BEYOND APATHY: DYNAMICS OF YOUTH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN CONTEMPORARY EUROPE

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

EKİN EROĞLU

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

DECEMBER 2023

Approval of the thesis:

BEYOND APATHY: DYNAMICS OF YOUTH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN CONTEMPORARY EUROPE

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ABSTRACT

BEYOND APATHY: DYNAMICS OF YOUTH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN CONTEMPORARY EUROPE

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December 2023, 110 pages

This thesis explores the complex landscape of youth participation in politics, by challenging the critiques of apathy by underlining on the frequently overlooked contributions of young people to international politics. Despite the scepticism regarding the engagement of youth in traditional politics, this study contends that youth decreased engagement shows a pursuit for alternative political methods beyond the restrains of existing mechanisms. The research delves into socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors that influence and impede youth participation in conventional politics. In contrast, it highlights the emergence of varying participations of young people themselves or facilitated by adults, emphasizing a transformation in the understanding of citizenship, democracy, and participation. The research emphasizes that the participation of the youth should be analysed not entirely within the traditional political spectrum but within a broader context which encompasses alternative forms of participation. Focusing on Europe as a centre for youth-related agendas, the thesis examines the impact of neoliberal practices on youth participation. Utilizing a transnational analysis, the research surpasses borders to investigate the evolving prospects of youth participation practices by questioning the efficacy of longstanding EU institutions: European

Youth Parliament, European Youth Forum, and European Youth Partnership. The findings reveal dissatisfaction among young people, leading them to adopt new participation methods in contrast to traditional approaches that often necessitate consensus within the framework of the "EU project." The thesis critically analyzes the repercussion of neoliberal practices on youth participation. Ultimately, this research contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of youth engagement by recognizing alternative avenues.

Keywords: Youth, Participation, European Union, Neoliberalism

ÖZ

APOLİTİKLİĞİN ÖTESİNDE: ÇAĞDAŞ AVRUPA'DA GENÇLİK SİYASİ KATILIMININ DİNAMİKLERİ

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Yüksek Lisans, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü
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Aralık 2023, 110 sayfa

Bu tez, gençlerin politikaya katılımının karmaşık bağlamını keşfetmekte; gençlerin uluslararası politikaya sıkça göz ardı edilen katkılarını vurgulayarak, apolitiklik ve ilgisizlik eleştirilerine yanıt vermektedir. Gençlerin geleneksel siyasete katılımına dair yaygın şüpheye karşılık bu çalışma, gençlerin geleneksel siyasete yönelik reddi veya azalan katılımının, mevcut mekanizmaların sınırlarının ötesinde alternatif katılım yöntemler arayışını yansıttığını savunur.

Araştırma, gençlerin geleneksel siyasete katılımını etkileyen sosyo-ekonomik, kültürel ve kurumsal faktörlere derinlemesine inmektedir. Bu bağlamda, gençlerin kendilerinin liderlik ettiği veya yetişkinler tarafından önayak olunan çeşitli katılım uygulamalarının ortaya çıkışını vurgulayarak; vatandaşlık, demokrasi ve katılım anlayışlarındaki dönüşüme dikkat çeker. Araştırma, gençlerin politik katılımının sadece geleneksel politik spektrum içinde değil, aynı zamanda alternatif katılım biçimlerini içeren daha geniş bir bağlamda analiz edilmesi gerektiğini vurgular.

Çalışma Avrupa'yı gençlikle ilgili gündemlerin merkezi olarak ele alarak, neoliberal uygulamaların gençlerin katılımına etkisini inceler. Sınırları daha kolay aşabilen ulus ötesi analiz düzeyini kullanarak, gençlik katılım pratiklerinin ve hareketlerinin

dönüşümünü incelerken, Avrupa Gençlik Parlamentosu, Avrupa Gençlik Forumu ve Avrupa Gençlik Ortaklığı gibi uzun süredir var olan AB kurumlarının etkinliğini sorgular.

Bulgular ise gençler arasında memnuniyetsizliği ortaya koymaktadır ve gençlerin, "AB projesi" çerçevesinde uzlaşmaya dayalı geleneksel yaklaşımların aksine yeni katılım yöntemlerini benimsediğini ortaya koyar. Çalışma, neoliberal geleneklerin gençlerin katılımına etkisini eleştirel bir şekilde analiz eder. Sonuç olarak, bu araştırma, alternatif katılımı tanıyarak gençlerin siyasete katılımının daha kapsamlı bir şekilde anlaşılmasına katkıda bulunur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gençlik, Katılım, Avrupa Birliği, Neoliberalizm

This thesis is dedicated to the Turkish youth, to our fellow friends we lost in the system and with whom we share the same anger.
Wishing to always watch out for each other.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Associate Professor Asuman GÖKSEL, my thesis advisor, for her invaluable guidance, endless support when my efforts were insufficient, and elucidatory feedback throughout the whole thesis process. Her expertise and encouragement have been efficacious while shaping the thesis. I also would like to express my gratitude to Professor Özgehan Şenyuva, for the feedback provided, which contributed to the framing of my thesis and to Professor Zuhal Yeşilyurt Gündüz, for being a member of the committee and providing her valuable time and feedback.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CoE : Council of Europe

EU : European Union

EYF : European Youth Forum

EYP : European Youth Parliament

FFF : Fridays for Future

I**DASA** : The Institute for Democracy in South Africa

IDEA : Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

ILO : International Labour Organization

SALTO : Support for Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities Within the European Youth Programme

UK : United Kingdom

UN : United Nations

UNDP : United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO : United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNFPA : United Nations Population Fund

XR : Extinction Rebellion

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Children" and "young people" can be used interchangeably (Evans, 2008). Besides some legal approaches to the issue; youth and adolescence can also be defined in the same way, historically speaking, according to Elliot and Feldman (1990), the maturity of physical body term "teenager" is defined referring to people between 13-19 years old (as cited in Evans, 2008). Another understanding of youth is considered as a "Western construction" whose roots are in the definitions of childhood and adulthood, characterized by "play, freedom, innocence, lack of responsibility and work, seriousness, independence, and responsibility" (Evans, 2008). Definition of youth in the Oxford English Dictionary is as follows: "State of being young, newness, young people (plurally), a quality of the young." Indeed, the etymologic roots of word of "youth" lies in the German word "Jugend," which is related to Dutch word "jeugd." It was then adopted by English as "geoguth" (Krishnan&Sethuramalingam, 2017).

The constructed definitions of "youth" are associated with socialization theories, which aim to "position" people according to their responsibilities, controls over certain things, level of independence; "a transforming process," according to Prout and James (1990, as cited in Evans, 2008). In a nutshell, the youth is described as the transition interval, from childhood to adulthood, which comes with responsibilities; where responsibilities and independence coming along with the mentioned transition is defined within the scope of neoliberal aspects of Western societies (Evans, 2008).

More precise definitions of the youth made in the field of International Relations, such as the definitions the United Nations, which defines youth as the persons between 15-24 years old. Similarly, the World Bank defines youth for those who are between the ages of 15-24. On the other hand, the UN agencies do not have a

consensus regarding the age interval. For example, the United Nations' Envoy on Youth suggested the age interval for youth should be extended to 15-35 years. International Labour Organization (ILO) follows the UN definition and accepts people between 15-24 years old as the youth. However, ILO stated that the youth should be understood as a period of transition from childhood to adulthood, underlining the fact that transition to adulthood can differ from country to another country depending on the welfare levels (Krishnan&Sethuramalingam, 2017). At the the European Union level, those who are 15-29 years old are considered as the youth; however age range of the youth vary among the EU countries. For example, Austria defines young people those who are between the ages of 14-18, while Belgium considers the 12-30 interval for the youth. From psychosocial point of view, Erik Erikson defines youth as a "confusion stage" which occur between the ages of 12-18 while Carl Jung says that the youth is the period where childhood dreams are put to an end and transition to career starts, where problems start to arise (Asler et al., 1973, as cited in Krishnan&Sethuramalingam, 2017). Lastly, American Psychological Association (2002) define youth age group as 10-24 (Krishnan&Sethuramalingam, 2017).

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) indicates that universally accepted definition does not exist; however, adopts the UN definition, as 15-24 years old. According to UNFPA, with %90 living in developing countries, there are 1.8 billion young people in the world, at an all-time high (UNFPA, n.d.). Finally, the European Commission (2023 defines young people as those between 15-29 years old. Accordingly, the youth distribution among the European countries in the top ten in terms of young population are as follows: Iceland (%20.9), Cyprus (%19.8), Ireland (%18.9), Netherlands (%18.8), Norway (%18.6), Luxembourg (%18.6), Belgium (%17.8), Sweden (%17.6), Malta (%17.6) and France (%17.6) (Eurostat, 2021).

The engagement of the young people in politics, in other words youth political participation, is a vital topic in an era where many transformations occur, and new societal dynamics exist. The youth political participation can include variety of practices to contribute and influence the decision-making and policy-making processes. Both conventional and unconventional methods of participation can be

used in this multidimentional engagement, and both methods can have their own advantages and disadvantages from the youth perspective. Additionally, youth-led and adult-led initiatives and methods shapes the level of youth engagement as well as the prospects of youth political participation.

Although the attitude of young people towards politics is often subjected to harsh criticism, the reality is quite different. It is possible to say that the contributions of young people to international politics are not recognized and not adequately taken into account by the main actors and structures shaping international politics today. The rejection or lack of acceptance of traditional political participation by young people does not mean that they are not involved in politics, that they are apolitical, or they do not bring new perspectives to international politics. The alternative political model that the world youth is seeking and occasionally struggles to assert through various means and structures cannot be fulfilled by the opportunities provided by traditional politics of today. Socio-economic factors, cultural patterns and norms, institutional regulations, and structures have an influence over the level of youth participation in politics, and sometimes even act as barriers. In contrast, there are mechanisms of local, national, and international participation that are initiated by young people or created for young people by adults, albeit with varying degrees of impact. In addition to institutionalized mechanisms, young people also act as actors in international politics through non-traditional - non-institutionalized forms of political participation. As young people's participation shapes the agenda of the discipline of International Relations, they will inevitably become permanent actors and shape the field. Therefore, their participation, particularly through mechanisms initiated directly by the youth should be evaluated and valued in addition to or beyond the topics and mechanisms set by adults.

In this regard, Europe can be considered as the centre of youth political engagement efforts as well as youth activism for taking the lead for creating the environment for youth work and youth participation mechanisms. Europe has emerged as the cradle of youth work and youth political engagement due to many social movements and for its longstanding tradition of civic engagement as well as the longstanding institutional mechanisms that have been echoed as the pillars of democratic values.

Although Europe seems to be ahead in terms of civic participation and advocacy of democratic values, according to the "European Parliament Youth Survey" conducted in 2021, 55% of the survey participants said that they did not have a broad understanding of the EU as well as stating that they did not feel they had an influence over the decisions made, laws and policies. 87% of survey participants also indicated that they had gotten involved in at least one civic or political activity; as well as voting in the last elections (46%), signing petitions (42%), boycotting, or buying on the grounds of ethical consumerism (25%). Additionally, 24% of the survey participants declared that they had taken part in street protests and demonstrations while 26% stating they had been part of online political activities. Thence, it would not be right to say youth is apathetic or apolitical; rather, their relationship with the EU and its institutions is in change, considering that 85% of the youth respondents said they had discussed politics within their social environments.

Regarding the image of the EU, 45% of survey participants did not declare any change compared to the previous year, while 31% stated that the image had gotten worse and 17% stated that the image had gotten better.

In "Young People's Participation in European Democratic processes" study of the European Parliament, conducted by Tomaz Dezelan in 2022, voter turnouts are discussed. According to the study, declining voter turnouts since 1951 considered as a threat to the democracies and voting considered as the "most significant tool" of political participation. However, 2019 European elections showed an increased youth (aged 15-29) voter turnout compared to 2014; from 28% to 42% and main reason was presented as the adjustment of the electoral calendar. Still, a general voter absenteeism in the EU is mentioned in the study, especially, highlighting the voting behaviour of the young generations. Although increase was observed during 2019 elections, no evident data was presented bridging the increased interest of the youth with the EU's institutional politics but only more available conditions to vote, coming to conclusion that the youth's decreased participation in the institutional politics of the EU cannot be denied (Dezelan, 2022). In "Europen Values Study" conducted in 2020 which was mentioned in the European Commission's study, adults (aged 30 – 50+) participation in certain political methods such as voting both

in national and European level or being a member of a political party is higher than the young generation, aged 15-29. Also, even the rates of less institutionalized but conventional-considered methods such as signing petitions is higher among adults, compared to the young people. In the study, decline in the political party membership is said to have severe impact on the function of the political parties as well as the level of participation (Dezelan, 2022). The same can be said for other conventional means of participation like electoral campaigns, communication with public official or activeness in political groups. Although focusing only on the voting behaviour while examining the level of political participation narrows down the political participation options, at the EU level, voting turnouts are still considered as the primary indicators (Marsh et al., 2007 as cited in Dezelan, 2022). At the EU level, voter turnouts are even lower than the national level voter turnouts for their "second order" character (Moyser, 2003; Reif&Schmitt, 1980, as cited in Dezelan, 2022).

The influence and impact of the digital world is also notable for the EU youth's participation in the social media by publishing their opinions, with the percentage of 26. Also, at least 24% of the EU youth seems to be a part of the street protests and demonstrations, along with the 25% of the youth who practice "politically motivated consumption" (European Parliament Youth Survey, 2021). Despite the varying means of political participation, the EU institutions perceive low rates of voting as lack of representation and as a challenge to their democracies. Therefore, it is obvious that participation is evolving and is a dynamic component of politics which poses both challenges and opportunities, considering the diverse understandings and practices (Lamprianou, 2013; Norris, 2022, as cited in Dezelan, 2022). Imposed and narrow conceptions of political participation, then, ignore the youth's political imaginations and quantitative studies to understand the youth's perceptions towards politics and participation fall short to put the full picture forward, which eventually leads to "apathy" conclusions (Marsh et al., 2007 as cited in Dezelan, 2022; Dezelan, 2022). According to Norris (2002) and Dalton (2009) reasons of divergence of young people from traditional politics and institutional structures vary. The reasons are linked to the changing values and norms as well as the trust in political actors and institutions, increased influence of the digital world, increased interest in protest politics as well as changing definitions of citizenship and the role of the state (as

cited in Dezelan, 2022). Insecure environment and vulnerable positions of the youth affected the positioning of the youth towards politics, as mentioned in Dezelan's (2022) study for the European Commission. According to Norris (2002), the new citizens are more individualist, cause oriented, involved in single-issue organizations which do not necessarily require long term commitments; as well as being more interested in informal groups to become members and participate in demonstrations through mass communication (as cited in Dezelan, 2022). "Dutiful young citizen," as put by the states, is therefore challenged by the youth, with their non-hierarchical critical networks, which are now positioned over their first-circle social ties, such as family, neighbourhood, work (Dalton, 2009; Rainie&Wellman, 2012, as cited in Dezelan, 2022).

As indicated in the European Youth Survey (2021), the European youth is showing diverse and mixed citizenships, in accordance with their priorities. However, it does not mean that the youth disregard the ethical responsibilities, but they also put forward critical notions of citizenship. Still, for example, being a member of political parties has the lowest rank among citizenship practices, as the most institutionalized and traditional forms of participation (Dezelan, 2022).

The gap between the youth and the institutional and traditional politics is evident in the Youth Survey. According to the Youth Survey (2021), youth answered to "how much do you feel you understand about your government and the European Union?" Regarding the EU, 43% of the youth responded that they did not understand very much and 9% of the understood "nothing." Regarding their governments, 42% of the youth responded that they did not understand and 9% understood nothing at all. Another important indicator for the aforementioned gap is the answers to question of "how much of a say do you feel you can have over important decisions, laws and policies affecting the government in your country and the European Union?" 33% of the respondents indicated that they did not have much say over the EU decisions and 35%, which is significantly high, said they had none at all. For their national governments, the picture is also not too different too. The survey therefore puts forth the reason for "concerning" levels of political interest of the youth. Also, changing citizenship and priorities are also evident in the survey since top three priorities of

the youth can be listed as follows: Fighting poverty and inequality, combating climate change and protecting environment; which can easilybe considered as distant than the traditional priorities of the states (Dezelan, 2022).

Another reason for the gap is the political trust, which refers to the "psychological commitment" and level of trust that a person carries for the political system (Nygard&Jakobsson, 2013, as cited in Dezelan, 2022). Decreased trust for the political system and politicians due to cynicism, populism and polarisation motivates the youth to look for alternative ways, which end up in the decreased levels of traditional means of participation (Dezelan, 2022). This "non-participation," on the other hand, should not be equated to "apathy" due to some first-noticeable reasons such as youth being sceptical, poorly informed or disempowered. Question of "what prevented you from voting?" explains the point above very well: While 15% of the respondents said they were not interested; 13% said they did not think decision makers listen to the youth, 11% said they did not understand the issues well enough and 10% said it is difficult to understand the currents of the traditional politics (European Parliament Youth Survey, 2021). In order to overcome such perceptions and to strengthen "participatory democracy," primarily through voting, the EU introduces many platforms and mechanisms such as the EU Youth Strategy, the European Democracy Action Plan, the European Youth Parliament, Erasmus+ etc., which will be examined in terms of their impact in the upcoming chapters. "Traditional binary categories," as put by Dezelan (2022), creates lack of ownership among young citizens due to lack of inclusion, sufficient information, increasing scepticism and decreasing trust as well as the alternative ways that gain visibility and that are more preferred, namely, "repertoires of the youth."

A briefing document of the European Parliament named "Youth Participation in European Elections" written by Micaela Del Monte in 2023, also focuses on the "apathy" discussions as well as the position of the European Parliament. The briefing document underlines the upcoming European elections in 2024 as well as the latest elections of 2019. The document explains the increase of youth votes compared to 2014 with "young people's desire for active political participation." Del Monte also states that the "European democracy is much more than just voting" and recognizes

the increase of non-conventional forms of participation. After the declining trend of voting since the first European elections in 1979, votes reached up to 50.6%, with the increased participation of the youth, according to Eurobarometer. Although the reason for increased participation can be linked to different reasons (such as the previous study's findings, namely, electoral calendar adjustment), the document emphasizes the "groundwork" of the institutions as well as the electoral campaigns, in collaboration with the youth initiatives. The briefing document also highlights that the European youth is not disengaged from politics or apathetic but engaging in varying political activities. For example, Del Monte gives the examples of a 2015 Commission study, indicating that 42% of young people declared interest in politics. Throughout the years, participation practices of young people moved towards protests, and young people become more and more politically active through demonstrations, as well as the increasing effect of online political engagement (Del Monte, 2023).

According to a study conducted by Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) on voter absenteeism in 2019, for young between 16-24 years, absenteeism in 2014 election was 72.2%. In response, youth agendas were raised in the EU including promoting young candidates, trainings for participation and political education, as well as lowering voting age, developing new voting methods, fostering conventional methods of participation in order to ensure high level of voting. "Representation gap" is another issue, underlined in the report. Underrepresentation is caused from unwillingness of politicians to hand over their positions to younger candidates and lack of "proactive" policies (Del Monte, 2023). When it comes to European Parliament's position, European citizenship and democracy were emphasized again with the indication of importance of youth participation. Parliament came up with the resolution of "European Youth Assembly" in order to observe the sufficient youth component (Del Monte, 2023). Obviously, repeating youth participation mechanisms under the same adult-led roofs do not lead to expected changes.

Current decision-making processes are not challenged well enough, due to rooted power struggles, tokenistic point of views and failure of deliberative approaches, in a

world where democracy is adopted by organization such as the United Nations and the European Union (Boldt, 2017). According to Barber (2019), developed strategies are criticized for being "decorative rather than influential in an adult-dominated area" (as cited in Boldt, 2017). As put by Schumpeter (1943), elite democracies are under criticism. In response, deliberative approach considers different perspectives, listen to other ideas in order to achieve consensus (Fishkin, 1997, as cited in Boldt, 2017). When it comes to young people in particular, as put by O'Toole et al. (2003), bottom-up approaches without strict definitions, by understanding youth's engagement styles and their "conscious choice" for "non-participation" in formal means of participation. According to Oswald and Schmid (1998), young people's "disappointment" with democracy causes them to experience detachment from formal politics and a new reunification among themselves (as cited in Boldt, 2017).

For sure, in Europe, participation behaviours vary too. For example, according to Flash Eurobarometer 2007, Germany introduces examples of youth subcultures while Belgium shows the highest voting rankings (where voting is compulsory); Sweden and Italy are the lowest in terms of voting rankings while the UK and Ireland presents examples of union memberships amongst young people. Additionally, the literature claims that the degree of European identity changes from country to country, showing the complex face of youth participation (Boldt, 2017). European identity focus of the EU aim at the young people and introduces measures to encourage young people to participate. "A New Impetus of for European Youth (2001)," "Framework for European Co-operation in the Field of Youth (2002)," "The European Youth Pact (2005)" and "Youth Action Programme 2007-2013 (2006) are some of the examples of those measures, aiming to ensure the future of the "European Project" (Boldt, 2017). However, as Lister et al. (2005) studied the "constructive social participation" indicating the shift towards civic notions of citizenship among the UK youth, it is not possible to discuss one single youth in the Europe when it comes to their engagement and notion of active citizenship (Boldt, 2017). On the other hand, as argued by Garmanikow and Green (2000), the emphasis of active citizenship provides little space for more defiant forms of political participation (as cited in Boldt, 2017). Conventional methods are highly promoted by the EU in policy documents, such as the European Commission White Paper on

Youth – A new impetus for European Youth, and mechanisms like youth councils are suggested to direct young people into the decision-making mechanisms, which are not welcoming alternative methods of participation. Therefore, the emphasis is more on "actualizing citizen" at the EU level (Boldt, 2017).

The EU sets goals for youth participation by introducing policies focuses on trainings, education, youth employment, volunteering activities. However, the failures of the system, the EU democracy, and institutions to meet the expectations of the youth. Due to this, the policy makers refer to the youth as "pessimistic disaffected citizen," by claiming that they are apathetic, apolitical, and inattentive (Cammaerts et al., 2014). Observers, on the other hand, from the youth point of view, perceive a "crisis of representative democracy," emphasizing the lack of trust for politicians, for the EU institutions (Kaase et al., 1996 as cited in Cammaerts, 2014). Young citizens tend to criticize the situation of the political systems, however, also, they are the ones with aims and ideals to restore the gaps and insufficiencies by creating their ideal of democratic participation (Bruter&Harrison, 2009, as cited in Cammaerts, 2014). This is called a "democratic paradox," as noted by Pattie et al. (2004) and paves the way for investigating the opportunities of youth participation.

According to European Commission Youth Participation in Democratic Life Survey conducted between 2011-2012, 52% of the surveyed young people stated that country would best governed if politicians listened to what people want and they wished citizens had more opportunity to participate in political decisions. Thus, democracy is still seen as the main organization to fulfil the needs of the citizens by youth, and the youth actually express their ideal understanding of democracy. The problem starts when public authorities, or the public itself, links young people's level of engagement to the voter turnouts only, by claiming young people are "done" with politics itself. Contrarily, surveys indicate that there is a bigger demand for democratic participation (Cammaerts et al., 2014). Outcomes of the focus group discussions conducted by Cammaerts et al. (2014), underlines that the politics itself is not the problem at all, but who do the politics is:

> "It is because young people don't vote! So politicians don't come to see them, because they don't need them." (Active focus group, France, 2012)

> "Those in power don't listen. Most people know their votes don't count. If someone's going to get power, they're going to get power anyway. Votes don't count." (Reference focus group, United Kingdom, 2012)
>
> "This is not democracy. . . Democracy is only mentioned at election time." (Excluded focus group, Spain, 2012, emphasis added)

According to the same study, young people are looking for different forms of participation and it is not possible to mention about a "general apathy," especially for those who are older than 18 years old. Peer groups discuss politics among themselves, involve in boycotting and involve in protests (Cammaerts et al., 2014). While investigating the representation of the youth, Cammaerts et al. (2014) mentions two levels of analysis: How the representation occurs in the relevant organizations and how sincere and true are the efforts of involving the youth to the mechanisms.

The European Commission Youth Participation in Democratic Life Survey, conducted between 2011-2012to measure the tendencies of young people regarding 2014 European elections, presents varying modes of participation experienced so far by the youth: Discussing politics (60%), signing petitions (55%), donating (45%), voting (59%), participate in demonstration (26%), joining a pressure group (16%), political activeness in social media (23%).

Another mass survey conducted by Cammaerts et al. (2014) indicates that, although there is a sense of "betrayal" and "distrust," young people expect to be heard by the representatives and tohave more minority representatives, to communicate with political authorities.

For Cammaerts et al. (2014), voting is located at the centre of both the problems and solutions, from the youth and adult point of views. While the participation to vote is highly stressed by the actors, avoiding voting seem to be result in a "political socialization" through the sense of betrayal and frustration.

Young European's participation is rather considered complex, in terms of the youth's level and patterns of participation (Motti-Stefanidi&Cicognani, 2018). According to

Barrett&Zani (2015), young people more seen in the civic organizations than in political parties (as cited in Motti-Stefanidi&Cicognani, 2018). While some young people apply to new methods of participation, some mix traditional methods with new, alternative ways (Motti-Stefanidi&Cicognani, 2018). The youth who feel disengaged from the EU may be involved in unconventional methods of participation, but, "the EU project" requires its citizens to be active within the institutional practices in order to strengthen and carry on the project (Motti-Stefanidi&Cicognani, 2018). The International Civic and Citizenship Education Study by Serek and Jugert, published on 2017, puts forward that trust of the youth towards the institutions effect their level of activeness within the relevant mechanisms. The findings of the study indicates that although the "active European citizenship" may differ from the general active citizenship, the factor of "trust" is observable in every level, related to the socio-economic problems and increasing social inequalities. This lack of trust eventually leads to lack of participation to activities (Motti-Stefanidi&Cicognani, 2018).

Hereby, we can say that several constuctructed definitons of the youth including their transition, age and positioning shape the discussion as well as vitality of youth engagement, either adult-led or youth-led. Critiques towards the youth make it necessary to investigate the youth engagement factors in a detailed manner, due to the complexity of the topic. Europe, for being centre of youth-related agendas, bring out varying means of engagement. Feeling of distrust and betrayal of the youth induce them to disengage from the institutional politics, thatfrom the EU politics. As put by Pattie el al. (2004), this does not neceaarily mean that the youth is disengaged from the democracy itself, but they reconstruct democracy with their own ways. Therefore, analysing the adult-led and youth-led structures as well as understanding their place in today's world is important to understand the influential dynamics of youth participation within the scope of traditional (conventional) and untraditional (unconventional) politics in order to put forward a future perspective.

This thesis aims to investigate the European youth's engagement practices by analyzing the impact of neoliberal practices by using a transnational level of analysis with the assumption that youth movements and engagement practices cross the

borders easier among Europe; and, the European youth is relatively more engaged status in politics due to the institutional mechanisms that have long been existed. To do this analysis, Europe's institutional mechanisms that have long been serving to boost the youth engagement will be put into question in terms of their responsiveness capacity. Dissatisfaction of the youth which leads them to adoptfor new participation methods in comparison to conventional methods needs to be examined also by comparing deliberative democracy practices and agonistic pluralism perspective, in order to highlight the neoliberalism's impact over repetitive approachs of traditional mechanisms, which lead to imperative consensus within the scope of the "EU project."

Hence, the text will start with the conventional/traditional political participation by touching upon the relationship between citizenship, democracy, and participation in traditional means by visiting adult-led political participation. After, international frameworks for youth participation will be explained through the first international attempts regarding youth political participation. Thirdly, both adult-led and youth-led youth political participation mechanisms will be inspected in comparison to each other to examine the impacts of the mechanisms. Lastly, the thesis will be concluded with the very current topic of the youth participation, which is unconventional political participation, by providing the main criticisms against traditional mechanisms and by getting the bottom of unconventional space and its development areas, where young people managed make it mainly "youth-led."

CHAPTER 2

CONVENTIONAL/TRADITIONAL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

In conventional approaches, communities who are participatory are seen as the essential component of a strong future of the states. According to many scholars in the field, too, participation is considered as "at the hearth of the democracy" (Dalton, 2008). Without public involvement, democracy falls short within the framework of traditional politics, therefore the common political culture encourages its citizens to participate. Participation may refer to voting, taking part in public discussions, being a member of a political party or serving in a jury. Therefore, being a participative "good" citizen is the basis of democracy (Dalton, 2008). For example, "Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy" survey, conducted by Georgetown University, asked its respondents if they vote, if they are active in organizations and in politics, and if they are able to form their own opinions while abiding by the rules and regulations as well as showing solidarity with other citizens on the basis of "citizenship norms" (2005). Power holder authorities of traditional politics define citizenship via participatory practices, as a proof of democracy. Consequently, traditional politics should be examined throughout the relationship among participation, citizenship, and democracy.

Citizenship is therefore associated with participation by holding people responsible for their obligations and rights such as using the right to vote when the time comes. According to this, the liberty is supported by the linkage between "political theory and practical politics" (Hurrellmann et al., 2013). Then; politically active, involved and knowledgeable citizens are desired by the states claiming to be democratic. With this way, stability of systems could be seen to be maintained within the framework of traditional politics. Traditional politics therefore also sets boundaries for citizenship, democracy, and participation. It is important to highlight the dominance of traditional mechanisms since discussions regarding alternative ways for participation have been

opened in the field of politics, and, the main subjects, citizens, also get affected therefore notion of citizenship as well as understanding of democracy and participation are under transformation as well. Highlighting is important since the states and the state actors, within a conventional perspective, could deny or ignore the new discussions (Corney et al., 2021). Undoubtedly, younger generations are commonly the main subjects of citizenship, participation, and democracy discussions for discovering their political identity and level and types of their political engagements, while the traditional means are challenged and under transformation by them. Even though conventional ways of participation still dominate the daily political discussions, a new agenda is ahead of many societies, especially of young people, by taking the youth into consideration more significantly other than adult-led political participation.

This chapter aims to investigate the links between citizenship, democracy, and participation in order to move to converge on young people's perception and practices regarding the mentioned concepts since they are problematized under the domination of conventional/traditional political participation.

2.1. Citizenship

The notion of "citizenship" can be perceived by two different sides: One is the side of the citizen itself, and the other is, the authorities that hold the power within a national or international system. People can practice citizenship through different means, such as voting, being a member of organizations, protesting, boycotting or just by being a national of a country. On the other hand, power holder authorities can define citizenship through certain practices which may be aligned or not aligned with the perception of citizens. Namely, authorities may expect their citizens to vote, to be involved in politics in order to defend their countries' interests in order to gain legitimacy or to practice the values of democracy within the traditional frameworks. On the other hand, people can reconcile the concept of citizenship with aspects such as identity, solidarity and civic virtue. It is important to underline that citizenship can be experienced differently among people as well as can be experienced different than traditional/formal settings of the states. The reason to examine such differences is necessary to better acknowledge the transforming nature of citizenship.

For example, as discussed in Winter et al. (2016), citizenship can be defined in formal and informal ways. The formal way of citizenship is described as a "legal category" where it brings certain rights and responsibilities such as voting and paying taxes. On the other hand, the informal category describes citizenship as involving any people and practice, regardless of being "ordinary." Another approach to citizenship is put by Bloemraad's (2018) "claim-making" approach, saying that citizenship is measured with the responses to those claims and how long it takes to receive those responses. These claims can be, for example, related to recognition where persons ask for status and rights with the features they hold. It can be seen that the responses to citizenship are mostly interested in national contexts and nationhood. Supremacy of "national welfare state" on formal citizenship shadows the informal citizenship practices; however, formal and informal citizenship exist and transform together (Nordensvard et al., 2022). As T. H. Marshall mentions that dominance of the nation state and its mechanisms support its citizens in order to ensure the existence of the welfare state (Roche, 2002, as cited in Nordensvard et al., 2022). Additionally, traditional perception of citizenship claims that all citizens universally are subject to same obligations and rights without taking personal citizenship experiences into consideration (Nordensvard, 2022). When the states focus on formal mechanisms only, it creates a challenge both for itself and for its citizens who engage in informal relations, which is put as "the everyday state" by Gledhill (2002, as cited in Nordensvard, 2022). Formal citizenship approach undermines the concepts such as plurality as well as norms and values of many individuals in relation to their historical path which brings us to the point where "being or becoming a citizen" has many facets. As Isin and Nielsen (2008) mentions, citizenship's social, political, cultural and symbolic aspects are needed to be paid attention. Additionally, private sphere of individuals and community networks should also be taken into consideration rather than focusing only on state influenced legal definitions. Here, informal perspective on citizenship enters the picture.

When formal citizenship focuses on state-regulated obligations and rights to maintain welfare, informal citizenship focuses more on local communities while trying to maintain welfare for communities and mitigate risks for the society (Nordensvard, 2022). Informal citizenship approach includes informal social groups too as well as

households and networks. The main difference between formal and informal citizenship is described by Nordensvard (2022) as follows: While formal citizenship is based on legal rights and duties; informal citizenship is based on fulfilling communities' needs. People can be connected through informal networks and the local contexts regarding them cannot be disregarded while developing even welfare politics. According to Lipschutz (1999), informal citizenship occurs especially when the decrease of interest in formal practices of citizenship is observed in the nation state. Practices of informal citizenship provides local alternatives to citizenship attached to the nation state when citizens manage to organize themselves in response to state's failures. For informal citizenship, rights are embodied and realized by relationships as well as being community-based and engendered while for formal citizenship rights are disembodied, realized by legal processes via state (Nordensvard, 2022). Consequently, as mentioned by Cornwall et al. (2005), citizenship is "mutually constitutive and variety of citizenships exist".

Mentioning the alternative approaches, "claims-making approach" of Bloemraad (2018) explains how people's status, rights, participation are intertwined while examining citizenship. Additionally, at what level formal status matters is also an important aspect of the approach. According to Bloemraad (2018), normative concept of citizenship puts state and citizens vis-à-vis each other, and claims that rights mainly emerge from formal citizenship status. However, paying attention to claims-making approach makes alternative citizenship mechanisms possible related to social identity, mobilization and solidarity. Western understanding of citizenship offers a degree of "equality" among citizens, but it is not clear what happens to non-citizens; which creates a notion called "second class citizenship." (Bloemraad, 2018). But does (formal) citizenship really matter? Research show that citizenship status does have impact on civic and political engagement as well as social and economic inclusion and integration to society (Nordensvard&Ketola, 2022). T.H. Marshall's (1950) definition of citizenship covers civil, political and social rights; a "claim" for being a fully accepted member of a society (as cited in Bloemraad, 2018). Therefore, Bloemraad (2018) puts that citizenship as claims-making is related to recognition as well as "citizenship criteria." Therefore, claims-making approach is a relationship between normative aspects of citizenship and recognition. This mechanism,

according to Bloemraad (2018), consists of formal aspects such as law and rights but also concepts such as membership and civic engagement.

In short, when it comes to citizenship, informality matters. However, overlooking the informal practices of citizenship cause us to miss the complementary sides of the different citizenship practices. Understanding of citizenship is transforming as politics transforms and both authorities and people get affected from this transformation. While trying to adapt into these changes, overcoming traditional politics challenges or making claims; people can be categorized as "good citizens" and "bad citizens" by the authorities or even by certain group of the citizens.

Citizenship can be experienced differently by the different groups of society. Young people are one of them, due to their differentiating expectations and living conditions from adults, their perception on politics, and their fundamental concerns (Walsh et al, 2017).

Citizens, especially the young citizens are problematized for being "bad citizens" by the authority figures of the states, according to the state definitions of "good citizen" (Hart, 2009). It is important to mention young citizens because they are more likely to be actors of the aforementioned transformation. When norms are not abided by, it is likely for people to be marginalized. When citizenship's dynamic identity is ignored, the formal definitions of citizenship may put people in a "bad citizen" position. Also, as sense of belonging decreases, trust to political institutions and political agents also decreases. The youth in particular is expected to be "average" and "normal" abiding with the reasonable majority groups, without considering different backgrounds, expectations, norms. Critical citizenship focuses on the marginalized groups from the traditional structures in a society; such as LGBTQI+ community, refugees, disabled, women etc. (Wood, 2022). Previously mentioned transforming citizenship is commonly practiced by young people with a citizenship practice called "every day and lived citizenship." Arising from critical perspectives, lived citizenship is found in people's lives affected by the conditions they live with (Wood, 2022). The everyday citizenship can be experienced in neighbourhoods, schools and communities. Another area challenging the traditional citizenship

through informal ways is “digital citizenship.” The area is mostly shaped by young citizens who are the biggest adopters of technology. The citizenship therefore is practiced online by digital participation through expressions of “identities, rights and solidarities (Black et al., 2022, as cited in Wood, 2022). Digital practice of citizenship, according to Blanch (2016) makes the distinction blurry between public and private space as well as increasing the connective action. These alternative/informal practices and participation attempts will be more relevant in the upcoming sections while discussing the concept of participation and youth participation mechanisms; however, varying practices of citizenship are a consequential start to examine the traditional political participation and then to move to the contexts where citizenship is practiced.

As mentioned in the previous section, understanding of citizenship is limited by boundaries of the states within the scope of national interests and priorities. Even in national contexts, citizens’ expectations from being a citizen may differ from the states’ approach. In order to better grasp the reason behind the “transforming citizenship” and states’ good-bad citizenship categorizations; Newman and Tonken’s (2011) evaluation on Denmark case can be considered as an example from being defined in a European welfare state context to shifting into an “obligation based neoliberal active citizenship” understanding. According to Newman and Tonkens (2011), in Denmark, citizenship is “earned” through fulfilling responsibilities. For the Denmark case, especially for the younger generation, these responsibilities include earning money, contributing to economy and being active socially. In this case, Denmark perceives young people and even less-recognized minorities as “extra burdens” rather than “full citizens” for not being good enough.

Denmark case above draws the picture in terms of being problematized as “bad” citizens. People can be, or, are likely to be marginalized when their life practices do not abide by the states’ expectations from them, as previously mentioned. When it comes to “active citizenship,” Kennedy (2007) mentions that the notion of “active citizenship” is highly affected by the national concepts, country contexts and understanding of democracy. For instance, students are influenced by local contexts; namely their families, schools, neighbourhoods etc. The impact of local

determinants, such as practicing democracy, shapes their relationship with citizenship.

In some cases, active citizenship might be in favour of the democracies in terms of drawing the borders of favourable citizenship or additionally, governments prefer its citizens to be engaged in institutional / traditional / conventional politics when it comes to being active by underlining the requirements of democracy. Again, as put by Kennedy (2007) another example for citizenship practice can be school communities, where peers raise their concerns, plan for potential actions, and discuss about social justice where university students create opportunities for wider connections. Conceptualizing citizenship beyond electoral responsibilities and state-shaped democratic requirements is helpful to perceive the effects of the transformation. Thence, perusing the concept of democracy to understand how citizens and states act under the domination of traditional politics would be the next step to analyze the features of traditional politics.

2.2. Democracy

Democracy, in its most basic form, comprehends formal traditional practices such as elections, guarantying rights, providing citizens' essential requirements (Fukuyama, 2014). A more developed approach by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines democracy as processes which citizens "rise their interests, exercise their rights and mediate their conflicts." (cited in Boyte, 2005) The Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA), for example, defines democratic governance as managing economic, political and social processes through governments, civil society and private actors (Boyte, 2005). According to Fukuyama (2014), democratic political structures consist of three components: The state, rule of law and accountability mechanisms. While mentioning about democratic state mechanisms, it is highlighted that power is used to favour whole citizens. Although democracy cannot be counted as the only legitimate system, it can be said that it is the most common. Fukuyama (2014) says, by responding to citizens' demands through democratic mechanisms, states maintain security therefore continue to enjoy their authority. Secondly, state and democracy are examined in relation to each other when it comes to forming a national identity. National identity is required by the

states to perform more effectively. By this means, states focus more on broad public interests, rather than the interests of minorities or other "narrower." Similarly, states of strong bureaucratic traditions have strong national identities (Fukuyama, 2014).

Democracy is very much related to the roles of citizens and their participation, citizenship participation is considered even vital although there are different views in terms of vitality (Michels, 2006). According to Kurki (2010), different policy makers and academics perceive democracy from a sceptic point of view, saying democracy can even limit rights and actions. For example, Joseph Schumpeter (cited in Kurki, 2010) argues that citizenship participation is not necessarily required for a democracy to be maintained and even participation should be left to those who have leading roles. In contrast, Rousseau argues that individual participation of citizens is required in decision making processes (Michels, 2006). Therefore, while one focus desires leaders' participation and claims participation is only instrumental in a representative democracy; the other focus takes citizens into consideration and claims a good democratic government requires participation. In neo-republican perspective, citizens become "public citizens" as they get involved in public affairs since getting involved means governing themselves. Common academic debate, on the other hand, sees the relation between democracy and participation as an individual behaviour which is being interactive in policy making processes as citizens in the age of information and communication (Michels, 2006). Scholars now define democracy more from an interaction-based perspective rather than state-centric approach. Meaning that, cooperation among governments, civil society, and private sector involvement boost democracy. This can also be perceived as a shift from elections-based and state-centric approach to democracy being the major instrument of citizenship. However, traditional approach of state-centric participatory democracy continues to dominate the discussions. In this sense, importance of spreading everyday politics increases in terms of youth-civic engagement by bringing skills to the table such as public speaking, conflict resolution and negotiation (Boyte, 2005).

Another aspect of democracy is creating commonwealth. According to this, citizens take part in society to maintain commonwealth by sharing responsibility where

citizens are “co-creators” of the democracy. Therefore, in a democratic governance, states act like the source of “self-reliant” citizens (Boyte, 2005).

For sure, as will be examined further in upcoming chapters, concept of democracy is also under reconstruction and criticism. Due to transformations caused from social, institutional, and technological reasons, one can mention the “crisis of democracy.” Crisis of democracy can be summarized as the decrease in the sovereignty of a nation state affected by the global currents, transnational networks and, transforming concept of power in the eyes of the citizens (Castell, 2010). As in the changing concept of citizenship, public opinion regarding traditional politics and its components, such as political parties and politicians, is also changing in relation to dissatisfaction and decreasing effectiveness. Yet, increasing scepticism for mainstream politics does not mean that citizens do not worry about democracy or do not take part in the democratic involvements (Castell, 2010). Upcoming chapters will go through the democratic and political dissatisfaction and (alternative) participation mechanisms; but to summarize, it can be said that when mainstream approaches of politics do not respond to certain crises that affect citizens, new components are opened up which aim to address the dissatisfactions by opening up the pathways of unconventional politics, different than conventional ways.

2.3. Participation

In the most basic definition, political participation can be defined as citizens’ activities affecting politics and participation can be relevant for any political system (van Deth, 2016). Although there are various types of participation now in the political systems; the most prominent ways can be counted as voting, signing a petition, taking part in organization and forums as well as unconventional ways such as strikes, protests, civil disobedience. Traditional politics is mostly relied on conventional ways of participation and the common sense would count conventional ways when asked about political participation (Borg&Azzopardi, 2021).

Participation is not a stable concept, but it is changing on the basis of the developments in theorems and research. While Schumpeter (1952) defines

participation only as voting, Linz (1975) and Dahl (1971) includes the context into the discussions of participation by linking it with a broader understanding by referring to the opportunities in a state's subnational units. For Dalton (1988), the success of the democracy is measured with the level of participation and system's ability to respond to citizens' demands. Additionally, Gerhardt (2007) defines participation as "dialectic between self-determination and co-determination;" Habermas (1984) as "representation with deliberation;" and, Pateman (1970) as "enabling citizens to participate more directly rather than elections" (as cited in Pohl et al., 2020).

Thus, it is possible to argue that the concept of political participation is a versatile and evolving phenomenon that brings variety of forms and challenges in its definition. In the most basic way, political participation refers to the involvement of individuals in actions that engage them in the political process, allowing raise concerns and take part in decision making processes. Wide range of participatory practices from formal practices such as political party membership, voting, joining unions, to more unconventional means like protests and demonstrations can be given as examples (Lamprianou, 2012). According to Bourdieu (1997), there are different types of capital that influences people's participation to politics. These types are namely economic capital (individual's financial assets); cultural capital (competencies, capabilities, and knowledge); social capital (social contacts and social networks); and, symbolic capital (reputation and prestige). For Bourdieu (1997), these types of "capitals" are intertwined with each other and also "transferable" as well as being connected to factors such as family and school.

The struggle to establish a precise definition of political participation is also influenced by the different theoretical frameworks employed in its analysis. On the one hand, there is the teleological perspective, which focuses on goal-oriented political behaviour (Lampriaonu, 2012). This approach seeks to understand political participation in terms of its outcomes and impact on the political system (Wahlberg, 2003). On the other hand, the "praxialist" argument emphasizes procedural involvement, underlining the procedures and mechanisms through which individuals participate, regardless of the specific outcomes (Lampriaonu, 2012).

Variety of perspectives make it difficult to create a universally accepted definition of participation. Still, political participation can be described as "political engagement" or "public involvement in decision-making" as well as citizens exercising their rights such as protest, speaking up, vote, and influence decision making processes. The key point in these definitions is that political participation involves actions that contribute to the functioning of the political system, whether through traditional or alternative ways (Lampriaonu, 2012). As societal attitudes change and unconventional actions gain acceptance, the distinction between conventional-unconventional becomes less clear-cut. For instance, activities like signing petitions and participating in demonstrations, once considered unconventional, are now more commonly accepted as legitimate forms of political engagement (Lampriaonu, 2012). Since young people are defined as "citizens in the making," their ways of participation either conventional or unconventional, might occur in the settings set by others, however these means of participation does not necessarily reproduce certain practices (Smith et al., 2005). Instead, these type of participation experiences/opportunities help young people develop their identities and ways of participation (Becevic et al., 2019). Either adult-led or not, engaging in activities which seem to come out from traditional means might be useful to construct their recognition and social capital.

In conclusion, political participation encompasses a wide array of activities that individuals undertake to engage with the political process and influence decision-making processes (Lampriaonu, 2012). Defining political participation is difficult due to the transforming nature of societal norms, the diverse range of actions, and various theoretical frameworks. As the understanding of political participation continues to evolve and transform, it is essential for researchers and policymakers to acknowledge the dynamic nature of participatory politics and consider both traditional and unconventional activities as legitimate expressions of citizens' involvement in shaping their societies (Lampriaonu, 2012).

2.4. Youth and Traditional Political Participation

The classical approach to youth participation studies underlines the importance of youth's integration into the existing agents, institutions, and regulations; so that

young people would be under control and abide by the states' expectations. In this way, status quo would be maintained, and young people would only be passive agents of the state. Another approach encumber youth for their appreciation to the state and expect youth to contribute to the society (Alterri and Raffini, 2014).

Dahl et al. (2017) suggests that adult-led politics spreads the idea/common sense that in today's world, young people have apathy for politics therefore the youth is distant from political participation. This argument is mostly accompanied by anger and criticism of adults against young people which claim that young people do not take enough responsibility and fulfil citizenship duties (Dahl et al., 2017).

One approach to youth participation is provided by European Steering Committee for Youth, by saying that participation is not an ultimate goal, but a tool for becoming active citizens in order for young people to play an active role in European cooperation (Kovacheva, 2000). The committee is also an adult-led structure consisting of governmental representatives from ministries, therefore might be subject to criticisms, however, it shows why -either formal or informal- youth studies refer to European efforts and why European youth tends more to participate (Kovacheva, 2000).

One definition of "youth participation" can be the practices of the young people regarding their claims in public sphere and those claims' and practices' recognition by adults and institutional actors (Batsleer et al., 2020 as cited in Pohl et al., 2020). Here, it can be seen that youth participation is not considered immanent to politics but adult recognition and concession required. As national governments are considered as the actors for youth policy making, national policies determine the scope of youth political participation. In that sense, it is crucial to underline that youth policies are less related to regulations but more depend on the public authorities' initiatives. Williamson (2007) defines "youth policy" as "the overarching framework of governmental (or sometimes not governmental) activity directed towards young people."

At the international level, due to dominant approaches regarding how the young people are addressed, it can be said that there is a dominant/preferable approach

regarding participation. In 2009, EU Commission addressed young people by stating that, in civic and political life, full participatory approach should be adapted concerning the increasing gap between the youth and the institutions. Although this approach underlines the concern for a certain degree of decreasing participation, also sets the limits for participation; in order it to be in a more desired way and to be through the institutional channels (Pohl et al., 2020). In relation to "citizenship" discussions, the youth is not considered as "full citizens" but more of "citizens in the making" (Becquet et al, 2020). Citizenship conceptualization is often "didactic" and "adult dominated" one, which attributes to institutional relationships and traditional/conventional forms of participation and does not include the "alienated" youth from formalised participation. This approach reproduces the adult line of vision in politics as well as adult interests rather than the needs and perspectives of the youth (Pohl et al., 2020).

Formal youth participation carry "control" and "legitimizing" purpose within the institutionalized frameworks by making young people subjected to hierarchy. Desired youth participation is expected to serve "empowered young people" for them to become "good citizens" (Lüküslü et al., 2020). Formal settings for youth participation require aligning with the adults' positions. No further negotiation or transformation is desired other than the concept of "desired citizenship." This setting shows clearly that the participation is stuck in the power relations between the youth and adults (Lüküslü et al., 2020). Accordingly, engaging in political participation is mostly associated with electoral behaviour. However, over time, a wide range of newly formed political participation has emerged as alternative to traditional ways of participation. At this point, it is again important to highlight the alienation of young people from traditional politics and their engagement in alternative forms such as protests and political consumerism (O'Toole, 2003). Even passivity is seen as a relationship with politics for favouring political inactivity time to time, for instance, when crises create vulnerable positions for the youth and support mechanisms are low.

Again, it can clearly be seen that participation issue is led by the adults and solutions are "provided without promoting" (Lorde et al., 2020) which gives a little mandate and action scope to the subjects, namely, the youth.

CHAPTER 3

INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS FOR YOUTH PARTICIPATION

In the modern societies, participation and democracy are embedded to each other as a natural outcome of being a citizen and young people are the main subjects of citizenship-democracy-participation relationship for the broad place they occupy. Since the growing discussions underline that new linkages are available to be a citizenship, it is important to highlight youth councils and youth parliaments and their approach to youth discussions (Matthews, 2001).

European Commission (2009) describes participation as young people's involvement to political life through the means of representative democracy also by highlighting the decreased relationship with institutions. This leads Commission to highlight the engagement with local representative mechanisms such as councils by urging national governments to take necessary actions. Again, the main role to initiate the involvement is given to the adult-led institutions. At the European level, institutionalization of youth participation seen as the primary action. The direction to participation is given by policy papers and programmatic interventions.

Either impactful for the youth and welcomed by the youth or not, especially at the Europe level, international interventions are worth to be examined in order to analyse better the response and actions of the youth in return. Therefore, the chapter will first cover the EU's youth participation attempts including policy documents and the EU's "non-formal learning" emphasis within the neoliberal setting. Then, the chapter will focus on the "moral panic" of the institutions which end up with developed youth strategies while also focusing on tokenistic character of the attempts. Lastly, forms of youth participation and the transformation of the mentioned participation towards more non-hierarchical and horizontal forms as well as youth's positioning within the existing setting will be examined to find out whether the youth is experiencing apathy or alienation.

3.1. Describing Youth Participation at the International Level and Marking the Neoliberal Turning Point

In broad definition, participation refers to being active in a political activity including decision making processes, in a group/community or ecosystem as well as taking responsibility, having influence over certain topics with a role (Kiilakoski, 2020). For youth, too, participation is mostly defined by their engagements and influence. In youth studies, participation occupy an important place as can be seen in certain "key documents" regarding youth work (Kiilakoski, 2020).

The very first significant attempt regarding youth participation is considered as the Convention of the Rights of the Child, which was adopted in 1989. Article 12 of the convention covers the issue of participation by highlighting the rights of children to express their views on the matters that affect their lives by stressing the importance of participation of those who are under 18. Participation is stated as a complete right where children's voices should be heard but also their voices must influence the decisions taken (Gretschel et al. 2014, as cited in Kiilakoski, 2020). The importance of the convention for sure cannot be denied, however the impact of it rather extends the formal procedures than paving the way for actual and impactful participation mechanisms. One general comment of the committee proves the statement right:

> "Much of the opportunity for children's participation takes place at the community level. The Committee welcomes the growing number of local youth parliaments, municipal children's councils and ad hoc consultations where children can voice their views in decision-making processes. However, these structures for formal representative participation in local government should be just one of many approaches to the implementation of article 12 at the local level, as they only allow for a relatively small number of children to engage in their local communities."
>
> (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009)

The statement above highlights the importance of avoiding tokenism and says participation "for show" should be avoided too. The statement also impose responsibility for the national actors for children to be engage in decision-making processes.

According to Kiilakoski (2020), there are different approaches to concept of participation which are not restricted to young people's participation and root back to 1960's. Those views underline the importance of the citizenship-participation link and their influence over bureaucratic decision-making and hope that citizens are empowered through participation. This "participatory turn" also includes the involvement of NGOs where standardised democracy is criticized too.

At the EU level, one of the milestone documents can be seen as "White Paper on Youth," which was agreed in 2001. The European Commission adopted the document at the aim of meeting expectations of young people following the consultations with national and international level stakeholders. The paper was expected to guide EU countries to develop best practices in terms of youth participation, as well as improving knowledge of the youth and encouraging voluntary work. The paper also prioritized coordination in the field of youth, mobility, guaranteeing the support to youth about their participation to processes and regular consultation to youth. As related acts, the Commission claimed in 2004 that high level of mobilization achieved among young people and undertakings were "fulfilled," although not many insights were published in terms of the actual outcomes. (White Paper on Youth, 2001).

Other key documents related to youth participation are 1st and 2nd Declaration of the European Youth Work Convention that were adopted in Gent, 2010 and Brussels, 2015.

The first declaration was adopted nine years after EU's "White Paper on Youth." The first declaration focused on "youth work in action" and developed the discussions through workshops and thematic seminars. The declaration mainly addressed the ministers of 50 countries and described youth work as providing support, opportunity, and experience for the youth through existing formal mechanisms as well as promoting voluntary work. The attention of the convention was mostly on the future of the youth and improving the accessibility and recognition of the youth. The convention also acknowledged that the formal authorities' priorities are not fully in line with the priorities of the youth and a link between top-down and bottom-top

must be created. The declaration, after all, determined “new strategy on youth work in Europe,” “non-formal learning” and “recognition” as the next steps in the field of youth work (Declaration of the 1st European Youth Work Convention, 2010).

The 2nd declaration acknowledges the youth work with the following principles: Educative, participative, inclusive, empowering, and expressive. Keynote speeches and presentations as well as plenary sessions in the convention aimed to advance democracy, human rights, European citizenship, and participation as well as finding solutions to social ambiguities and empowering adulthood transition (Declaration of the 2nd European Youth Work Convention, 2015). The second convention seems to be a follow-up document containing similar statements, observations, and goals with minor additions such as a bigger focus on civic dialogue and social cohesion.

Action points of the second declaration were once again formed around non-formal learning, responsibilities of the states, necessity of national strategies and instruments to overcome the challenges. The declaration concluded by stating that youth work is essential for Europe’s future, Europe’s democracy, and human rights and fail to prioritize youth work would lead bigger social challenges (Declaration of the 2nd European Youth Work Convention, 2015).

As can be seen in the key document examples above, main goals and highlights are quite similar to each other, when it comes to improve youth participation. Recommendations, actors involved and main challenges as well as reminding direct youth engagement are being reiterated and no major development which might cause an impactful outcome regarding youth participation from one document to another can be spotted. Although even the importance of avoiding tokenism and symbolic participation were mentioned in each document, the main concerns of young people and their demands were not taken into full consideration while shaping policies and while developing discussions in international platforms. The documents serve as proofs of young people’s secondary place in the tables of formal political actors and that repeated problems remain unsolved in new declarations; and such declarations have very limited impact in the following periods after their adoptions as also very similar recommendations can be seen in the documents. While criticizing tokenism, this kind of adult-initiated attempts may actually serve to tokenism itself by turning

faces away from the real problems and demands of the youth by underestimating the effects of dominant political concepts, such as neoliberalism.

The neoliberal practices of states and international entities increase inequalities and create even more insecurities for young people, decrease social inclusion of young people and maximize their exclusion. Years ago, political apathy was defined as not voting. Newer understanding of apathy also includes notions such as disinterest and decreased motivation as well as politically chosen passivity, due to the distrust among young people. Political alienation, on the other hand, described as being detached from politics for seeing it meaningless, restricted to a few or not effective (Dahl, 2018).

The mainstream discussions claim that the young people are not interested in politics, they are disconnected from the essentials of democracy and sceptical about the representative institutions and entities. Now, along with conventional politics, unconventional means of participation is in the picture.

It is true that individualist approaches to apathy discussion increase their impact, however this should not be associated with political apathy, based on the discussions that collectivist collective action is now turning into individual collective action (McFarland et al, 2003, as cited in Raffini et al., 2016). What we mean here is: Political engagements are now less linked to the family or education but more linked to the social networks (Loader et al, 2014 as cited in Raffini et al., 2016). Mentioned change is a long process considering creation of identity and means of mobilization. Sum of the changes, concerning individualization, deinstitutionalization, interests, and networks would lead different outcomes in terms of participation and requires social planning (Jugert et al., 2019). Based on the youth's skills, resources, abilities and cultural assets, young people would develop new ways to express themselves both in the political and social area – if not intertwined already. This is where "flexibility" enters the frame again. Today's agenda and context highly differentiates from the conditions of the 1980s-1990s. Today's generations develop their political engagement within a world of crisis, and socialization which creates the social networks of new mobilizations is being developed with a sense of insecurity. The

new agenda of youth consists of reducing inequality, oppression, empowerment of individuals, constructions of life projects (Giddens, 1991 as cited in Raffini et al., 2016). Additionally, new concepts that were seen as non-political earlier are now becoming more politicised by the youth such as "consumption," "labour" and "leisure time." For sure, new politics has not emerged suddenly and dates back long ago, however, even earlier developments are not sufficient to take as reference points; since the people who were young earlier now judge and commentate today's youth as apathetic and even irresponsible. Still and all, all these changes that challenging traditional politics actually shows us the mainstreaming of unconventional politics with new values, which we will examine in more details in the next chapter.

Depending on these new developments, one can say that the one of the most favourable forms of participation would be the movements emerging neither in private nor public sphere but somewhere in between. This is again a collective action but with new and more unusual words to say. Mentioned unconventional model is "non-institutional, horizontal and informal" along with being "individually oriented and less patterned." Therefore, no formal and traditional-usual practices exist but a more "fluid, informal, unstable" and even "temporary" activisms are now taking the stage (Raffini et al., 2016). In this transformation from traditional to non-traditional/non-institutional forms of participation, there is a role defined for neoliberalism in general.

Harvey (2005) claims that neoliberalism became dominant in the 1970s and found itself a place as a state instrument. He describes neoliberalism as follows:

> "Neoliberalism, is a theory of political-economic practices which has, at its core, a set of interrelated propositions about the preferred kind of relationship that should exist, or be made to happen, between the state, the market and the public. In this, the general wellbeing of people is best achieved by freeing up the spirit of enterprise that reposes in all individuals, guided by an institutional framework that privileges private property rights, free markets, and free trade as operational credo. The role of the state is to deploy its authority and resources to guarantee appropriate conditions for the effective operations of this system. Neoliberalism's prime directive is the complete domination of all human interactions by extending the reach of the market to areas of human relations not already governed by market transaction."
>
> (Harvey, 2005)

Therefore, youth studies specifically, allow us to examine the impact of neoliberalism on young people clearly. Especially, following aspects affected by neoliberalism explain the approach to the youth: Education, unemployment, work, dependency, mobility, and protests (Oyeleye, 2014). Youth studies and youth's space for action are shaped accordingly by schools, state, courts, churches, and time to time by theNGOs (Sakariek et al.,2015 as cited in Lo Schiavo, 2017). For the neoliberal paradigm, youth correspond to a "social category" where particular policies are developed for.

In response to neoliberalism's dominance and the comittant inequalities it creates, youth show global reactions, uprisings, and protests. It is possible say that neoliberal agendas have driven youth to certain new actions/responses. The youth act against inequalities created by neoliberalism, dominant policies of neoliberalism which they suffer from the most and adult-led initiatives that are not seen genuine in terms of being on the side of the youth in the context of neoliberal order. Certainly, the youth might be involved in adult-led protests of trade unions and political parties; however, it is important to note that those protests are also against the harms of neoliberalism. In the recent trends of global protests, globalization as a diffusor of neoliberalism is countered by the youth staking out the claim for solidarity, collectivism, and anti-commodification of education. The creative new forms of collective action mostly come out from the students around the world addressing variety of issues starting from education. Effects of economic crises, globalization, marketization, oppressive measures taken by the states constitute the centre of the protests.

Concept of participation is also relevant to the concept of democracy since democracy is defined as a system where all actors are included in discussions and decision-making processes about their own lives (Dalton, 2008). In this way, the existing global order does not only include the inter-state relations but also the global civil society and the built relationships/alliance with new social movements. Politics tend to approach to youth with the presumption of being unexperienced or even just as an "age group." Since the statistics show that the voter turnout is low among young people, they are considered disinterested to politics. Although young people tend to be involved in untraditional means of participation, narrow perspectives on

participatory politics disregard the inevitable change in their choices of political participation, the change towards post-materialism and civic participation (Kovacheva, 2000). Post-materialism emphasis is important because of the transition that the youth have been going through: The transition from material individual values to values of individualism concerning expression and autonomy over their perceptions.

As cited in Alterri and Raffini (2014), Beck (1992) supports the idea that "Youth depoliticization theory" is missing to grasp new "re-politicization" and "sub politization" processes led by the youth. In this sense, Beck (1997) comes up with the concept of "reinvention of politics" and says the youth is going beyond restrictions of traditional politics and extending it to "everyday life" (as cited in Alterri and Raffini, 2014). The term of "networked individuals" (Renie and Welmann, 2013) opens the path for this new tendency of youth participation (as cited in Pohl et al., 2020). In this new type of participation, it is observed that political activities are carried out in different spheres with new forms. On the other hand, integration of youth into politics through certain mechanisms is relatively a common agenda of institutions and local-national authorities. Here, we can see a distinction of adult-led integration and youth-led initiatives in terms of youth policies.

The distinction between conventional and unconventional participation in under change, as societal norms and perceptions evolve over time. For instance, participatory practices that were considered unconventional in previous periods can now become widely accepted and integrate into the political spectrum as they are recognized (Lamprianou, 2013). This recognition, therefore, may even gain the legitimacy about their political acts in the eyes of higher political mechanisms.

3.2. International Intervention to Youth Participation

Youth reserve places both in the agenda and in different mechanisms of the United Nations (UN), World Bank, the European Union (EU) as well as of multinational companies like Microsoft, Shell, Coca-Cola. It is possible to state that including

youth policies in the agendas and systems strengthen both institutions and companies since youth is a determining factor of both international arena and the neoliberal markets. The global trend/shift towards youth policies mainly aims to strengthen youth for them to be robust actors of the states and markets in the favour of neoliberalism and in order to ensure their relevant capacities, trainings, opportunities and even curriculums shaped.

Education, in relation to employment later, aims to create independent actors out from the youth in order to minimise the risks which might be burden on the shoulders of states and private sector. As Sukarieh (2014) mentions, youth as a social category is constantly constructed by the relevant actors in order to ensure state interest priority character of neoliberal policies (as cited in Lo Schiavo, 2017).

For example, World Development Report dated 2017 refers to the models of "youth dimensions" as "learning, going to work, staying healthy, forming families, exercising citizenship." No doubt, these are the tools to shape the desired neoliberal society where the priority is not to secure the youth from the risks and damages of neoliberalism but aligning youth with neoliberalism. Here,

Youth participation is a concerning area for governments in terms of a "moral panic" and being out of the set structures, where their citizenship skills are found insufficient (Kennely, 2011).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) is accepted as the first treaty defining the rights of youth. At the international level, young people are at the centre of environmental, social, and economic change movements. Meaningful participation require consensus about youth-centred policy developments and participatory structures which are not tokenistic (O'Donoghue et al., 2002). For policy development to not to tokenistic, policy-makers attention to the factors that put the youth into risk must be examined well.

Changes in society and political economy are driven by youth who are both "at risk" and "social agents" of change (Banjac, 2017, as cited in Kwon, 2019). International

organizations such as the UN agencies and World Bank recently accept young people as the agents of the changes and as a category to empower. Global youth conferences are one of the most performed organizations to ensure youth participation by involving them to the processes and allowing them to create the discussion agendas (Kwon, 2019). For example, in the Baku Forum, participatory structures for youth were identified as one of the primary challenges in terms of the difficulty to build meaningful, real, youth-led mechanisms.

Although we see more international attempts for youth participation such as UN Convention of the Rights of the Children or EU Commission's "White Paper on Youth," most youth policies are considered as symbolic. Considering the definitions of participation above, potentially all actions can be participation; having a citizenship status with "lived practices" considering the constructivist approach in participation; as well as voting, youth parliaments and councils (Walther, 2012; Smith et al., 2009 as cited in Pohl et al., 2020).

Organizations such as the UN promote youth participation through the following: Forums and groups formed by elected authorities, board members, specific forums, panels, community-based groups, national groups, advisory groups, event, and activities where young people are responsible for (Bersaglio, et al., 2015). With these means, young people have a chance to be heard, involved in decision making and planning processes and influence local policies. However, again, it is important to draw the attention to the scope and limitations as the examples above are mostly adult-led initiatives in nature. Even if the idea is youth-led, the problem starts with the actions taken as declarations, papers and outcomes rarely become real policies accepted by the adults. Exceptionally, some young people report certain local projects, forums or "steering groups" are youth-led where the youth put forward their opinions to influence other young people, chairing groups, and taking direct decisions. The benefits of such participatory engagements are considered impactful in terms of "improving life" (Bersaglio et al., 2015).

Europe, in this sense, is both concerned and hopeful regarding the youth participation. "The White Paper" of the EU describes the youth policies as a national

priority by emphasizing youth participation is crucial for Europe's integration (2001).

The European Union takes the lead for youth political participation with its instruments. The EU puts national governments as the main responsible parties for ensuring youth participation. This top-down policy approach making the national government agents responsible for youth policy making is doubtful considering it is essentially the local level youth-led efforts that provide meaningful participation (Shephard&Patrikios, 2012).

3.3. From Youth Participation to Youth Political Participation

Youth studies mainly focuses on three types of political participation: Participation to institutional politics (elections, campaigns, memberships), protest actions (mobilizations and demonstrations) and expressionist, aesthetical, and digital categories. Young people contributed to all three types of political participation; but most creative new types of participation can be looked under the third category (Kovacheva, 2000). International Relations reckon young people as a group with a special societal status and examines political participation through research on new and improving experiences, youth's transition regimes within the context of new societal relationships and the new global points which are embraced by young people (Kovacheva, 2000).

Politics do not only consist of governmental policies for the youth, rather, includes almost every aspect which interests society: Hierarchies, norms, institutions, authorities can be challenged by the political actions of the youth.

Youth in current times is not the same with early modern times. Different groups within the young populations embrace different political definitions and, more importantly, expressions (Verschelden, 2009). These forms might include informal networks between peers as well as irregular actions which are challenges to hierarchical structures (Fiedler et al., 2022). Internet, for example, is a widely used tool for youth's participation in terms of taking actions, fundraisings, lobbying and

building networks. More flexible and comprehensive methodologies, therefore, would be helpful to examine the new participatory mechanisms of youth (Pitti, 2019).

The main reasons of differentiated findings regarding "political apathy" are many diverse points of views of the researches and taking sides about youth's political participation. As Norris (2002) indicates, while political scientists who abide by the 1960's political views problematize the decrease in political party memberships; academics in the field of International Relations celebrate the rise of activism (as cited in (Verschelden, 2009). The second mistake done by the researchers is their comparative survey groundings while examining the tendencies regarding participation for ignoring the societal context and not being able to explain the diversity of forms of participation (Verschelden, 2009). These diverse forms of participation are practiced in the social space.

According to Bourdieu (as cited in Soler-i Marti and Ferrer-Fons, 2015), social space is called the relationship within a society shaped by socio-economic conditions and culture. This relationship is established by the individuals and their "symbolic capitals" available so that individuals' position designated whether to be in central or periphery. In this respect, the youth get integrated into the system and get familiar with the relationships mentioned above. For example, getting integrated into labour market, gaining independence from family would bring more centrality to the youth on their way to the adulthood. According to Strate et al. (1989), developed skills and gained experiences cause youth to be more interested in public-related matters. For sure, all these are traditional approaches in a sense and brings us to the fact that pathways to the adulthood have changed from past to the present especially in terms of being more flexible and less standard. However, it should be kept in mind that the youth are developing their political stance under more uncertain and vulnerable conditions due to the existing welfare regimes which prioritizes such things as individualism and job markets. For those who are better integrated into welfare states it is less likely to get affected by vulnerabilities and more likely to be involved in institutional/political relations since welfare states take the priority over adult members of the state. For instance, adult-oriented public spending can be considered

as a first-line aspect of this difference. It is true that especially Western European mechanisms are in favour of providing central participatory positions to the youth, when within the institutional-formal frameworks. However, more peripheral contexts for youth are also seen when the adult-led mechanisms act precautious regarding the youth participation.

Institutional expectations tend to define political apathy towards young people, however, importantly, the modern citizens' discontented attitude for formal politics, but this attitude should not be confused with apathy. As Colin Hay and Gerry Stoker (2009) put:

> "The real issue is the prevalence - and the inadvertent nurturing - of an anti-political culture. Contemporary political disaffection is not, we suggest, a story of the decline of civic virtue, nor is it a story of political apathy – it is one of disenchantment, even hatred, of politics and politicians. It is not that we have stopped caring – we remain impassioned and animated by politics – but our intuitive and emotional responses to politics are increasingly negative in tone and character." (as cited in Valgardsson, 2019).

Hence, rather than discussing "apathy," one should argue the fact of "alienation," as discussed by O'Toole (2004). Investigating the turn from formal politics to informal practices, then, would help to understand the young critiques about traditional mechanisms. Cambridge Dictionary defines apathy as follows: "Behaviour that shows no interest or energy and shows that someone is unwilling to take action, especially over something important." Oxford Dictionary, too, defines apathy in a similar way: ″Indifference to what is calculated move the feelings, or to excite interest or action" (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d., as cited in Valgardsson, 2019). The definitions underline two main components: Uninterest and not willing to act. Also, as put by Thompson&Horton, (1960), political science, too, defines apathy as a uninterest in politics and lacking motivation to involve in political activities (as cited in Valgardsson, 2019). One should be careful that, having less interest and unwillingness to take an action are two different things, and are not necessarily interchangeable. For example, some can vote in the election just out of the sense of duty, without having a particular political motivation or interest (Ekman&Amna, 2012, as cited in as cited in Valgardsson, 2019).

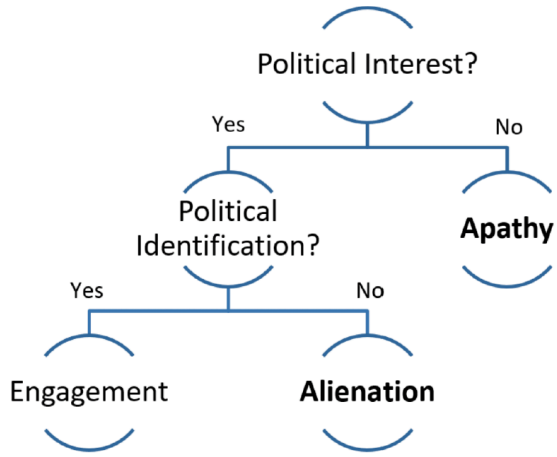

Figure 1. Apathy / Alienation Diagram

Source: Apathy or alienation? The conceptual distinction between apathy and alienation developed in Valgardsson (2019).

Therefore, it is possible state that we are lacking a sufficient identification for traditional political alienation, where voting is considered as the central part of the systems (Fox, 2015, as cited in Valgardsson, 2019). Important to emphasize that people who do not identify themselves within the existing systems might be part of "marginal" or "anti-establishment" actions. Following chart showing the increasing trends for "political alienation" is significant to underline the importance of apathy-alienation distinction:

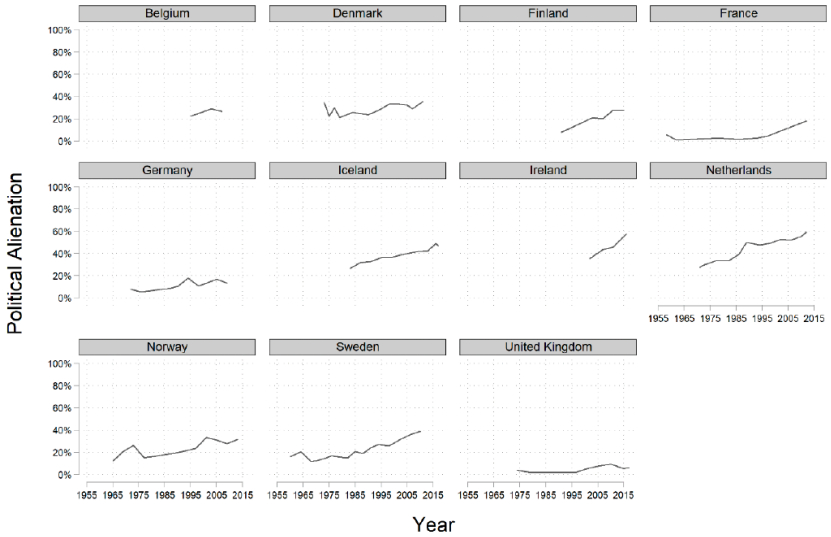

Figure 2. Political alienation trends in Europe

Source: "Trends in alienation. Average political alienation (reporting political interest but no identification with any political party) in 11 Western European countries from 1956-2017" in Valgardsson (2019).

Both apathy and alienation may result in decrease in the formal political activity, however, one should not conclude that the youth's divergence from formal practices means political disinterest and passivity (Valgardsson, 2019). The experienced decline in the European Union for those who were 15-29, concerning the voting turnouts, namely 29% in 2009 and 28% in 2014 (European Parliament Data on Voter Turnout, 2023) made the youth "the most disengaged group" of politics (Kitanova, 2020). However, on the contrary, the EU funded MYPLACE survey indicated that 42% of the youth between 16 – 24 years old had reported interest in politics (MYPLACE Final Report, 2015). As studied by Norris (2002) too, young people do not tend to move away from the politics itself, rather, looking for more untraditional meaningful ways, for already feeling excluded from conventional options (O'Toole et al., 2003, as cited in Kitanova, 2020).

In conclusion, repetative attempts that are limited to follow-up policy documents and actions remain tokenistic and should be avoided while the youth is seeking after less patterned and non-instiutionalized means of participation. Within the neoliberal setting and dominance, emphasis on voting and encouregement for youth parliaments-councils of adults continue. In response to this, re-politicization of the youth occur although the youth experience the resistance of the adults. Therefore, the changing conceptions should be considered as "alienation" rather than "apathy" and apathy should not be equated to political passivity. In relation to this, examining the existing institutional youth political participation mechanisms would set light to the experiences of the youth.

CHAPTER 4

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS FOR YOUTH

In traditional political context, both public opinion and policy makers do not perceive young people as “full citizens” but “citizens in the making” (Andersson et al, 2016, as cited in Becquet, 2020). In order them to be full citizens, actors who have already been recognized officially need to guide them within the formal channels. Youth policy in this sense operates in different levels including national, supranational, local and regional interventions. By creating programmatic approaches, the European Union (EU), Council of Europe, and European Youth Forum work together on the youth participation mechanisms by promoting cooperation. For example, while Council of Europe (CoE) focuses on the rights of the youth, the EU focuses on education, mobility, employment, active citizenship, and the European Youth Forum (EYF) works for the youth’s concerns by consultation to the CoE and the EU. At the European level, it is seen that active citizenship within the framework of European governance is an agenda topic almost for two decades. Therefore, we can infer that Europe is leading the youth policy work with its supranational identity. For sure, the implemented policies are highly hierarchical and institutionalized in all three and does not give room for informal, unconventional means of participation. However, their work on youth policies causes more youth to be engaged in discussions, policy making processes and representation. Either way, these efforts have a positive impact on young people’s engagement in politics and answers the question why European youth is more engaged in politics.

In terms of the policies, agendas are not fully aligned between the EU, and CoE too. These institutions accept that there are ways of participation outside of their formal settings; however, in that case, the youth is seen as “stakeholders”, in line with a neoliberal jargon, rather than being the direct representatives or decision makers. It can be stated that EYF is more in favour of accepting the youth as direct actors on

decisions and rights than the EU and CoE. Aside from institutional coordination and the EU and CoE being the main bodies above the EYF, it can be hardly said that their approach to youth participation is different as will be seen in this chapter. This shows that even among the European institutions working for the same goals regarding the youth, there are differences of mindset just like adult-led and youth-led perceptions of politics.

4.1. European Youth Forum

Formed in 1996, European Youth Forum (EYF), defines itself as an "international non-profit association" which was "constituted for an indefinite period," as indicated in the original status report (2023). EYF is considered as an umbrella organization, constituted by the member national youth councils and non-governmental youth organizations of European countries, which are called "nominating organizations." From this perspective, the forum can be described as "youth-led" participation mechanism. EYF's members are categorized as full members, observer members and associate members. Each membership category come with their own criteria, duties, and rights. This non-profit international organization presents its main objectives under Article 3 as follows:

- Representing the European youth, raising their voices and increasing the youth participation.
- Advocating for rights, defending interests of the youth.
- Raising youth-related matters to the higher entities such as Council of Europe, the European Union and the United Nations.
- Promoting the youth policy and working to make youth policy an integrated concept within the policy-making discussions in the adult-led traditional mechanisms.
- Advancing exchange-based practices and right of equal access.
- Advancing the concepts of democracy, diversity, solidarity, and active citizenship.
- Boosting the network among young people, as well as youth organizations.
- Promoting national level youth engagement and participation.

- Developing youth-related policies and making youth-related research (EYF Status Report, 2023).

EYF supports the idea that, youth mainstreaming in all national and international policies is required, especially to create a "long lasting" legacy within the Europe. In the 2020-2023 EYF Strategic Plan, a "system change" is highly emphasized, saying that, members of the EYF get together to create changes in terms of the dominant practices that govern the youth's lives. Seeking a rights-based approach, EYF underlines the importance of enabling youth-friendly and youth policy-oriented environments (EYF Strategic Plan 2020-2023). EYF puts forward certain priorities that are expected to pave the way for a youth-friendly world: Access to rights, youth rights recognition, social rights, employment opportunities, and inclusion and diversity. The strategic plan compares the 2021 resolutions with the reported changes in 2023. In 2021 resolutions, EYF aimed to overcome discrimination, challenges regarding youth's access to rights, welfare of the youth, young people with vulnerable background, existing governance mechanisms, youth legal protection and meaningful youth political participation (EYF Strategic Plan 2020-2023). In 2023, EYF reports changes regarding the aforementioned challenges. EYF claims that, in 2023, young people had increased access to rights, youth had been recognized better, welfare systems were built more youth-inclusive, vulnerable groups were included more in the society and young people participated more in the mobility practices. Likewise, the Strategic Plan indicates that youth work has now an increased recognition by the political actors as youth organizations also enjoys empowered status. When it comes to participation, no definite indication is available in the Strategic Plan but only the efforts of EYF to strengthen the participation of young people within the political and economic framework were mentioned.

In the light of the above, it is possible to say that the primary approach of the EYF in the strategy document is "rights-based approach." For sure, participation is emphasized many times and recognition is repeatedly underlined; however, political participation seems to stay at the background compared to other concepts such as welfare, access to rights, discrimination, and sustainability. This is not to say participation is not paid enough attention; however, means of effective participation

is now reached through different channels and agendas. Therefore, rather than seeing an institutional political participation dominated goals, EYF focuses on driving institutional actors to change their agendas accordingly.

On the other hand, in "Policy Programme" document of the EYF which was adopted in 2021 provides more about youth political participation within the framework of democracy and institutions. EYF indicates that, in the policy making processes, youth representation is not at the desired level and meaningful engagement areas to contribute, implement and evaluate are lacking which lead to not well-reflected realities of the youth. In the document, EYF also evokes one significant fact: Young people are the leading actors of the social movements and the gap between young people and institutional mechanisms are on the rise. Therefore, EYF (Policy Programme, 2021) proposes and works on the following in order to overcome the underrepresentation:

- Promoting "co-management" and "co-creation" structures where young people can directly and meaningfully engage.
- Encumbering governments for evaluating the impacts of developed youth policies.
- Pushing governmental bodies and institutional mechanisms to involve more young people directly to the policy making discussions as well as their implementations.
- Pushing governmental bodies and institutional mechanisms to create a better-working feedback mechanism.
- Ensuring the "rights-based" approach while improving the participation mechanisms.
- Monitoring the degree of diverse groups' involvement in the institutional mechanisms.

While underlining above, EYF reminds once again the degree of decrease in the institutional participation and shows election turnouts as evidence. This decrease is shown as a result where political parties, candidates and relevant traditional mechanisms tend to include youth and youth policies in their programmes and

campaigns, which is defined as a “vicious cycle.” In response to this, the EYF Policy Programme (2021) proposes the following:

- Making voting age 16
- Including youth organizations in the election processes
- Promoting youth interests primarily in the election campaigns
- Running informative campaigns regarding elections targeting the youth
- Increasing the number of young candidates as well as strengthening the youth branches in the parties
- Proving meaningful debate spaces to youth during election periods as well as spaces to challenge politicians
- Ensuring transparency and easier access to political institutions and authorities .

The policy programme is considered as a tool by the EYF to provide key aspects for future of the youth and top-line youth-related matters. This document aims to set a framework in terms of the ideal looking of the political environment for youth, as well as being a guide both for the EYF itself and other relevant stakeholders, including public authorities and traditional institutions. The policy programme document puts will to implement the calls for youth, also binding for the strategic plan (EYF Policy Programme, 2019).

As mentioned, one significant point that EYF puts forward too is the decline in the traditional means of participation. While proposing solutions to increase the traditional political participation of youth, very little is offered in terms of promoting alternative ways. Of course, emphasizing concepts like diversity, inclusion, sustainability, environment-related matters, and advocacy shall serve to boost alternative participation and alternative political agendas; however, when it comes to the actual impact, presenting policy papers and strategy documents themselves fall short to identify the new participatory pathways and familiarize institutional representatives with those pathways. Although the EYF itself is considered a youth-led initiative, the main stakeholders, partners, and interlocutors of the EYF are highly institutionalized and conventional mechanisms and, at the end, national governments

continue to prioritize their national agendas that are in line with the state interests. Consequently, national youth councils, which are the local "branches" of the EYF keep reporting the same challenges to the forum.

Still, it is important to note that, besides being the main funders of the European Youth Forum in comparison to the European entities such as the EU and the Coe; within the EYF young people are considered more as "actors" (Becquet et al., 2020). The EYF too can be categorized as a formal arena for youth participation which aims to bring social and cultural capital to. The EYF allows practices for youth-led formal participation of the youth with different backgrounds. With parliamentary practices, the EYF assists the youth to influence policymakers.

The quotation below explains the EYF approach and how formal settings are very much valid and directly involved in youth-led youth policy making:

> "Responsibility for youth participation lies with state authorities, who provide young people with the necessary legal framework and structures for their involvement. NGOs, together with parents and schools, should encourage youth participation and finally young people themselves, who are asked to take a grasp of the opportunities offered to them."
>
> (EYF, 2012b: 29)

With this, critiques raised for existing mechanisms, for the European Youth Forum too. The EYF criticized for being "unorganized and being too busy with its survival" as well as being the representative of "youth organizations" rather than the young people themselves. The EYF also not considered as a direct participation mechanism but rather a "member organization" that support "educational efforts" (Cammaerts et al., 2014). In relation to this, formalized structures of participation is found "alienating" and distant by the young people. This alienation, however, should not be accepted as apathy. The mass survey's focus group discussions proof the statement:

> "[Commenting on people involved in a political campaign] For example, those were students. I don't mean any harm but they are freaks that are well versed in everything [emphasis added]." (Excluded focus group, Austria, 2012)
>
> "I'm not confident because I don't have knowledge [emphasis added]." (Excluded focus group, Finland, 2012)

> "It would be good if the structured dialogue would be organized as a bottom-up process [emphasis added], which means that young people themselves are asked what they consider to be important and that these themes would be communicated to national governments and the EU. In this way, we would know what really is important to young people instead of asking young people's views on things they sometimes do not have an opinion on." (Stakeholder interview with representative to a structured dialogue, e-mail, 2012)

4.2. European Youth Parliament

Describing itself as a "youth-led non-profit organization for the youth" the European Youth Parliament (EYP) dates back to 1987 and its founding purpose was to bring young Europeans together to give people a space to talk about currents when there were no other youth parliaments (EYP, n.d.). EYP's very first aim is to support European youth in terms of civic education with its national level representatives and volunteers. The main strategy of the EYP is to create broad networks that are covering as many youth-related areas as possible and while working with this strategy, responsibility is shared among each actor of the EYP, which are national committees, the international body, volunteers, and members (EYP 2021-2025 Strategy Document). In the strategy document, parliament's mission is stated as the goal of inspiring, empowering, and informing the youth by supporting them to be responsible active citizens who take step to drive change.

The EYP defines itself as an independent organization where their action and discussion topics are decided free from any political institutions or parties. The network does not accept any interference from outside organizations or donors, as well as not taking any sides in political debates. However, while preserving political neutrality, the EYP does not show a "non-political" character. The EYP pays attention to the political currents and discuss them without allowing anyone's political opinion to directly impact the organization (EYP 2021-2025 Strategy Document). Main pillars of the organization are built upon the aim of being an accelerator for active citizenship, fostering peace, promoting sustainable structures, encouraging volunteerism, promoting inclusion, and creating innovative methods that would help improving the network (EYP 2021-2025 Strategy Document).

The primary focus of the EYP is active citizenship, as stated in the strategy document. Through volunteers, members and participants, the network works to develop and implement projects that involve young people, starting from the local stage. Within the local communities and networks, young people are expected to get familiarized with the topics that affect their life and relevant political institutions where decision-making processes take place, take part in potential solutions and developing constructive discussion environments. All these elements are believed foster the concept of active citizenship and considered as participatory practices in a youth-led space. (EYP 2021-2025 Strategy Document).

Belgin's (2021) interview with Matthew Caine, Communications Trustee of the European Youth Parliament, provides more insights about the structure and priorities of the EYP. Caine says, the EYP is a youth-led organization which is also "run by young people." As mentioned above, Caine too states that the primary aim of the organization is to encourage active citizenship. Additionally, it is emphasized that youth employment is at the hearth of the organization. Through forums, the European youth is given chance to engage in social and political topics and present their opinions and solutions (2021). According to this, young people experience a direct participation within a youth-led network.

The EYP adopts "regional, national and international" approaches while shaping their events. The events ensure peer to peer contact and from beginning to the end, activities are shaped by the youth (Ekström, 2016). Proposals, outcomes such as declarations and papers are first brought to the General Assembly of the EYP and then to the European Parliament with the aim of influencing the procedures, as indicated in Belgin's (2021) interview with Caine. Therefore, it can be said that the methods are conventional, however the content and the actors are the youth instead of traditional political actors or adults.

In response to Belgin's question regarding the degree of the influence, Caine responds that the influence of the youth work changes "across national borders." For being a unbound organization and not representing a certain political group, a certain political framework cannot be set for the EYP which causes relatively loose ties with politicians and policymakers as well as not having lobbying committees. Despite

this, more influential examples exist too, such as Ireland example. The EYP's "sister organization" in Ireland has relatively more close ties with policymakers and more direct communication lines. Additionally, the EYP's Germany organization is in close coordination with the Federal Foreign Office. Besides, as reported by one of the EYP member Kevin Boland, some of the EYP members attended high level events such as Davos Economic Forum, UN Women Nairobi Summit, and UNESCO Youth Summit, which are considered as influential outcomes of the EYP (2021).

As mentioned in previous paragraphs, the EYP apply youth-led conventional methods. One of the actions taken reinforcing conventional participation methods is "YOUthVOTE" project (EYP, n.d.). The project aims to increase the democratic participation of young people, in close collaboration with the European Parliament. through electoral processes for upcoming European Elections to take place in 2024. The project highlights the importance of voting either local or European level. Voting is seen as one of the primary opportunities to "have your say" and to "help change the world the youth live in." Voting is also considered as an important tool to approach the "global challenges" and primary step to solve them. Also, democracy is closely associated with voting and voting seen as a collective responsibility (EYP, n.d.).

In the light of the EYP's strategy, youth work, practices, projects, and primary approaches, once again, it is possible to say that the European Youth Parliament is a youth-led initiative where direct participation is available for the youth. Within this scope, the EYP operates with the conventional methods and goal of maintaining the youth-led nature is strictly followed. Accordingly, impacts and outcomes of the EYP work can also be considered as limited. It is true that young people are the direct actors within the scope of the EYP and its national parliaments; however, this does not make the EYP the ultimate policy and decision maker. The EYP's internal decisions are conveyed to upper entities such as the European Parliament, but the frequency of those decisions' actual considerations at the upper level still seems restricted and predetermined. This is once again the result of the adult priorities wall. While it is possible to see a close coordination with upper mechanisms and youth-led mechanisms during election times, regular discussions barely have direct outcomes

for young people. This is why when we compare different youth-led participation mechanisms, the fundamental problems they tackle are quite similar to each other, as well as tackling methods. Concluding this part with Kevin Boland's quotation from Belgin's (2021) interview would summarize the efforts well: "EYP probably won't change the world, but it will change people that do."

4.3. European Youth Partnership

Formed in 1998, the European Union – Council of Europe Youth Partnership aiming to "connect, engage and empower" the youth, first focused on European Youth Workers. In 2005, it was agreed to strengthen cooperation with a "Framework Partnership Agreement" (Schild, 2013). Although both institutions were very much able to conduct their own autonomous youth programmes, they mutually gave up some of their autonomy to implement youth worker trainings, despite the doubts and dissenting voices.

After many formal and informal exchanges, in April 2001, "Joint Declaration on Co-operation and Partnership Between the Council of Europe and the European Commission" was adopted. Later, the works of the partnerships were put on the legal basis through the time span of YOUTH (2000-2006), Youth In Action (2007 – 2013) and Erasmus+ (2014-2020) programme (Schild, 2013).

The "framework" agreements that were signed to provide a framework to the joint efforts, for the periods 2005-2006, 2007-2010, and 2010-2013. After the mentioned three, all developed framework agreements since 2005 were merged in a one single partnership agreement. The agreements covered strategies in the field of youth; namely, citizenship, human rights, participation, intercultural dialogue, and youth policy development. In the light of these efforts, with the support of the national agencies of the "Youth in Action" programme and SALTO Centres, European citizenship and youth participation aimed to be fastened. During the programmes, many research and political documents were produced, however, it is indicated that the outcomes and reflections of the documents are difficult to track (Schild, 2013). Main priorities of the partnership determined as follows (Schild, 2013; Council of Europe, 2023:

- Developing strategies for formal recognition of youth work
- Disseminating knowledge tools
- Determining political priorities for the youth sector
- Strengthening regional cooperation
- Mainstreaming youth policies
- European Citizenship
- Human rights education and intercultural dialogue;
- Better understanding and knowledge of youth
- Youth policy development.

Today, EU – CoE Youth Partnership's main themes were determined as participation and democratic citizenship, social inclusion and strengthening youth work. Within the partnership, young people are support through three main mechanisms:

- Youth policy: Capacity and knowledge building
- Youth research: Knowledge development to perceive the potential challenges and trends in the field of youth policy.
- Youth work: Promoting youth work, youth participation and social cohesion (Pasic, 2023).

Main youth research conducted with the support of the EU – CoE partnership, recently focused more on the alternative participation methods of the youth, as well as conducting research on critical approaches. Participation holds an important place for the partnership, and formal participation methods are encouraged with the emphasis of representative democracy. Therefore, efforts are made to boost voting, participation to referendums, increase party memberships as well as encouraging youth to take part in youth councils and youth parliaments. According to this, youth councils are paid attention, and they are considered as the "messages of public authorities" (Pasic, 2023). Democracy is perceived as "at risk" due to low level of conventional participation levels than expected.

Limitations and problems are very well determined at the partnership level both through the consultations with youth councils-parliaments and the independent

studies conducted with the partnership's financial support. However, it does not seem like full transparent, power-sharing, full participatory and impactful structures are still missing, as will be examined more in the coming chapter. Also, despite the awareness and recognition of activism, unconventional participation methods of the youth are not favoured, rather, they are treated as side-actions of the youth which cannot be replaced with favoured institutional practices.

All in all, above-mentioned youth participation mechanisms, etiher adult-led or youth-led, are again the institutional mechanisms that simulates conventional mechanisms and do not provide much in terms of the demands of the youth. Outcomes and impacts are low when it comes to policies implemented, and, showing presence as the youth in adult-dominated spaces. Participation methods are also conventional and arenot quite supportive in terms of the alternative methods. Additionally, emphases of the European Youth Parliament, European Youth Forum and European Youth Partnership are more on the capacity building, knowledge development and youth's transition to labour market; where the youth is seen as the future useful components of the system.

Distinctions emerge between adult-led integration and youth-led initiatives in the context of youth policies. Youth participation, as conceptualized, lies on the recognition of claims and demands made by young people in the public sphere by adults and institutional agents. Although national policies shape the framework of youth political participation, the implementation of youth policies often relies on public authorities' initiatives rather than legal/regulation-based steps.

Institutional approaches to youth participation often emphasize formal channels and hierarchical mechanisms. This perspective tends to limit the young citizens' participation. The prevailing discourse often prioritizes adult interests over the needs and perspectives of the youth, hindering the true and effective youth engagement. While European frameworks like the EU-CoE partnership promote youth participation, they retain hierarchical and institutionalized structures that undermine the potential for youth-led mechanisms that are not tokenistic.

CHAPTER 5

UNCONVENTIONAL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH

Claiming that youth is depoliticized, then, would be ignoring the "repoliticization" of the youth and the constant change regarding the new ways created by them. According to Beck (1992), the reinvention of politics is shaped by "overcoming restrictions of politics" of traditional mechanisms; or, in other saying, by overcoming the adult-led political directions, where "reinvention of politics" brings connective action mobilizations that includes both individual and collective approaches along with "post-materialist and materialist claims" (Raffini et al., 2016) Mobilizations today consist of more global concerns of the individuals' everyday lives. Here, what we mean is that the values, principles or ideologies do not have to be commonly shared, but the problems of everyday life components which create new linkages for mobilization (Raffini et al., 2016). As Melucci (1982) indicates, the mobilization is moving towards "why" to "how" people do actually mobilize. Of course, the segment of society we focus here is the youth since they are the one with the power of change regarding aforementioned participatory mechanisms. On the other hand, it is necessary to discuss if these networks can initiate a new long-term collectivism which would spark a bigger change.

Traditional political participation, as mentioned, is lower among the youth except the fact that conventional means of participation is accepted as the reference point while examining alternative ways of participation (Raffini et al., 2016). According to Raffini et al. (2016), rather than competing these two by claiming conventional means are the only meaningful ways; new linkages and demands should be looked upon as choice of participation.

Youth then might be "patronized" and "dismissed" for their activist action. This leads formal participation to decrease, which is seen as the only "meaningful"

participation by the states (Kennely, 2011). In relation to "citizenship" and "participation" discussions; from the state perspective, the youth, for being seen as the "citizens in the making," and for engaging in less-preferred methods of participation may not be considered as full citizens.

Democratic means of participation are highly related to youth participation for differentiating conventional/traditional participation from untraditional/unconventional participation and protest politics (Kovacheva, 2000). Many research show that participation patterns are changing, and the ways of political participation are increasing and diverging from the interest groups to societal movements, from traditional repertories to protest politics and from being under the guidance of the state to non-profit actors. Modern developments regarding political participation are linked to civil society and post-materialism; since post-materialism associates with differentiating participation means along with the cultural transformation within a society (Kovacheva, 2000). As the old style hierarchical and bureaucratic institutions' support is in decrease, younger generations now are more interested in societal movements, transnational advocacy, participatory mechanisms which challenge elites (Inglehart, 1997, as cited in Kovacheva, 2000). Social capital is created through the societal relations and horizontal relationships rather than hierarchical relationships. Salamon et al. (1999) even claims that mass voluntary "agentship" that is organized in an autonomous area out of the state and market is in the rise, which would eventually cause a global civil society to rise (as cited in Kovacheva, 2000). Then; concepts such as citizenship, democracy and participation would also transform globally, affecting International Relations, global youth and the societies around the world. This change could also cause decrease in the oppression that the youth face.

Literature shows that young people are linked to their social circle, especially when they take political actions such as protests, uprisings, or boycotting (Barber, 2014). With these social groups and networks, the youth can become more resilient to political oppression with the sense of collectiveness. Such a sense of collectiveness is one of the reasons for young people's decreased political attention to conventional means, and being the central agents of conflict studies (Kaim, 2021). In the contexts

that they find places, with the help of their community and/or peers, the youth get adapted to the challenges and conflicts relatively easier. Such young engagement can be addressed by mentioning the level of awareness about the conflict, how much they share the dissatisfaction, at what degree the personal identity aligns with the nature of the conflict and how frequently they engage in conflicts. In current contexts, young people experience the conflict with structured and long-ago established political structures (Barber, 2014).

At the international level, the states considered democracies by underlining the importance of formal political engagement of their citizens. This is required because of the question of "legitimacy," since governments refrain from losing their legitimacy to the decreasing voting habits (Crick et al., 2002, as cited in Print, 2007). Young people are more distrustful and sceptical about politics and politicians cause them to get less involved in formal practices of politics. Although education is expected to teach the "basics" of being a member of democracies, as the level of education grows, youth's engagement in formal politics decreases, on the contrary (Print, 2007). As Putnam (2000) puts, decline in civic indicators, electoral indicators and political engagement indicators can certainly be observed, but this does not simply mean that the youth do not have any political views or do not engage in alternative means (O'Toole et al., 2003, as cited in Print, 2007). On the contrary, as Norris (2002) argues, evidence shows that the political participation is under change, alteration, and reinvention.

The youth is often visible in the streets with their social capital, namely voices, sociability, and activity. According to Fuller and Löw (2017, as cited in Andersson, 2019), the space of act is constantly under construction by interactions and actions. Therefore, participation should also be considered in the spaces, especially in public spaces. Public space allows people to demonstrate, protest, celebrate, to do networking in order to engage in daily interactions. Therefore, public space helps people recognize each other, get organized, teach, and learn. The relations built in public spaces allow people to gain collective identity and even to define their own individual identities. Spaces can be organized with certain purposes too, such as being "invitations" to participation (Fuller&Löw, 2017). It is important to highlight

that young people tend to attend these invited spaces willingly in a "self-directed way" (Andersson, 2019) The below field note from France explains the use of such space of act very well:

> "Since March 36 (April 5), in Rennes, citizens opposed to the Labour Laware assembling Place du Peuple (formerly [or officially] Place Charles de Gaulle) to re-appropriate politics, invent another relationship with the public space and deepen democracy. Night Standing Rennes pursues two goals: in the short term, to defeat the Labour Bill. In the long term, we want to organise to regain control over politics."
>
> ("Field notes, NDE, Rennes," Andersson, 2019)

It is a fact that young people are less into the mainstream politics, however, at the same time, they are expanding the scope of their civic responsibilities. Political movements, collective organizations and civic engagements are likely to bring a new vision to traditional systems. On the other hand, critical education must be involved in curricula underlining the importance of youth's participation in decisions, different ways of political participations such as community action and protests, emphasizing broad sense of participation including workplaces and schools, including youth movements including women's movements and rights movements, allowing critical approaches to power relations and democracy (Rimmermann, 1997).

In this direction, the chapter will cover the topics of young people's perception in the eyes of the adults, as well as providing a critique of the impact of neoliberalism on young people. Additionally, how the youth is seen both as a problem and resource of future will be examined, embedded in the neoliberalism critique.

The youth's horizontal response opposed to the EU's hierarchical institutions as well as the quest for inclusionary politics will be analyzed. The EU critique will also include the EU's compromising nature by using Mouffe's deliberative democracy critique. The youth's differentiating politics from conventional methods due to decreased trust for the formal institutions and disparate priorities, and, transition to unconventional-activits politics will be the centre of the chapter. Also, climate activism be considered will take part in terms of its youth-led unconventional aspects.

5.1. Criticisms of the Existing Participation Mechanisms



Figure 3. Mafalda Cartoon by Quino

"From this humble little chair I make an emotive call for world peace!!" - "¡Oh, well!... It seems that nowadays the Vatican, the UN and my little chair have the same power of persuasion." © 1964, Joaquín S. Lavado (Quino)

Youth citizenship with certain set of qualities is desired by the states, only when their participation is not considered as a threat to state's power. Neoliberal states want their citizen to be competitive, market-oriented, and dependent (Kennelly, 2011). Youth is placed right opposite of adults, who need guidance for "good citizenship" considering their significance for the capitalist state. Young people who failed to be good citizens are defined as irrational, immature and dependent. As Arendt (1971) stated, neoliberalism itself would bring societies to an apolitical end when public sphere is restricted and "thoughts are absent." Without the possibility of "considerate, engaged, and ethical" politics, the concerns regarding youth citizenship and domination of adult-centred politics would continue (as cited in Kennelly, 2011). Therefore, the main criticisms of the conventional participation targets neoliberalism for its broad impact on the lives of the youth.

Privatized public services such as healthcare, school, education under neoliberal policies increase inequalities and worsen the human state and welfare. With the help of the corporate media, neoliberal capitalism is shown as the normal order of life, brings sufferings to young people, women, and children (Giroux, 2005, as cited in Grady, 2012). Societies have witnessed decreases in investment to education during neoliberal era, privatization of schools and education transformation towards "efficiency" (Ross et al., 2007, as cited in Grady, 2012). Schools now serve as a neoliberal tool for creating productive citizens supporting ruling class by becoming

"corporates" (Hill, 1999, as cited in Grady, 2012). This education model limits the students' critical way of thinking as well as their knowledge. Under these circumstances, youth try to open space for dignity, patterns for horizontal power rather than vertical with the notions of no-racism, no-sexism. Different groups among young people such as queer youth and youth of colour are affected even more by the neoliberal hegemony and strive for actions for themselves. Below quotation from interviewed young person from 2009's "Vogue Evaluation" (as quoted in Grady et al., 2012) summarizes the challenge well:

> "Nobody will help us, we have to help ourselves. We will be waiting around forever if we think that those White folks will give us a helping hand They pretend to and pretend to care about us but things ain't changed. Things are still the same. Our people are still struggling, still on the streets, and still being abused. With Innovation, I decided to take matters into my own hand you know. We go out into our community and get people active. We tell them about what is going on and tell them to speak up, to write to like the mayor, to protest. If we don't stick up for ourselves no one will. Failure is not an option for me and I refuse to let my people go down without a fight."

Although boards, councils and certain organizations allow youth participation, it mostly does not go beyond giving one seat within the structures, namely, as "decorations." In addition to limited involvement of youth, adults' interferences silent the voices of the youth (O'Donoghue, 2002). Having adults as guides to youth people mostly goes off the purpose and dominate the areas which supposed to be youth-led alternatives. It seems that adults cannot bear youth participation yet for not being able to fully comprehend youth participation. Therefore, rather than youth's adaptation of adults, adults need to be ready to adapt to youth-led political participation (O'Donoghue, 2002).

The neoliberal order caused young people to experience detachment from politics (Kymlicka et al., 1994, as cited in Simonsen, 2022). Due to the promotion of individualism of neoliberal state, decrease in the sense of community, and emphasis of individual responsibilities affected the relationship with what we call "political." In this era, the youth is described both as the problem and the solution; by being a threat to the order of neoliberalism but also by being the resources of the future which will ensure the future of adults (Simonsen, 2022).

Global youth conferences, youth conferences, youth seminars as well as the UN summits time to time provide participation opportunities to young people, but by emphasizing the idea of "ideal citizens" through the notions of liberalisms. Then, rather accepting these conferences as sincere and effective youth participatory structures, it is possible to indicate that they firstly serve to augment the criticized power relations and adult-led political participation (Kwon, 2019). After the spread of neoliberal governance, such conferences are used as tools to promote existing governing systems along with the notions of human rights and democracy. Outcomes of such conferences are barely converted into policies and limited actors show commitment to centralize the issues discussed during sessions (Kwon, 2019). Highly depoliticized and "contemporary" form of participation is defined as "post-political" and "post-democracy" by Mouffe (2005) and Ranciere (2004, as cited in Kwon, 2019). These youth conferences are designed as spaces of "regulated politics" where the consensus exist upon markets. A real participatory practice for youth is difficult to be observed, due to the agendas set by power holders and dominance of economic norms. Even the spaces that youth were able to negotiate to had been restricted by the institutionalized powers (Kwon, 2019).

Young people express their desire to take part in such conferences to be a part of global social affairs and conferences are expected to be conducted on egalitarian basis. But, on the contrary, young participants reported that their involvement was restricted, and unequal relations were observed during the conferences, such as the extreme involvement of high-level participants, government representatives, heads of UN agencies etc (Kwon, 2019). Sessions are not found interactive at the desired level and young people listen to high level adult participants in most of the sessions. Even, one participant reports her experience as follows: "It is a bunch of officials telling us we matter but not letting us speak." Indeed, this quote from a participant explains the main challenge very clearly; either during conferences or in local contexts, institutional representatives emphasize the importance of youth involvement and their significance for the world's future (Kwon, 2019). Even if the sessions organized for more interactive panels, attendance of high-level participants turns the organization into a highly traditional and usual one, as a mere formality. As a result, young people are insisted to attend the conferences to practicetheir citizenship ,

however, they are expected to join with their highly "depoliticized" ideas and action; moreover, no concrete political actions are observed after the conferences. So to speak, young people are used by adults to fulfil the duty of paying enough attention to youth policies. While the main aim should be the participation young people, on the contrary, unequal power relations arises from such conferences or similar mechanisms (Kwon, 2019).

Also in Europe, despite the structural youth participation mechanisms, youth participation is discussed within the framework of "European citizenship" and "European governance." This European framework does not necessarily address the different levels of society but encumbers the youth to be engaged into the existing mechanisms by using the "proper means" (Becquet et al., 2020). However, in order to implement youth policies aptly, different levels of society should be addressed in terms of their actions, according to Becquet's (2020) formal youth policy understanding. For instance, EU – CoE Youth Partnership which was formed in 1998 promotes participation, citizenship, social inclusion, and recognition. However, the mechanisms this partnership offers are highly hierarchical and institutionalized considering the aspects that have been promoted: Policy making, management, promoting youth participation, and support to the youth. All these aspects point out the concern regarding declining institutionalized youth participation. The consultative nature of the European Youth Forum, the European Youth Parliament and the EU – CoE Youth Partnership act more like a "simulation" of the higher mechanisms by offering a limited participation opportunities at the decision-making levels. The mentioned structures also focuses a lot on "capacity building and non-formal education" while supporting very conventional methods, also by conducting campaigns and projects with the EU institutions, for example, to increase the voter turnouts.

CivEd (Civic Education) Study conducted in 1999 with young people aged 14-19, focusing on notions like democracy, citizenship, youth engagement and diversity shows that political action mainly consists of electoral participation, political action, social movement and protests (as cited in Kennedy, 2007). However, even from early ages, political detachment can be observed from traditional practices. It is due to the

dominant idea that only means of participation is through conventional ways and voting (Kennedy, 2007). Therefore, in a setting where most of the options lead to conventional ways, it is difficult to see engagement through alternative political means. On the other hand, for even younger generations, protests are seen "illegal" and "terrifying" due to adult-led social constructions even when they have thoughts or stances about political currents (Kennedy, 2007). It seems that the political activities of the youth tend to be examined under four main dimensions: "Political obligations, political rights, voluntary activities and protest activities," as stated in CivEd research. Political environments and political socialization based on the -especially- local contexts also have impact on the political activity and the type of it. Considering the tendency of the youth for advocacy and voluntarism pointing inequalities related to youth-relevant matters; these types of political activity could be the main areas to focus on for encouraging the youth and opening new spaces (Kennedy, 2007).

Besides, promoting political equality by referring to equal votes would be the narrowest point of view since the equality constitutes the main concern of the youth (Print, 2007). While young people suffer from inequality in many parts of their lives, starting from education, trying to convince them to vote by underlining that their demands and concerns will be taken into account if they vote, would not be a powerful method since the initial standing point of the youth is the idea that votes are worthless when it comes to solve their problems. Secondly, strengthening central governments would be possible when the participation spectrum is broadened. Central governments around the globe are structured by the adults in the matter of "capacity building," this process also does not include young people directly even the policies include the young people (Print, 2007). Additionally, capacity building processes of the central governments are generally supported by supranational institutions, which are also adult-led formal politics promotive institutions. On the other hand, capacity building is likely to be through financial supports and guidelines that have been the same for a long time, constituted without the true involvement of the young people. Third, and the most controversial, is "opposing the undemocratic politics." Since the favourable and promoted type of political involvement is the formal involvement, then, governments would readily define any other form of

participation “undemocratic.” Since the main aim is to strengthen the central governmental power with the most “legitimate” way possible, other forms such as protests or alternative ways might be defined undemocratic, even illegitimate. Democracy itself is another discussion topic to be elaborated, however it is clear that the youth and adult institutional agents will define democracy different while the democracy is being linked to neoliberal aspects nowadays and subject to serious criticisms. There are even examples of parties who are accused for being illegitimate or traitor which were formed under “democratic” rules and regulations of the governments; therefore, young people can too be accused for defying democratic values (Print, 2007).

Voting is not considered as the very first option to apply by young people. As mentioned earlier, the main reasons are trust and honesty. Although the curricula in the schools try to create the opportunity for engaging in formal politics, the boundaries of national curricula are not expected to promote direct youth political involvement with alternative ways or increase the political trust (Print, 2007). However, no matter formal or informal, increasing political knowledge would help citizens to somehow engage in politics more, such as citizenship education programmes. On the other hand, as almost every school have in the West, there are “informal curricula,” also called under the name of “lifelong learning” which aim to teach through activities and by allowing the youth to organize and run certain formations (Print, 2007). Also, in Bourdieu’s (1993) opinion, modern societies construct the youth within the scope of adult-dominated spheres (as cited in Lüküslü et al., 2020). This narrow range of youth work with adult dominance are explained by two components: Pedagogical methods and institutionalization shaped by adult expectations which lead to challenging paths for the youth’s formal participation. Lüküslü (2020) explains the challenges for youth as follows:

> “Young people are put in “in between position,” pushing them to make a choice between their peers or adults, which leads to either losing their recognition or alienated and de-legitimized.”

During policy making processes, youth people are seen as the resources to ensure future. Within the framework of this regime, institutions might be more proactive to respond the needs and provide spaces to youth for decision-making. However, in

liberal transition regimes, youth is considered as a problem to be fixed and controlled. Therefore, the approach towards the youth is more related to control mechanisms (Walther et al., 2020). In Europe, approach to the youth is generally problem-oriented and main goal is to "protect" society from the disturbing aspects of the youth rather than bringing in the autonomous, self-governed young people; such as focusing on employability to decrease the "burden" of the states, directing young people to voting or being a member of youth councils. By these means, the most favoured outcome would be institutional control on "normalized youth" (Walther et al., 2020). As attention drawn many times in this thesis, institutions shape their operational structures and policies according to adult expectations and the youth participation structures, such as the European Youth Forum and Youth Parliament, deliver the messages of public authorities and higher mechanisms by barely going beyond their consultative natures. Even though young people manage to find for themselves meaningful room to participate, it is challenging for being "in-between" position. On one side, they may lose the recognition in the eyes of the adults and on the others side they might lose the trust of their peers by being delegitimize. The aim of "empowering young people" and making them good, active, European citizens causes tokenistic representation. No matter the efforts are, the power relations between young people and adults remain indestructible in formal settings (Walther et al., 2020).

Unlike adult people, political disaffection may lead young people to protest when they are unhappy with the conditions they have in hand. Therefore, it is likely for young people to use protest means for political expression, especially in Europe (Pitti, 2018). The political dissatisfaction can be first explained with political cynicism when people think regardless of the political party in power, no benefit can be done for them (Bynner&Ashford, 1994). Second is, political apathy when people are not interested in politics; and lastly not voting when people do not vote in the election periods. However, young people might be involved in unconventional methods (Bynner&Ashford, 1994).

Youth activists are accused of being "irrational, violent and out-of-control" (McRobbie, 1994, as cited in Kenelly, 2011). Public sphere in most of the countriesis under oppression and control of the states and those spheres are commodified with

the help of the institutions, as can be seen in recent France examples of Yellow Jackets Protests and protests against the pension bill. Activist movements are mostly related to crisis of globalization, economic crisis, war, and environment. States want "good citizens" with "moral values" and decide who is acting accordingly. Young people are taking actions in the front to shift mentioned conditions set by the states. Neoliberalism acts as the control mechanism in response to these shifts. Young people, depending on their social place, can be affected positively or negatively from the global neoliberal order and the gap keeps growing between those who can fit into the market and not (Kennely, 2011).

Marginalized youth, namely, working class youth, youth of colour etc.develop critical consciousness out of oppression. They are more likely to act for social change to overcome injustice and inequality, as young people are more detached from mainstream politics but more involved in civic participation (Diemer, 2011).

Tisdall (2008) proposes that in order to understand youth participation, one should look beyond the conventional participation definitions of the existing literature. Participation is mostly defined through justice, increased public services and more confident citizens. Also, participation nowadays is also described in relation to consumerism, where young people's engagement in decision making processes can be seen increasingly.

Among young people, types of participation may change, and participation orientation may differ, from being related to strong institutions and services to citizens to improved communities (Fleming, 2013). Undeniably, adult validation is a barrier in front of young people in terms of creating their own agendas and rights advocacy. Aside from some impactful examples of conventional participation, participation mechanisms which are open to young people are controlled by adults, in order to make sure that youth participation does not threat the existing institutional structures and orders (Hodge, 2005, as cited in Fleming, 2013). On the other hand, participation through "adult invitation" is also doubtful since the scope of the debates are limited by the adults. As Habermas mentions in instrumental rationality, young people are subject to "iron cage of regulation" where they are consulted, but their

empowerment and true participation is limited (Houston, 2008, as cited in Fleming, 2013).

However, short-lived events and modest expectations cannot allow young people to actually influence decision making processes, which would only result in physical participation. In addition to attending forums and committees, impact of the outcomes should go beyond the meeting areas as services, actions and wider everyday life discussions (Fleming, 2013).

Dismissive behaviour of the adults, as reported by young people, serves as a trust breaker although adults' discourses are "in favour of" youth participation. For example, during forums, too much adult interference is observed and boards themselves are moderated by the adults (Fleming, 2013). Even though the sessions of, for instance, the European Youth Forum and European Youth Parliament are led by the youth, for the session topics being escalated to the adult-led mechanisms, the level of consideration end up low. In addition to adult intervention, it takes a long time to see results, or even get feedback, due to the slow nature of the adult-led mechanisms. Adult people do listen, but the culture of actual youth involvement have not been developed yet and alternative mechanisms are not given a real place. These feedback that have directly been received from young people, of European Youth Parliament for instance, reported that agendas and structures are created by adults and limited by "normative barriers" (Hodge, 2005, as cited in Fleming, 2013). As a result, young people are not truly seen as equal partners while taking decisions and their identification within the aforementioned structures are done by the adults, in the name of European citizenship and European democracy. A true alliance with young people required to observe true participation if conventional participation is desired to increase.

Notions such as democracy and citizenship are defined and structured by constitutional systems of governments. The constitutional frameworks of the political system in modern times aim to ensure capitalism's survival. Citizens' participatory democracy in conventional terms aims to get to the solutions through advocacy and building relationships with relevant bodies, by being as diverse as possible (Rimmermann, 1997). Youth policies, in many instances, focus on problem-oriented

approaches, such as unemployment. This approach seeks to maintain the existing system's stability, often at the expense of promoting self-governance among young citizens. Consequently, youth participation remains largely guided by adult-driven approaches, limiting young individuals' scope for impactful action and decision-making.Transition regimes further complicate youth participation dynamics, as the concepts of universalistic, liberal, and sub-protective approaches intersect. In this multifaceted landscape, Bourdieu's (1997) observation that modern societies construe youth within adult-dominated spheres offers insight into the challenges young people face. The “in-between position” that young people often find themselves in push them to choose between aligning with adults, to unrecognition and alienation (as cited in Lüküslü et al., 2020).

Studies presented in this text and daily discourses are evident that young people are not interested in “traditional politics,” and detached from the usual practices of politics. Additionally, some literature and adult citizens from all over the world claim that young people are apathetic and less informed than previous generations. The main evidence they use to claim is the voter turnouts. It is true that the general tendency is not to vote, however, coming to a conclusion where young people are defined as apathetic and less knowledgeable would be superficial one (Rimmermann, 1997; Pilkington&Pollock, 2015). According to Michael Connery, young people should not be described as apathetic or less interested but more “civic minded” in terms of their ways in political participation matter. Why would any young people keep voting and follow the daily political discourses if they believe that they have very small impact on their lives, and if their voices are not reflected in the discussions? Then, they would lead civic engagement to occur (Rimmermann, 1997). For example, when the youth believes civic engagement might have impact on their lives, they would steer for activism. Through activism, young people keep trying to witness change even if they cannot achieve what they deserve right away; but at least the connection and collective action between peer citizens empower them to be engage in activism.

Parliamentary election’s voter turnout not being at the desired level in Western Europe or in Eastern Europe; also the decrease in memberships of unions or even

youth organizations show the accumulating problems around youth participation. These problems are interpreted by some as decrease in the social capital, de-politicization of the youth, social weakness or even marginalization (Kovacheva, 2000). However, one should analyse this if the decrease is related to the tendency of breakout from politics, or, traditional forms are being replaced by new civic forms of participation.

Deliberative model of democracy, which politically adopts notions such as morality and justice, reason, and argumentation brought new meanings to the understanding of democracy (Mouffe, 1999). As put by Habermas, deliberative democracy aims to reformulate the classical democracy through "communicative terms" on the basis of legitimacy: If there is consensus within the democratic institutions, and if they act for the "interest of all," then arrangements and norms become valid, for being agreed by all (Mouffe, 1999). Benhabib (1966) also refers to "common good" if considered legitimate and rational, and in order to achieve that "common good" and "rational consensus," discussions, debates and inquiries might take place (as cited in Mouffe, 1999). The above-mentioned defining components of current institutionalized democratic systems, exhibit the highly promoted characteristics of the European institutions. The EU supports the idea that with broad-enough representation that includes the youth, policies and next steps can be decided within their structural frameworks through discussions and debates, which would eventually end up in a "consensus." However, as Mouffe (1999) discusses, a full consensus and deliberation without constraints are impossible to achieve, for denying the conflictual side of the politics in a reality where a perfect harmony and true transparency do not exist. Mentioning about conflictual side, for instance, the youth's unconventional tendencies are tended to be ignored, considering their conflictual and differentiating natures. In terms of the power relations that have been criticized in this paper, too, for legitimation to exist, power must be enforced and power also enforced through notions such as "European democracy" and "European citizenship" which again shows the compromising nature of their institutions. When we think about the power holders who are the decision makers, then, "legitimate" decisions are in their hands, more than the youth, as the discussions made in the youth-led mechanisms are escalated to the mentioned power holders for further expected processes and policies.

Power holders can choose or limit the degree of youth participation to the decision-making processes; therefore democracy's "more democracy less power" claim can be refuted when we look at the participation practices. Hence, collecting all actors of the youth participation under institutional mechanisms with "morality" and "rationality" cover would not lead to a true plural democracy or would respond to the true needs ot the youth, but rather, it would deny the conflictual nature of pluralism and would inevitably end up in exclusion of many young actors. Then, denying an "unconstrained deliberation" and moving to more agonistic model, namely, "conflictual consensus" (Mouffe, 1999) would be more responsive to the demands of the youth made in the youth councils or parliaments. Also, reminding again the "simulative" structures of such youth participation mechanisms mentioned in the previous chapter, in order a decision to be made, consensus among the youth should be achieved, for democracy to be achieved. Then, the youth mechanisms can barely go beyond being a structural copies of the higher adult-led mechanisms. Additionally, prioritized discussion topics in such councils inevitably avoid conflicts, then, inevitably exclude a certain part of the youth where a pluralism cannot be mentioned. Consequently, the introduced mechanisms for youth participation would not go further than reproducing the existing structures.

"The European Project," is at a crossroads (Mouffe, 2013). The decisions made, including the efforts for youth participation, are made for continuation of the European project. European citizenship in a "post-national" Europe can prevent the acknowledgment of national and/or regional level identifications, which would put diversity in the background under "rational European citizenship" (Mouffe, 2013). With this, consensus is aimed to be achieved without any conflict as well as bonding differences in a plural setting. This "consensus politics" then would ignore the legitimate disagreement, and as Mouffe (2013) puts, shortfalls of such deliberative model can clearly be observed in the EU model. Within this model, youth participation mechanisms such as the European Youth Parliament, the European Youth Forum and the Youth Partnership become instrumental to carry on the consensus politics of the Europe, by spreading it among young people and by emphasizing the musts of the democratic European citizenship. These shortfalls are also observed in the youth policies of the EU as well as the youth's discontent with

the politics. In relation to this discontent, Europe's absent project that could enforce citizens' own identification and a target that the citizens mobilize their "politics" towards lead to a crisis and this crisis is also linked to the neo-liberal crisis which is fuelled by the "consensus politics" (Mouffe, 2013).

Today's modern societies are dominated by liberal and democratic traditions. To take it one step further, "liberalism was democratized, and democracy liberalized." Practicing democracy commonly in relation to human rights creates a "democratic deficit" as a negative result of "rational consensus" politics imposed by the "liberal objective" (Mouffe, 2000). These liberal components are endorsed by the premise that all citizens are equal and free. In this rationalistic perspective of liberalism, which is commonly recognized as the only legitimate model, pluralism cannot find itself a place, and even, pluralism and democracy are put in a conflict (Mouffe, 2000). Therefore, liberal logic can even act as a threat to democracy (Schmitt, 1976, as cited in Mouffe, 2000). In response, Mouffe (2000) suggests "agonistic pluralism" against deliberative democracy. In terms of the youth, plural approach might be what is needed for recognition of varying youth participation methods too. Rather than the youth's repeating practices in institutional mechanisms, such as the EYF and EYP, true introduction of unconventional and alternative methods to formal politics can foster pluralist approach within the existing structures. With this way, the failed practices of the EU could be avoided to be reproduces.

In formal political communities, the constructed "we" helps them to equalize their own demands to a commonly made democratic decision. The notion of "equality and liberty for all" constitute the political community, the notion of the citizenship and "coexistence" (Mouffe, 2000). However, the constructed "we" cannot correspond to all people, or all youth, as the EYP cannot represent the all youth, or the EU – CoE Youth Partnership fall short to identify the policies with such pluralist approach by the imposition of their "democracy" and "citizenship." "The politics" constituted by discourse, group of practices and institutions aiming to form an order and coexistence then denies the very conflictual nature of politics. Therefore, for a healthy democracy, without seeing the other as "enemy," conflicts and defenders of conflicting ideas would not be put into question (Mouffe, 2000). Because, according

to Mouffe (2000), the condition of somebody's identity is the existence of the other; otherwise no "identity" can be mentioned. Within this perspective, unconventional methods of youth political participation catch the plural approach better, in terms of allowing identity politics, conflicts and having diametrically opposed ideas without considering them as threats, such as the youth-led environmental movements, including the very unorthodox practices of the climate activism, as can be seen in Extinction Rebellion or in queer activism . This plural structure of the youth then can challenge the power-holder adult's hegemonic politics of crushing consensus.

As liberal democracies flourish in Europe, problems of gender, populism, authoritarianism, and human rights as well as neoliberal crisis increase under the hegemonic and barely contested liberal political systems. Liberal democratic notions such as universalism and rationalism and equalizing a person to another person increases individualism by detaching them from the community (Xavier, 2020). In Europe, liberal youth work is considered as a key policy, and youth organizations receive financial and political support from the EU institutions, which lead to inevitable inclusion of the EU notions, regardless of their useful links with the youth. Frequently encountered discourse of "opportunities for young people" and the initiatives of the EU is considered as the abetment between European youth policy practices and hegemonic notions of liberal democracies. Although the opportunities and the work done so far for the youth at the European level is not negligible; limitations prevent "counter-hegemonic" alternatives to arise for young people (Xavier, 2020).

The concept of "European Youth Work" defines the objectives, frameworks, methods, platforms and processes by itself under the influence of the liberal projects such as the EU, EU&CoE Youth Partnership, SALTO Resource Centres (Xavier, 2020). In order to widen the non-tokenistic alternatives and opportunities for young people, plurality must be embedded in the youth work in order to welcome the "beyondness" since even the best-intentioned youth work effort has hegemonic roots (Xavier, 2020). The youth participation spaces by nature, including youth councils and youth parliaments such as the EYF and EYP, for operating under the hegemonic andinstitutionalized power structures, are paradoxical and reproduces the notions of

liberal democracies. Rather than serving as open spaces for impactful youth engagement, they serve as adult-led mechanisms' simulations in a highly engaged way with the traditional politics. For example, the youth-related topics that the EYP, EYF and Youth Partnership focus are very much similar to each other and young people themselves are far from being the ultimate decision-makers within the traditionally structured mechanisms. The very first role of the organizations then would be to advance new spaces for true criticism, the criticism of themselves, by the youth.

Despite these challenges, efforts to transcend the limitations of institutional frameworks have given rise to innovative spaces for youth participation. Unconventional participation methods, often the primary political experience for many young individuals, provide spaces for activism, while hybrid models too, merge institutional and unconventional methods to boost young people's voices. Ultimately, the nature of political participation is transforming inciting a re-examination of traditional assumptions and approaches (Alteri et al., 2016) . Young people's political engagement is not characterized by apathy, but rather by a reimagining of citizenship and participation. As young individuals challenge the limitations set by adult-led structures and endeavour to participate meaningfully, the notion of citizenship becomes more fluid and inclusive.

5.2. Youth-Led Political Participation and Enhanced Engagement Area

In this new era, actions of the youth can take place both in private and public sphere as well as digital environment. These actions do not even have to be politics-oriented and can include single-issue mobilizations which proves that well-structured or pre-planned collective movements are not solely the case (Raffini et al.,2016). Non-hierarchical "networked individuals" (Renie et al., 2013 as cited in Raffini et al., 2016;) act by connective action. In this sense, participation has now become conscious individual's choice through more "fluid forms" to build their subjectivity and the term of "authority" is in the centre of the youth's debates (Raffini et al., 2016). Therefore, debates of participation go beyond institutional-unconventional dualism and bring a hybrid understanding of participation (DiGrazia, 2013).

Young people are very well aware of the solutions, namely, the conformity should be addressed, especially in schools, and critical thinking and active political involvement should be developed; which are the things neoliberalism tries to discourage. With resistance and activism, young people including queer youth and youth of colour are now creating an intersectional counter mechanisms to neoliberal policies (Grady, 2012) which put forwards a new development area. As being mentioned since the beginning, attention is also on informal participation due to the increased pressure on the youth both for individual and collective expressions.

Zill (2012) explains that as the crisis recognized more by youth, protests and revolts are observed such as "Arab Spring" and "Lost Generation of Europe". Occupy protests in many different locations and mass demonstrations in Chile also show young people play a leading role in the protests against the global oppressive system. Neoliberal agenda affects most education and employment components of young people's lives; and institutions responses to these crises are not found adequate by young people. Uncertainties, frustration, feeling of insecurity create reactions all over the world. Riots, in relation to these feeling are underestimated, such as David Cameron's comment to youth riots in London, calling them "mindless violence" as well as Kenneth Clark's labelling the protestors as "a feral underclass" (Diemer, 2011). These reactions, as mentioned, are far from being a mindful response to young people's demands along with being dangerously targeting. Informal ways of political participation, as an inference, are likely to be criminalized. Current global order generates protests and riots as a way of expression and political demand. In a world of neoliberal limitations and settings, youth cannot be expected to seek justice within the formal institutional settings of governments, or in other words, try the already tried. Globalized neoliberalism creates victims in all social groups, starting from youth (Diemer, 2011).

Since young people are at risk of changing conditions, they become the ones to start mobilizations/mass protests. Under neoliberal conditions, it is important to understand the claims of the youth (Nulman, 2019). Social movements act as a way of interaction with institutional politics (Loukakis and Portos, 2019). In the times of crises, core groups that protest are students and young people for being the very first

citizens affected by the precautionary politics. Eurobarometer 2021 data shows that, European young people are active in terms of political participation when it comes to "anti" protests and economy-related mass mobilizations.

When the problem is related to socioeconomic conditions and unemployment, it is more likely to see the youth is mobilized through waves of campaigns and mass gatherings. Education-related matters are also subject of mobilization for young people (Loukakis and Portos, 2019). Although voter turnouts, party memberships and engaging in formal politics is low compared to previous times, "apathy" does not describe the youth's choice of political participation. Informal means of political participation are embraced by young people in means like online activism, demand for inclusive politics, volunteer work and boycotting. Consumerist approach to education is one of the mobilization areas of the youth; since young people act through more "cause-oriented" reasons. Young people are not depoliticized, but alternative ways are more performative in terms of being flexible and directly related to young people's demands and rights. Youth protests are more likely to be observed when the formal stance shifts negatively towards youth-related matters. Lastly, protest claims of youth increases when the protest aims institutional actors. According to Loukakis and Portos (2020), with 73% of young people are by far the most prominent actors, delivering the two thirds of the protest claims globally. Issues raised when protest claims are made are mostly neo-liberal reforms related. For instance, in Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain, education-related reforms are the main issues. Other issues which young people make protest claims are migration-related issues, mental and sexual health, and safety. The picture shows that young people appeal to protests for the matters that affect them directly as well as matters affect the society in general. In Europe, the Great Recession caused inconvenience among citizens, mostly young people (Loukakis and Portos, 2019). Increase in inequalities, measures taken, neoliberal reforms paved the way for protest claims. State actors and institutional agents are targeted most. As long as the youth rights are in danger, more protest claims are likely to follow. Especially in the times of neoliberalism, education is expected to be the leading reason for protest politics. There are variety forms of protests across the countries and if the current settings continue, more protest claims are to be made by the youth (Loukakis and Portos, 2019).

Neoliberalism sees youth as a distinct "social category," warranting tailored policies. These policies find their place not only within international organizations but also resonate with multinational corporations. Youth policies are strategically embedded within agendas and systems, including institutions and corporations. This is driven by the realization that the youth play a leading role in international dynamics and global markets. Reframing of systematic inequalities caused from neoliberalism made it more difficult for people to be engage in formal politics, since the instruments of formal politics became less responsive. As a result of it, young people came up with resistance movements such as climate strike, Never Again Movement, Standing Rock Protests, and the Black Lives Matter Movement. Justice movements seem like to challenge neoliberal practices and institutional politics by removing barriers such as class, gender and race (Ferman, 2021). Different types of resistances by youth including alternative ways such as performance art, youth media became important to challenge imposition of public institutions.

Through the lens of intersectionality, participants of protests connect themselves with larger networks in order to rebuild collective identities where formal political detachment is replaced by action. This is also a revolt to neoliberal individualism. Demands for social justice cause critical consciousness to arise and help desire for engagement to increase. Determination of young people in terms of resistance and mobilization allows adults to be allies to their actions. Adults with legal advocacy power and activism background can also support the efforts of young people (Warren et al. 2016, as cited in Ferman, 2021). In sum, potentials for activisms are high since activism has intersectional nature considering the roots of youth concerns and youth-led movements are likely to spread in schools and in many other youth-dominated places (Ferman, 2021).

The domain of political participation has transformed significantly throughout the time, containing different forms of engagement that are beyond conventional methods. While traditional political participation predominantly developed around conventional means like voting, signing petitions, and organized forums; shift to unconventional occurred such as strikes, protests, and civil disobedience. This change contest the conventional notions of political engagement and highlights the transformation to civic involvement.

In the context of young people's political participation, there has been discourse of adult-led politics that the youth are apathetic in terms of political issues. However, this view fails to understand new dynamics regarding youth participatory mechanisms. Beck's notion of "reinvention of politics" and the concept of "everyday life" underlines the traditional constraints, as young individuals increasingly expand the boundaries of conventional politics (as cited in Alterri and Raffini, 2014). This shift is exemplified by the concept of "networked individuals," highlighting the emerging trend of youth participation occurring in diverse spheres with innovative forms, including unorthodox practices of activism, such as the youth-led developed climate politics.

Despite the common rhetoric saying, “young people are the future,” they mostly go unheeded, and the youth is not considered as the primary actors of the political debates (Kiilakoski&Piispa, 2023). The protest politics of the youth managed to challenge the order of traditional politics and the youth had opportunities to point out the policy makers for their responsibilities and failures, at global meetings and summits (Kiilakoski&Piispa, 2023).

Young environmental activists set an example for resounding unconventional type of participation. Compared to previous examples, climate protests, more coordinated groups, well-established networks, and platforms have helped newer generation to spark the change, as can be seen in the movements led by Greta Thunberg, born in 2003, Time Magazine’s 2019 “person of the year” for starting the school strikes for climate change (Sloam et al., 2022). Besides, Thunberg underlined the unfair practices for environment challenging the neoliberal mindset that favours short-term economic gains over long term climate concerns, and heard by the power holders during her speeches in the World Economic Forum and Davos (Kiilakoski&Piispa, 2023). Other than Thunberg; activist, who were recognized and awarded by the UN, Vanessa Nakate, born in 1996, Luisa Neubauer, born in 1996, Xiye Bastida, born in 2022 have become visible young actors. Simultaneously, European-based youth-led climate activisms, which are time to time categorized as “radical,” have become influential around the world: Extinction Rebellion (XR) and Fridays for Future (FFF) (Sloam et al., 2022). Speaking of unconventional natures of the movements, methods used by the youth can give us more insights.

Extinction Rebellion, first started in the UK in 2018, famous for its civil disobedience actions such as blocking the roads, funeral marches, and occupying state buildings uses more radical methods to increase the pressure on governments. Fridays for Future Future, started by Greta Thunberg in Sweden in 2018, uses less radical unconventional methods by skipping schools on Fridays to shout out the demands of the youth to decrease carbon emissions through government policies (Fridays for Future, 2023). Both movements gained a cross-border nature with the efforts and persistence of the youth.

These youth-led movements sparked the change for being impactful at a certain degree as some of their demands found places in policy documents and pledges, including promises made to set targets to decrease carbon emissions; while some decision makers defined the youth who got involved in the movements as "immature" (Sloam et al., 2022). In relation to the traditional linkages of the climate crisis, the Greens at the European Parliament doubled the number of its seats, due to the increased support of the youth towards green parties (Sloam et al., 2022). However, limited direct impact to the adult-led UN negotiations echoed in the streets, criticizing the "empty words, weak leadership and ongoing exploitation," as put by Thunberg in Glasgow at a FFF march (Sloam et al., 2022).

Despite everything, climate activism holds an important place for adapting varying methods of participation by using private and public spaces, social media, or ballot boxes. The everyday politics of the youth, focusing on climate too, is an outcome of their lives shaped by crises; such as the Great Recession, COVID-19 pandemic, and climate emergency (Henn et al., 2018, as cited in Sloam et al., 2022). The issues become more and more existential, which can be seen as the driving force of the movements, on the way to their adulthood. The seriousness level of the issue and reactions of the youth against it for sure face adult-led challenges, as happens in almost all spheres. Namely, the youth experience a "cultural backlash" from the adults who are against the youth-adopted norms and values, diversity and adults who deny the climate crisis (Norris&Inglehart, 2019, as cited in Sloam et al., 2022).

According to Sloam et al. (2022), we know how young people participate in environmental participation practices but focusing on the diversity of youth

involvement, as well as the transformative force of the engagement is also crucial. For example, for Henn (2021), Sloam and Nunes examine that the European youth created a change in the values by their post-materialist focuses, prioritizing the environment, justice for all and politics of redistribution with equity emphasis. Pickard (2019) on the other hand, underlines the "do-it-ourselves (DIO)" politics, which is a very reactive bottom-up response for denoting the failures of traditional/conventional mechanisms and adult actors whose actions fall short to identify the problems and create solutions. Another important aspect of the "do-it-ourselves" politics is how it enables young people to act together, making their movements global-scale "generational" actions and transforming the democracy, also by overcoming the "fear and anxiety" (Pickard, 2019). Actively using hybrid methods and communication through social media's engagement the way for broader participation is paved, and, support, visibility and even pressure created, according to the 400 youth-people study of Boulianne&Ohme (2022, as cited in Sloam et al., 2022).

The youth's positioning towards environmental politics influenced both Global North and Global South, with their own unique ways as well as showing the possibilities for alternative ways that are detached from formal/conventional politics. Emergence of connected critical youth who adopted post-materialist notions rejected the mainstream politics which centralizes elections and included new topics into the political agendas. Additionally, environmental politics opens new innovative ways by integrating technologies and, through that, creating opportunities for the non-engaged youth to "reimagine" the relationships between them and the others (Sloam et al., 2022). The climate politics of the youth seem not to align with the already existing adult-led systems, also by refusing the impositions of the modern society, namely, the importance of formal education and not skipping schools to secure the future and to find decent jobs. However, through their climate activism, the youth express that there are more important realities, and without solving them, no future would be available for them (Kiilakoski&Piispa, 2023). Then, considering youth as a "political identity" in environmental politics would make sense, within the scope of "adultist" structures for motivating high-profile movements across Europe with their frustration (Gorman, 2021). As Thunberg frequently refers, the hegemony of

capitalism and status quo embedded in the current formal systems can be shaken by unconventional methods of the youth.

> "So we have not come here to beg the world leaders to care for our future. They have ignored us in the past and they will ignore us again. [. . .] We have come here to let them know that change is coming whether they like it or not. The people will rise to the challenge. And since our leaders are behaving like children, we will have to take the responsibility they should have taken long ago (Greta Thunberg, quoted in Holmberg and Alvinius, 2019: 87)."

As Forkby and Batsleer (2020) put, through climate movements and youth-built "autonomous communities," new structures that challenge the hegemonic structures are created, as well as values norms that belong to the youth are improved (as cited in Gorman, 2021). Another important concept to mention would be "youth created laboratories of democracy," from Dezelan and Yurttagüler (2020), referring to the youth-led and youth-created horizontal spheres, creating justice claims. In this spheres, young people act as the agents of change and reconstruction as well as being the agents of "a world building project" (Bowman, 2019, as cited in Gorman, 2021). Lastly, in order to foster this project, rather than climate change educations in formal settings, a more "bottom-up" approach is suggested to be disseminated among children and youth which invites them for engagement and even, "radical imagination" (Rousell&Cutter-Mackenzie-Knowles, 2020, as cited in Trott, 2021).

Thus, in the context of youth political participation, it is essential to move beyond conventional indicators and formal systems. While youth engagement in traditional political pathways might be limited, their political stances and alternative means of participation are impactful. The youth's role in shaping modern politics should be evaluated beyond voting habits. Citizenship education, which aims to equip young people with the basics of democratic engagement, sometimes leads to decreased formal political participation as awareness rises. However, this decline does not mean a lack of political views or engagement; rather, it shows a transformation and reinvention of political participation.

Understanding youth political participation requires careful investigation, acknowledging that non-traditional paths and alternative forms of engagement hold

significance. The youth's impact on politics transcends formal structures, often finding expression through creative means that challenge the norms of adult-led politics.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed to analyze the discussion of “youth apathy” by touching upon the notions of democracy, citizenship and participation; as well as examining the youth-led / adult-led structures and the youth’s transition to unconventional methods. Conventional/traditional politics sees participation at the “hearth” of democracy, and public involvement is seen as crucial in the eyes of state authorities. With this approach, the "good citizen" is defined, and citizens are expected to vote, establishing the essential relationship between participation, citizenship, and democracy. States desire active citizens in terms of participatory conventional politics, aiming to respond to citizens’ needs and maintain their authority (Fukuyama, 2014). Consequently, democracy is fundamentally related to citizenship duties, and this approach also includes the youth’s active involvement in practices of conventional politics.

Participation is an evolving concept, and in broad terms, conventional politics accepts it as "public involvement in decision-making." Hence, citizenship and participation can be experienced differently by people, and societal transformations bring informal citizenship to the table, arising from the critical perspectives of conventional politics. Conventional politics considers the youth as “citizens in the making” where their political interest is desired.

Adult-led politics tends to see young people “apathetic” and “passive,” and their contribution to society is less than expected in the eyes of traditional authorities. On the other hand, the European Steering Committee for Youth puts forward a relatively more proactive approach, stating that participation is not an ultimate goal but a tool for becoming active citizens. Citizenship discussions regarding youth are didactic and adult-dominated, carrying control and legitimization aims by expecting

alignment with adult approaches. However, a newer understanding of political participation has emerged over time, leading to renovated approaches and international attempts at youth political participation.

At the international level, the youth also drew their paths, especially in the times of neoliberalism, where increasing inequalities and insecurities led the youth to apply for new methods, both conventional and unconventional. This was defined as “re-politicization” by Alterri and Raffini (2014) or as “reinvention of politics” by Beck (1997). Through this, international organizations and supranational entities, such as the UN and the EU, as well as youth-led initiatives, started working on agendas regarding youth. The EU took the lead with its instruments to promote youth engagement. The transitions young people experience such as entering the labour market and gaining independence, can impact their centrality within this social space. Developing skills and gaining experiences also play a role in directing youth interest in public matters. However, the pathways to adulthood are no longer standardized; rather, they are flexible and adaptable. Accordingly, it is important to keep in mind that youth is navigating political engagement under uncertain and vulnerable conditions influenced by prevailing welfare regimes (Pohl et al., 2020).

The examination of formal attempts, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the “White Paper on Youth,” underscores the importance of youth engagement in decision-making processes. Other key documents related to youth, such as the 1st and 2nd Declaration of the European Youth Work Convention, were adopted in 2010 and 2015, respectively, focusing on “youth in action” by bringing new perspectives to youth participation. It is important to note that the current era brings distinct challenges and opportunities for young individuals. They are navigating their political engagement in a world of crises and insecurity. Themes like fighting with inequality, empowerment, and constructing life projects shape the agendas of structures such as the EYP and EYF. Concepts like "consumption," "labour," and "leisure time" have become more and more political for the youth, and conventional notions of citizenship are changing. Connectivity, both online and offline, provides a basis for new forms of political activism that can span both individual and collective actions, promoting hybrid models of political participation.

In response to non-functioning mechanisms, unconventional methods of youth participation should be considered very carefully and seriously, as young people are the leading actors of unconventional participation with the aim of overcoming restrictive politics. Research shows that participation patterns of the youth are changing, and diverse groups are now paving alternative ways from traditional politics to more protest attempts. In relation to the youth's social circle, their political actions are shaped and affected by their networks in schools, universities, and neighbourhoods. In this way, young people develop their political identity and build solidarity. Youth is now more visible in the streets, and their emphasis is on their social capital and activity in the spaces they create for themselves. These spaces can be shaped for pre-determined aims, and young people tend to be part of these spaces with their own accords, without any inducements.

Main criticisms against existing participation mechanisms are that they are operated around neoliberal policies, creating more inequalities, privatization, and insecurities. In relation to that, the main demand of the youth is to move to more horizontal mechanisms with the emphases of no-racism, no-sexism, and no hegemony, which are often missed by the power holder authorities. In today's world, even schools are considered as a neoliberal tool by the youth. Therefore, youth councils, youth parliaments, young delegate programmes are considered tokenistic and non-influential compared to the expectations of the youth. Highly institutionalized mechanisms or even youth-led mechanisms that end up in institutionalized levels to get results lack the essence of the youth's demands and fail to keep their direction aligned with the transitions occurring. Youth-led engagement area, therefore, either conventional or unconventional, must be paid well attention, and more autonomy should be provided to the youth without delegitimizing or marginalizing them. The youth cannot be let being the victims of globalism.

The reason for European youth being relatively more engaged in politics is the institutional mechanisms that have long been existed, compared to the other examples. First, the national youth councils almost all-around Europe are a driving force of political participation, regardless of being impactful at the higher or international level. The existence of youth-led mechanisms and support to them from

the international level, such as the European Union instruments in terms of funds and platform creation opportunities, makes Europe the centre of youth work. Additionally, mobilization opportunities provided within Europe boost peer-to-peer learning and networking, and European youth find chances to influence each other, either to be engaged in conventional mechanisms or activism when conventional ways fall short to resolve concerns or are demanded to be transformed. The European willingness to engage the youth in the agendas also influences other international mechanisms, such as the UN. Therefore, Europe has a guiding position when it comes to the topic of youth.

In order to construct young people's involvement in politics, first, participation needs to be treated as a social practice; rather than focusing only on institutions and formal settings, and the complexity behind youth participation must be understood. Also, existing power relations should either be transformed or should not be reproduced within the paradoxical institutional means for allowing alternative means to develop better in a more free setting, as mentioned by Xavier (2020) where young people are not hesitant to be participatory anymore. Contrary to popular belief, the youth are not apathetic/apolitical but discovering the influential, tailored, and most importantly, the most "their own" ways to be actors of their lives and the future.

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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Gençlerin siyasete katılımı, birçok dönüşümün meydana geldiği ve yeni toplumsal dinamiklerin var olduğu bir dönemde hayati bir konudur. Gençlerin siyasi katılımı; gençlerin, karar alma ve politika oluşturma süreçlerine katkıda bulunmak ve etkilemek için çeşitli pratikleri içermektedir. Bu çok boyutlu katılıma geleneksel ve geleneksel olmayan yöntemler dahildir ve gençler açısından her iki yöntem için de kimi avantajlardan ve dezavantajlardan bahsedilebilir. Ayrıca, gençlerin liderlik ettiği veya yetişkinlerin önayak olduğu katılım girişimler ile yöntemlerin gençlerin katılım düzeyini veolanaklarını şekillendirdiği unutulmamalıdır.

Apolitiklik tartışmaları çerçevesinde gençlerin siyasete karşı tutumu yetişkinler tarafından sıklıkla sert eleştirilere maruz kalsa da, gerçek yetişkinler tarafından değerlendirildiğinden farklıdır. Gençlerin uluslararası siyasete katkıları ve geleneksel olmayan katılım yöntemleri, bugün uluslararası siyaseti şekillendiren geleneksel ana aktörler ve yapılar tarafından genellikle yeterince tanınmaz veya dikkate alınmaz. Gençlerin geleneksel siyasi katılımı reddetmesi veya geleneksel siyasi katılımdaki düşüş, onların politikaya ilgisiz veya apolitik oldukları sonucuna çıkmamaktadır.

Gençlik katılımından bahsedildiğinde Avrupa; gençler için katılıma yönelik sağladığı ortam ve kimi imkanlar itibariyle, gençlik çalışması ve gençlik katılım mekanizmalarını oluşturmak ve desteklemek için liderlik eden merkezlerden biri olarak kabul edilebilir. Avrupa, demokratik değerlerini ayakta tutan sütunları olarak kabul ettiği ve uzun süredir işlev gösteren kurumsal mekanizmaları ile sivil katılımın uzun zamandır süregelen gelenekleri nedeniyle gençlik çalışması ve genç siyasi katılımın beşiği olarak öne çıkmıştır.

Bu tez, gençlik katılım pratikleri ve hareketleri bağlamında, sınırları daha kolay aşabilen ulus ötesi analiz düzeyini kullanarak neoliberal uygulamaların gençlik

katılımı üzerindeki etkisini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Aynı zamanda, gençlik hareketleri ve katılım uygulamalarının Avrupa'daki durumu ve Avrupa gençliğinin uzun süredir var olan kurumsal mekanizmalar bağlamında katılım durumu da kurumsal mekanizmaların yanıt kapasitesi açısından sorgulanmaktadır. Gençlerin geleneksel yöntemlere kıyasla yeni katılım yöntemlerine başvurmasına yol açan memnuniyetsizlikleri, "AB projesi" kapsamında zorunlu uzlaşıya sevk eden geleneksel mekanizmaların tekrarlayan yaklaşımları ve neoliberal geleneğin gençlik katılımı üzerindeki etkisi de irdelenmektedir.

Geleneksel yaklaşımlarda, katılımcı topluluklar devletlerin güçlü geleceklerinin temel bileşenlerinden biri olarak görülür. Alandaki birçok araştırmacıya göre de katılım demokratik toplumların "kalbinde" kabul edilir (Dalton, 2008). Kamu katılımı olmadan demokrasi geleneksel siyaset çerçevesinde eksik kalır;bu nedenle ortak baskın siyasi kültür, vatandaşlarını katılıma teşvik eder. Bu katılım; oy kullanma, kamusal tartışmalara katılma, bir siyasi parti üyesi olma veya mahkemelerde heyet üyesi olarak hizmet etme gibi pratiklere atıfta bulunabilir. Bu nedenle, katılımcı "iyi" bir vatandaş olmak demokrasinin temeli kabul edilir (Dalton, 2008). Örneğin, Georgetown Üniversitesi tarafından yapılan "Vatandaşlık, Katılım, Demokrasi" anketi, katılımcıların oy kullanıp kullanmadığını, örgütlerde ve politikada aktif olup olmadıklarını ve kendi görüşlerini oluştururken kurallara uyma yeteneğini, "vatandaşlık normları" temelinde diğer vatandaşlarla dayanışma gösterip göstermediklerini araştırmıştır (2005). Geleneksel siyasetin iktidar sahipleri, demokrasiye kanıt olarak vatandaşlık pratiğini gösterir. Bu nedenle geleneksel siyaset ve katılım ile vatandaşlık ve demokrasi arasındaki ilişkiyi gözden geçirmek önemlidir.

Vatandaşlık konsepti, insanları görevleri ve hakları bağlamında sorumlu kılarak oy kullanma gibi haklarını pratik etme göreviyle ilişkilendirilir. Buna göre, "özgürlük" kavramı "siyasal teori ve politika pratiği" bağlantısıyla desteklenir (Hurrellmann, 2005) ve ardından; devletler tarafından politik olarak aktif, ilgili ve bilgili vatandaşlar istenir. Bu şekilde, mevcut sistemlerin devamlılığının ve istikrarının geleneksel politika çerçevesinde sürdürüldüğü gözlenmektedir. Geleneksel siyaset aynı zamanda vatandaşlık, demokrasi ve katılım için sınırları da belirler. Geleneksel

mekanizmalara ve siyasi alanda alternatif katılım yollarına yönelik tartışmaların açıldığı bu dönemde; devlet ve devlet aktörleri tarafından, geleneksel politikadan sapma tartışmaları nedeniyle, vatandaşlık kavramı, demokrasi ve katılım anlayışı da dönüşüm sürecindedir. Dolayısıyla bu vurgu, devletlerin ve devlet aktörlerinin, geleneksel bir perspektiften, yeni tartışmaları inkâr edebileceği veya göz ardı edebileceği gerçeğini de önemli kılar (Corney et al., 2021). Elbette ki, genç nesiller genellikle vatandaşlık, katılım ve demokrasi konularının ana aktörlerinden biri olarak ele alınır ve gençler de süreç içinde siyasi kimliklerini keşfetmeye ve politik angajman düzeyleri ile katılım türlerini belirlemeye çalışırlar. Bu süreçte igençler, siyaseti ve siyasete katılım yöntemlerini geleneksel katılımın ötesinde dönüştürdükleri ve şekillendirdikleri için önemli aktörler haline gelirler. Geleneksel katılım biçimleri hala günlük siyasi tartışmaları domine etse de gençlerin özellikle gençlik liderliğindeki siyasi katılıma daha fazla ilgi göstermeleri, birçok toplumun önünde yeni ve önemle değerlendirilmesi gereken bir gündem olarak durmaktadır. Dolayısıyla gençlerin siyasi katılımı, sadece geleneksel siyaset çerçevesinde değil, aynı zamanda alternatif katılım biçimlerini de içeren daha geniş bir bağlamda ele alınmalıdır. Gençlerin, demokratik değerlere uygun olarak politika ve toplumlarına katılımlarını şekillendirmek adına farklı ve yaratıcı yöntemlere başvurdukları bir dönemde, gençlerin siyasi katılımı adına kapsamlı bir anlayışa sahip olmak, toplumların demokratik gelişimine de katkıda bulunabilir.

En temel tanımıyla siyasi katılım, vatandaşların siyaseti etkileyen faaliyetlerini ifade eder ve herhangi bir siyasi sistem içinde katılımdan söz edilebilir (van Deth, 2016). Günümüzde siyasi sistemlerde çeşitli katılım türleri bulunsa da en belirgin ve yaygın yöntemler olarak oy kullanma, bir dilekçeye imza atma, örgüt ve forumlara katılma gibi geleneksel yollar ile grevler, protestolar, sivil itaatsizlik gibi geleneksel olmayan yollar öne çıkmaktadır. Konvansiyonel siyaset çoğunlukla geleneksel katılım biçimlerine dayanmakta ve siyasi katılımdan bahsedildiğinde de genellikle bu geleneksel yollar akla gelmektedir (Borg & Azzopardi, 2021).

Siyasi katılım, bireylerin politik süreçlerle etkileşime girmek ve karar alma süreçlerini etkilemek amacıyla yaptığı geniş bir dizi faaliyeti kapsar (Lampriaonu, 2012). Siyasi katılımın tanımlanması; toplumsal normların dönüşen doğası, çeşitli ve

değişken pratiklerile çeşitli teorik çerçeveler nedeniyle zor bir meseledir. Siyasi katılım anlayışının değiştiği ve dönüştüğü bir ortamda, araştırmacıların ve politika yapıcıların katılımcı siyasetin dinamik doğasını kabul etmeleri ve hem geleneksel hem de geleneksel olmayan katılım faaliyetlerini vatandaşların toplumlarını şekillendirmedeki meşru ifadeleri olarak değerlendirmeleri önemlidir (Lampriaonu, 2012).

Modern toplumlarda katılım ve demokrasi, bir vatandaş olmanın doğal bir sonucu olarak birbirine entegre edilmiştir ve gençler, kapladıkları geniş alan sebebiyle vatandaşlık-demokrasi-katılım ilişkisinin anabileşenleridir. Gelişen tartışmalar, toplumun üyeleri ve vatandaşlık kavramı arasında yeni bağlantıların var olabileceğini vurguladığından, gençlik konseyleri ve gençlik parlamentolarının, gençliğe ilişkin tartışmalarayönelik yaklaşımlarını vurgulamak önemlidir (Matthews, 2001). Bu doğrultuda, Avrupa Gençlik Forumu, Avrupa Gençlik Parlamentosu ve Avrupa Gençlik ortaklığı gibi mekanizmalar içinde yürütülen katılım ve vatandaşlık tartışmaları bu bağlantılara ışık tutar.

Devletlerin ve uluslararası kuruluşların neoliberal uygulamaları, gençler için eşitsizlikleri artırmakta, gençlerin sosyal içerimini azaltmakta ve dışlanmalarını üst düzeye çıkarabilmektedir. Yıllar önce, siyasi duyarsızlık sadece oy kullanmamak olarak tanımlanırken, daha yeni anlayışlara göre bu “duyarsızlık,” gençler arasındaki güvensizlik nedeniyle politik bir tercih olarak seçilen pasiflik gibi kavramları da içerir. Diğer yandan bu siyasi uzaklaşma; mevcut siyaseti anlamsız görme, sınırlı veya etkisiz olduğunu düşünme olarak da tanımlanır (Dahl, 2018).

Ana akım tartışmalar gençlerin siyasete ilgi duymadığını, demokrasinin özüne bağlı olmadıklarını ve kendilerini temsil eden kurumlara şüphe ile yaklaştıklarını iddia eder. Bu sebeple, gençler tarafından geleneksel siyasetin yanı sıra katılımın geleneksel olmayan yollarına ilişkin seçenekler de geliştirilmektedir. Toplumdaki ve ekonomi politikteki değişiklikler üzerinde gençlerin etkisi büyüktür; bu sebepten gençler hem "risk altındaki" hem de "değişimi yönlendiren" aktörler olarak değerlendirilmektedir. (Banjac, 2017, Kwon, 2019'da alıntılandığı şekliyle). Birleşmiş Milletler ajansları ve Dünya Bankası gibi uluslararası kuruluşlar, gençleri

değişimin temsilcileri olarak görür ve onları güçlendirmek için geliştirilmeye açık çeşitli ve yeni kategorilerde çalışma alanları olduğunu kabul eder. Küresel gençlik konferansları, gençleri süreçlere dahil ederek tartışma gündemlerini oluşturmalarına izin veren gençlik katılımını sağlamak için en çok uygulanan yöntemlerden biridir (Kwon, 2019). Örneğin, Bakü Forumu'nda gençler için katılımcı yapıların; anlamlı, gerçek, gençlik liderliğindeki mekanizmalar olmaktan uzaklıkları, en önemli sorunlardan biri olarak tanımlanmıştır. Avrupa Birliği (AB), gençlik katılımı konusunda geliştirdiği araçlarla süregelen çalışmalar yürütmektedir. Örneğin, Avrupa Gençlik Parlamentosu ve Avrupa Gençlik Ortaklığı bu çalışmalardan ikisidir. AB, genç katılımını sağlamak için ulusal hükümetleri başlıca sorumlu taraf olarak görür. Bu durum, yerel düzeyden başlayarak gençlerin taleplerini önceleyen anlamlı katılımın sağlandığı,gençlik liderliğine dayanan mekanizmaların geliştirildiği senaryolara işaret eder. Bu durum, Gençlere yönelik politika yapma konusunda ulusal hükümetleri sorumlu tutan “tavandan tabana” bir anlayışa işaret etmektedir (Shephard & Patrikios, 2012).

Gençlik çalışmaları genellikle üç tür siyasi katılıma odaklanır: Kurumsal siyaset katılım (seçimler, kampanyalar, üyelikler), protesto eylemleri (mobilizasyonlar ve gösteriler) ve ifadeci, estetik, dijital kategoriler. Gençler, üç tür siyasi katılıma da katkıda bulunmaktadırlar; ancak en yaratıcı ve yeni katılım türleri genellikle üçüncü kategori altında incelenmektedir (Kovacheva, 2000). Uluslararası İlişkiler, gençleri özel bir toplumsal statüye sahip bir grup olarak değerlendirir ve gençlerin siyasi katılımını yeni ve gelişen deneyimler, gençlerin yeni toplumsal ilişkileri bağlamında “geçiş rejimleri” ve gençler tarafından benimsenen yeni küresel odak noktaları üzerine yapılan araştırmalarla incelemektedir (Kovacheva, 2000). Bu nedenle, "duyarsızlık" üzerine tartışmak yerine, O'Toole (2004) tarafından tartışıldığı gibi "yabancılaşma" gerçeğine odaklanılmalıdır. Ardından, resmi siyasettengayri resmi uygulamalara geçişin araştırılması, gençlerin geleneksel mekanizmalar hakkındaki eleştirilerini anlamaya yardımcı olacaktır. Oy vermenin, siyasi sistemlerin merkezi bir parçası olarak kabul edildiği bir düzende “geleneksel siyasete yabancılaşma” konusunda yeterli bir tanımlamaya sahip olmadığımızı belirtmek mümkündür (Fox, 2015, Valgardsson, 2019'da alıntılandığı şekilde). Mevcut sistemler içinde kendilerini tanımlamayan kimi insanların ve özellikle gençlerin, "marjinal" olarak

tanımlanan pratiklerin veya "anti-kurum" eylemlerinin bir parçası olabileceği vurgulanmalıdır. Sonuç olarak, birbirini takip eden politika belgeleri ve eylemleriyle sınırlı birbirini tekrarlayan girişimler, gençlerin daha az kalıplaşmış ve kurumsallaşmamış katılım biçimlerini aradığı bir dönemde sembolik kalmaya devam eder ve bu katılım mekanizmalarının dayatılmasından kaçınılmalıdır. Neoliberal hakimiyet içinde, oy kullanma vurgusu gibi gençlik parlamento ve konseylerinin üzerindeki yetişkin etkisi de devam etmektedir. Buna karşı olarak da gençlerin geleneksel yöntemlere direnişleri artmaklaberaber, gençliğin "yeniden siyasileşmesi" de gerçekleşir. Bu nedenle, değişen kavramların "duyarsızlık" yerine "uzaklaşma/yabancılaşma" olarak değerlendirilmesi ve duyarsızlığın siyasi pasiflikle eşitlenmemesi gerekmektedir.

Geleneksel siyaset bağlamında hem yetişkin halk hem de politika yapıcılar gençleri "tam vatandaşlar" olarak değil, "vatandaşlık sürecinde olanlar" olarak algılamaktadır (Andersson et al, 2016, Becquet tarafından 2020'de alıntılandığı şekliyle) ve tam vatandaş olabilmeleri için zaten resmi olarak tanınmış olan aktörlerin rehberlik etmesi gerektiği fikri benimsenir.

Bu anlamda gençlik politikası, ulusal, uluslararası, uluslar üstü, yerel ve bölgesel müdahaleleri içeren farklı düzeylerde işlenmektedir. Avrupa Birliği, Avrupa Konseyi ve Avrupa Gençlik Forumu, iş birliğini teşvik ederek genç katılım mekanizmaları üzerinde birlikte çalışmaktadır. Örneğin, Avrupa Konseyi gençlerin haklarına odaklanırken; Avrupa Birliği eğitim, hareketlilik, istihdam, aktif vatandaşlık gibi konulara odaklanmakta ve Avrupa Gençlik Forumu ise, Avrupa Konseyi ve Avrupa Birliği ile istişare düzleminde gençlerin endişe ve talepleri üzerine yoğunlaşarak çalışmaktadır. Avrupa düzeyinde, Avrupa yönetişimi çerçevesinde aktif vatandaşlık konusu neredeyse son yirmi yıldır önemli bir gündem konusudur. Bu nedenle, Avrupa'nın üst ulusal kimliği ile gençlik politikası alanında aktif çalışmalar yaptığını söyleyebiliriz. Elbette ki, uygulanan politikalar üçünde de hayli hiyerarşik ve kurumsallaşmış olup, gayri resmi, geleneksel olmayan katılım biçimlerine yeterince yer verilmemektedir. Var olan gençlik katılım mekanizmaları ister genç, ister yetişkin liderliğinde olsun, gençlerin taleplerine beklenen düzeyde katkı sağlamayan, genellikle geleneksel mekanizmaların simülasyonları olarak hareket eden kurumsal

mekanizmalardır. Uygulanan politikaların etkileri düşük, gençlerin yetişkin hakimiyetindeki alanlarda varlık gösterme çabaları açısından değerlendirildiğinde de sınırlıdır. Katılım yöntemleri de genellikle geleneksel olup, alternatif yöntemler açısından doğrudan destekleyici değildir. Ayrıca; Avrupa Gençlik Parlamentosu, Avrupa Gençlik Forumu ve Avrupa Gençlik Ortaklığı, vurguları itibariyle gençliği sistemin gelecekteki "yararlı araçlar" olarak gördüklerinden öncelikli olarak eğitim, kapasite geliştirme ve gençlerin iş piyasasına geçişi gibi konular üzerine odaklanmaktadır.

Belirli niteliklere sahip "genç vatandaş" konsepti ve onların katılımları, mevcut sistemlerin gücüne ve sürekliliğine bir tehdit olarak değerlendirilmediği durumlarda istenir. Neoliberal devletler, vatandaşlarını rekabetçi ve pazar odaklı olmalya iter (Kennelly, 2011). Gençler, kapitalist devlet için önemli oldukları göz önüne alındığında, "iyi vatandaşlık" için rehberliklerine ihtiyaç duyduklarıyetişkinlerin tam karşısına yerleştirilmiştir. İyi vatandaşlar olamayan gençler irrasyonel, olgunlaşmamış ve bağımlı olarak tanımlanır; Arendt'in (1971), neoliberalizmin, kamusal alan ve fikirler kısıtlandığında toplumları apolitik bir sona getireceğini belirttiği gibi. "Saygılı, katılımcı ve etik" politikaların mümkün olmadığı bir durumda, genç vatandaşlık ve yetişkin odaklı politikanın hakimiyeti de devam eder (Kennelly, 2011). Bu nedenle, geleneksel katılım pratiklerinin başlıca eleştirisi, gençlerin yaşamları üzerindeki geniş etkisi nedeniyle neoliberalizme yöneltilmektedir. Kurullar, konseyler ve belirli organizasyonlar genç katılıma izin verse ve hatta cesaretlendirse de genellikle bu yapılar içinde gençlere sağlanan bir koltuktan öteye gitmemekte ve gençleri sadece "dekorasyon" olarak görmektedir.

Gençlerin sınırlı katılımının yanı sıra, yetişkin müdahaleleri gençlerin potansiyel etkisini bastırabilmektedir (O'Donoghue, 2002). Katılımı artırmayı amaçlayan yetişkin müdahaleleri genellikle amacını aşmakta ve gençlerin liderliğinde olması beklenen alanları domine etmektedir. Yetişkinlerin, genç katılımının hedefteki etki alanını tam kavrayamamaları nedeniyle, gençlere uyum sağlaması yerine; gençlerin kendilerinin öncülüğündeki siyasi katılım pratiklerine adapte olmaya hazır olması beklenmektedir (O'Donoghue, 2002). Ayrıca, Avrupa'da, yapısal genç katılım mekanizmalarına rağmen, genç katılımı genellikle "Avrupa vatandaşlığı" ve "Avrupa

yönetişimi" çerçevesinde tartışılmaktadır. Bu Avrupa çerçevesi, gençleri farklı toplum düzeylerine değil, içlerinde "uygun araçlar" olacakları mevcut mekanizmalara dahil olmaya itmektedir (Becquet et al., 2020). Bu sebepten politika yapma süreçlerinde genç insanlar, geleceği garanti altına alacak birer kaynak olarak görülmektedir. Bu rejim çerçevesinde, kurumlar gençlerin ihtiyaçlarına yeterince proaktif bir şekilde yanıt verememekte ve gençlere karar alma konusunda alanlar sağlayamamaktadır. Bununla birlikte, liberal geçiş rejimlerinde gençler, yukarda bahsedilen perspektifte risk olarak görüldüklerinden, düzeltilmesi ve kontrol edilmesi gereken bir sorun olarak da tanımlanmaktadır. Bu nedenle, gençlere yönelik yaklaşım sıklıkla kontrol mekanizmaları ile ilişkilidir (Walther et al., 2020). Avrupa'da gençlere yönelik yaklaşım genellikle sorun odaklıdır ve ana hedef, gençlerin rahatsız edici yönlerinden toplumu "korumak" ve bunun yerine “kendi kendini yöneten” gençleri getirmektir; devletlerin "yükünü" azaltmak için istihdam odaklı olma, gençleri oy kullanmaya veya genç konsey üyeliğine yönlendirmek de yöntemlerden bazılarıdır. Bu araçlarla elde edilecek ve en çok tercih edilecek sonuç, istenen "normalleşmiş gençlik" üzerindeki kurumsal kontrol olacaktır (Walther et al., 2020). Bu kurumsal kontrol, meşruiyet de rasyonellik kavramlarını da içine alan türlü tartışma ve oturumlar aracılığıyla da sağlanabilmektedir.

Bu bağlamda, demokrasinin ahlaka, adalete, akla ve argümantasyona dayanan düşünceleri politik olarak benimseyen “istişareci demokrasi” modeli, demokrasi anlayışında yeni tartışmalar açmıştır (Mouffe, 1999). Habermas'ın belirttiği gibi, istişareci demokrasi, demokrasi kurumlarında ancak bir uzlaşma varsa, bu kurumlar "herkesin çıkarı" için hareket ediyorsa ve düzenlemeler ile normlar tüm taraflarca kabul ediliyorsa geçerli olmaktadır (Mouffe, 1999). Benhabib (1966) benzer şekilde, meşru ve rasyonel olarak kabul edilen bir "ortak iyilik"ten bahseder ve bu "ortak iyilik” ile "rasyonel uzlaşıya” ulaşmak için tartışmalar, çekişmeler ve sorgulamalar yapılabilir (Mouffe, 1999'da alıntılandığı şekliyle). Mouffe tarafındantartışılan mevcut kurumsallaşmış demokratik sistemlerin tanımlayıcı bileşenleri, Avrupa kurumlarının öne çıkan “yüksek” özelliklerini sergilemektedir. Avrupa Birliği de, gençleri kapsayan geniş temsil yoluyla; politikaların ve sonraki adımların, tartışmalar ve anlaşmalarla kendi yapıları içinde kararlaştırılabileceği fikrini desteklemektedir. Ancak, Mouffe’un (1999) tartıştığı gibi, mükemmel bir uyum ve tamşeffaflığın

mümkün olmadığı bir gerçeklikte, tam bir uzlaşma ve kısıtlamalara tabi olmayan bir tartışma olması imkansızdır. Örneğin gençlerin, çatışabilen ve birbirinden farklı doğaları nedeniyle, geleneksel olmayan yöntemlere eğilimleri de bu modelde göz ardı edilmektedir. Bu tezde de eleştirildiği gibi; iktidar ilişkileri açısından meşruiyetin var olabilmesi için iktidarın dayatılması gerekir ve bu iktidar "Avrupa demokrasisi" ve "Avrupa vatandaşlığı" gibi etrafında birleşilebilecek kavramlar üzerinden güçlendirilir kibu da AB kurumlarının uzlaşmacı doğasını bir kez daha ortaya koymaktadır. Karar verici olan iktidar sahiplerini düşündüğümüzde, gençlerin öncülüğündeki mekanizmalarda yapılan tartışmalar ilerleyen süreçte politika yapımına yol göstermesi için zorunlu olarak söz konusu iktidar sahiplerine taşındığından, "meşru" kararlar ve politikalar gençlerden daha çok iktidar sahiplerinin elinde bulunmaktadır. Güç sahipleri, gençlerin karar alma süreçlerine ne kadar katılacağını seçebilir veya sınırlayabilir; bu nedenle demokrasinin "daha fazla demokrasi daha az güç" iddiası, katılım uygulamalarına bakıldığında reddedilebilir (Mouffe, 1999). Dolayısıyla, gençlik katılımını "ahlaki" ve "rasyonel" bileşenler çerçevesinde kurumsal mekanizmalar altında toplamak, gerçek bir çoklu demokrasiye veya gençlerin gerçek ihtiyaçlarına yanıt vermek yerine, çoğulluğun çatışmalı doğasını inkâr eder ve kaçınılmaz olarak birçok genç aktörün dışlanmasına yol açar. Bu nedenle, kısıtlamasız bir tartışmayı reddetmek ve bir agonistik model olan "çatışmalı uzlaşıya" geçmek gençlerin gençlik meclislerinde veya parlamentolarında talep ettikleri ihtiyaçlara daha duyarlı olacaktır (Mouffe, 1999). Ayrıca, bu tür gençlik katılım mekanizmalarının "simülasyon" yapılarına tekrar vurgu yapacak olursak, bir karar verilebilmesi ve demokrasiye ulaşılabilmesi için de gençler arasında uzlaşma sağlanması beklenmektedir. Sonuç olarak, gençlik katılımı için tanıtılan mekanizmalar, mevcut yapıların üstesinden gelmeye yönelik gerçek bir katkı sağlayamayacak ve tekrarların ötesine geçemeyecektir.

Katılım, dönüşmekte olan bir kavramdır ve genel anlamda, geleneksel siyasal katılımı "karar verme sürecine halkın katılımı" olarak kabul eder. Bu nedenle, vatandaşlık ve katılım, insanlar tarafından farklı deneyimlenebilir ve toplumsal dönüşümler, geleneksel politikaların eleştirel perspektiflerinden kaynaklanan gayri resmi vatandaşlığı da masaya getirir. Geleneksel siyaset, gençleri "vatandaşlık sürecinde olanlar" olarak görür ve gençlerin siyasi ilgilerini ister. İşlevsiz

mekanizmalara karşı, gençlik katılımının geleneksel olmayan yöntemleri çok dikkatlice ve ciddi bir şekilde ele alınmalıdır, çünkü gençler, kısıtlayıcı politikaları aşmayı amaçlayan ve geleneksel olmayan katılımın öncü oyuncularıdır. İklim siyaseti ise gençlerin başrolde olduğu, siyasi katılım ve müzakere yöntemlerini kendileri belirledikleri geleneksel olmayan katılımın en güçlü örneklerinden biridir. "Yokoluş İsyanı" ve "Gelecek için Cuma Günleri" eylemlerinde görüldüğü gibi, hükümet binalarını işgalden öğrenci grevlerine, sokak protestolarından sosyal medya kampanyalarına kadar geniş bir skalada kendine yer bulan gençlerin öncülüğündeki iklim aktivizmi, alışılagelmişin dışında da birçok katılım metodunu barındırmaktadır.

Avrupa gençliğinin siyasi katılımının nispeten daha fazla olmasının nedeni, diğer örneklerle karşılaştırıldığında uzun süredir var olan kurumsal mekanizmalarıdır. İlk olarak, uluslararası düzeydeki etkileri tartışılır olsa da neredeyse tüm Avrupa çapında mevcut olan gençlik konseyleri siyasi katılımın itici güçlerinden biridir. Gençlerin liderliğindeki kimi mekanizmaların varlığı ve bunlara uluslararası düzeyde fon ve platform oluşturma fırsatları gibi destekler sağlayan AB araçları; Avrupa'nın gençlik çalışmalarının merkezi haline gelmesini sağlamaktadır.

Gençlerin siyasete katılımını oluşturmak için öncelikle katılımın bir toplumsal pratik olarak ele alınması gerekmektedir; sadece kurumlar ve resmi ortamlara odaklanmak yerine, gençlik katılımının ardındaki karmaşıklığı anlamak gerekmektedir. Ayrıca, mevcut güç ilişkileri dönüştürülmelidir ve bu ilişkiler alternatif yöntemlerin daha özgür bir ortamda, daha sağlam temellerde gelişmesine izin vermek adına, çeşitli kurumsal araçlarla yeniden üretilmemelidir.

Siyasi katılım alanı zaman içinde önemli ölçüde dönüşmüş ve geleneksel yöntemlerin ötesinde farklı katılım biçimlerini içermeye başlamıştır. Geleneksel siyasi katılım, genellikle oy kullanma, imza kampanyalarına katılma ve organize forumlar gibi yöntemler etrafında gelişirken; grevler, protestolar ve sivil itaatsizlik gibi geleneksel olmayan yöntemlere doğru bir kayma gözlemlenmektedir. Bu değişim, geleneksel siyasi katılım anlayışlarını sorgular ve sivil katılıma doğru bir dönüşü vurgular. Gençlerin siyasi katılımı bağlamında, onların siyasi konularda duyarsız olduğunu iddia eden yetişkin-öncülü politika söylemi ortaya çıkmıştır.

Ancak bu görüş, gençlerin katılım mekanizmalarıyla ilgili yeni dinamikleri anlamada başarısız olmaktadır. Beck'in "politikanın yeniden icadı" kavramı ve "günlük yaşam" konsepti, genç bireylerin geleneksel siyasetin sınırlarını giderek genişletiyor olmalarına dikkat çeker (Alterri ve Raffini tarafından 2014'te alıntılandığı gibi). Bu değişim, "bireyler arası ağ bağlantıları" kavramı tarafından temsil edilir ve gençlerin iklim aktivizmi gibi yenilikçi formlarda ve çeşitli alanlarda gerçekleşen katılım eğilimini vurgular. Kesişimsellik perspektifinden; protestolara katılanlar siyasetin kendisinden uzaklaşmak yerine eylemleriyle birlikte kolektif kimlikleri yeniden inşa etmek için daha büyük ağlarla bağlantı kurarlar. Bu aynı zamanda neoliberal bireyselciliğe de bir başkaldırıdır. Toplumsal adalet talepleri, eleştirel bilincin ortaya çıkmasına neden olur ve katılım isteğini artırır. Gençlerin direniş ve harekete geçme konusundaki kararlılığı, kimi zaman da yetişkinlerin bu eylemlerde onların müttefikleri olmalarını sağlar. Hukuki savunma gücüne sahip ve aktivizm geçmişi olan yetişkinler, gençlerin çabalarını destekleyebilir (Warren et al., 2016, Ferman tarafından 2021'de alıntılandığı gibi). Sonuç olarak, aktivizmin potansiyeli yüksektir çünkü aktivizmin, gençlerin endişelerinin kökenlerini göz önüne alan kesişimsel bir doğası vardır ve gençlerin öncülük ettiği hareketlerin okullarda ve birçok başka genç-yoğun alanda yayılma eğiliminde olması aktivizm aracılığıyla mümkündür (Ferman, 2021).

Mevcut katılım mekanizmalarına yönelik temel eleştiriler, bu mekanizmaların genellikle neoliberal politikalar etrafında şekillendiği, daha fazla eşitsizlik, özelleştirme ve belirsizlik yarattığı yönündedir. Bu bağlamda, gençlerin temel talebi, ırkçılık, cinsiyetçilik ve hegemonyadan uzak vurgulara sahip yatay mekanizmalara geçilmesidir; ki bu vurgular genellikle güç sahibi otoriteler tarafından göz ardı edilmektedir. Günümüz dünyasında, gençlerin okulları bile bir neoliberal araç olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Bu nedenle, gençlik konseyleri, gençlik parlamentoları, genç delegasyon programları, gençlerin beklentileriyle karşılaştırıldığında genellikle sembolik ve etkisiz olarak kabul edildiği gibi mevcut mekanizmaların yeniden üretildiği ortamlar olarak da değerlendirilmektedir. Sonuç elde etmek için kurumsal otoritelere ulaşmak zorunda kalan, son derece kurumsallaşmış mekanizmalar kadar gençlerin öncülük ettiği kimi benzer mekanizmalar da gençlerin taleplerinin özünü göz ardı etmeye müsaittir ve gözlemlenendeğişimlere ayak uyduramaz. Bu nedenle,

gençlerin öncülük ettiği alan ister geleneksel ister geleneksel olmayan olsun, dikkatlice ele alınmalı ve gençlere daha fazla özerklik sağlamalı; onları marjinalleştirmemelidir. Gençlerin, küreselleşmenin kurbanı olmalarına izin verilmemelidir.

Bu nedenle, gençlerin siyasi katılımı bağlamında, geleneksel göstergelerin ve resmi sistemlerin ötesine geçmek esastır. Gençlerin geleneksel siyasi yollarla katılımı sınırlı gözükebilir, ancak politik duruşları ve alternatif katılım biçimleri alanda dönüşüm yaratmaktadır. Gençlerin modern politikayı şekillendirmedeki rolü, yalnız oy verme alışkanlıklarına bağlı değil, ötesinde de değerlendirilmelidir. Demokratik katılımın temelini gençlere benimsetmeyi amaçlayan vatandaşlık eğitimleri, bazen farkındalık arttıkça resmi politik katılımın azalmasına dahi yol açabilmektedir. Ancak, bu düşüş siyasi görüş, siyasi kimlik veya katılım eksikliği anlamına gelmez; aksine, siyasi katılımın dönüşümünü ve yeniden icrasını gösterir. Gençlik siyasi katılımını anlamak dikkatli bir araştırma gerektirir ve geleneksel olmayan yollar ile alternatif katılım biçimlerinin anlamlarının farkında olmayı gerektirir. Gençlerin siyasete etkisi, genellikle yetişkin-öncülü politika normlarına meydan okuyan yaratıcı yöntemler aracılığıyla resmi yapılara meydan okur.

Xavier (2020) tarafından belirtildiği gibi gençlerin artık katılımcı olmaktan çekinmediği bir gerçekte;kurumların kendi kendilerini de eleştirebildikleri gibi, kendi içlerinde gençler tarafından eleştirilmelerine de fırsat veren platformlar geliştirilmelidir. Yaygın inancın aksine, gençler ilgisiz veya apolitik değildir; ancak etkileyici, özel ve en önemlisi, "kendi" geleceklerinin aktörleri olmayı kendi yöntemleriyle keşfetmektedirler.

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