Making the waste count

A contribution to the political economy of youth

This article contributes to the debate on the political economy of youth by exploring elements of Lacanian psychoanalysis and Marxian theory in the context of youth participation. It will be argued that the mechanisms deployed to support youth participation are part of a university discourse that functions as to guarantee that youth is not wasted but is instead assimilated into the functioning of capitalist political economy. Elements from a large European project will be used to illustrate the modus operandi of this discourse, together with an exploration of Lacan's notion of jouissance *as an important construct to understand the motivations behind young people's participation in formal settings. The article finishes with a set of remarks about our own role as researchers in the way we enjoy the same economic system that we so often criticise.*

Introduction

> "The revolution related to capitalism is none other than this: it founds the means of making the waste count" (Zupančič, 2006, p. 170)

It is a common place when talking about young people to refer to a new generation as being "wasted"[1]. In the words of the Council of Europe's former director of youth and sports, Lasse Siurala (2005), "the political alienation of young people has reached a point where increasing numbers of young people are either completely disinterested and ignorant of politics or have gone to extremist political movements" (p. 12). Against this crisis of youth apathy signalled by young people's retreat from formal politics, *participation* has become a catchword to signify the importance for young people to become engaged in broader society (Delli Carpini, 2000; Henn, Weinstein & Wring, 2002; Youniss, Bales, Christmas-Best, Diversi, McLaughlin, & Silbereisen, 2002; Gordon & Taft, 2011; Andersson, 2017; Matthews, 2001; Raby, 2012; Wyness, 2009). Over the last couple of decades, youth participation has been associated with the provision of instrumental support through tailored training, with the purpose of developing skills and competences in young people (Kirshner, 2008; Pearce & Larson, 2006), the development of young people's identity (Côté & Schwartz, 2002), or to the fostering of a sense of sociopolitical control by encouraging young people to participate in "collective actions oriented to influencing social environments" (Martinez, Loyola & Cumsille, 2017, p. 6). The creation of institutionalised spaces for youth participation stems from a need to provide mechanisms through which the needs and interests of young people can be identified and incorporated in new policies and legislations (Geddes & Rust, 2000; Gordon & Taft, 2011). The European Union in particular has actively encouraged local and regional authorities to promote the involvement of young people in local life and politics, with the youth councils being arguably the most visible examples of these policies (Geddes & Rust, 2000; European Commission, 2001, 2009). The reasoning behind youth participation in formal spaces is one

[1] The title of Georgia Gould's book, "Wasted: How misunderstanding young Britain threatens our future" (Gould, 2015).

where adults develop the best ways to "train", "engage" and "socialise" youth to become active citizens (Fox, 2013: Gordon & Taft, 2011).

Young people are not just wasted. As a waste, they become the object of a process of assimilation assuring that waste turns into a resource. This new "youth development movement" signals a turn "from a century of pathologizing youth and approaching youth in a negative light, to a path-breaking sense of positivity and a new-found commitment to embracing and empowering the young" (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2011, p. 675). In their critique of this movement, Sukarieh and Tannock (2011) highlight how this shift to positivity has proven to be extraordinarily productive for research on youth (p. 677). This research is characterised by a tacit assumption of neoliberalism and capitalism as the ultimate societal frames orienting our lives (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2011; Foster & Spencer, 2011; Kelly, 2006). The purpose is not to question or explore alternatives to these societal arrangements, but to devise and implement strategies that guarantee a smooth transition into a healthy and thriving adulthood in a free and productive society and economy (Côté, 2016; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2011; Walsh, Black & Prosser, 2018). In the face of an uprising of people, contesting the status quo or manifesting a pure display of rage[2], there is a need to exert damage-control "by way of re-channelling a popular uprising into acceptable parliamentary-capitalist constraints" (Žižek, 2014, p. 114). Some instances of youth work function so as to guarantee that young people's time is not "wasted" but can instead be optimised within a logic of permanent self-enhancing productivity (Dillabough, 2009; Raby, 2012). In a society of such permanent self-enhancing and productivity, activities like protesting, striking and squatting are seen either as a waste or as dangerous. Youth participation must occur within a certain "productive" frame. Dillabough (2009) calls it the "utilitarian idea of youth" (p. 216), where young people are perceived as owners of a commodity that cannot be wasted but needs to make itself useful and productive.

Young people learn that it is not enough to participate, they must participate in a way that is meaningful within the coordinates of a certain social arrangement. Participation has to be recognised and registered in order to become legitimate. This creates a network of institutional guidelines, procedures and regulations that typify what Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002, pp. 2 – 24, in Woodman, 2010, p. 738) refer to as the "bureaucratic and institutional jungle of modernity"; which mirrors Lacan's depiction of the *university discourse* characterised by knowledge production and bureaucratic procedures (Lacan, 2007). The university discourse is not so much the discourse of science – aiming at the universal, the law, the thought and notion of a certain object – but a discourse that, although informed by scientific knowledge, assumes the form of protocols, regulations, ethical procedures, policy recommendations, as well as lifestyles, and norms of conduct and behaviour. Instead of disappearing, "structure" becomes omnipresent, but operating in disavowal of any clearly identifiable hierarchy or summit.

This modus operandi signals the passage from a discourse based on a master, to a university discourse, where knowledge production and bureaucracy creates a horizontal network of services and regulations that sustain the global functioning of capital. In this article, I will use

[2] As in the street riots in the United Kingdom (2011) and France (2005), or the regular rampage school shootings in the United States. In both cases, there seems to be no clear message to deliver, only a display of violence grounded in no utilitarian or ideological reasons.

elements from the PARTISPACE project[3], to explore the ways in which the university discourse underpins youth participation. This discussion will be informed by elements of Lacanian psychoanalysis and Marxian theory, and by engaging with an ongoing discussion occurring in the field of youth studies concerning the relevance of class as a category of social analysis.

The university discourse

Within the cosmos of contemporary identity politics (Butler, Laclau & Žižek, 2001; Brown, 2015), the lack of what Lacan (2007) calls a *master-signifier* – that is, a figure, a goal or an idea unifying a certain symbolic field – telling people what to believe and how to behave, requires the production of knowledge that can inform people's individualised decisions. In his theory of the four discourses, Lacan uses the term *university discourse* to signal this move from a master discourse based on authority and compliance, to a (university) discourse based on knowledge production and bureaucratic procedures. Today, we have a significant amount of knowledge and information telling us how to do almost everything, from technical and professional matters, to health, relations, and weapons. There is no longer a master figure limiting us from enjoying our lives to the full. Instead, we tend to auto-regulate based on the knowledge provided by science and popularised in the media.

This move puts the onus on individuals to master their own lives. The field of youth studies has been prolific in research that analyses the process of *individualisation* (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Bauman, 2001) that characterises late modernity, and its impact on the lives of young people. As explained by Woodman (2009), individualisation concerns the process of "disembodying of institutional boundary drawing at the level of collectives and re-embedding of this boundary drawing at the level of people in the singular" (p. 250). Important scholars have been noticing how this shift from collective endeavours to choice and individual responsibility are the main characteristics of the post-1970 generation (Wyn & Woodman, 2006; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Farthing, 2010). In this new citizenship, people no longer rely on a strong state to delineate their participation but are instead encouraged to individually pursue their own interests, independently and free from a broader collective commitment.

Although this "affective turn away from the institutional" (Walsh et al, 2017, p. 227) can be perceived by young people as offering more flexible options than those associated with centralised institutional power, it is nonetheless part of a tendency for states to individualise their relationship with young citizens (Farthing, 2015). Individualisation is thus not simply a process of subjective preference or choice but results from an external pressure imposed on young people by institutional power (p. 1366). Moreover, this focus on individual choice requires the elaboration of institutional guidelines to inform individuals about their choices (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p. 23). This *institutionalised* individualisation can be understood "as one of the multiple and overlapping logics that underpin the ongoing management of 'youth' and of young people" (Farthing, 2015, p. 1367).

[3] PARTISPACE: Spaces and styles of participation formal, non-formal and informal possibilities of young people's participation in European cities. Grant Agreement number 649416, H2020-YOUNG-SOCIETY-2014. http://partispace.eu/

This move towards individual responsibility is best described by what Kelly (2006) refers to as the *entrepreneurial self*, where young people are expected to experiment different identities, improve themselves constantly by following routines and lifestyles. Though hastily experienced as autonomous and self-affirming choices, these self-entrepreneurial endeavours can be posited as part of a larger program of *governamentalisation* (Bessant, 2003; Kelly, 2018; Masschelein & Quaghebeur, 2005; Raby, 2012; Walsh et al, 2018), in which experts produce new knowledges and technologies that inform and indeed determine individual choices. The contemporary management and regulation of populations is only possible by the knowledge produced by the university discourse. Thus Kelly's (2018) invitation for youth studies to turn its analytical gaze into itself as an "artefact of expertise" (pp. 10, 11) generating knowledge about youth that intersects with "management, service delivery, and budget knowledges: intersections that produce hybridised knowledges about appropriate, economic, and evidence-based forms of guidance and government of young people and their families" (p. 11). The university discourse always presents that which leads to a political decision, founded on power, as a simple insight into the factual state of things (Zupančič, 2006, p. 168). With this being the case, research on governmentality provides us with elements to uncover what is behind the supposed neutrality of knowledge and naturalness of economic laws.

Making the waste count

The PARTISPACE project contemplates analysis of spaces and styles of youth participation in formal, informal and non-formal settings, across eight European cities (Rennes, Manchester, Zurich, Bologna, Gothenburg, Eskişehir, Frankfurt, and Plovdiv). Over three years (2016 – 2019), researchers collected a significant amount of data through analysis of policy documents, expert, group and biographic interviews, and close ethnographies and action research projects with groups of young people representing formal youth participation (parties, student unions and youth councils), as well as alternative, non-recognised, non-formal and informal spaces and styles of youth participation. Altogether, the project produced thousands of pages of data and analytical reports of the ways in which young people are participating in the lives of their cities, which are now being transformed into published pieces of scientific writing, policy recommendations, press releases, national and comparative reports, training modules, etc.

Elsewhere we provide a mapping of the variety of settings of formal participation studied in PARTISPACE (Batsleer, Ehrensperger, Lüküslü, Osmanoğlu, Pais, Reutlinger, Roth, Wigger, and Zimmermann, 2017; Lüküslü, Pais, Tuorto, Walther, & Loncle, 2018; Walther, Batsleer, Loncle & Pohl, 2019). In these documents, the reader can find detailed analysis of the functioning of these spaces, including analysis of youth worker interventions, impressions from the young people who participate in these spaces, as well as detailed depictions of the mechanisms that disavow or delay youth engagement. This article takes advantage of this analytical work, by referring to the most important conclusions and using them to illustrate the ways in which the university discourse underpins the functioning and the nature of the interactions occurring in these spaces.

Although there is no single model of (formal) youth participation, our research showed how these settings have commonality in that they are often initiated and led by adults with regard to their rules and activities and have a strong proximity to adult institutions. That is, in the

formal settings we studied (youth branches of political parties, student unions, student councils and youth councils, among others), there is a tendency for participation to be co-designed and overseen by adults. "Direct" participation, where young people take their problems into their own hands and deal with them with the necessary means, becomes difficult to pursue (Batsleer et al 2017; Lüküslü et al 2018; Walther et al 2019). One of the young people in Gothenburg, for instance, described the youth council as "a kind of 'lapdog of politics', a box that politicians can cross and say now we have created something and done something for young people" (Lüküslü et al, 2018, p. 41). Instead of autonomously developing their own activities, young people are presented with pre-defined campaigns and structured activities, with timelines and specific topics to be addressed (Batsleer et al, 2017, p. 27, 28, 87, 88).

In nearly all the formal settings we studied, the agenda tends to be filled "automatically" because "they are predefined by regulations, rules and routines with a high share of bureaucracy that inhibits young people from coming up with their own initiatives" (Lüküslü, Pais, Tuorto & Walther, 2019, p. 76). Young people may have a budget, can pose questions, offer suggestions and express opinions, but lack decision-making power. It is hard to overlook a certain "pedagogisation" of the discussion, structured by adults and aimed at young people's engagement (Lüküslü et al, 2018, pp. 24 – 29; Batsleer et al, 2017, pp. 43 – 50, 79, 80; Lüküslü et al, 2019, p. 76). Youth workers tend to lead the process from above, with activities being framed externally and pedagogical methods applied so that young people learn how to participate in the 'right' way (Lüküslü et al, 2019, p. 77). It is as if there is a fear of getting lost in the discussion when given over to young people's own initiative, thus the need to control it by elaborating a set of specific rules that groups must follow (cover certain topics, make a report, report back to one person in the group, etc.) (Batsleer et al, 2017, pp. 150, 151). As a result, as mentioned by one of the young people in Manchester, discussions, although addressing quite relevant issues (e.g., issues of diversity and the social integration of minorities), are often "too sugar coated – we did all that in Religious Education for years and years; we want to talk about when there is not cohesion!" (Batsleer et al, 2017, p. 27).

In the case of Manchester, there was the explicit indication from major officers not to talk with young people about the European referendum or about party politics (Batsleer et al, 2017, p. 151):

> [t]here is meant to be Manchester Youth Assembly on June 8th and the theme is Europe and we were going to invite M.P.'s and M.E.P.'s. To give facts as well as opinions and hear from a normal person what it all means. But 'We go into Purdah…..it means we can't communicate and we can't put things into social media. We can't even talk about politics'. (Speech of the youth worker addressing young people during one of the sessions of the Manchester youth council, in Batsleer et al, 2017, p. 29)

In the case of Zurich's school student committee, activities are supervised by at least one teacher who interferes when the discussions do not seem to correspond to the tasks and topics of the school committee (p. 151). This regulation aims to prevent "negative dynamics", that is, to prevent "the discussion of some of the most significant events in school life and hinders a critical reflection of their [students'] situation at school" (p. 151). These formal places of youth participation perform a role in the enculturation of young people into a world of sanitised

politics, where polemic, ideological, and economic questions, or, more generally, issues that call into question the totality of the system are foreclosed (Žižek, 2014). Instead, problems are addressed from a perspective of expert management and service provision. Moreover, the very idea of youth participation seems to refrain young people from engaging with the problems of the present. It is as if youth participation led by adults serves to disavow or delay youth's engagement with the problems of the present. It keeps young people occupied pretending to play politics while at the same time guarantees that their time and energy is not channelled into meaningful activism. These models of civic engagement do not seem to accord any real political power to youth in the present. As documented by Gordon and Taft's research, this is particularly evident in student government (student councils, student unions, etc.), where activities follow "a model of civic engagement designed by adults to 'train' students for future participation while estranging them from real political power in the present" (2011, p. 1512).

The logic at work in the youth and student councils we studied presents important elements characteristic of the university discourse. It is a discourse that seeks consensus (discussion is valued as a means towards consensus, and conflictual positions sugar coated), avoids polemic issues, follows protocols for each activities, which are evaluated and assessed, and then fed into the apparatus of "policy impact". It promotes a discourse that is managerial and promotional, rather than political and dialogical; which assumes itself as neutral and for the common good. Engaged subjective stances are not easily tolerated, and tend to be seen as "dogmatic" or "sectarian" (Žižek, 2006, p. 108). Moreover, some of the activities are presented as "cool" "fun" and "enjoyable" as a way to seduce young people into participation.[4]

Besides the conventional sites of formal youth participation, the project also encompasses an analysis of spaces and styles of participation that are informal, non-formal or even not immediately recognised as places of youth "participation". In an innovative move, the project's rationale starts from the assumption that all young people do participate while not all participation is recognised as such. The challenge is thus posited in terms of identifying and exploring youth participation that might not be recognized by adults.

This feature illustrates another important component of the university discourse. This discourse works by integrating and appropriating the excess that resists and rejects the workings of capital. It is the best neutraliser of revolutions: "it receives them happily into its bosom and turns them into an affair of knowledge" (Dolar, 2006, p. 136). Capitalism "continually energises the production of newer, more sophisticated ordering devices and practices that animate, and flow through, the *cultural circuits of capitalism*" (Kelly, 2018, p. 7). Capitalism is a vital force, in the way it operationalises not only the routine, the mundane, the everyday, but also the new, the inventive, the sexy (p. 7). Activities that were previously seen as exotic, wasteful or dangerous, are now becoming the focus of attention of policy makers, researchers and other stakeholders interested in the youth business (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2011, p. 685). Today it is not just alternative and counter-hegemonic movements that are making the apology of youth empowerment, but dominant, hegemonic actors as well (Sukarieh &Tannock, 2016, p. 1286). As noted by Cohen and Ainley (2000, p. 90), "turning 'exotic' forms of marginality

[4] Farthing (2010) notices how attempts to make politics "cool" as to seduce young people often result in a cynical attitude towards these activities.

into marketable lifestyles is all grist to the mill of today's global multicultural capitalism". In view of this knowledge, the project is particularly important for cataloguing alternative youth participation occurring outside mainstream participation, and in some cases involving activities in a context of poverty, homelessness, political turmoil, radical activism, and illegality. This pressure to signify youth participation, to study it and categorise it, is a way to include youth within a specific frame of social relations, which can be regulated, appraised, and marketed. This feature brings together the two main features that characterise the university discourse (Žižek, 2006). On the one hand, the logic of integrated excess, of "the system reproducing itself through constant self-revolutionizing" (p. 108), and, on the other hand, the bureaucratic machinery that needs to be held in place to domesticate this same excess.

What is the enemy?

With the inauguration of the university discourse, the master becomes irreducible to concrete embodiments, inaccessible, invisible and abstract (Tomšič, 2015, p. 215). This decline of the master discourse is associated with a fragmentation of the social order into a multiplicity of social spaces and identities governed by information systems. It becomes difficult to delineate the contours of the "enemy":

> by virtue of the fact that the clouds of impotence have been aired, the master signifier only appears more unassailable, precisely in its impossibility. Where is it? How can it be named? How can it be located – other than through its murderous effects, of course (Lacan, 2007, p. 207)

Although life "is more embedded in structures than never before" (Woodman, 2010, p. 739), these structures are partial and dispersed, thus making it difficult to foresee what quilts them all together. Individualization is Beck's attempt to provide an alternative to class to understand structural inequality (Woodman, 2009, p. 249, 250). While class as a sociological concept identifies the bourgeoisie and its apex, the so-called 1% elite of billionaires, as the problem (Côté, 2014, p. 533), individualisation refers instead to a "relatively macro, but difficult to locate and far from total, sociological phenomenon, imposed on people by institutions, that has ambiguous and difficult to predict effects on attitudes" (Beck, 2007, p. 681, in Woodman, 2009, p. 250).

Is the enemy clearly discernible in a class of wicked fellows that exploits us all? Or are we dealing instead with an indistinct but ubiquitous mechanism that includes us all? These questions have been at the core of an exciting sociological debate that opposes a classic reading of social reality, where class is considered to be a main category of analysis, to a more "postmodern" position, arguing for the obsolescence of class as a social category of analysis, and privileging instead processes of individualisation and cosmopolitanism (see, for instance, Atkinson, 2007; Beck, 2007; Curran, 2013). This debate has entered with might and main in the field of youth studies in the last decade (Roberts, 2010; Woodman, 2010; Côté, 2014, 2016; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016; France & Threadgold, 2016; Woodman & Wyn, 2015), with authors debating on whether Marxian theory is still a valid construct to address the problems of today's youth, or if there is a need to move forward towards more nuanced and less stiff theorisations (such as Beck's). This article contributes to this debate by arguing that whilst class might have become an obsolete category of analysis, Marxian theory, particularly as

elicited in the contemporary works of Jacques Lacan and Slavoj Žižek, can offer us important elements to understand the workings of current society. Within this theory, the enemy has a name: capital. But this is a very particular kind of enemy, one that is very close to us to the point where it is entrenched in our own identities and underlies most of our mundane decisions. It is not, as Côté (2016) puts it, restricted to an elite class that manipulates the masses through manufactured consent and material restrictions. It is also not a meta structure regulating our lives as if we were puppets. Instead, capital operates as what Žižek (following Hegel) calls a *concrete universal*, present, but often unnamed, in our most mundane activities: "while it remains a particular formation, it overdetermines all alternative formations, as well as all noneconomic strata of social life" (Žižek, 2004, p. 3). Capital is an entity that cannot be properly allocated in a particular person, class or institution, but is instead universalised through constant calculations and rationalisations (Boucher, 2006, p. 274). Moreover, there is a drive towards totality at work in the functioning of capital (Tomšič, 2017, p. 64). Capital grows by capitalising what is not yet capitalised – the "waste" – by means of integrating this surplus into its normal functioning. In Marx's theory of political economy, *surplus value* – the product of capitalist economies – takes the form of a loss or subtraction of value from the worker (Marx,1976). The worker never enjoys that surplus product: they "lose" it. There is something that the worker has to lose, to alienate, if they want to engage in capitalist economy. However, in order to be efficient, workers' loss needs to be articulated within a knowledge that seeks to present capitalism as the meeting between equals in the free market. That is, as implying no loss at all. That knowledge is the one at play in the university discourse – a discourse, as we saw, that seeks to justify and rationalise the "excesses" of the system.

In the university discourse there is space for everyone. But the price is high – it is a flat space constituted by identical subjects. It delineates a consensual space based on a normative distinction between productive citizens and criminalised or "wasted" underclasses. You are welcome to be included as long as you are useful to the system, an active and participative member of society (Boucher, 2004, p. 286 – 288). In this process, there is a loss, namely, the loss of desire for an alternative social arrangement. This loss, that Lacan (2007), following Marx's notion of surplus–value, calls *plus-de-jouir*, is then rationalised and integrated into the normal functioning of things. As we have previously seen, when young people want to decide for themselves and take action in their own hands, they are faced with a set of constraints and offered an array of possibilities wherein this action can be pursued. This creates a bureaucratic machinery, of rules, pedagogies, guidelines, and regulations that not so much inhibit young people from participating, as they frame participation as such. The *jouissance* that is lost when renouncing a more radical way of participating, returns as a *surplus-jouissance* (Lacan, 2007, p. 177) in the way young people end up "enjoying" playing the kind of tokenistic and performative activities that characterise some spaces of formal participation. That is, they start enjoying their own ordeal; inasmuch the same way as the worker, after being alienated from the value of their work, has no choice but to enjoy their own exploitation (by receiving a certain wage, for instance).

Enjoying our own ordeal

However, can one say that young people actually *enjoy* participating in the formal settings that we studied? To answer this question, it is important to understand what Lacan called jouissance

– a word often translated to English as *enjoyment*[5]. Lacan (2007) is following Freud's idea, first developed in his book *Beyond the pleasure principle*, that human beings tend to pursue not only pleasurable activities but can also behave in ways that go beyond pleasure, ending up getting "pleasure" from repeating habits and behaviours that cause them displeasure, or can indeed be harmful for their lives.[6] Beyond the pleasure principle, displeasure turns into a source of repetitive satisfaction. Lacan's use of the word jouissance intends to encapsulate this ambiguity of human desire, and ought not to be confused with amusement, diversion, fun, joy or a more "pleasurable" meaning that the English word usually conveys.[7] Therefore, when I say that young people enjoy settings of formal participation, I am not necessarily assuming they have fun (though some of them definitely have) or pleasure. To enjoy being in these places – despite knowing the overall farcical logic that runs them – rather means that young people are getting something out of this kind of participation; something that does not have to be fun or "enjoyable", but nonetheless presents a source of libidinal investment.

To further explore this question is important to understand the level of awareness that young people evince about the nature of their participation in these settings. This is an important debate in youth studies (e.g. Côté, 2014, 2016; France & Threadgold, 2016), and one that concerns what is usually called "false consciousness", a term coined by Engels in his correspondence with Franz Mehring (Engels, 1968). According to Côté (2014), apparatus like the educational curricula, advertising and marketing, ideologies of the ruling class, or, more generally, adults as such, can work as to make young people unaware of their manipulation and disadvantaged position in the political economy. This lack of awareness of the causes of their exploitation inhibits young people from organising themselves into a "class for itself" (Côté, 2016, p. 857); thus the need for a critical emancipatory position "that helps those who might be accepting their exploitation as 'normal' to see how they can overcome their false consciousness" (p. 538). France and Threadgold (2016) explore the caveats with this depiction of young people's consciousness and engagement. While recognising that young people's lives are shaped by political economy, they criticise the idea that young people are passive dupes, unaware of their social and economic predicaments (p. 612). Instead, they refer to studies that show how young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are aware of their own position in the social space (p. 619). Similarly, Farthing's (2015) study noticeably shows how young people themselves can be aware of the role of structure in framing their choice

[5] It is worth noticing that the word enjoyment does not carry the ambiguity resulting from the explicit sexual connotation that the French word has. In French, jouissance explicitly signals an enjoyment of a sexual nature (*to jouir* in French means to orgasm). As in all matters related with sexuality, things are never clear cut, and pleasure can suddenly turn into pain, inasmuch as pain itself can easily turn into a source of pleasure. Exemplary here is the case of the ascetic who ends up finding pleasure in its own auto-flagellation. As posited by Žižek, in these cases, "the very performance of the compulsive ritual destined to keep temptation at bay becomes the source of libidinal satisfaction" (Žižek, 1999, p. 309).

[6] Such an insight is not exclusive to Freud. Judith Butler, for instance, a critic of Freud and of psychoanalysis more generally, makes the same point apropos of what she calls a "passionate attachment" (Butler, 1997), where the very submission of oneself to discipline also produces libidinal activity. That is, the subject actually enjoys being submitted to disciplinary mechanisms. As phrased by Butler (1997, p. 49)), "the repressive law is not external to the libido that it represses, but the repressive law represses to the extent that repression becomes a libidinal activity". This explains why people continue to be attached to discursive or ideological forms of submission, even after becoming completely aware of them. What binds us to explicit ideologies or discursive practices of subjectification is not a rational decision to do so, but an unconscious mode of enjoyment.

[7] Though enjoyment also means "benefit" or "use", as when we say, "Enjoy your pension".

biographies, thus calling into question the hypothesis of an "epistemological fallacy" as designated by Furlong and Cartmel (2007).

The question that imposes itself here is: why do (young) people sometimes act in ways that seem to contradict their better knowledge and believes? Or, as posed by France and Threadgold (2016, p. 623), "how might we explain young people's 'conscious choices' especially when they sometimes seem to act in contradiction of their best interests?". As previously described, in most of the formal settings of the PARTISPACE project, there is little space for discord, for raising and discussing polemic issues, to seek out different agendas and activities. The young people who participate in these settings are aware of issues involving tokenism, the sugar coating of controversial topics, and an overall farcical atmosphere, as if they were being staged for somebody else's gaze (Lüküslü et al, 2019). Nonetheless, young people continue to participate in them. They might do so because they find it a good place to be, to fraternise, and to discuss. They might come to these places because it is the only option against loneliness. Certainly, participating in youth and student councils brings them closer to future positions of influence, to travelling opportunities, to career possibilities. In our research we noticed that "young people in student and youth councils are expected to play an intermediary role but, apparently, often choose to situate themselves closer to the adults' world and enjoy the more advantageous position regarding recognition and resources" (Lüküslü, et al, 2019, p. 75). Although young people (and also youth workers) might recognise the shortcomings of participation in formal settings, they still do not change their practice because they enjoy being there. To refer again to our analogy with the worker, a worker that enjoys a salary does not necessarily has "fun" with the money it receives – for many people a salary barely covers basic needs (housing, food, hygiene, energy). Nonetheless, he or she still enjoys the salary because there is no other choice. And the same can be said of young people participating in the activities previously described. They might not necessarily agree or relish these ways of participating, but they still get something from it: companion, career opportunities, travel possibilities, etc. Since the thing in itself – youth participating by their own means – is prohibited, a reflective turn takes place whereby young people start to enjoy the very measures that keep the thing in itself at a proper distance. That is, they get the "thing in itself" in an alienated form, as surplus-jouissance, as a rationalisation and bureaucratisation of the excess that is lost to an adult world that does not seem to be able to conceive an alternative modus vivendi anymore. That loss then returns in the form of pathetic and tokenistic activities that characterise these settings.[8]

A final word on our work as researchers

It has been noticed that to simply allow youth participation to occur, without it being framed, influenced or studied by adults, does not seem to lead to success in research or funding (e.g., Fox, 2013; Dentith, Measor & O'Malley, 2012). The relationship between researchers and young people needs to occur within a university discourse, that whilst it might hinder more direct and efficient forms of alliance between them, it also produces a surplus that is appropriated by researchers under the form of salaries, scholarships, publications, etc.[9] Although researchers might be aware of the limited impact that research on youth has in the

[8] In the case of the worker, the excess, that is, the surplus-value of their work, is lost to the market, which then returns to the worker in the form of a wage.

[9] Though projects are that also include direct benefits to the young people themselves.

lives of young people worldwide, they build their careers and enjoy the possibilities given by the extraordinary expansion of scientific activity around the study of youth and adolescence in recent decades (Kelly, 2018; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2011). At moments during the execution of the PARTISPACE project, especially when working with young people, I wondered how things could be done differently if the two and a half million euros that the European Commission granted for researchers to conduct their study were instead distributed across the young people we studied. Nonetheless, we all enjoyed the project in all its dimensions (intellectually and personally).[10] That is, we enjoyed not the immediate change that many of us wanted to see occurring in many of the lives of the young people we worked with, but the project itself, the surplus generated by all the activities, reports, meetings, protocols, policy documents, research articles and other surplus features that constitute the bulk of the project. Capitalism, through the workings of the university discourse, distributes and regulates jouissance. As indicated by Kelly (2018, p. 6), while capitalism can be oppressive and exploitative, it is also enjoyable, people get stuff from it. Capitalism is not a (macro) entity that exercises its power on people, but lives in the actions of all of us who participate in it through our most mundane activities. Thus, while I fully endorse the plea for research to focus on the structural arrangements that determine young people's lives (e.g. Côté, 2016; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016), I argue that this plea should also encompass a criticism of the field of youth studies itself, as well as ourselves as individuals, in the way we also benefit from the capitalist organisation of academic research. Since, in many cases, our individual careers, salaries, networks, and adventures depend on this organisation, we are faced with a complicated situation. There is no easy escape from this condition, but an awareness that we might be part of the problem is perhaps a good starting point.

Acknowledgements

This article is part of the PARTISPACE Project: Spaces and styles of participation formal, non-formal and informal possibilities of young people's participation in European cities. Grant Agreement number 649416, H2020-YOUNG-SOCIETY-2014. I am thankful to Robert Gardiner for a careful reading of the final version of the paper.

References

Andersson, E. (2017). The pedagogical political participation model (the 3P-M) for exploring, explaining and affecting young people's political participation. *Journal of Youth Studies, 20*(10), pp. 1346 –1361.

Atkinson, W. (2007). Beck, individualization and the death of class: a critique. *British Journal of Sociology*, *58*(3), pp. 349 – 366.

Batsleer, J., Ehrensperger, K., Lüküslü, F., Osmanoğlu, B., Pais, A., Reutlinger, C., Roth, P. Wigger, A. & Zimmermann, D. (2017): *Claiming spaces and struggling for recognition.*

[10] I am not downgrading knowledge, but the way knowledge has become framed as knowledge production. Because universities need external funding, they have to align their research aims to predefined governmental and private agendas.

Comparative Case Study Report. PARTISPACE Deliverable 4.3. Zenodo. Download here: 10.5281/zenodo.1064119 B

Bauman, Z. (2001). *The individualized society*. Cambridge: Polity.

Beck, U. (2007). Beyond class and nation: reframing social inequalities in a globalising world. *British Journal of Sociology, 58*(4), pp. 679 – 705.

Beck, U. & Beck-Gernsheim, E. (2002). *Individualisation: institutionalized individualism and its social and political consequences*. London: Sage.

Bessant, J. (2003). Youth participation: a new mode of government. *Policy Studies*, *24*(2–3), pp. 87–100.

Boucher, G. (2006). Bureaucratic speech acts and the university discourse: Lacan's theory of modernity. In J. Clemens & R. Grigg (Eds*), Jacques Lacan and the other side of psychoanalysis* (pp. 274 – 291). Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Brown, W. (2015). *Undoing the demos: neoliberalism's stealth revolution*. New York, NY: Zone Books.

Butler, J. (1997). *The psychic life of power*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Butler, J., Laclau, E. & Žižek, S. (2000). *Contingency, hegemony, universality*. London: Verso.

Cohen, P. & Ainley, P. (2000). In the country of the blind? Youth studies and cultural studies in Britain. *Journal of Youth Studies, 3*(1), 79-95.

Côté, J. (2014). Towards a new political economy of youth. *Journal of Youth Studies, 17*(4), pp. 527 – 543.

Côté, J. (2016). A new political economy of youth reprised: rejoinder to France and Threadgold. *Journal of Youth Studies, 19*(6), pp. 852 – 868.

Côté, J. E., & Schwartz, S. J. (2002). Comparing psychological and sociological approaches to identity: Identity status, identity capital, and the individualization process. *Journal of Adolescence, 25*, pp. 571-586.

Curran, D. (2013). Risk society and the distribution of bads: theorizing class in the risk society. *British Journal of Sociology*, *64*(1), pp. 44 – 62.

Delli Carpini, M. X. (2000). Gen.com: Youth, civic engagement, and the new information environment. *Political Communication, 17*, pp. 341-349.

Dentith, A., Measor, L., O'Malley, M. (2012). The Research imagination amid dilemmas of engaging young people in critical participatory work. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 1*(13), pp. 1 – 23.

Dillabough, J.-A. (2009). History and the making of young people and the late modern youth researcher: time, narrative, and change. *Discourse, 30*(2), pp. 213 – 229.

Dolar, M. (2006). Hegel as the other side of psychoanalysis. In J. Clemens & R. Grigg (Eds*), Jacques Lacan and the other side of psychoanalysis* (pp. 129 – 154). Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Engels, F. (1968). *Marx and Engels correspondence*. International Publishers.

European Commission. (2001). *A new impetus for European Youth* (No. COM/2001/0681 final/). Brussels: European Commission.

European Commission. (2009). *An EU strategy for youth - Investing and empowering. A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities*. Brussels: European Commission.

Farthing, R. (2010). The politics of youthful antipolitics: representing the 'issue' of youth participation in politics. *Journal of Youth Studies, 13*(2), pp. 181 – 195.

Farthing, R. (2015). Low-income young people's problematic relationship with individualised policy in England. *Journal of Youth Studies, 18*(10), pp. 1366 – 1381.

Foster. K. & Spencer, D. (2011). At risk of what? Possibilities over probabilities in the study of young lives. *Journal of Youth Studies, 14*(1), pp. 125-143.

Fox, R. (2013). Resisting participation: critiquing participatory research methodologies with young people. *Journal of Youth Studies, 16*(8), pp. 986-999.

France, A. & Threadgold, S. (2016). Youth and political economy: towards a Bourdieusian approach. *Journal of Youth Studies, 19*(5), pp. 612 – 628.

Furlong, A. Cartmel, A. (2007). *Young people and social change, new perspectives (2nd ed.)*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Geddes, M. & Rust, M. (2000). Catching them young? Local initiatives to involve young people in local government and local democracy. *Youth & Policy, 69*, pp. 42-61.

Gordon, H. & Taft, K. (2011). Rethinking youth political socialization: Teenage activists talk back. *Youth & Society, 43*(4), pp. 1499-1527.

Gould, G. (2015). *Wasted: how misunderstanding young Britain threatens our future*. London: Little, Brown.

Henn, M., Weinstein, M., & Wring, D. (2002). A generation apart? Youth and political participation in Britain. *British Journal of Politics and International Relations, 4*(2), pp. 167-192.

Kelly, P. (2006). The entrepreneurial self and 'youth at-risk': exploring the horizons of identity in the twenty-first century. *Journal of Youth Studies, 9*(1), pp. 17 – 32.

Kelly, P. (2018). Three notes on a political economy of youth. *Journal of Youth Studies, 21* (10), pp. 1283 – 1304.

Kirshner, B. (2008). Guided participation in three youth activism organizations: Facilitation, apprenticeship, and joint work. *Journal of the Learning Sciences, 17*(1), pp. 60–101.

Lacan, J. (2007). *The other side of psychoanalysis: The seminar of Jacques Lacan book XVII*. New York: Norton & Company.

Lüküslü, D., Pais, A., Tuorto, D., Walther, A. & Loncle, P. (2018). *Local constellations of youth participation in comparative perspective. PARTISPACE Deliverable D 6.1.* Zenodo. Download here 10.5281/zenodo.1240191

Lüküslü, Pais, Tuorto & Walther (2019). This is a compressed political system." Ambivalences of formal youth participation. In A. Walther, J. Batsleer, P. Loncle, and A. Pohl (Eds), *Young people and the struggle for participation: contested, practices, power and pedagogies in public spaces (*pp. 69 – 82). London: Routledge.

Marx, K. (1976). *Capital, volume 1*. Harmondsworth: Penguin. (Original work published 1867)

Martinez, M., Loyola, L., & Cumsille, P. (2017). Quality of participation in youth organizations: relationships with identity and sense of political control. *Youth & Society, 49*(7), pp. 968-993.

Marx, K. (1976). *Capital, volume 1*. Harmondsworth: Penguin. (Original work published 1867)

Masschelein, J. & Quaghebeur, K. (2005). Participation for better or for worse? *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, *39*(1), pp. 51 – 65.

Matthews, H. (2001). Citizenship, youth councils and young people's participation. *Journal of Youth Studies, 4(*3), pp. 299-318.

Pearce, N., & Larson, R. (2006). How teens become engaged in youth development programs: the process of motivational change in a civic activism organization. *Applied Developmental Science, 10*(3), pp. 121-131.

Raby, R. (2012). Children's participation as neo-liberal governance? *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 35*(1), pp. 77 –89.

Roberts, S. (2010). Misrepresenting 'choice biographies'?: a reply to Woodman. *Journal of Youth Studies, 13*(1), pp. 137 – 149.

Siurala, L. (2005). *A European framework for youth policy*. Strasbourg. Council of Europe.

Sukarieh, M. & Tannock, S. (2011). The positivity imperative: a critical look at the 'new' youth development movement. *Journal of Youth Studies, 14*(6), pp. 675 – 691.

Sukarieh & Tannock, S. (2016). On the political economy of youth: a comment. *Journal of Youth Studies, 19*(9), pp. 1281 – 1289.

Tomšič, S. (2015). *The capitalist unconscious*. New York: Verso.

Walsh, L., Black, R. & Prosser, H. (2018). Young people's perceptions of power and influence as a basis for understanding contemporary citizenship. *Journal of Youth Studies, 21*(2), pp. 218 – 234.

Woodman, D. (2009). The mysterious case of the pervasive choice biography: Ulrich Beck, structure/agency, and the middling state of theory in the sociology of youth. *Journal of Youth Studies, 12*(3), pp. 243 – 256.

Woodman, D. (2010). Class, individualisation and tracing processes of inequality in a changing world: a reply to Steven Roberts. *Journal of Youth Studies, 13*(6), pp. 737 – 746.

Woodman, D. & Wyn, J. (2015). Class, gender and generation matter: using the concept of social generation to study inequality and social change. *Journal of Youth Studies*, *18*(10), pp. 1402 – 1410.

Wyn, J. & Woodman, D. (2006). Youth and social change in Australia. *Journal of Youth Studies*, *9*(5), pp. 495 – 514.

Wyness. M. (2009). Children representing children: participation and the problem of diversity in UK youth councils. *Childhood, 16*(4), pp. 535-552.

Youniss, J., Bales, S., Christmas-Best, V., Diversi, M., McLaughlin, M. & Silbereisen, R. (2002). Youth civic engagement in the twenty-first century. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 12*(1), pp. 121-148.

Žižek, S. (1999). *The ticklish subject*. London: Verso.

Žižek, S. (2004). *Organs without bodies: Deleuze and consequences*. London: Routledge.

Žižek, S. (2006). Object a in social links. In J. Clemens & R. Grigg (Eds), *Jacques Lacan and the other side of psychoanalysis* (pp. 107 – 128). Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Žižek, S. (2014). *Trouble in paradise*. London: Allen Lane, Penguin Books.

Zupančič, A. (2006). When surplus enjoyment meets surplus value. In J. Clemens & R. Grigg (Eds*), Jacques Lacan and the other side of psychoanalysis* (pp. 155 – 179). Durham and London: Duke University Press.