

Article

## An Intersectional Analysis of Child and Adolescent Inclusion in Local Participation Processes

Noemi Laforgue <sup>1</sup>, Marta Sabariego <sup>2,\*</sup>, Antonio Ruiz <sup>2</sup>, and Ana Belén Cano-Hila <sup>3</sup><sup>1</sup> Faculty of Education, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED), Spain<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Education, University of Barcelona, Spain<sup>3</sup> Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Barcelona, Spain

\* Corresponding author (msabariego@ub.edu)

Submitted: 14 November 2021 | Accepted: 2 January 2022 | Published: 20 April 2022

### Abstract

Educational and social initiatives promoting participation among children and adolescents struggle with the widely-held notion that non-adult stages of life are merely transitory and that, therefore, non-adults' views on public life are of less value. Apart from this hurdle of adult-centrism, there are other obstacles to the full participation of this segment of the population. The present study analyses the inbuilt structures that help or hinder children and adolescents' participation in the local arena. Being ascribed to one or other of the social categories (gender, origins, racialisation, economic status, functional diversity, physical and mental health, gender identity), in addition to being a child or adolescent, involves a further difficulty in exercising one's rights in general and the right of participation in particular, and this weakens young people's social inclusion and exercise of citizenship, deepening their social vulnerability. This is where the intersectional approach can help us avoid the exclusion of children and adolescents with added social barriers. In this article, we survey 191 local youth workers to determine their perceptions of inclusivity in child participation bodies in their municipality. The specific measures in place are also discussed. Lastly, we identify the challenges to children's inclusion in local participation processes and some strategies for advancing towards the creation of more diverse and inclusive arenas of participation.

### Keywords

child participation; childhood; intersectionality; municipalities; social inclusion; youth participation

### Issue

This article is part of the issue "Promoting Social Inclusive Experiences in Uncertain Times" edited by Ana Belén Cano-Hila (University of Barcelona).

© 2022 by the author(s); licensee Cogitatio (Lisbon, Portugal). This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY).

### 1. Introduction

Participation is the exercise of the right to take part in collective decision-making on issues that affect us as groups or communities (Poza, 2014). In the words of Arnstein's (1969) classic study, it is a categorical term for citizen power. From a more process-centred perspective, it is seen as the exercise of a real practice, an individual and collective experience that enables people to engage in social projects promoting psycho-educational development, value-building, and the exercise of active citizenship through committed deliberation and action

on issues of concern to the community (Novella, 2012). This multi-dimensional nature means that participation is a citizen-driven political and educational process that stresses the practice of citizenship of acting with and relating to the community. To participate is to take part in public life by contributing to the construction of what is common to all citizens (Mata, 2011). One of the basic features of participation is its active dimension (Cano-Hila et al., 2018), which presupposes the empowerment of the individuals and groups involved. This is what distinguishes real participation from simply being listened to or being consulted (Sinclair, 2004), and ensures that all

groups (including children and adolescents) can expand their potential as active citizens whose capacity to intervene in public life is recognized by their community. In this article, we advocate conceptualizing children and adolescents' participation in terms congruent with this social representation, i.e., as social actors with agency and varying degrees of competence (Lister, 2007). Other studies that reinforce this argument and that have been considered in this article include Cele and Van der Burgt (2015), Woodyer (2008), and Horgan et al. (2017).

One of the best ways to learn how to participate is through practice. This emotional component to feeling part of and participating in children and adolescents' participatory processes has piqued the interest of referent authors in the field of participation and social inclusion (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015; Chakraborty et al., 2018; Hadfield-Hill & Horton, 2014; Khan, 2018; Marcu, 2012). For this practice to be real, however, it must be relevant to the needs and interests of the people involved, and it must be felt and experienced from the standpoint of commitment to the community and/or democracy. As Flannigan (2013) has pointed out, this civic interest is the basis for citizen participation and is upheld by emotional identification and the desire to contribute to a cause.

The various areas in which children and adolescents participate are privileged arenas for encouraging civic commitment, democratic culture, and citizen participation. From the socio-cultural perspective, teaching people to participate cannot be separated from educating them in and through participation from their earliest years. Cultivating participation creates benefits in terms of social competence and personal empowerment, a critical understanding of reality, communication, dialogue and enhanced listening, and learning co-responsibility and collaboration. It is a source of collective social action and of a sense of responsibility towards the common good; participation also benefits the community by embracing children and adolescents' knowledge, viewpoints, and frames of reference in the decision-making process and by putting into practice and assessing the decisions taken.

According to Cussiánovich (2006), an active role for children and adolescents means participation and social and political action, and this requires breaking with prior classificatory structures, overcoming the barriers of adult-centrism, and combating the idea that pre-adult life stages are transitory and that children and adolescents have fewer valuable opinions on public issues. This article sees this tendency to link citizenship to adulthood as a key restraint that affects how children and adolescents participation is represented, promoted, and facilitated on a municipal level. Aside from this, we also seek to strengthen the intersectional approach to the study of the inclusion/exclusion of children and adolescents in local participation practices. The forms of oppression flowing from ascription to one or more social categories associated with origins, racialization, economic status,

functional diversity, mental and physical health, and gender identity represent a barrier to children and adolescents participation, weakening their social inclusion and exercise of citizenship and deepening their social vulnerability. Likewise, the prevailing power structures do not always work in favour of symmetrical relationships with adults (Ramírez & Contreras, 2014) or diverse, inclusive spaces of participation.

These forms of marginalization, and their impact on participation at the local level as an area for articulating and consolidating democracy, were the focus of this study. Thus, we first set out to describe the workings of participatory practices and inclusivity initiatives from the standpoint of the social representations of the youth workers involved in children and adolescents participation practices; secondly, we endeavoured to identify useful strategies for creating participatory spaces, conditions, and practices that could favour inclusion and an active role for children and adolescents at the municipal level.

## 2. Intersectionality as Analytical Framework

Intersectionality is an analytical framework that views problems stemming from inequality and its relationships with power by analyzing the overlapping categories of social identity into which people are classified (Cho et al., 2013). The theory was developed by African-American feminists in the 1980s and 90s and was first applied in academic work by Kimberlé Crenshaw in the early 1990s, in her study of the way the American judicial system treated (and still treats) black women, i.e., differently to the way it treats white women and black men. Intersectionality argues, therefore, that since inequality is multifaceted, studying it requires a theory that takes this plurality into account (Martínez-Palacios, 2017).

The purpose of this approach is to make visible the effects of different forms of social oppression—not only in sum but in combination, giving rise to specific new manifestations of inequality—that operate through social identities, i.e., not in terms of who people really are, but through the social identities attributed to them.

Intersectionality, then, argues that we make artificial social classifications that carry with them a range of stereotypes and prejudices that have concrete effects on others' lives. For example, being categorized as "a woman" conditions one's access to resources such as work, public life, and leisure time. Therefore, the aim of this framework of analysis is not to establish categories but to study the power relations created around them in order to develop responses that promote social justice. It contends, therefore, that although these categories are arbitrary—since no human group is homogeneous—they are linked to a series of discourses that legitimize inequality. Hence, to overcome these discriminating situations, we need to reveal how they work and, armed with this knowledge, create strategies to help eradicate them (Cho et al., 2013).

The forms of oppression stemming from each categorization are not immutable or static but vary across time and space (Rodó-Zárate, 2021). These space-time specifics enable us to have a more dynamic, context-related, situated view of the various forms of oppression so that we can focus on the effects of the categorizations rather than the categories themselves, thereby avoiding reifying the latter (Rodó-Zárate, 2021). In this sense, children and adolescents are not a homogeneous group (Warming, 2020), but a Eurocentric construct on which there is no global (Khan, 2021; Rabello de Castro, 2019) or historical consensus (Aitken, 2018). Despite this, there is a widespread notion in academia that non-adult life stages are unfinished stages and therefore have less to contribute to social and political life.

### *2.1. Child and Adolescent Intersectionality and Participation*

In the form of the right to vote, citizen participation in democratic societies has been conquered by disadvantaged groups such as women, racialized people, people with functional diversity, etc. (Davis, 2004). Despite the gradual spread of voting rights, other less visible factors hinder people's participation in government, such as the lack of availability of political parties representing their specific needs, for example. In the case of children and adolescents, social and educational initiatives promoting their participation have to take on adult-centrism, a form of oppression based on the idea that non-adult life stages are unfinished, transitional periods during which people's opinions on public issues are not valuable (Cussiánovich, 2018). Even when this barrier is overcome, there are further hurdles in the way of the full participation of this part of the population. Children and adolescents, similarly to adults, are situated within varying social structures that give rise to differing needs and experiences and, at the same time, offer greater or lesser access to participation (Ballesté & Feixa, 2019; Martínez-Palacios, 2017). These structural situations shape people's rights and access to resources according to their gender, origins, racialization, social class, physical and intellectual abilities, physical and mental health, gender identity, etc. Combined with the status of a child or adolescent, being ascribed to one or more of these social categories results in added handicaps in exercising rights in general and participation in particular, and this, in turn, weakens social inclusion and the exercise of citizenship and deepens social vulnerability. This is where the intersectional approach can help us avoid the exclusion of children and adolescents with added social barriers. In fact, democratic participation and intersectionality share a concern for equality and a desire for social transformation (Martínez-García & Martínez-Palacios, 2019). Further, the intersectional approach can help us uncover power inequalities within participation in various senses. One of these is in the operation of participation itself, since the value ascribed

to different social identities results in the idea that some people's views and contributions are more valuable than those of others (Marcu, 2012). This means that the participation of people embodying more highly-valued attributes will be given more weight and scope, thus creating feelings of lack of legitimacy among those who embody less highly-valued attributes. Working towards inclusive participation, then, is a long-term endeavour that requires constant reflection on our own dynamics of oppression (Cele & Van der Burgt, 2015), in addition to ongoing educational efforts towards equal relationships, for which intersectionality affords valuable possibilities for analysis and action (Khan, 2021).

### **3. Method**

This article is the outcome of an exploratory, diagnostic survey study, part of the first stage of a wider research project whose purpose is to map the current state of children and adolescents' participation, from both children and adolescents as well as adult perspectives, in the 386 municipalities making up the CAI-UNICEF and AICE networks. To this end, the Childhood and Participation Questionnaire was developed and designed to analyze the inclusion-exclusion of children and adolescents in local participatory processes (Sabariego et al., 2021). It was self-administered online by 279 youth workers and elected representatives responsible for promoting children and adolescents' participation in the municipal arena. The questionnaire took the form of a protocol with a double online version: one for elected representatives and one for youth workers. The former consisted of 23 questions, while the latter consisted of 76 questions. The questionnaire aimed at elected officials included four sections or dimensions of content, compared to the following five that made up the questionnaire for youth workers (four common to the elected representatives' version and one specific). The table of specifications of the final version of the questionnaire is available online (<https://bit.ly/2PDOcXA4>) in its anonymized version, with the first- and second-order dimensions and sub-dimensions, as well as the indicators for each of them.

The results of this study, then, are based on: (a) experiences of specific local government initiatives aimed at fostering children and adolescents' participation and (b) the perceptions stemming from the beliefs of the youth workers who made these initiatives possible. This approach was therefore suited to the intersectional perspective that our analysis of children and adolescents' participation strove to adopt.

The article is organized around two main objectives: (a) to describe how the participatory initiatives and practices for fostering the inclusion of all children and adolescents were carried out and (b) to identify strategies of value for creating municipal arenas, practices, and conditions of participation that would favour the inclusion of children and adolescents and ensure their active

role. The information obtained came from the analysis of responses to the two following open questions in the questionnaire:

1. Are you working in a space that is inclusive and accounts for the diversity of children and adolescents in the municipality? If so, please indicate briefly how this inclusion is ensured.
2. Please indicate the main actions taken to make practical advances in child and adolescent’s participation at the local level during this term in office.

A systematic content analysis was conducted of the responses to the open questions using the IRAMUTEQ text analysis program and ATLAS.ti, combining theoretical with emergent categorization to afford greater depth and nuance from their own perspective.

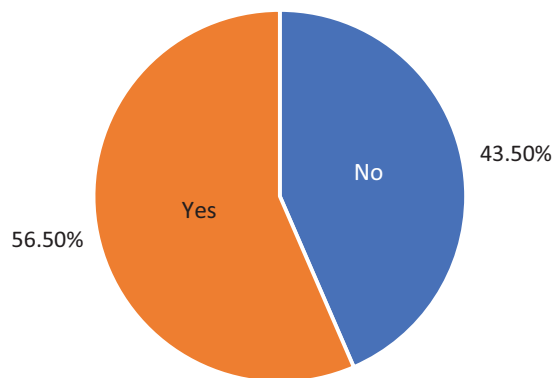
**4. Results**

In this section, we first analyse the different perceptions of the organs of participation regarding inclusivity (on whether they are considered inclusive or not, to what extent they are inclusive, or whether they enhance inclusiveness) and the specific strategies used for this purpose; secondly, we analyse the challenges identified in order to create spaces and strategies favouring more inclusive participation.

*4.1. Strategies for Promoting Inclusivity in Spaces for Children and Adolescents’ Participation*

One of the questionnaire items asked the youth workers whether the council for local participation they worked for was of an inclusive nature. This question aimed to determine whether, in these councils, children and adolescents were seen as a diverse group with differing needs, i.e., a group showing features of intersectionality. The question also sought to ascertain whether these local bodies included measures to ensure that intersectional situations did not hinder or obstruct the participation of all types of children and adolescents. Significantly, a total of 191 responses, representing 43.5% of participants, were negative. On the other hand, 56.5% were positive responses. Thus, almost half of the participants acknowledged that the councils were not fulfilling the requirements for achieving inclusivity for the whole population, thus revealing a situation with significant room for improvement (see Figure 1). As evidence for the inclusivity of the participation councils, 56.5% of responses mentioned forms of oppression that were considered: Racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, and aporophobia were some of those named, although there were also more generic references to the inclusion of particular groups. These findings suggest that we should reflect on how best to ascertain the inclusivity of the councils, bearing in mind what these youth workers understand by this term. It is possible that some of those stating that their

council was not inclusive applied a stricter concept of inclusivity to the practices in question.



**Figure 1.** Answers to the question: Is your participation council an inclusive space?

The second open question analyzed aimed to identify how inclusion was ensured. This was answered by 43.4% of the youth workers who had previously responded to the first question above. The results enabled us to identify two types of key strategies for realizing inclusivity: (a) strategies in the area of diversity in access to (and composition of) the councils for local participation and (b) those—far less numerous—intended to ensure that interactions in the councils were inclusive, in such a way that all involved could take an active role, as opposed to being passive spectators. Below, we outline each of these two types in greater depth.

**4.1.1. Composition and Accessibility**

Amongst the youth workers’ answers, there were 96 references to existing strategies for ensuring inclusion in access to and diversity in the composition of the participation councils. The strategy most cited was providing attention to children and adolescents at specialized centres. Other options involving greater diversity were found, however, such as: (a) including all schools in the municipality, so that the chance to take part in the councils was available to the whole child and adolescent population; (b) delegating responsibility for inclusivity to the schools, such that the latter decided or intervened in deciding who would participate; and (c) providing special centres for attention to people suffering from specific forms of oppression to encourage the participation of particular groups like children and adolescents with special educational needs and disabilities: “All 5 schools in Ripoll take part, including special education. We start from the principle of non-segregation, so that all the children in Ripoll can have the same opportunity to be part of the Council.”

Regarding centres designed specifically for vulnerable groups, youth workers stated that this strategy contributed to the inclusion of children and adolescents with functional diversity and children in situations of

socio-economic vulnerability, whether the latter was real (e.g., the family being catered for by social services programs) or perceived (e.g., the children living in a socially stigmatized area). The centres most referred to were special education schools, social service agencies, associations, and other bodies working with vulnerable minors.

A similar strategy, although less mentioned, was to delegate this responsibility to professionals working in direct contact with children and adolescents, normally teachers: “We coordinate with the school tutors so that they can ensure inclusion.”

Both of these channels—ensuring inclusivity through specialized centers and professionals—can be very valuable since the contacts these organizations and specialists have with young people are more direct. Nevertheless, it is necessary to make sure that schools and special centres have the same approach, or common criteria, when dealing with inclusion.

Another widely mentioned strategy for achieving inclusion was the openness of participation programs, meaning that all volunteers were accepted, thereby avoiding discrimination: “All children and adolescents from the two schools (*in 5th and 6th grade*) can take part. Although the representatives are in this age group, they contribute ideas from all the students in their schools, at all stages of education.”

This strategy, however, does not ensure inclusion since, although admission to these particular forums is completely open, there are also social barriers (such as issues related to poverty and social exclusion, socio-economic status, educational level, cultural background, disability, etc.) that cause some children and adolescents to believe that they are less legitimate or less equipped to take part.

Holding elections in which children and adolescents themselves decided who would represent them was another of the strategies for ensuring inclusion mentioned by the youth workers. The elections of the members of the council are organized by the students of each school in the municipality. This approach avoided any prejudices and stereotypes held by the adults managing the participatory spaces.

Nevertheless, this does not consider that children and adolescents are socialized in an adult world and that, although they are political actors with their own will, their decisions may be mediated by the same stereotypes and prejudices. To prevent this, the youth workers added to this strategy the possibility of choosing among candidates by drawing lots, so that it would not always be the most popular children and adolescents who were elected.

The so-called quota policy was another of the strategies for inclusive participation mentioned by youth workers. In this approach, fixed numbers of participants were reserved for people ascribed to vulnerable social groups. This was seen as ensuring these groups’ participation and requiring efforts to fulfil the quotas. According to the youth workers, this strategy favoured the inclusion of female children and adolescents, those with functional

diversity, and children with lower socioeconomic status (real or perceived).

Other strategies named by a minority of participants were: widely publicizing the activities of the council, aiming to reach the whole children and adolescents population; carrying out activities that promoted participation among children and adolescents, so that they could have an experience of success; and having regulations and/or guidelines for inclusive participation in the councils.

#### 4.1.2. Strategies for Ensuring Inclusive Interactions

While ensuring inclusive access and diverse recruitment to the local participation councils is a first step towards achieving fair participation, it is still not enough. A council may be made up of children and adolescents in diverse situations, but it will be of little use if we do not ensure that all their views are embraced and held in consideration with the same respect and interest. In this regard, a much smaller number of participants mentioned strategies for guaranteeing inclusive interaction within the councils.

Those most referred to were having the necessary means to attend to diversity and treating all children and adolescents equally (Cano-Hila et al., 2018; Novella, 2012). According to one of the participants: “Children and adolescents are active agents in society and should have the right to participate fully in it. So, we should work hard to completely eradicate any barriers that get in the way of achieving this objective.”

Other strategies mentioned, again by very few participants, were: carrying out activities in the council to promote inclusion, autonomy, and interaction; working with small groups in order to go into greater depth on these issues; and working through values: “We work with inclusive group dynamics, encouraging personal autonomy and interaction with other kids and groups.”

#### 4.2. Challenges to Creating Diverse and Inclusive Participation Spaces and Strategies

Among the key points youth workers identified to boost inclusive children and adolescents’ participation from an intersectional perspective were: (a) promoting social inclusion of children and adolescents through local government policy; (b) giving value to adult support; and (c) breaking with stereotypes and adult-centric views.

##### 4.2.1. Promoting Social Inclusion of Children and Adolescents Through Local Government Policy

The principle of inclusion must be regulated in and through local government policy. Participatory practices for children and adolescents in municipalities should be inclusive by definition, configuration, and action. It is equally necessary that this be constantly monitored and ensured. Two of the factors for achieving this that participants most agreed on were:

1. Assuring the visibility and transversal applicability of policies on children and adolescents within local government. The regulatory and legal structures (such as the Childhood Plan, the municipal educational project, regulations on citizen participation, and childhood and adolescence policies) should guarantee the sustainability of municipal children and adolescents' participation models and ensure that the participation council's proposals for the city are carried out, giving them the necessary social importance. In participants' words, this meant "providing initiatives and commitment to help achieve them, as well as the city council committing itself to fulfil them."
2. Consolidating and dynamizing children and adolescents' participation spaces. This involved strengthening the child and adolescent council and other participatory structures (forums) as bodies participating in municipal political actions, not only through consultation but also by giving them permanence. It was also seen as important to broaden the topics and areas for discussion and participation in these structures to result in actions and activities with a higher profile in the locality, encompassing social, political, organizational, and governance topics.

#### 4.2.2. Giving Value to Adult Support: Listening and Recognition

Additional professional support was required for all children and adolescents to consolidate a team of facilitators in the participatory forums, to build more bridges with children, adolescents, local schools, and bodies (leisure time, associationism) that could contribute to the inclusive, transformative participation of children and adolescents. The actions proposed went further than specific occasional events (for example, Children's Day or Children's Rights Day) to include projects that would influence the direction of local government policy, such as, for example, mobility plans or the plan for policy on children, both transversally and by extending beyond the area of children and youth into other fields of local government.

#### 4.2.3. Breaking With Stereotypes and Adult-Centric Views

Overcoming stereotypes and adult-centric perspectives was key to moving towards greater inclusion of children and adolescents in participatory processes.

These ideas suggest creating organizational conditions, spaces, and opportunities in which the views of children and adolescents would not only be heard but also recognized, listened to, and made visible, thus turning them into real municipal decision-makers and actors.

#### 4.2.4. Impact of Self-Management in Participation Practices Sensitive to Children and Adolescents' Situations, Needs, and Frames of Reference

It is important to link children and adolescents to the municipal project from the standpoint of their own needs and concerns, and not through a structure that is too rigid for them. This means ensuring children and adolescents' participation through open educational spaces that enable them to represent themselves as a group. In this line, youth workers made interesting suggestions, such as creating participation groups and coordinating centres in all schools, children and youth associations, and other more informal and temporary groups. This is a question of empowering children and adolescents in the exercise of their rights and duties and offering them other opportunities in their municipality so that they may be more visible, from the standpoint of inclusion and representativity.

### 5. Conclusion

Incorporating intersectionality into children and adolescents participation actions entails acknowledging that inclusion is a necessary condition to ensure social justice, but it is not sufficient in and of itself. Aside from being included or having their voices heard, people need to be guaranteed the conditions necessary for them to exercise their right to participation on an equal footing.

Our findings enabled us to identify some key principles for moving towards children and adolescents' inclusion in decision-making, summarized below in the form of three main premises:

First, issues of access and management of diversity must be included in participatory spaces and arenas. Children and adolescents' participation is more inclusive when their consent to participate is sought; that is, when the municipality offers open information to its whole children and adolescents population, thereby soliciting their willing participation. It is also important to clarify the criteria for the inclusion of vulnerable groups in these forums. The youth workers surveyed here suggested a quota system for including all children and adolescents. In our view, however, the institutional view is exclusive per se and uses arguments such as the differing needs of different sectors of the population in order to include or exclude specific groups. As Martínez-García and Martínez-Palacios (2019) remark, the intersectional approach reminds us that participatory experiences are not exempt from reproducing domination, which challenges us to consider measures to avoid this:

1. As professionals, we must become aware of our own patterns of relating to others and how they reproduce certain forms of oppression. To achieve this, we need to pay attention (a) to which, and whose, needs we prioritize and which we leave out of account; (b) to whether we make value

judgements about some children and adolescents and their families that we would not allow ourselves to make about others; (c) to whether we are more concerned with achieving institutional objectives than respecting the time necessary to care for the needs of diverse groups; and (d) to whether the forums for relationships we have created enable all and any children and adolescents to express their complaints without fear of being judged.

2. Constantly working to overcome stereotypes and prejudices in order to create a safe environment free of value judgments. It is important that we talk openly to children and adolescents about racism, sexism, ableism, aporophobia, homophobia, prejudice against Roma people, etc., and explore with them how these forms of oppression affect people's lives. At the same time, we should remember that taking these forms of oppression into account must not involve pigeonholing people into these categories (Ballesté & Feixa, 2019). It can be useful to approach these issues through the everyday life of children and adolescents, encouraging them to dialogue with and learn from each other. It is essential not to personalize these issues nor to expose anyone to discomfort in these discussions, since one aspect of providing a safe space is respecting the communicative pace and needs of all, and this requires time and patience. In other words, "personalizing" can be illustrated as having two functions/outcomes: (a) a positive one if it is used as a process of humanizing lived realities of children and adolescents, to capture spaces of exclusion and thus promote more active social inclusion/participation; or (b) a negative one if we think of personalizing in the sense of perpetuating stigmas of children and adolescents, restricting the spaces for their local participation within their lived environments.

Second, we must give meaning and value to children and adolescents' participation. Our findings also confirm that children and adolescents' participation is more inclusive when children and youth have opportunities to make decisions that are meaningful to them and that are recognized and made visible locally as successful initiatives stemming from their active role in participation. One barrier we must overcome to make this possible is the social representation of children and adolescents' participation from the adult viewpoint, which traditionally turns children and adolescents into "others" and ghettoises them in non-inclusive spaces. Advancing beyond this requires ongoing training in critical pedagogies and different social struggles. It also requires us to apply this analytical framework to our everyday lives. This means we must analyze the languages and codes through which we communicate information to ensure that the images used—illustrations, photographs—represent various types of children and adolescents with differing characteristics,

to publicize the initiatives in ways specifically designed to reach these sectors of the population, and to create brief inclusive experiences that can serve as examples of the type of participatory activities we wish to carry out.

Third, we must give more attention and recognition to children and adolescents in participation processes. The real inclusion of all types of children and adolescents stems from our ability to listen to, recognize, and make visible all their views on an equal footing. Thus, we should utilize approaches guaranteeing inclusive interaction within the councils, diversity-sensitive approaches combined with others encouraging autonomy and small group work in spaces and types of dialogue suitable to young people's forms of expression and creativity. These approaches should enable us to listen to their perceptions, opinions, experiences, and, above all, to understand their world and point of view in order to engage them in developing and carrying out institutional participation projects and initiatives based on these principles. Democratizing participation to give space to children and adolescents' needs requires us to adopt new channels of communication that open up new possibilities for dialogue among equals.

From the methodological point of view, the intersectional approach to analyzing inclusion in children and adolescents' participation processes requires contextualization and a qualitative view, in order to identify and delineate the forms of oppression occurring in children and adolescents' participation, and particularly to reveal the causal factors and specific dynamics of these forms of oppression and obstacles. The intersectional approach serves as a revealing prism through which to examine the convergence of structural factors and forms of oppression in constructed social categories and enables us to analyze the dimensions across which multiple interconnected discriminations develop, while at the same time calling on us to create other forms of participation and of encouraging children and adolescents' participation in their towns and cities (Crenshaw, 2016).

### **Acknowledgments**

This work is part of the research project Childhood and Participation: Diagnosis and Proposals for an Active and Inclusive Citizenship in the Community, Institutions and Governance (RTI2018-098821-B-I00), developed with the funding of the Ministry of Science and Innovation, the European Science and Innovation, the European Regional Development Fund, and the State Research Agency. We would also like to thank the Intercultural Education Research Group (GREDI) and the Ajuts Programme of the University of Barcelona for funding the open access publication of this article, as granted by the vice-rectorate for research at the University of Barcelona.

### **Conflict of Interests**

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

**References**

- Aitken, S. C. (2018). Children's geographies: Tracing the evolution and involution of a concept. *Geographical Review*, 108(1), 3–23. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gere.12289>
- Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 35(4), 216–224. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944366908977225>
- Ballesté, E., & Feixa, C. (2019). El Sur político del Norte global: Repensando la participación política juvenil en España [The political South of the global North: Rethinking youth political participation in Spain]. *Nómadas*, 50, 175–193. <https://doi.org/10.30578/nomadas.n50a11>
- Boccagni, P., & Baldassar, L. (2015). Emotions on the move: Mapping the emergent field of emotion and migration. *Emotion. Space and Society*, 16, 73–80.
- Cano-Hila, A. B., Sabariego, M., & Ruiz, A. (2018). Youth participation in the Spanish urban periphery: Its concept, spheres and conditioning factors. *Youth Voice Journal*, 8. <http://hdl.handle.net/2445/133440>
- Cele, S., & Van der Burgt, D. (2015). Participation, consultation, confusion: Professionals' understandings of children's participation in physical planning. *Children's Geographies*, 13(1), 14–29.
- Chakraborty, K., Thambiah, S., & Arumugam, J. (2018). Estate youth and complicated migration in Malaysia's oil palm plantations: The emotions of leaving and connecting back. *Children's Geographies*, 16(6), 642–653.
- Cho, S., Crenshaw, K. W., & McCall, L. (2013). Toward a field of intersectionality studies: Theory, applications, and praxis. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 38(4), 785–810. <https://doi.org/10.1086/669608>
- Crenshaw, K. (2016). Les voyages de l'intersectionnalité [The journeys of intersectionality]. In F. Fassa, É. Lépinard, & M. Roca (Eds.), *L'intersectionnalité: Enjeux théoriques et politiques* [Intersectionality: Theoretical and political issues] (pp. 29–51). La dispute.
- Cussiánovich, A. (2006). *Ensayos sobre infancia. Sujeto de derechos y protagonista* [Essays on childhood. Subject of rights and protagonist]. IFEJANT
- Cussiánovich, A. (2018). *La participación infantil y adolescente. Mapa de un modelo*. In *Enclave: Guía para promover la participación infantil y adolescente en la Comunidad de Madrid* [Child and adolescent participation. Map of a model. In Enclave: Guide to promote child and adolescent participation in the Community of Madrid]. Ayuntamiento de Madrid. <https://bit.ly/2Zckbmw>
- Davis, A. (2004). *Mujer, raza y clase* [Women, race and class]. Ediciones Akal.
- Flannigan, C. A. (2013). *Teenage citizens: The political theories of the young*. Harvard University Press.
- Hadfield-Hill, S., & Horton, J. (2014). Children's experiences of participating in research: Emotional moments together? *Children's Geographies*, 12(2), 135–153.
- Horgan, D., Forde, C., Martin, S., & Parkes, A. (2017). Children's participation: Moving from the performative to the social. *Children's Geographies*, 15(3), 274–288.
- Khan, A. A. (2018). From the peaks and back: Mapping the emotions of trans-Himalayan children education migration journeys in Kathmandu, Nepal. *Children's Geographies*, 16(6), 616–627.
- Khan, A. A. (2021). Advancing children's geographies through "grey areas" of age and childhood. *Geography Compass*, e12584. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12584>
- Lister, R. (2007). Why citizenship: Where, when and how children. *Theoretical Inquiries in Law*, 8, 693–718. <https://doi.org/10.2202/1565-3404.1165>
- Marcu, S. (2012). Emotions on the move: Belonging, sense of place and feelings identities among young Romanian immigrants in Spain. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 15(2), 207–223.
- Martínez-García, P., & Martínez-Palacios, J. (2019). Introducción: "Diálogos entre la democracia participativa y la interseccionalidad. Construyendo marcos para la justicia social" [Introduction: "Dialogues between participatory democracy and intersectionality. Building frameworks for social justice"]. *Feminismo/s*, 33, 13–20. <https://bit.ly/3oGSmxE>
- Martínez-Palacios, J. (2017). Exclusión, profundización democrática e interseccionalidad [Exclusion, democratic deepening and intersectionality]. *Investigaciones Feministas*, 8(1), 53–71. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5209/INFE.54827>
- Mata, P. (2011). *Ciudadanía ética, crítica, participativa y transformadora: Propuestas educativas desde el enfoque intercultural* [Ethical, critical, participative and transformative citizenship: Educational proposals from an intercultural approach]. Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED). <https://bit.ly/3vUck9t>
- Novella, A. M. (2012). La participación infantil: Concepto dimensional en pro de la autonomía ciudadana [Child participation: A dimensional concept for citizen autonomy]. *Revista Teoría de la Educación: Educación y Cultura en la Sociedad de la Información*, 13(2), 380–403. <https://bit.ly/3bmevsY>
- Pozo, J. M. (2014). *Educacionari*. Edicions 62.
- Rabello de Castro, L. R. (2019). Why global? Children and childhood from a decolonial perspective. *Childhood*, 27(1), 48–62. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568219885379>
- Ramírez, M., & Contreras, S. (2014). Deconstruyendo la noción de infancia asociada a ciudadanía y participación [Deconstructing the notion of childhood associated with citizenship and participation]. *Revista Internacional de Investigación en Ciencias Sociales*, 10(1), 91–105. <https://bit.ly/3IXOF3j>



Rodó-Zárate, M. (2021). *Interseccionalidad: Desigualdades, lugares y emociones* [Intersectionality: Inequalities, places and emotions]. Bellaterra Edicions.

Sabariego, M., Izquierdo-Montero, A., Ruiz, A., & Noguera, E. (2021). Validación por expertos del cuestionario Infancia y Participación [Expert validation of the questionnaire “Childhood and Participation”]. *Pedagogía Social: Revista Interuniversitaria*, 38, 33–46. [https://doi.org/10.7179/PSRI\\_2021.38.02](https://doi.org/10.7179/PSRI_2021.38.02)

Sinclair, R. (2004). Participation in practice: Making it

meaningful, effective and sustainable. *Children and Society*, 18(2), 106–118. <https://doi.org/10.1002/chi.817>

Warming, H. (2020). Childhood prism research: An approach for enabling unique childhood studies contributions within the wider scholarly field. *Children’s Geographies*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2020.1787952>

Woodyer, T. (2008). The body as research tool: embodied practice and children’s geographies. *Children’s Geographies*, 6(4), 349–362.

### About the Authors



**Noemi Laforgue** is a graduate in pedagogy from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid and master in psycho-social and community intervention from Autonomous University of Madrid. A predoctoral researcher at the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED), she is also a member of the INTER group for research into intercultural education (<https://www2.uned.es/grupointer>) and of the CoLab group for teaching innovation. Currently, she is working on a PhD thesis on rap as a medium for education with vulnerable adolescents. She is also a member of the UNESCO Chair of Distance Education.



**Marta Sabariego** is a lecturer in the Department of Methods of Research and Diagnosis in Education at the University of Barcelona. Her research career has been developed on intercultural dialogue, youth participation, and the construction of active and inclusive citizenship in formal education and socio-educational spaces as a principal investigator of national projects on childhood and participation (RTI2018-098821-B-I00) and social cohesion (EDU2013-46704-R). She has also coordinated research and innovation projects in university teaching centred on narrative methods, educational research, and reflective thinking.



**Antonio Ruiz** earned his PhD in philosophy and letters (psychological section) from Autonomous University of Barcelona. Also, he earned his PhD from the University of Barcelona in the Doctoral program in education and society. His academic career has centred on specialising in consulting for institutions on the design, implementation, and analysis of research studies, which has involved working with an extremely wide range of both quantitative and qualitative methodological techniques. Another area of interest is in methodological advances and theoretical approaches to teaching from a student-centred perspective, specifically regarding meaningful learning, seen through a global vision of the teaching-learning process.



**Ana Belén Cano-Hila** is a tenure-track lecturer (Serra Hunter Fellow) in the Department of Sociology at the University of Barcelona. She has participated in international and national projects of research on social exclusion, social cohesion, culture and participation, social innovation and education. Some of her most relevant projects include: ERC TRANSGANG (H2020-ERC-AdG-742705), Childhood and Participation (RTI2018-098821-B-I00), and INNOSOGO (CSO2013-47217-P). She is a member of RC21 and RC35 of the International Sociological Association and the Spanish Federation of Sociology.