into their movements. Some activists think that a movement's priority should be working for the community. However, in both Russian cases, it is deemed important to contribute to a common cause, which proves to be significant for other people as well.

In contrast, while the birth of a child for young women in the Finnish case (YMMW) is an incredibly important event, it is not one they imbue with political significance. Talking about the present and future experience of motherhood, informants focused not on the wider social and political context but their own life trajectories and feelings:

Well I do hope we have like a nice everyday life as a family, like everyone felt that life is nice even though... Or like it doesn’t have to be super great all the time, but like that everyone would be content with the situation. (Elina, YMMW, FI)

3.1.5 Engaging in other forms of activism

The analysis of the case studies shows that the majority of the respondents are involved in several types of volunteer work simultaneously. As for the four cases that deal with gender and sexuality (FEM, LGBT, ZP, YAGI), these are mostly environmental, anticapitalist and democratic initiatives as well as various movements fighting for gender equality and the rights of LGBTIQ people.

Well, we are generally oriented towards queer people as well; we have a transrepresented community, and, well... we also cooperate with LGBT. For instance, when there was a LGBT festival, we also reposted [information about it] and advertised their events. Well, there is a vegetarian movement as well. (Alyona, FEM, RU)

I counted promo materials and did some basic tasks, did some volunteering, until I started participating in the forum, worked in the organisation, was part of a living library - I was one of the books. I was also on a panel about transphobia and homophobia in the education system. (Lars, ZP, HR)

As for Muslim girls (YMW), their volunteer work usually involves various religious organisations or activities aimed at helping migrants and refugees. Despite the fact that, as a rule, they do not have migrant experience themselves, the feeling of belonging to the culture and traditions of their parents in the context of living in Germany makes integration into another community a relevant topic for them. For example, one of the respondents is a member of an association offering language courses for refugee children, and another one, in addition to participating in two Islamic organisations, also helps homeless people and migrants.

Pregnancy and child care require a lot of time, emotional and physical resources. Because of that in the case of YMMW, the young women did not have opportunities to be actively involved in different initiatives, studies or work:

And then I had no idea that I could get pregnant. Or we weren't trying or anything. But then, when I got my head wrapped around the fact that 'okay, I'm not going to university, I'm going to stay home instead and have another one', then it went alright after all. (Tiia, YMMF, FI)

Thus, young people's social engagement often has several dimensions and is not limited to just one agenda. Each of the initiatives they take part in allows them to manifest their agency in different ways – helping different population groups and influencing the existing order in various areas.

3.1.6 'I see my future in the social sector'

When young people belong to groups that are not considered legitimate in their cultural space, they often find that they are denied access to social mobility. In this context, they tend to try to professionalise their activist capital in order to achieve a higher social and economic status in the future. The skills, experience and contacts they acquire can subsequently help them, for example, to move on from being a volunteer to being employed by an organisation.

Interviewer: With Sw... Sweden?

Respondent: Sweden – yes, I went on a trip for [in English] Gender ... something, to Sweden.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: I met Irina D. there; she is so cool. Supercool. So... And, like, yeah, it's

great and all. And I would continue doing it, I don't know, like, communicating with potential sponsors and so on, but it ... it sure takes up a lot of energy.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: I mean, if I didn't have to do anything else, I could lead [Initiative No. 11] to an unprecedented success like ... [I could do] anything!

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: Because I know what we can do about it, in general. For example, this year I want a book. And I shall have a book!

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: So. Then I want some silly T-shirts – everyone loves T-shirts, dammit! And laptop stickers with pink unicorns, yeah.

(Ksusha, FEM, RU)

We should also note that some Russian activists (FEM, LGBTQ) expect to move abroad in the future, where, they believe, they will be able to continue their activities in a friendlier environment:

Not in Russia. I guess, I see my future doing a Master's programme abroad if I manage to enrol for free. I see my future in the social sector – human rights or something like that. And maybe ... maybe someday in politics, if I find that I am mentally prepared and mature enough, because in reality politics not only requires enormous moral resources but it is also, to a great extent, an art of surviving and leading a normal life surrounded by tough competition, gossip and dirt – this is how I see it. (Katya, FEM, RU)

In addition, some respondents from the FEM, ZP, YAGI and LGBTQ case studies say that in the future they would like to continue their work as experts in gender studies. On the one hand, choosing this career path would allow them to stay within their domain of interest, and on the other, it would ensure professional fulfilment:

One of my biggest dreams is to be a college professor and to teach gender studies to young generations and to teach them tolerance, to teach them to go out into the world not just with an open mind to other cultures but to every individual and to accept others how they are. So they can do ethnographies based on that. (Jo, ZP, HR)

As for young Muslim girls, when the respondents speak about their future, they often mention a desire to work in the social sector – to become a doctor, a teacher or a social worker:

And since I started studying I realised I also want to do a Masters. Before I only wanted to do a Bachelors. But now I really want to do a Masters. I want to work in the social field and have a career there. My favourite - well I am doing my work experience now in Kindergarten Management, let's see if I like that. (Banu, YMW, DE)

Some informants in the YMMF case also talk about their future education and career plan. However, they focused on the importance of having a job as such rather than working in a specific field. One of the reasons for that is that they are conscious of their financial responsibilities: 'I should find some work, that's also important for the child' (Jamila, YMMF, FI).

It is therefore evident that some young people hope that their activist experience, along with certain skills, competencies and social capital they acquire in the course of their activities, will help them in their professional life. They might become experts in their field or use the skills and competencies acquired in their future work in the social sector.

3.1.7 'I at least feel good about myself'

Fighting back against stigma is a manifestation of one's agency. Discrimination and stigmatisation often have a negative effect on people's self-perception, forcing them to feel 'different', 'sick', 'strange', etc. In this context, social engagement (activism) proves to be a practice that helps young people to construct a more positive self-image and to increase self-esteem and self-confidence despite all the difficulties and conflicts discussed above through meeting people with similar experience, attitudes and values. Young people involved in LGBT activism in Portugal, Croatia and Russia mention that being part of the community has helped them to accept their gender and/or sexual identity: 'I joined a dating page and met other people and talked to them so coming to that community, meeting them, talking to other LGBT people really helped me to accept myself..' (Jo, ZP, HR).

An important part of the process of accepting oneself is the possibility of 'having a name', identifying with a certain group, without complying with society's heteronormative standards.

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, YAGI, PT)

Moreover, activism allows young people to feel their autonomy and independence, and to become confident about their rights (LGBTQ, FEM, YAGI, YMW). Activism proves to be the space where young people have an opportunity to take initiative, follow their wishes and interests, and influence other people, while, for example, their families or schools continue to be institutions where young people's ability to act is limited, and they are denied the right to autonomy, which is discussed in more detail in the next section.

I still have my tradition, but I am also independent. I do not want to depend on someone, depend on a man. I do education, and by expressing this opinion, when I tutor kids, many of them say, 'Later I will get married and not work'. When I work with these people, I guide them, to think a bit differently. So the children change their mindset a bit. (Teslime, YMW, DE)

In addition, the acquired confidence in their legitimacy and in the correctness of their own actions and interpretations of what is going on around them encourages activists to share their experience and knowledge with others, thereby initiating the manifestation of the agency of people around them, whose reaction proves to be an important motivation for activists to continue their work (FEM, YAGI, YMW):

I at least feel good about myself and I feel that ... it's a point, it's a good factor because this ... we live on the basis of our self-esteem, we live on the basis of the things that happen around us, but from the moment when I'm fine with myself, it's good because I can share it with others, it's good because I can see things differently, I feel like I'm acting well, I'm not against anything and now... (Florabela, YAGI, PT)

Well, in fact, lately, I have been using just one measure of effectiveness – how effective it is for me. I mean, for a long time I was feeling depressed and hopeless, and now I lead a normal life. And some people like it too. It seems to me that, first of all, effectiveness should be meant for ... well, it should be for myself. And when you do

something really cool, and other people see it, it is kind of contagious. And everyone is, like, happy. (Vika, FEM, RU).

In the YMMF case, informants rather talk not about accepting their identity and re-evaluating their experience, but about the joy of achieving the long-desired status of motherhood, of having chosen the right moment to have this child. In this context, the key point was not joining the community, but the new status associated with parenthood.

Interviewer: How young were you when you became a mother?

Respondent: 18.

Interviewer: 18. Did you think then that you were young or was it an ideal age?

Respondent: Yeah quite. Ideal time.

(Hodan, YMMF, FI)

We can therefore conclude that young people view the social engagement and their activities not only as a way to influence the existing social order but also as an activity that promotes a more positive attitude towards oneself, fosters confidence in one's rights (including situations where one has to stand up for them) and creates a sense of autonomy.

3.2 What enables and what inhibits the social involvement of young people?

This question addresses both what helps and what hinders young peoples' social involvement. Focusing on the respondents' personal experience of stigmatisation and on their relationships with friends, family and other significant people, we identify five concepts that can help answer these questions. The first concept, 'family', reveals how relationships with relatives affect young people's opportunities for social engagement. The concept of 'important/powerful adults at school' reflects the influence of a wider circle of adults, primarily representatives of educational institutions. 'We do not know that there are spheres of action we can get involved' is a concept that demonstrates difficulties encountered while looking for an organisation, movement or community one can join. 'And I was very disappointed, 'cause I did not imagine it like that' reflects difficulties young people face in the course of their activities. The last concept, 'someone who shares the same or similar experience', reflects the importance of meeting those with whom one can share experiences, feelings and emotions.

3.2.1 Family

Family is an important part of young people's lives. It is a space where multiple systems of relationships - of care, control, support, hierarchy, etc. - exist simultaneously, often contradict each other, and largely determine the lives of its members. Among other things, one's parental family has a significant impact on young people's activism, being both a motivator and a barrier for their social engagement.

In some cases, one's family can serve as a motivation and/or a resource for social engagement. For example, when there are shared family values and members of the older generation have some activist experience, young people might see their family members as an example for building their own activist biography (FEM, YAGI)

For me, what has awakened me ... because, I usually say it, and it's true, I'm a privileged person, I come from a privileged family, and I come from a family where feminism exists since my great-great-grandmother. (Manuela, YAGI, PT)

And even in cases where the older generation has different life experience, they can still have a positive effect on young people's social involvement if they show support, approval and understanding of the importance of young people's activities. For instance, Necla says that her family gives her wholehearted support in her activities and illustrates this statement with her father's reaction to a poetry performance: 'My family supports me fully in it. They were really proud of me, I saw that in my dad's face, he nearly cried and under my Facebook post [of my poetry performance] he wrote: "I am so proud of you."' (Necla YMW, DE)

However, in some cases, young people's families may push them towards social engagement not only through lending support and providing role models but also by setting an example of what should not be done. For instance, a patriarchal regime in one's family may contribute to the development of such values as freedom and equality through the denial of what is happening at home:

I think the fact that my parents are quite authoritarian has influenced me a lot – I mean, my father is really authoritarian, and my mother has always obeyed him. I didn't like to see such a relationship at all... (Vika, FEM, RU).

Support of the family was also important for young mothers (YMMF). Parents, partner and other relatives can provide material help, give advice or spend time with the baby to give a new mother the opportunity to relax. Moreover, experience of relationships in the childhood family sometimes serves as the basis for building one's own parenting strategies:

[...] more or less I'll do things the same way as my parents, but like I for real had parents like they're from the army or something, they kept a really really strict line. So I do, I mean I wouldn't, I will probably be strict, but I'd still like to be sort of relaxed. (Melisa, YMMF, FI)

However, one's family may also become a barrier on the way to social engagement rather than a resource. Such situations are mentioned by respondents from every case study in this cluster, and they tend to happen when, for one reason or another, parents or other senior family members consider activism to be an inappropriate activity for their child. Russian respondents say that the desire to protect young people from social engagement stems from the parents' idea of activism as a dangerous endeavour associated with various risks (for example, police custody or physical abuse from other people). Other reasons for such a perception of activism are incomplete information on what it is exactly as well as its image in the media:

Let's say I don't know how much they know, or, to be more precise, how much they understand from what I tell them. But if we take the older generation – say, my mum or my aunt, they sure do imagine god knows what ... and they sometimes overreact because, like, it's a question of safety. And they worry a lot and say, 'Don't take part in anything, keep your head down.' [laughs] (Katya, LGBTQ, RU)

In some other cases, parental disapproval of activism does not come from safety concerns but is a value-related conflict. Sometimes this conflict is triggered by the parents' rejection of their child's gender and/or sexual identity, which is reported by respondents in the YAGI, ZP, LGBTQ and FEM case studies: 'But there, I think it is because she [mother] does not accept that I am gay.' (Luciano, YAGI, PT) Other respondents mention different views on such issues as gender roles, relationships between parents and children or religious practices:

We argued really a lot. My mum did not know this, she grew up in Turkey [...] her dad was very conservative. [...] in the villages women have this typical role, a bit like a servant. A bit inferior. That's how she grew up. She did not know these freedoms. She

did not know that you talk and argue. And because she did not know it and never learnt it, [...] it was an extreme challenge for her. [...] Since I always got into discussions and arguments with her and said, 'I don't understand – why am I not allowed to do this? I want it!' And so we had many many arguments. (Selma, YMW, DE)

Parental disapproval of youth activism produces not only conflicts but also various attempts to protect young people from joining activist groups through direct prohibitions or indirect restrictions. For example, Ruby says that her parents used to take her to the seaside every summer during the Pride March because they did not want her to participate in it: '...This year they didn't take me there [to the coastal part of Croatia], but I couldn't be on the March [...] So they let me stay in Zagreb this time, but they said a few times "You better not go! If I find out you went, it won't be good!"' (Ruby, ZP, HR)

In their attempts to reduce the number of potential conflicts and/or to shield the space of activism from senior family members' control, young people sometimes just do not tell their parents about their activities or give them as little information as possible:

I don't talk so much about [my social engagement]. My parents – well they are neither positive nor negative. They just want me to perform well in university. So, on top of that, that's ok. But I don't tell them how hard it is, otherwise they would say, maybe better don't do it. (Seda, YMW, DE)

We can therefore draw a conclusion that one's family may influence social engagement in two different ways. On the one hand, a young person's family may encourage participation in activism either through providing role models and having the same values or by being a negative model – that is, showing young people what should not be done and thus giving them a platform on which to build their activities. However, one's family can also be a hindrance to social inclusion in cases where relatives do not approve of young people's activities, sometimes initiating verbal conflicts or resorting to various ways of limiting their participation opportunities.

3.2.2 Important/powerful adults at school

This concept provides insight into the ways powerful adults in educational institutions affect young people's social engagement. School takes up a considerable amount of time in young people's everyday lives and involves a lot of interaction with other students, teachers and other school employees.

In the YAGI, ZP and YMW cases, respondents repeatedly mention stigma and discrimination coming from teachers. Such conflicts tend to occur through teachers' public statements rather than face to face, so all the other students and/or teachers become its participants:

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, ZP, HR)

Stigmatisation is expressed not only in disapproval and marginalisation of the respondents' experience, but also in direct, offensive statements: '[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, YMW, DE).

Nevertheless, school teachers can also have a positive impact on young people's social engagement. In some cases, for instance, they initiate discussion of issues that concern young people, provide them with much needed information and inspire them by referring to various historical figures:

I remember at school, there was an English teacher, with whom we talked about the suffragettes in England. [...] She would ask questions and if, I remember right, I think that was it, I think it was at that time that there were women who burned their bras. I remember perfectly her asking me if anyone here was also burning [their bra] and I think at the time I said yes (laughs) [...] and so there we talked a little bit. (Rosário, YAGI, PT)

In addition, other school staff, usually psychologists and social workers, often provides psychological and emotional support, which becomes especially significant in cases where young people are unable or unwilling to discuss certain issues with friends and relatives. For example, Lara says that, unlike her parents, her psychology teacher became a person with whom she could share anything: '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, ZP, HR).

Therefore, each of the three cases show that when it comes to social engagement, school teachers' opinions, actions and attitudes can sometimes be a barrier and sometimes a resource. As for the YMMF case and Russian cases (FEM, LGBTQ), the concept of 'important/powerful adults at school' is not mentioned at all. This may be due to the fact that Finnish young women became mothers after finishing school while informants from the Russian cases are older than informants from YMW, ZP and YAGI, and school is no longer a part of their everyday life. Moreover, discussing gender and sexuality is virtually impossible in schools under current Russian legislation³, so Russian activists, of whatever age, would be unlikely to have that experience.

The analysis shows that although the subject of the influence of adults at schools is not brought up in the Russian and Finnish case studies, it is extremely important for YMW, ZP and YAGI respondents. In each of these cases, there are different stories about relationships with adults. On the one hand, adults may provide information and promote public recognition, while on the other, they may act as stigmatisers. It is particularly important to note that roles played by adults are often tied to their positions – as a rule, but not always, support comes from psychologists and social workers rather than from teachers.

3.2.3 'We don't know there are spheres of action we can get involved in'

In addition to external barriers that limit the social engagement of young people, many of the respondents also note that the field of activism itself is extremely closed, and although there are abundant resources and information circulating inside it, gaining access in the first place can be difficult. For example, respondents from YMW and YAGI say that once you become part of any initiative, a multitude of other projects immediately appear in front of you. Finding your first project, however, is extremely difficult, for various reasons. For example, Guilhermina in her interview attributes the lack of information to the fact that there is a stereotype about young

³ At the moment, there are two laws in Russia that strongly limit discussion issues of gender and sexuality and completely prohibit discussion of non-heterosexuality with minor children. First law is the Federal Law "On the Protection of Children from Information Harmful to their Health and Development" (29.12.2010 N 436-ФЗ). The second is Article 6.21 by Code of Administrative Offences most known as the so-called 'Gay propaganda law'. This law prohibits informing minors about 'non-traditional sexual relations' and their equality with 'traditional' ones.

people being disinterested, which is why they are not even invited to participate:

I think what's missing, which was also what I felt, is that we don't know there are spheres of action we can get involved in. For example, I didn't know in high school, or, ok, maybe it was also lack of interest, but I did not know because they did not give me information. I could, I don't know, I could participate, I guess, I could be a member of a political party or a volunteer. I think it's that idea that young people are not interested, so we will not give them this information. And I think that those who do not participate, I believe, it's due to lack of information, they do not know that it exists or that they can participate. (Guilhermina, YAGI, PT)

In addition, it is worth noting that it may be not only the lack of information that prevents engagement, but also the lack of projects and organisations themselves in small towns. As a result, it is only after moving to a larger city that young people get an opportunity for social involvement, as discussed in the ZP, FEM and LGBTQ cases.

About my friends it was okay, but with 18, I had that cut -[town] was too small. And something starter in me, like I would like to do something, I have some ideas, which I didn't know enough then, but I came in Zagreb and I knew there is something more for me, because everything is centralized in Zagreb in one city and there is more people, more opportunities, more ideas, more of everything. (Borka, ZP, HR)

But there might be difficulties ahead even when the first project is found. Not every organisation has a working structure for the admission and integration of new members. This problem is mentioned and discussed from different viewpoints in various case studies. For instance, Guilhermina (YAGI) says that the process of joining an organisation turned out to be extremely long and complicated, and Anya (FEM) says on behalf of her organisation that their mechanisms for getting people involved work rather poorly.

It took a lot of time to get involved [name of organisation for human rights] because I remember it was December of my last year and I had sent an e-mail to [name of organisation for human rights], national headquarters to ask which group I should be part of, and then it took three months or so, around that, by which time it had opened the cell in my city. So now I'm going to be a part of that but during those four months I never got a response and at one point the only answer I got was in [name of city in Northern Portugal]. And that left me a bit unmotivated. (Guilhermina, YAGI, PT)

Look, it depends on what you want to take part in. We have a certain kind of a plan approved by [name of a foundation], and it includes the things that we are supposed to organise – like, a festival, a seminar and a number of other events. All the rest – like, lectures that we organise or some shows – it's all sort of our initiative. If ... We are not very well-organised; I don't really know how to work with volunteers. Like, if there is a person who wants – I don't know – to develop some area or to organise rallies, then we don't really have a mechanism for engaging them. (Anya, FEM, RU)

We should also mention personal and psychological discomfort. It is often intimidating and uncomfortable for young people to join a community where everyone knows each other, and they are the only new ones. Reyhan mentions this when she talks about her experience of social engagement:

I would say there are many projects you just don't know about. But when you get informed, you find out that there is a lot and you just have to have the courage to try something new. For example with the [Islam conference], I thought, 'Oh no, I don't

know anyone. How will that go?’ but you meet so many new people. And because they are people with the same interests as you, who also want to get involved, you often make new friends. (Reyhan, YMW, DE)

This concept demonstrates that social involvement can be a rather complicated process, particularly due to the lack of initiatives in small towns, the lack of information about movements one can join and poor mechanisms for accepting and engaging new members.

3.2.4 ‘And I was very disappointed, ‘cause I did not imagine it like that’

Even when they are already involved in activism, young people often continue to face various difficulties that can negatively affect their motivation, self-perception and evaluation of their own effectiveness. The idea of activism that young people have before they join a movement or an organisation may differ from the reality in various aspects. For example, sometimes there are conflicts that arise within an organisation, which leads to disappointment. Such situations are discussed in more detail in the next section. In other cases, participants find themselves in situations where their understanding of what should be done and what the main goals are does not coincide with the beliefs on which the activist community is based. This can be illustrated by Lars’ belief that the LGBTIQ movement in Croatia today needs to shift its focus:

Well, I think that the weak point of activism in Croatia until now was that it was focused on marriage equality, on kids, on adopting, life partnership, keeping certain rights, but no one was focused on the youngest in the community and the question that should be the priority now, for example, which is intersexuality and transgender people and those sorts of things. (Lars, ZP, HR)

In addition, young activists may encounter a number of difficulties outside the organisation. In the cases of FEM, YMW and YAGI, respondents report a lack of a positive reaction from the society, criticism and a lack of understanding of their activities. This, in turn, may have an adverse effect on young people’s assessment of their effectiveness, create a feeling of meaninglessness and uselessness of their activities, and, as a result, turn into emotional burnout:

And then we gave them a rose. And the people were like – ‘don’t look, just walk on. We don’t wanna know.’ [...] And you met many ignorant people, before you manage to give your first rose. [laughs] And then only because people thought, ‘well, roses are nice’. That reduces your motivation of course. And I was very disappointed, ‘cause I did not imagine it like that. (Melek, YMW, DE)

In some cases, bureaucracy becomes a barrier, and when trying to organise something young people need to fill in endless forms and acquire permits instead of actually organising the event. Such situations require a large amount of resources, leaving young people feeling powerless. Francisca (YAGI) says the following about this:

I had the case of the organisation of the feminist festival, I sought the service of [City Hall name of a city in Portugal], the Youth Service, right? In support of youth, it was very complicated, a lot of bureaucracies, it took a long time to give an answer, whatever it was, although people want to help, have a will, have a political agenda and are very committed to it. This is frustrating because you, as a young person, still have that thing of wanting to change the world, right? And you’re going to get hit from everywhere, whether it’s a person who does not give you permission, whether it’s the bureaucracy that you have to satisfy. (Francisca, YAGI, PT)

It is also important to note difficulties mentioned in both Russian cases (FEM, LGBTQ) relating to the fear of punitive measures and threats from law enforcement agencies. Tough regulations, the red tape involved in getting a permission to hold a rally and crackdowns on participants of unauthorized rallies force some young people to give up activism:

Respondent: It is all very sad. Everything is ebbing away.

Interviewer: And why is that?

Respondent: A closed environment, crackdowns.

Interviewer: You mean, they stop participating? People are scared?

Respondent: People are scared. (Artem, LGBTQ, RU)

Despite the conflicts and difficulties that young women face during their motherhood, none of them expressed regret about the decision to become a mother, accepting these difficulties as an integral part of the new status. However, in one case, Emilia was not sure about her decision:

Interviewer: Did you consider by the way, if you don't mind me asking...

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Did you consider not keeping it?

Respondent: Yes, and I still do hesitate even now every now and then, like it's, I think it's pretty terrible that still at this point... Because it's really... Because it's really too late now... And of course there's also other options, but I don't think I would have it in me... But I do feel even now every now and then that I'm not sure whether this was such a smart idea. (Emilia, YMMF, FI)

It is evident that even when young people are already involved in activism, they still often face various situations that negatively affect their social engagement experience. Some of them are related to processes inside the organisation, while others are part of a wider context: the bureaucracy in administrative institutions, crackdowns, and a lack of a positive reaction from society.

3.2.5 'Someone who shares the same or similar experience'

The concepts discussed above show that families and educational institutions often become spaces where young people are stigmatised and constrained in their ability to take a proactive stance. In this context, communication with their peers with similar experience and values becomes particularly important for a number of reasons, despite all the difficulties that may arise within the community. First, this communication often becomes a turning point in constructing one's own identity and a sense of the significance of one's own experiences, as mentioned by the LGBTQ, ZP and YAGI respondents:

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, ZP, HR)

Young mothers and Muslim girls say that sometimes help in solving some problematic situations and emotional support can only be provided by people from the community, as others may simply not have the relevant experience, which is unique and can only be understood by people with the same identity. Therefore, only members of their networks can understand what kind of support is required and provide it: '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, YMW, DE).

For young mothers an important way of keeping involved in the community is through the Internet. Special chats and forums create an opportunity to communicate with other women with the same experience, without having to arrange a physical meeting: 'Yeah I joined all the possible Facebook groups, all the groups for those who are having their babies in May, so I could meet people who are in the same situation.' (Anna, YMMF, FI).

Activists also say that the community can provide not only psychological support but, among other things, also help to find work and accommodation. It is important to note that this can be done either by the organisation itself or with the use of the social capital accumulated in the community.

As a matter of fact, they can always go to the crisis centre. I have never been in such a situation myself, but I know that they usually help you for a while. For example, they can provide you shelter, but not forever – they are quite crowded. I guess, they can help with getting a job, but from what I've heard, it is not always the case. So ... Well, probably, if it's for the short haul, then you can go to the crisis centre. In another case ... Try to organise something yourself. Find some girl in a similar situation, rent an apartment together, find a job. (Alyona, FEM, RU)

This concept demonstrates that being part of a community allows young people to accept their identity when they cross paths with people who have similar life experience, and to increase their social capital, which gives them an opportunity both to get emotional support and to obtain necessary information, assistance in looking for a job, a place to live, etc.

3.3 How do young people experience (understand, imagine and shape) their involvement in (activist) communities and networks?

This last section discusses concepts that address the issue of young people's involvement in (activist) communities and networks. We identify five concepts, each describing one aspect of young people's conceptualisation of the events in their community and their feelings about them. 'A base where I learnt everything I didn't learn in school' is a concept that reflects ways of acquiring various skills and competencies in the process of social engagement and activism. 'It's great to see young people asking me to help them' shows the importance of feedback, particularly that from one's peer-group. The concept 'in the seminar [...] we could speak openly about discrimination' reveals how young people conceptualise the space of their community and their emotional experience of becoming a part of it. The other two concepts are related to conflicts within the respondents' communities: 'we're right, and you're the outsiders' and 'a generational gap between activists'.

3.3.1 'A base where I learnt everything I didn't learn in school'

Activism both requires and contributes to an ongoing acquisition of various practical skills and theoretical knowledge. Participants from all case studies of the cluster say that their involvement gives them access to new information and experience, which facilitates their self-development in various fields. For instance, young people say that they gain knowledge, which, for some reason, they did not get while studying at educational institutions:

... 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, ZP, HR)

The longer a person stays in an activist community, the more knowledge and experience they gain and the wider their range of opportunities in a relevant area becomes. Information (both theoretical and practical) does not only have a positive effect on young people's efficiency but also allows them to choose from a wider range of actions. Diverse experience contributes to the involvement with more initiatives, and a focus on a given area leads to reaching a higher status and helps activists become experts:

I think, more in terms of getting more involved and doing more things... from the moment I started, I started to pay more attention to workshops, initiatives, to everything that was extracurricular, in quotes. (Elisabete, YAGI, PT)

At the same time, we can see an inverse relationship as well: the more someone is involved in activism, the more skills and knowledge they strive to acquire. They feel the need to have different competencies, to be effective and to feel comfortable in different groups:

And during my activism I happened to become part of different groups. [...] Just a ton of circles, which together create a big field for me to work with. And in order for my friends to feel comfortable communicating with each other despite some kind of cultural gap – a huge one – I began to study facilitation, so that no one would start a fight. (Vika, FEM, RU)

Moreover, just being part of the activist field can be enough of a reason for young people to find themselves in situations where they acquire skills and knowledge that are not directly related to their activities. These situations can take various forms: meetings with different people, during or in preparation for which activists learn certain information; feeling the need to acquire some social skills to perform one's own tasks more efficiently; or unforeseen circumstances that lead to obtaining new experiences, which would not be acquired otherwise.

... and I came to some kind of a feminist gathering organised by Lena and Dasha, and they were like, 'Yulia, do you want to be in a video? We are making a video here.' And I said, 'Oh, I probably do.' Well, long story short, it was just some kind of ... well, apparently, deep down I really wanted something because I, um, I am very indecisive when it comes to things like that. (Yulia, FEM, RU)

It is also important to note that activism lets young people accumulate social and cultural capital, which they can convert into social and economic success later on in their lives. They often emphasise the fact that they can use their competencies outside the activist field, as their experience may give them opportunities for professional development in other areas:

It was published and became the most popular article in the history of the portal and I was offered to write, twice a month, like Friday or Wednesday, to publish my articles in which I would share my experiences, but which were connected to some topic or

stereotypes about lesbians. And that is when it started - within a three month period, everyone was reading my articles, not only in the community but straight people and it was more than 10 000 views of every article, every 2 weeks. (Leia, ZP, HR)

There are also various social skills that help young people in everyday life – for example, self-confidence or extracting oneself from difficult situations. Such skills develop gradually through constant practice and may eventually allow young people to take on tasks that they would not have attempted before.

[I could use in my job the experience] to stand in front of a group and tell them what to do. Leading a group. I have trained the kids on my own [...] That gave me self-confidence for my job. If I went to a job interview now I would think: 'what could one person possibly do to me, when I am able to handle 20 kids?' (Selma, YMW, DE)

In the YMMF case informants sometimes mention that their new parental status requires a lot of new knowledge and skills, which leads to a feeling of tiredness. Support groups, the Internet, friends or relatives who have children in these cases may be necessary sources of information and support:

But then again I have often asked advice from my friend who has a (child) who's three months older, because they're always a bit ahead, so they've had time to go through these things. Then I'm always like 'hey, what, what and this and that', like 'how should I do this and that'. So I've gotten a lot of info from them too. (Salla, YMMF, FI)

Expanding the scope of one's theoretical and practical experience is an important aspect of social engagement and activities. Young people's competencies may refer to both specialised knowledge, allowing them to become experts within their communities, and various social skills that can be useful in a number of areas (public speaking, information retrieval, self-control, etc.). By increasing their social and cultural capital, young people get an opportunity to be more effective both within the community and outside of it.

3.3.2 'It's great to see young people asking me to help them'

Changes in the social order do not usually happen quickly, and activists rarely see the effect of their activities in the short term, which leads to an impression that their actions are meaningless and useless. In this regard, a reaction from people with whom activists work becomes especially important. Respondents from the ZP and YAGI case studies note that feedback shows them that their effort is not wasted and has value for at least some part of society. It is worth noting that they mostly work with young people because, for a number of reasons, adults are more likely to stand in the way of young people's social engagement than respond to potential changes, which is discussed in more detail in the previous sections.

...at the end you are really happy when someone from 10th village, and 24th district, of 5th village say 'It really meant a lot to me, I heard what is happening, I watched a movie, read an interview, and I came' like, anything... that one person that has zero support where she is, and she says 'thank you', she got something from what you are doing, somehow it got through to her and that is it. (Borka, ZP, HR)

Another significant factor is the awareness that their experience is also important, as it can be passed on to other people and used for support or as an incentive for social engagement. It means that negative personal experience can be transformed into valuable and socially significant information:

I think, that's why I continue to do it every day, I feel a difference in some aspects and it's great to see young people asking me to help them and to help them do something or [show them] how they can solve this problem. I think I can help myself. (Marília, YAGI, PT)

In the case of YMW, the opportunity to be a role model for other Muslim girls also proves to be an important aspect of young women's activities. YMW respondents seek to broadcast a new image of a modern Muslim woman: active, independent but at the same time committed to Islamic traditions. By becoming doctors, going in for sports and taking leading positions in the social sector, young Muslim girls try to actively share their experiences, using social networks and other media, in order to fight stereotypes associated with Islam as a religion where women occupy a passive and inferior position: '[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, YMW, DE)

The Russian case studies (FEM, LGBTQ) also demonstrate that working with the community is a very important area of activism, and some activists believe that it is the only area that actually matters. In many ways, this position can be explained by the current Russian political context, where civil society is repressed, and its ability to influence the existing order of things is severely restricted.

If the goal is to change Russian society or the Russian authorities, then sure, it is absolutely ineffective. But if the goal is to form a circle of people around you with whom you will, well, share the same agenda and live in a comfortable – well, a more comfortable – environment and fight for your own rights in your own kitchen and ... I guess, avoid people who, um ... [if you want to] feel like you have the right to call an asshole an asshole and to fight for your rights in the small space of your personal life – [in this case] it is super effective. (Alyona, FEM, RU)

The importance of working with the community is a topic that is mentioned in all the case studies of this cluster, except the YMMF case for which this concept is not relevant. First, it provides an opportunity to receive positive feedback, which serves as a motivation to continue working and as an indicator of the effectiveness of one's current activities. Second, in the YMW case it proves to be important in the context of the respondents' desire to become role models for other Muslim girls in order to develop their agency and to create and broadcast a new image of a Muslim women to German society. Third, work for the community is found to be especially significant for Russian activists as, according to some of them, it is the only activity that can be effective in today's Russia, given that major structural changes are impossible to make.

3.3.3 A generational gap between activists

Being part of a community is, however, associated with a number of conflicts and difficulties. One of them is a gap, which is often seen between the older and the younger generations of activists and organisations' employees. For example, in the case of YMW, mosque authorities come into conflict with active Muslim girls, who founded their own Islamic youth group, because they consider the girls' position unacceptable. According to the respondents, some people have a negative view of their activities, thinking that they contradict Sharia norms:

There are people who are really against [our association], because they do not want a new stream of young people to develop, who have big plans and want to achieve something big. That's how I remember it. We have some opponents in some of the organisations. They say, 'no, what you are doing it haram.' Which I do not understand.

What we do- well it supports the principles of Islam, staying independent. We have opponents. (Morsal, YMW, DE)

In the ZP case, young activists note that, although they treat older activists with respect, as pioneers with a lot of experience, there is an impenetrable wall between them and those who have recently joined the movement. Young people say that long-time members of the organisation hardly notice them, do not reply to their letters, do not listen to them and basically act as if the organisation is theirs, while actually performing only monitoring functions. Therefore, the attempts of young people to establish contact and reach an agreement or at least start a discussion about some issues remain unheard and unnoticed.

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 are all kids who are replaceable and we will replace you!' And so they did. (Mika, ZP, HR)

In the YAGI case, there is no direct conflict between activists' generations or disregard coming from older activists, but there is something we can call an 'absolute gap' – that is, a complete lack of interaction and communication. Just like in the previous two cases, young people see this situation as a problem, which must be solved in order for the activists to achieve their common goals.

... 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 knowledge transference between these two generations and today we are maybe experiencing things related to HIV, in particular, that we would not be experiencing if there had been a more direct contact with those who were at the forefront [of the movement] 20 years ago. (Renato, YAGI, PT)

As for the Russian cases (LGBTQ, FEM), the topic of interaction between generations is only brought up in the context of a potential transfer of experience from older activists to younger ones. The reason for that might lie in the fragmented nature of the Russian LGBT and feminist scenes, where different age groups are divided not only by age but by ideological views. Therefore, conflicts within the scene are not viewed as a conflict of generations but rather as a conflict of views and ideas. At the same time, it should be noted that respondents from Russia, just like the ones from other cases, mention their respectful attitude towards senior activists as people with extensive knowledge and numerous skills.

[Initiative No. 52] might have been the most effective in this regard, but I worked with extremely experienced people there. Because there are sometimes really experienced people involved, much more experienced than me. And everything went really smoothly. (Oksana, LGBTQ, RU)

Thus, it can be seen that, despite the desire for a horizontal structure in the organisations included in this cluster, some kind of an internal hierarchy does exist. It can be based on age, on having the necessary resources or on experience in activism. On the one hand, theoretical and practical knowledge acquired through activism often serves as a necessary resource, vital for both the development of ideas and their realization. On the other hand, it is often very difficult for those without it to find their way into a space where they can acquire such knowledge. 'Older' activists (which here has more to do with experience than age) can deny them legitimacy and

access to the field, choosing such strategies as disregarding them or starting a conflict. In some cases, there is simply no communication at all between different generations of activists. In the YMMF case, for example, young women do not articulate any conflicts between generations of mothers or mothers with different experience.

3.3.4 'We're right and you've got it wrong, you're the outsiders'

This concept provides an insight into the phenomenon of secondary stigma – that is, stigmatisation faced by young people within various activist initiatives. The analysis shows that there are numerous conflicts within the activist community itself, which leads to stigmatisation and potential exclusion of the young from the field. Overall, respondents from all cases except YMMF mention similar conflicts; however, these conflicts may happen for different reasons. Sometimes they occur between subgroups within movements:

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, YMW, DE)

In other cases, disagreements stem from ideological issues: political views, food practices, support for other movements, inclusion of people with different identities into the community (FEM, LGBTQ, ZP, YAGI):

[...] 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, ZP, HR)

In addition, the choice of the most effective strategies and tactics also may start a controversy:

Broadly speaking, posters, or the content of the posters – they are repulsive. Well, they are just thrown together, with some scribbled slogan like 'We are right anyway' and so on. 'We are being hurt,' and stuff like that. [...] then you see a report, say, on VKontakte, and so on, and you think, 'Well, what the hell?' These are the moments that make you cringe a little. We have to think these things through; it is not that difficult. But at the same time, you understand that people need to react in a more appropriate way. Or at least try to. (Katya, LGBTQ, RU)

At the same time, we have to note that most respondents think that such conflicts are meaningless and absurd. They believe that in order for the community to function properly, conflicts have to stop; they see no need to establish a single point of view on each topic, and therefore try not to participate in such disputes, even when they do have a clear position concerning whatever point is in question:

I don't really believe in the idea that it can never, under no circumstances, be a voluntary choice. This is me, this is my point of view. It is neither this nor that. I don't want to be pulled to whatever side. I don't want to argue about it at all. Can I continue

doing my own thing? And why do some people feel the need to meet up and argue?! What – seriously! – what is it going to do?! This is what I really don't like. Obviously, not everyone participates in these shitstorms. Some people just don't give a damn, like me. Some choose their point of view and go on with their work. Like, yeah. Katya is great, be like Katya. So. But these things, they really get in the way. And they don't bring any problems closer to a resolution. We will never agree on whether something is good or bad. I mean, there is no clear 'good' or 'bad'. (Katya, FEM, RU)

However, in the YMW case, activists try to convey the potential of multiple points of view to other members of the community and different organisations. They focus on promoting the idea that the position 'I am right, and he is not' is not constructive and needs to be revised, and therefore include this task in their agenda:

[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 criticise 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. (Reyhan, YMW, DE)

It is therefore evident that engagement in a community does not only mean gaining support, increasing self-confidence and meeting people with similar experience, but it also entails dealing with new conflicts stemming from the heterogeneity of the participants' identities, backgrounds and positions, and taking part in arguments over community goals and ways to achieve them. Some young people adopt a militant position, others choose a strategy of non-interference, while still others try to convey the need to step away from the existing conflicts and unite.

3.3.5 'In the seminar [...] we could speak openly about discrimination'

This concept shows that it is not only important for young people to meet others with similar experience, but they also value the space itself – the space created through meeting each other, time spent together and common practices. Young mothers (YMMF) mentioned the importance of child health centres, where peer support groups for mothers function. Even though these groups are more institutionalised than other spaces in this cluster, they also give an opportunity to find people with similar lifestyle and experience, with whom young mothers can share their 'joys and sorrows' (Elina, YMMF, FI).

Respondents from the YMW, YAGI, ZP, LGBTQ and FEM cases talk about places where their community's events, meetings and workshops have taken place, emphasising the importance and the unique nature of these spaces. For instance, Pride members pay special attention to the need for a physical space where they can come in a critical situation – for example, if a young man is kicked out of home because his gender or sexual identity is not accepted:

Well there is one friend of mine whom police officers outed to her mum. I mean, one of my exes also had that problem... we really need something. That is really bothering us and we need some space where we can go, where we can be ourselves, but not a typically gay club... like, except for clubs we have rarely any safe places... (Archi, ZP, HR)

LGBTQ respondents also discuss specific physical locations: according to Natalia, the community centre of one of the organisations is the safest place for her to come to: 'If you do not include the community centre [name of the organisation 8], which is completely safe for me, in fact for me it is my faculty, oddly enough. This is the safest place, I think, here, of the closest, native and such places that I often visit.' (Natalia, LGBTQ, RU)

But at the same time, a physical location is not enough. A space becomes unique and safe thanks to the people who go there, their practices and rules they establish. A special mode of communication is one of the characteristics of such spaces. So, in the YMW case, girls note that their meetings create a space where they can come and speak freely about discrimination, discuss their experiences and those of other participants, and feel their belonging to the community through joint practices and shared experiences.

In the seminar [...] we could speak openly about discrimination. And then the perspective of the black girls. [they experience] multiple discrimination. That made me realise: Sometimes I have phases when I am upset that I am discriminated because of my headscarf. They can take off the headscarf. But their skin is still black. [...] it was this safer space. We were all Muslim. All girls. All about the same age. It was a place, where we could exchange. (Emine, YMW, DE)

But creating and maintaining such a space also requires certain resources and efforts, as, for example, discussed in the LGBTQ case – this is a special kind of work that cannot be done by one person alone but rather has to be constantly carried out by all members of the community.

The formation of a comfortable environment, not to prove that we are, we are. And to form a community of those who understand, accept and the like, Yes, where comfortable. But to do that, we need to do a huge amount of work on the community as a whole, yes. Because you need to make sure that the community wanted to join. (Efim, LGBTQ, RU)

Doing such work is not always easy. Despite having common views on certain issues and common ideas, conflicts are an inevitable part of community life and, if they occur, Vika notes, it is important to continue moving forward instead of giving up immediately:

Because when you are in a community, you are very relaxed, you feel that they are all your friends, that everything is different, and that they will always understand you there, but there are still misunderstandings sometimes. And you can't just give up or, like, run away from it and think that it's all f***ing over, they aren't your people at all, and it's all wrong, or feel disappointed in everything – no. (Vika, FEM, RU)

Therefore, young people view community space as a safe haven – they describe it as a specific place where they can come if necessary, on the one hand, and on the other, as a communicative space where they can discuss relevant topics without the fear of stigmatisation and discrimination. At the same time, young people point out that it is not formed and maintained by itself – it requires joint effort of community members and a willingness to overcome possible misunderstandings and conflicts.

4. Conclusion

The contemporary sociological discussion revolves around two opposing narratives about young people's political and social inclusion. Since the mid-2000s, there has been a steady decline in young people's participation in formal politics and traditional political institutions, such as joining a party or voting in elections. In this regard, some studies state that young people are apolitical and not interested in global processes, focusing on personal needs instead (Newton, 2001; Wattenberg, 2006). Other studies, however, suggest a need to broaden the understanding of the political and recognise that young people today no longer have confidence in traditional political institutions and therefore resort to alternative ways of political participation, which imply concrete local actions: micropolitics, subactivism and everyday politics (Harris, 2006; Riley et al. 2010; Cammaerts et al., 2014; Pilkington and Pollock, 2015).

Our analysis shows that young people (the respondents from most cases in this cluster) cannot be called apolitical and indifferent to what is happening around them. Constantly faced with stigmatisation in their daily lives, they decide to take part in various initiatives in order to change the world around them through taking action here and now. Their visibility becomes an important political project. Disclosing their sexual, gender or religious identity, showing that they belong to a certain community and asserting their views and values – all these actions are constituted by young people as political gestures. At the same time, their visibility leads to a new wave of conflicts, rejection and marginalisation. However, this restigmatisation in the context of their deliberate and reflexive visibility is perceived by young people as an integral part of their activities - an expected risk associated with social engagement.

As for stigmatisation and discrimination, it should be noted that they are not normally caused by the very activity of young people, but rather by their identities, values and attitudes. Agents of stigmatisation are often found among adults in young people's immediate environment: their parents, other relatives or teachers. In addition, as adults usually occupy positions of power in these relationships, they can hinder young people's social engagement by directly prohibiting them from participating or through indirect control (for example, organising a family outing during a certain event). It should be noted, however, that in some cases parents and teachers have a positive influence on young people's social engagement by being role models, providing emotional support or sharing their experiences.

In a situation of multiple stigmatisation, being part of a community becomes extremely important for young people from different cases. Just like in other social spaces there are many conflicts in (activist) communities: struggle for the legitimacy of various groups; difficulties in establishing communication between different generations of activists; and disagreements among members of the same team about their goals and means of achieving them. At the same time communities are also a great source of information and resources, which is why social engagement allows young people to increase their cultural and social capital by acquiring various skills and competencies necessary for the effective performance of their tasks. Later on in their lives, the acquired knowledge can contribute to young people's professional development and help them to move on from being newbies to becoming experts. In addition, meeting people with the same or similar experience, those who offer support and share one's views and values, helps to re-evaluate the negative experience of stigma and marginalisation, to accept one's identity and to see the significance of one's path and activities. However, it is important to note that engagement can often be a complicated process, since information on what needs to be done in order to become a member and what projects there are available is not always easily accessible. It can be said that there is a gap between community members and those on the outside, which is quite difficult to bridge.

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Project Identity

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