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“Diversity within Diversity” - Exploring Connections between Community, Participation and Citizenship

Even if recently the notions of citizenship and community have become buzz words of very positive connotation, significant tensions underlie any of them: between homogeneity and difference, belonging and diversity, inclusion and exclusion and, more recently, between freedom and security. Real communities are places of cooperation and mutual recognition as much as they are places of inevitable conflict, social control and exclusion. Following an ecological and contextual perspective, and a relational definition of community, concepts such as sense of community and social capital are explored. An analysis of citizen’s participation in their communities illustrates significant dimensions of participation: power, dialogue, initiative, formality, pluralism and time. The discussion considers how these dimensions might contribute to making community organizations turn into 'schools of democracy' (de Tocqueville 2000), and illustrates this potential with young migrants, as long as the diversity of diverse migrant groups is not only recognized but furthered.

Keywords

Community, participation, citizenship, diversity, power, democracy

1 Community as a Context for Citizenship

Community and citizenship share significant commonalities, mainly because their paramount, and often loose, use risks generating significant misconceptions. On both cases, the apparent emancipatory character of the concept eludes the fact that underlying the very notion of citizenship or community significant tensions between homogeneity and difference, belonging and diversity, inclusion and exclusion and, more recently, between freedom and security do exist. Citizenship has been, as we know, severely contested for suggesting a misleading consensual, not to mention transcendental definition (e.g. Beiner 1995; Haste 2004; Menezes 2005; Pais 2005; Taylor 2005; Torres 2001), criticized for its unrecognized pressure for equality and universality that risks denying diversity and pluralism (e.g. Young 1995), and denounced as an exclusionary category (“us” vs. “them”) that conventionally includes some individuals and groups, while excluding others (e.g., Benhabib 1999; Santos 1998). Community has similar threats: “community is a rather ambiguous concept which has (...) a wide variety of, some contradictory, meanings, serving the interests of ideologically distinct interest groups” (Coimbra, Menezes 2009, 90). Community, even if

frequently romanticized, is not only the *locus* of the “us myth” (Weisenfeld 1996), a place of mutual respect, help and cooperation—closely related to the notion of *Gemeinschaft* proposed by Tönnies (1925), that emphasizes solidarity and belonging. Communities are also places of inevitable conflict (positive and not so positive), exclusion and social control (Coimbra, Menezes 2009; Montero 2004; Putnam 2007; Towley et al. in press).

The recognition of this tension becomes more and more essential “as communities around the world become increasingly more diverse in terms of ethnicity and global perspectives, while also confronting growing concerns about inequalities, isolation, marginalization, and alienation” (Towley et al. in press). In this context, diversity and pluralism should be, not only recognized as inevitable features of community life, but also valued as essential for fostering individual and collective development. Moreover, as Chantal Mouffe (2002, 8-10) argues “the specificity of modern democracy is precisely its recognition and legitimation of conflict. (...) Consensus is necessary, but it must be accompanied by dissent,” and more deeply, dissent opens the possibility for equality (Rancière 2005).

In fact, the recognition and valuing of both belonging and diversity within communities has led community psychologist James Kelly (1966, 1970, 1971, 1986, 2010; Kingry-Westergaard, Kelly 1990) to propose an ecological metaphor, founded in epistemic contextualism. The *ecological metaphor* emphasizes the interdependence between individuals and their social environments, recognizing the distinctive culture and resources of each community, and the need to establish trust relationships with community members and to work collaboratively with them. Furthermore, it also implies tolerance for, and appreciation of, diversity “not expressed passively as a spongy attitude (...) [but as] the quality of putting the resources [of a community] to work to help secure options for a long-term cultivation of a locale.” (Kelly 1971, 900). The implications of this perspective also involve viewing communities not only *in-need-of* but also *with-resources-to*, surpassing essentialist and “blaming the victim” perspectives (Ryan 1971) that reinforce internalizing guilt and oppression (Freire 1968; Nelson, Prilleltensky 2005).

Conceptualizing the various conceptual layers of what a community is can benefit from the theoretical and empirical work on sense of community (SOC) and social capital. Psychological SOC was originally defined by Saranson (1974, 41) as “the sense that one belongs in and is meaningfully part of a larger collectivity,” a definition that obviously emphasizes identification and interdependence with others. McMillan and Chavis (1986) later elaborated on the concept, to distinguish four main components: belonging, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection. Belonging refers to membership, and therefore implies the definition, either immaterial or tangible, of boundaries that involve an “us” vs. “them” distinction. Influence refers to the circulation of power within the community, either conjointly or more centralized. Integration and fulfillment of needs characterizes the symbolic or real benefits of belonging to a community, in terms of access to material or expressive resources, such as support or ideologies. And the shared emotional connection describes the bond the results from interaction and is particularly manifest in times of trouble and of celebration. According to the model, this “relational” definition of community can be applied to

geographical locations, to institutional milieus and even to virtual on-line contexts (Bess et al. 2002) and there is research to show that these dimensions (whether or not independent) are important parts of the experience of connection with a community and are strongly and positively associated with personal wellbeing, social support, psychological empowerment and satisfaction; moreover, research has also shown that sense of community is a significant predictor of civic participation and volunteering (Obst, White 2004; Omoto, Malsch 2005; Peterson, Speer, Hughey 2006; Rodgers, Smith, Pollock 2002). Not surprisingly, SOC had been criticized for not emphasizing conflict and diversity within communities since, as Trickett (1994, 585) points out, it is important to recognize “diversity within diversity” – this also includes recognizing that, in spite of intense similarities from the point of view of culture and history, communities evolve, change and diverge over time (Birman, Trickett, Buchanan 2005; Montero 2004; Sonn 2002). In fact, “ignoring diversity within communities has also been used historically, and continues to be used, for purposes of control and management by members of dominant cultures” (Towley et al. in press). Moreover, individuals express sense of community in relation to multiple contexts and this subjective balance of belongings which, again, resonates with the definition of a lived citizenship that counterbalances a “formal,” “normative” citizenship also integrates different within-individual layers of conflict and engagement.

The various conceptualizations of social capital, both as an individual (Bourdieu 1986) and contextual variable (Coleman 1988; Putnam 2001, 2007) also illuminate these multiplicities. Portes (1998, 2) even points out that

“despite its current popularity, the term does not embody any idea really new to sociologists. That involvement and participation in groups can have positive consequences for the individual and the community is a staple notion, dating back to Durkheim’s emphasis on group life as an antidote to anomie and self-destruction and to Marx’s distinction between an atomized class-in-itself and a mobilized and effective class-for-itself.”

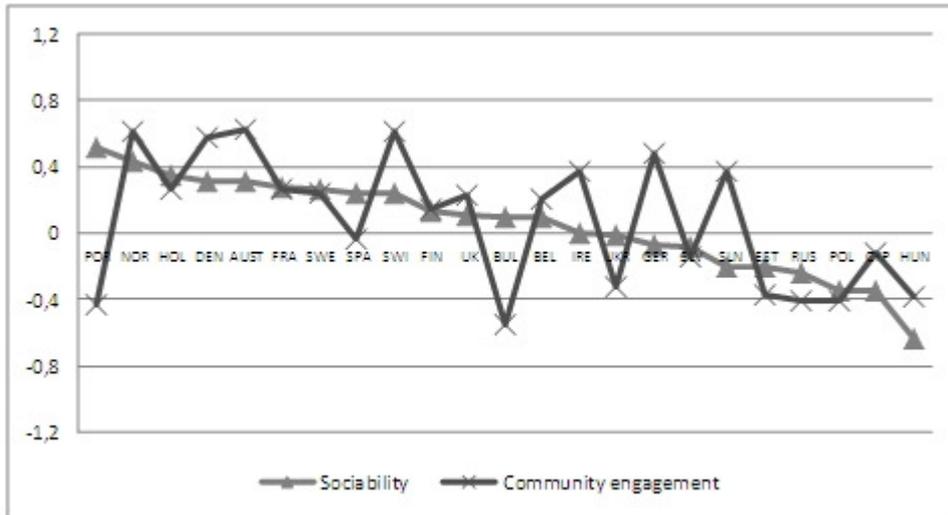
Bourdieu (1986, 51) defines social capital as “the aggregate of the actual and potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition.” Whether or not the underlying groups (e.g., families, clubs ...) consciously acknowledge and target it, this network of connections confers the individual symbolic, cultural or even economic forms of capital, reproduced through “an unceasing effort of sociability, a continuous series of exchanges in which recognition is endlessly affirmed and reaffirmed” (Bourdieu 1986, 52). Therefore, social capital is a resource possessed by individuals that might mediate the achievement of relevant life goals, both material and expressive.

For Coleman (1988) social capital refers to the characteristics of social structures that facilitate action, such as trust, norms or authority structures. This vision of social capital as a contextual variable was taken further by Robert Putnam (1993, 1995, 2001, 2007) that operationalizes three

constituting dimensions: *dense social networks*, where people have the opportunity to participate in both formal structures, such as civic associations, and informal socializing activities; *generalized interpersonal trust*, that is, the belief that “other people” in general are trustworthy; and *norms of reciprocity* that involve valuing procedural justice as a strategy to solve problems and conflicts. The first dimension is considered as the milestone of the concept, as it is through active participation in the community that interpersonal trust and norms of reciprocity are developed together with a large array of civic competencies that are essential for the quality of democracy. Putnam’s initial research in the North and the South of Italy (1993) was then applied to an analysis of the situation in the United States (1995). It was this argument that contributed to the immense notability of the concept, that is: that lower levels of participation in community life – the “bowling alone” phenomena, – accompanied with growing isolation and privatization of personal life. “In the 1990s, as Americans’ social connections withered, they increasingly watched *Friends* rather than had friends” (Sander, Putnam 2010, 10) – accounted for a decline in civic and political engagement and participation that was an important threat to democratic life. However, Putnam (2007, 138) has emphasized that “although networks can powerfully affect our ability to get things done, nothing guarantees that what gets done through networks will be socially beneficial.” In fact, Putnam proposes an important distinction between *bonding* and *bridging* social capital, the first clearly more in tune with Bourdieu’s (1986) description of homogenous groups that emphasize sociability and recognition (such as, for instance, Rotary clubs), and the latter more descriptive of groups and associations, more or less heterogeneous, whose mission is to have an impact in the larger community, generating some degree of social change (such as, for instance, the Amnesty International).

In an analysis of the 2006 European Social Survey data, we considered how these two forms of social capital vary across Europe (Ferreira, Menezes in press). The indicators are variables related to the intensity of meeting family and friends (bonding social capital) and the level of engagement in community-based civic organizations for volunteering, solving local problems, etc. (bridging social capital). Results (standardized values) show a very interesting pattern of combination between the two forms of social capital (Figure 1). For instance, Portugal has the most intense level of sociability, but community-based civic engagement is one of the lowest; Norway, Denmark and Austria reveal very high levels of both forms of social capital; as we move to the East, Central and Eastern European countries reveal less sociability, but the levels of community-based civic engagement are high in countries with a longer democratic transition. On the whole, results seem to suggest that complex interactions between democratic history and culture might account for variations in forms of social capital.

Figure 1. Variations in forms of social capital across Europe



Note: Countries included were: Portugal (POR); Norway (NOR), Holland (HOL); Denmark (DEN); Austria (AUST); France (FRA); Sweden (SWE); Spain (SPA); Switzerland (SWI); Finland (FIN); United Kingdom (UK); Bulgaria (BUL); Belgium (BEL); Ireland (IRE); Ukraine (UKR); Germany (GER); Slovakia (SLV); Slovenia (SLN); Estonia (EST); Russia (RUS); Poland (POL); Cyprus (CYP) and Hungary (HUN).

Therefore, a major implication of these theoretical conceptualizations of communities is that, although engagement and participation are decisive and might have important consequences for the quality of citizenship and democracy, it is of extreme relevance to explore and scrutinize the various forms, meanings and uses of participation by individual citizens in a specific cultural context.

2 Community and the Possibilities of Participation

The notion that citizens should be involved and participate in decisions and actions (intervention, civic or other) affecting and transforming community is widely supported, or as Arnstein (1969, 216) puts it, “(t)he idea of citizen participation is a little like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you.”

It is possible to trace these discourses almost half a century back, at least in some countries, but their intensification, and the greater emphasis on the need for more citizen participation and involvement is observable for a couple of decades (May 2006; Rowe, Frewer 2005; Saurugger 2010). In the US, for example, in the late sixties, Burke (1968, 287) was already writing that the participation of citizens in community planning “increased rapidly in the past few years to the point where it is now a fairly common and frequently praised practice,” and by the late seventies Glass (1979, 180) considered it to be “a commonplace element.” Changes in legislation, and the pressure exerted by citizens themselves, increased the opportunities and demands for participation (Burke 1968). Already (immediately) then,

beyond the apparent consensual support, participation was seen as desirable yet problematic and diverse (Arnstein 1969; Burke 1968; Glass 1979) participation practices were valued (and idealized) for their connection to the extension and deepening of democracy but they were also seen as source of excessive criticism, community conflict and confusion. Now, more than forty years later, and at least twenty years after the (intensification of the) “participatory turn” (Saurugger 2010), the issues surrounding citizen participation in social and community settings are surprisingly similar: the tensions between participatory democracy and expertise in decision-making; the critical question of how (and which) groups are excluded from participation and how the participation contexts deal with matters of plurality and diversity; and the realization that citizen participation is not only (or not always, or even not often) what it promises to be “redistribution of power” (Arnstein 1969, 216) but a strategy and a technique to pursue other ends and the ends of others (White 1996).

It should not be ignored that participation is a bundle of many different things. From public and community participation to civic or political participation it involves many somewhat distinct and sometimes overlapping kinds of actions, contexts, and research. We will explore that diversity in (hopefully) bringing together perspectives on types of participation, and highlighting its differentiating axis, in order to contribute to a reflection on how they (can) contribute to building (better or worse) communities and citizenship.

There are good reasons to start this analysis going back to Arnstein's (1969) work. Her typology is one of the most influential (May 2006) and already made clear that participation without real opportunities and power to affect the outcomes of the process is an empty ritual (White 1996). With power, or empowerment, as the main organizer, *The ladder of participation*¹ (Arnstein 1969) is set as a progression in terms of the power and control citizens hold: eight different levels organized in three groups. Level 1, *manipulation*, and Level 2, *therapy* appear grouped under *non-participation* since they are best understood as a contrived substitute for participation where those in a more powerful position manipulate the participants into supporting a (already decided) proposal or where the participation process' main/real objective is educating or “curing” the participants of their personal or social ills. Levels 3, 4 and 5, *informing*, *consultation* and *placation* all represent different *degrees of tokenism*. At this level participants still mostly lack any opportunity to make sure that their views or ideas have a real influence on the decision. They participate by being *informed*, but their opinions, ideas or information are not asked; they are *consulted* and so given the opportunity to state their view but have no way to ensure that they will be heard or attended to; they are *placated* by being granted a “seat at the deciding table” as advisers, unable to participate directly in the decision-making. Finally, in levels 6, 7 and 8, participants hold increasing degrees of citizen-control as they participate and negotiate as *partners*, or as they gain advantage over influencing the decision in *delegated power*, of finally when it is theirs the power over the decision and over how the decision is to be set in action, *citizen control*. Obviously, this typology has been challenged and adapted by different authors. Also dealing with public participation, and so with distinctions on how citizens (or the public) is involved in “agenda-setting,

¹ Some of the levels proposed by Arnstein (1969) bare a clear relationship with the strategies defined by Burke (1968).

decision-making, and policy-forming activities of organizations/institutions“ (Rowe, Frewer 2005, 253). Rowe and Frewer (2005) propose a typology (closely paralleling this one) but placing at the center not the level of citizen power or control but the *flow of information*. Their three main “types of public engagement“ are *public communication*, where the public is merely a receiver of information, *public consultation*, where, upon request, the public is involved in providing information but no formal dialogue ensues, and finally *public participation* where information is actually exchanged, some degree of dialogue (often in a group setting) as well as some degree of negotiation (Rowe, Frewer 2005).

A plethora of techniques, mechanisms and strategies to engage citizens in public participation have been designed and described over the years.² This proliferation reflects the need to combine the purposes of participatory initiatives with their particular objectives and contexts. Also, we believe, it derives from the tensions between two distinct (and sometimes and in some ways even contradictory) common purposes of citizen participation: achieving administrative goals and take part in determining policy or political decision. These two purposes are well described by Glass (1979). Following an administrative perspective the main purpose is “to involve citizens in planning and other governmental processes and, as a result, increase their trust and confidence in government, making it more likely that they accept decisions and plans and will work within the system when seeking solutions to problems,” while the citizen action perspective will focus on how participation can “provide citizens with a voice in planning and decision making in order to improve plans, decisions, and service delivery“ (Glass 1979, 181).

The “crucial tension between the radical language of empowerment-participation on the one hand and the consensual politics of delivery on the other“ (Dinham 2007, 184) is identifiable in many participatory efforts and reflects the double face of our political spheres: managing and ordering life with others, and challenging and recreating the possibilities of life in common. This is particularly salient in the current context. In a more interconnected world, problems appear more complex to solve. Preoccupied with resolving and ordering problems and needs, the managerial perspective has been dominant in most democratic countries (Head 2007), with its inherent elitism and “democratic deficit“ (Hindess 2002). Opportunities for broader inclusion and dialogue have been emerging. These sometimes challenge but other times merely extend and reinvent the same managerial logic, by increasing the levels of self-management without necessarily increasing the levels of self-determination, or by mobilizing (vulnerable) people to solve complex problems without mobilizing (the necessary) resources (and so having people share the responsibility while displacing guilt). Another relevant aspect of this renewed focus on dialogue between governments (local or national) and citizens, as individuals also but mainly as organized groups, creates new opportunities for involvement in the community sector and has the potential to bring not only better solutions but also gains in social capital, voice and influence to vulnerable groups and an augmented capacity for civic and political participation (Head 2007).

One of the most influential description and survey of political participation is

² Rowe and Frewer (2005) list about one hundred of them.

that conducted in the seventies by Verba et al. (1973, 1978). Their work provided statistical information on different political activities in different countries, and a proposal on how to group and organize them which became a reference for research in the domain. They distinguished four groups of electoral and non-electoral “political acts”: voting; campaigning activities (e.g. trying to persuade someone to vote for a certain party, giving money to political party or election activities, displaying or distributing campaign posters or leaflets, or attend an election rally); communal activity (e.g. contacting officials over a social problem, working with an informal group on some community issue, or being an active member of an organization involved in community affairs); particularized contacting (e.g. contacting officials over personal or family matters). Maybe even more interesting than these groupings are the *dimensions of participation* describing the “ways in which political activities might differ” (Verba et al. 1973, 236). Three at first, degree of initiative, conflict and scope of outcome, they were revised in 1978 (Verba et al. 1978) and two extra dimensions were added. They comprised:

“(1) the type of influence that was exerted by the act (whether it conveyed information about the actors' preferences and/or applied pressure for compliance); (2) the scope of the outcome (whether the act was aimed at affecting a broad social outcome or a narrow particularized outcome); (3) the degree of conflict with others involved in the activity; (4) the amount of effort and initiative required for the act; and (5) the amount of cooperation with others entailed by the act.” (Verba et al. 1978, 53).

By calling attention to the multidimensionality of political participation, this work contributed to a better understanding of the challenges and dynamics present in distinct opportunities for political participation in various contexts. It has also served as a background against which some revisions came to light. For example, according to a more recent revisiting of these “modes of participation,” Claggett and Pollock (2006, 600) found that “elite-driven acts and self-driven acts define a distinct dimension of political participation.” Another author who advanced a set of useful dimensions was Head (2007). He challenged us to consider differentiating types of participation based on (i) if it is an initiative of citizens or of the government, (ii) if it follows the formal channels of participation or if it happens outside of these channels, (iii) if it weak or strong (in terms of the power held by the citizens), (iv) if it focuses narrow or broad social issues and interests, and (v) if it is episodic or continuing.

Taken together, these various visions of participation, and of how it can be differentiated, point to some important considerations. To the two important organizers emphasized by those typologies of public participation that we presented, the degree of power distribution and the degree of effective dialogue, we should now add some other dimensions. One of the first ones to recall is that of the initiative, and to which extent are the citizens (organized or not) initiating the participatory efforts and setting the agenda and following (or not) the formal channels. Also important is to understand how broad or narrow is the focus which might relate to the

presence of pluralism and both conflict and cooperation which can be extended into longer collaboration and commitment if participation acts are continued over time.

One other relevant issue is how much of what is usually considered the community sector appears as constituting significant contexts for participation. Also because governments and institutions often seek (following a logic of broader inclusion and devolution) the participation of organized interests, associations, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), social movements and other community groups gain importance as capacitated and capacitating contexts with a role in redistributing and equalizing power. Understanding how and how often can these organizations operate in ways consistent with the classical hope of them being “schools of democracy” (de Tocqueville 2000), and how do distinct types and dynamics of participatory efforts contribute to it – also through the kind of experiences they offer to those participating – requires a contextual, developmental and psychopolitically informed (Prilleltensky 2008; Prilleltensky, Fox 2007; Trickett 2009, Watts, Flanagan 2007) consideration of the quality of the participatory process (Head 2007) and of the participation experiences (Ferreira, Azevedo, Menezes 2012).

3 Concluding Reflections and Some Illustrative Results

Inescapably political, community and citizenship are both contested concepts and places of conflict (Benhabib 1999; Montero 2004; Mouffe 1993, 2002). In our communities, we all live these tensions and take part in them, although never equally. Beyond spaces of shared life and communality, it is essential that we recognize the lines that mark significant differences and the diversity that always exists within communities – even if not always equally visible – thus regarding the fact of pluralism (Arendt 2000) and the possibilities open by dissent (Mouffe 1993; Rancière 2005) for transformation and construction of just contexts for living.

Since one's well-being depends on positive community integration, meaningful participation and the amount of power enjoyed for self-determination in one's community become essential elements (García-Ramírez 2008; Prilleltensky 2008; Dinham 2007). A social climate favoring fairness, participation and expression is also related to sense of community (Vieno et al. 2005) and integration. Opportunities to participate – particularly in contexts open to others and diversity – in addition contribute to gains in social capital and to relationships of mutual recognition. Yet mutual recognition must lead to integration beyond adaptation. That means going beyond removing differences and erasing diversity, and creating the conditions for different groups – especially those in most vulnerable positions – to affirm their difference in a plural context and exercise civic and political rights (García-Ramírez 2008; Costoiu 2008; Young 1995).

Illustrating how the places where we live with others (and as others) mark how different groups see themselves as citizens and participate as such, it might be interesting to look at the results of the European research project

PIDOP³ (Processes Influencing Democratic Ownership and Participation) that focus on the civic and political participation of youth, including migrant groups, in eight European countries (Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Sweden, Turkey, UK). Analysing data from focus-groups with young people aged 16-19 and 20-26 years old, both national and migrants, Menezes et al. (2010) note significant cross-national similarities: participants express the belief that youth are 2nd class citizens, lacking a real voice in society, while they also consider that young people lack the knowledge, skills and resources to contribute in a more significant way – thus internalising a “popular” view of youth as unprepared for real “adult” citizen roles. It is also interesting that their visions of citizenship tend to combine legal, communitarian and moral visions, while recognizing severe problems of racism and discrimination across Europe. Not surprisingly, all groups express a severe distrust of politicians and ambivalent perceptions of the effectiveness of civic and political action. However, when reflecting on their daily lives, youth identify a diversity of civic and political experiences, mainly at the local level, revealing that they are active political actors, whether they explicitly recognize it or not. Social movements, NGOs, associations and other community groups are often the places where they find the opportunities to become more involved. Obviously this does not mean that these participation experiences are always capacitating or politicizing but it reaffirms their potential role in extending and reinventing the exercise of democracy (de Tocqueville 2000) and in countering debilitating and excluding discourses faced by national and migrant youth.

These interesting commonalities should not obscure the differences between national communities and even specific migrant groups. In fact, in a recent analysis of the Portuguese data, Ribeiro et al. (in press) illustrate important variances between two groups of young migrants, Angolans and Brazilians. It should be noted that both groups come from Portuguese-speaking countries, but mostly Angolans have Portuguese citizenship and mostly Brazilians have not – also because it is quite likely that Portuguese-Angolans were born in the country or live in Portugal for many years, while Brazilians generally arrived in the late nineties. However, in both cases, legislation regarding political rights as migrants is quite inclusive, given the strong historical ties between Portugal, Angola and Brazil. However, access to citizenship and length of stay might account for the fact that Portuguese-Angolans express higher levels of political interest and attentiveness and stronger involvement in civic and political activities, when compared to Brazilians. Additionally, and interestingly, their strong sense of community in regard to their country of origin (or that of their parents, in the case of many Angolans) seems to interact with the nature of the current political regime in those countries and generate different profiles of daily civic and political engagement and involvement. Both (Portuguese-)Angolans and Brazilians express very strong feelings of identification and connection with their country of origin; however, while Brazilians seem to use this identity as an argument to restrict their political interest to domestic politics in Brazil, Angolans appear to become

“more motivated to participate as they look at the lack of meaningful

³ PIDOP is a multinational research project (project number 225282) funded by the European Commission under the Seventh Framework Programme.

opportunities for democratic participation that exist in their country of origin. Here, cultural capital plays a positive role fostering a particular interest and making these young migrants position themselves regarding the political conditions of the host country and the opportunities to participate in it.“ (s/p).

That is, in spite of an apparently similar sense of community, the way in which these young migrants evaluate the quality of the democratic culture in their country appears to influence their dispositions to engage in civic and political activities in the host country. These results suggest that complex interactions between access to citizenship, sense of community and political cultures might account for diverse participation profiles of young people with migrant backgrounds.

Much is expected from participation as a value-based concept but participation is many different things even if we look only at those acts of community and civic participation that became, in recent decades, a common presence in the discourse of various disciplines. Yet, practice shows that often this kind of participatory discourse leads to participants having their expectations about levels and types of participation unfulfilled, and to cynicism (Dinham 2007). A critical appreciation of the developmental and transforming potential of participation cannot ignore its underlying dynamics, tensions, the competing interests and purposes giving it shape and existence. As for these youth, better opportunities for community and civic participation should involve them in contexts where they could claim power (not to repeat what others say about them), where they could participate in affirming (instead of negating) their ways of being active and citizens. Since the meaning of power, as other social resources, is actively constructed in-context and, as we emphasised above, recognizing “diversity within diversity“ (Trickett 1994, 585) is essential to avoid domination.

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