

**Participatory youth policy – anyone interested in participating?**  
Become a youth policy change maker, Berlin, 24th June 2014



# **Participatory youth policy**

Manfred Zentner

Danube University, Department Migration and Globalisation (Krems/Austria)  
Institute for youth culture research - jugendkultur.at (Vienna/Austria)  
Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR)



## Main questions

- What is youth policy?
  - Every policy affecting the life of young people.
  - Which entity makes policy nowadays?
- What is participation?
  - Taking part, being part of something (that happens anyway)
  - Who has the power of definition?
- Who is participating?
  - Who is participating in finance policy, energy policy, defence policy or environmental policy?
  - Why young people, why not teachers, youth workers or facebook?



## **Milestones and obstacles**

- National youth policies emerging from education policies
- National youth councils as umbrella organisations of youth organisations (representing whom?)
- European youth policy started in the early 1970ies as a reaction on the infamous uproars 1968. → participation to calm the people down?
- CoE: Co-management CDEJ + Advisory Council (youth organisations)
- EU: New impetus for European youth (2001) 4 priorities (participation, but not participatory youth policy)
- 2004: European youth pact: (wombs and workers)
- 2005: Plan D: Democracy, dialogue and discussion (one- or multidirectional?)
- 2008: CoE: Agenda 2020 – democracy, human rights, social inclusion
- 2009: EU Strategy: Investing & Empowering (Structured dialogue)



## Obstacles and milestones

- Post- war generation (baby-boomers): fight for resources and rights
  - Traditional value-based upbringing created differences and conflicts
- Individuation: the self instead of community becomes important
  - Post-materialistic values
  - Post-modernity
- Network society gained momentum through new media
  - Local and global in spatiotemporal simultaneity
  - Allows local/regional ignorance and global commitment
- Economic crises
  - Blow to self-expression, loss of solidarity, community and commitment becomes obvious.



## Network society: where to get involved

From local to international!

- Involvement in local development on all topics – from playground to senior residence from school buildings to water supply.
- On regional / national level: education, labour, democracy, youth rights
- On international / European level: freedom to... (travel, work, study); human rights, youth rights
- Do I see consequences of my participation, of my involvement?
- Mutual influence of local and global level.
- Support is nice, but does it really help? So the easy solution is: just stay tuned in facebook.

## Participatory youth policy – anyone interested in participating?

Become a youth policy change maker, Berlin, 24th June 2014



### Individuation in consumer society

- Established forms of community building lose attractiveness.
- The individual person puts itself to the centre stage!
- Lifestyle as motor of group building: aesthetics of live
- Values are part of lifestyles and means for self-expression.
- Every consumption as investment in the own market value



Foto: faz.net



Foto: carolineclarkdesign.com



Foto: greune.com



## Democracy – granted, endangered, out-dated?

- Decline in interest in (party) policy and in election turn-outs in all European countries.
- Rise of distrust in political parties, in governments/parliaments and in the system.
- Neglecting the elections is not endangering democracy but some political developments (even in the EU) are.
- Citizenship as basis of involvement?  
Feeling of belonging as basis of involvement?
- Alternatives are gaining momentum – e-participation, consultations...





## Democracy in the consumer society – post-democracy

- Democracy means that you CAN get involved – not you have to.
- Politics a service paid with taxes: “they should just do there job”.
- Politicians do the dirty work that nobody wants to do – but we are also not electing our garbage collectors.
- But they start asking us to participate – like garbage collectors tell us to recycle!
- Politics as fast reactions, protectionism, against pleasure, for industry against individual rights?
- Anti-consumerism: boycotting certain brands, not buying anymore when discontent with the performance.
- Anti-consumerism in politics: neglect elections, because voting does not change anything.



Participatory youth policy – anyone interested in participating?  
Become a youth policy change maker, Berlin, 24th June 2014



## Post-democracy





## When to get involved?

The more it affects me, the more I care.

- Leisure time / media / lifestyle
  - Education / work
  - Equal opportunities / discrimination
  - Human rights
  - Environmental issues / animal rights
  - Democracy
- 
- The more I know about it, the more opportunities of action I see:
  - Information as a basic means for participation, but is not the guarantee for “the correct” decisions.



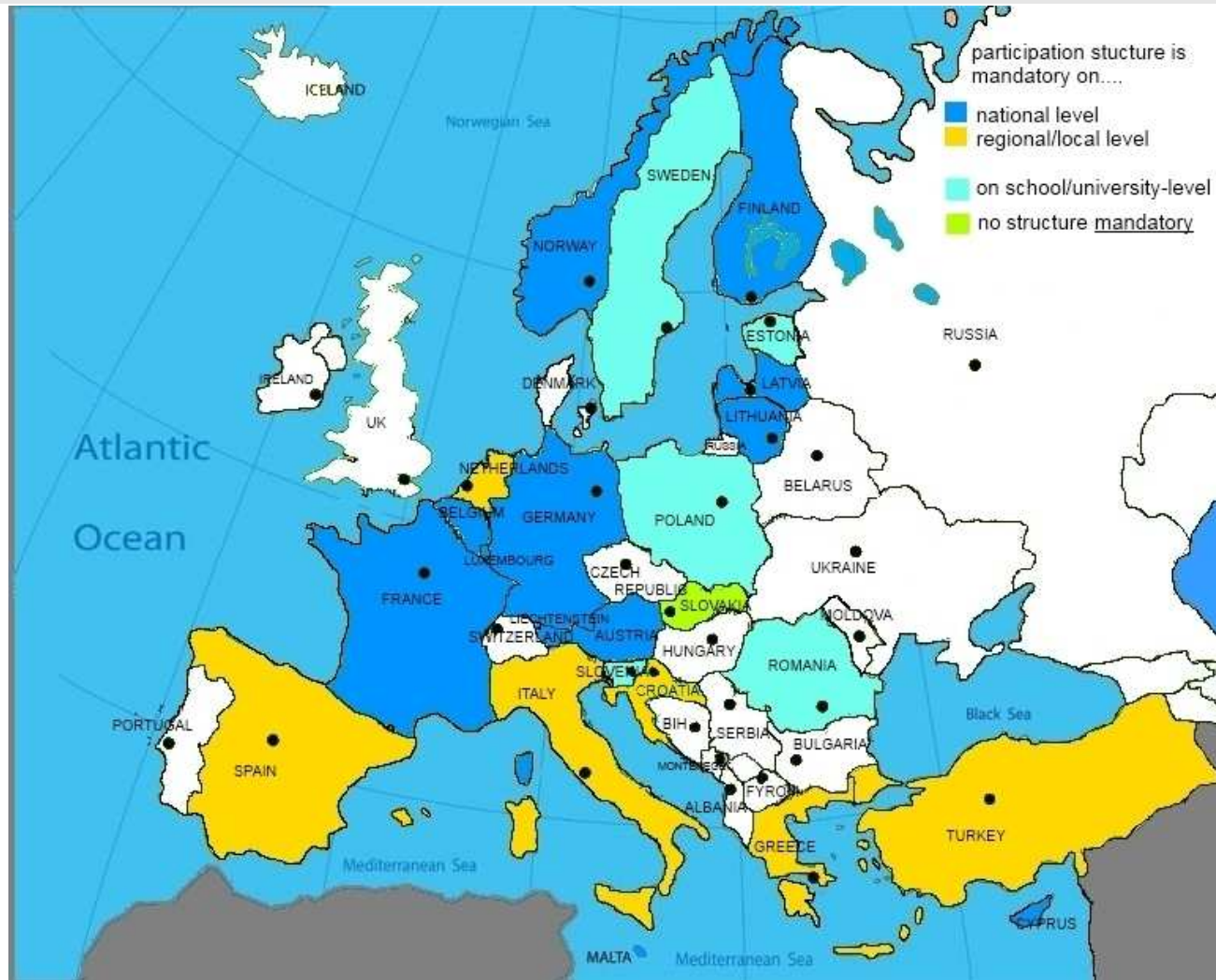
## How can youth be involved: you don't own me

Bottom up or top down?

- Representation of youth – youth involvement in policy making as legal right
- Youth councils – pupils/student councils – Youth parliaments
- Structured Dialogue
- If we invite (young) people to participate, we don't know the results!
- Demonstrations / strikes
- E-participation beside voting
- Active, political correct way of living without political demand
- Common topics in demonstrations do not imply similar political values!



## The right to participate for youth



Participatory youth policy – anyone interested in participating?  
Become a youth policy change maker, Berlin, 24th June 2014



**We can not predict how participation will end ...**



Participatory youth policy – anyone interested in participating?  
Become a youth policy change maker, Berlin, 24th June 2014



## Personal involvement shown in private

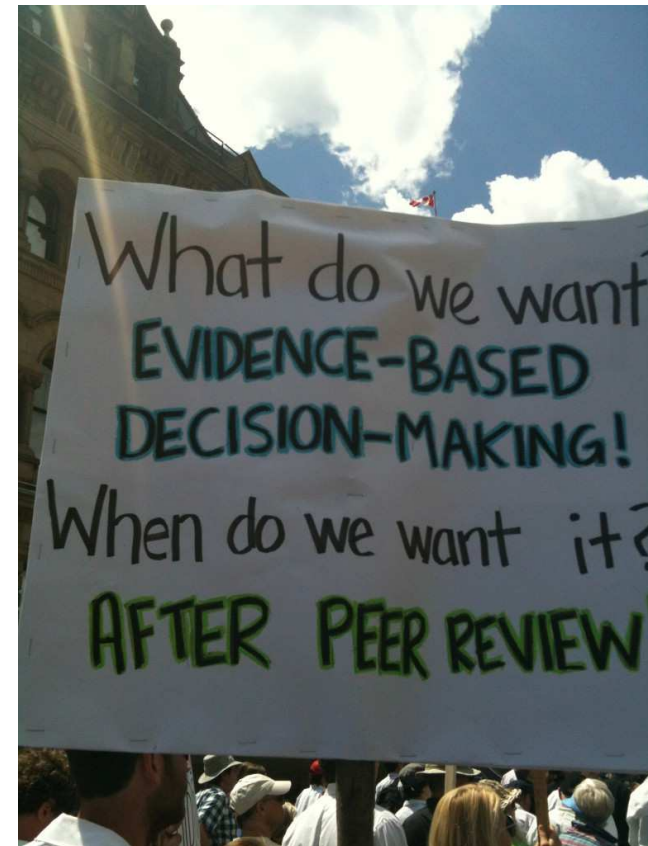




Participatory youth policy – anyone interested in participating?  
Become a youth policy change maker, Berlin, 24th June 2014



**Make jokes not war!**



Participatory youth policy – anyone interested in participating?

Become a youth policy change maker, Berlin, 24th June 2014



**Revolution might be seen as participation in the future – or not**





**Participatory youth policy – anyone interested in participating?**

Become a youth policy change maker, Berlin, 24th June 2014



# **Thank you for your attention**

Manfred Zentner

Danube University, Department Migration and Globalisation (Krems/Austria)

Institute for youth culture research - jugendkultur.at (Vienna/Austria)

Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR)