Promoting Social Inclusive Experiences in Uncertain Times

Editor

Ana Belén Cano-Hila

COGITATIO

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Editorial

Understanding Social Inclusion in Contemporary Society: Challenges, Reflections, Limitations, and Proposals

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Abstract
In 2015, the UN approved the 2030 agenda on sustainable development, intending to bridge—and eventually close—the gaps that divide our societies. These 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) are presented as a master plan that covers the most painful global challenges to a knowledgeable and inclusive society. In this thematic issue we look more incisively into goals no. 1 (no poverty), no. 4 (quality of education and inclusive education), no. 10 (reduced inequalities), and no. 11 (sustainable cities and communities) of the agenda. Social inequalities have drastically intensified after the 2008 financial crisis and the period of austerity that followed, especially among the poorest people and in the most vulnerable communities. Nowadays particularly, with the Covid-19 pandemic, these gaps seem to be growing. Against this background, this thematic issue aims to capture, make visible, understand, and analyze how social actors are organizing themselves and collaborating amongst each other in order to help attenuate and satisfy dramatic emerging social needs and improve living conditions, especially among the most vulnerable social groups, in uncertain times of crisis. We focus particularly on two main thematic blocks: social inclusion axes on the one hand (formal, non-formal, and informal education, participation, leisure time, and culture) and vulnerable groups on the other (including children, adolescents, youth, women, the elderly, people with disabilities, and migrants). Contributions to this thematic issue offer interesting conceptual, methodological, and empirical approaches to the study of social inclusion and social inclusive experiences in contemporary societies in uncertain times, particularly in Spain, Portugal, Belgium, and Brazil.

Keywords
adolescents; children; Covid-19; educational inclusion; participation; social inclusion; sustainable development goals; youth participation

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

1. Introduction and Context

This thematic issue of *Social Inclusion* compiles articles, both theoretical and empirical, analyzing different ways of promoting social inclusion in contemporary societies. In the context of growing social inequalities worldwide, essentially as a consequence of the 2008 financial crisis and the austerity period that followed it, and nowadays too, with the Covid-19 pandemic (Cucca & Ranci, 2016; Pradel-Miquel et al., 2020), as well as the millennium challenges set out in the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs), the need to build more inclusive societies becomes even more relevant and urgent. However, we know little about what social inclusion means (without confusing it with concepts with which it is closely interrelated, such as social capital, social cohesion, etc.), how it is constructed, under what conditions people are included, and what challenges and limits social inclusion presents in a specific social context or reality (Nilholm, 2021; Silver, 2010).

There is currently an open debate about what defines social inclusion (Alexiadou, 2002; Atkinson, 2002; Cordier et al., 2017; Oxoby, 2009). It is a multidimensional construct, dominated on the one hand by topics

of special education and special educational needs (Ainscow et al., 2006; Hodkinson, 2011; Nilholm & Göransson, 2017; Slee, 2011; Vislie, 2003)—perhaps obsfuscating other essential dimensions such as gender, class, or ethnicity—and being, on the other hand, closely linked to the concepts of social integration, social cohesion, social participation, social capital (Clifford et al., 2015; Cordier et al., 2017; Wilson & Secker, 2015), terms that are sometimes misplaced as synonyms of "social inclusion," which they are not.

Traditionally, social inclusion has been defined as the logical antonym of social exclusion (Koller et al., 2018; Peters & Besley, 2014). Different mechanisms, motivations, and actors produce social exclusion and social inclusion. However, social inclusion is not limited to combating social exclusion or promoting full citizenship (Silver, 2010). It is imperative to address the conditions under which people are/feel included, and how a claim and focus on universalism does not make differential treatment unworthy or stigmatizing. Social exclusion can sometimes be used to maintain the social order or build internal cohesion by distinguishing members from the "Other." At the same time, "opening the door" to belonging and facilitating access does not necessarily produce social inclusion or a perception of being included. Some additional effort or measures may be required, such as positive discrimination policies, which are not without difficulties both for the people who need to be included and for those who consider themselves already included in a collective or social group.

In the absence of a consensual definition, there is relative agreement in the scientific literature that social inclusion is made up of the following dimensions: (a) participation, (b) sense of belonging, and (c) rights and citizenship (Clifford et al., 2015; Cordier et al., 2017; Oxoby, 2009; Wilson & Secker, 2015). From a liberal perspective, social inclusion is often limited to providing equal opportunities and eliminating discrimination; whereas from a social-democratic stance, social inclusion is built on redistributive frameworks, especially for weaker members, and the recognition of the rights and needs of specific groups. In particular, the European Union often refers to social inclusion as a way of building social cohesion, paying particular attention to the connections between people and between people and their community.

As societies become increasingly diverse and heterogeneous, culturally, religiously, socially, the debate on diversity, freedom, and social cohesion becomes more central and relevant. Addressing this debate and the important challenge it represents within the framework of social inclusion implies defining a delicate and complex balance between the preservation of group values and the expression of identity, which must display sufficiently open, porous, and welcoming social boundaries so as not to be exclusionary, and accept difference without giving it a pejorative or hierarchical meaning.

2. Overview of Contributions

The thematic issue offers interesting conceptual, methodological, and empirical contributions to the study of social inclusion and social inclusive experiences in contemporary societies in uncertain times, with key examples from Spain, Portugal, Belgium, and Brazil.

Alvarez-Cueva (2022) presents a study that examines 13 examples of music production during the Covid-19 crisis and argues how music helped create—mainly virtual—scenarios where emotions of solidarity, empathy, and responsibility were key to dealing with the lockdown. The author argues that, through the production of music, a sense of "shared feelings" ensued, as well as a whole new community dynamics, that helped cope with the severe social isolation imposed by the pandemic, capable of eroding the actual social inclusion of citizens and, perhaps most importantly, their own perceived sense of inclusion.

On the subject of initiatives urged on by the pandemic, Novella Cámara et al. (2022) offer an example of a pedagogical practice developed during lockdown to stimulate dialogue between professionals working to enhance the inclusion of children and adolescents in decision-making processes at the municipal level. Created amid strict confinement measures, the online initiative (what the authors called "coffee meetings") proved a successful formative space where technicians gathered to share knowledge and experience, strengthen bonds with their community of professionals, and, most importantly, find practical ways to promote youth participation in their municipality.

Complementing this line of research on child and adolescent participation, Mateos-Blanco et al. (2022) present an important exploration of the different types and results of child-led participatory practices. The authors carried out a scoping review to find out what evidence is available on child-led participatory experiences and found, out of 674 identified papers, that a total of 33 studies met the "inclusion" criterion. The review concludes that children can undertake transformative action in their social environment—if the "adult world" allows them to do so—but also that the ways we think about children's participation and put it into practice must be updated.

On that note, Esteban (2022) proposes a theoretical and reflective article arguing that inclusive and equitable education necessarily involves considering children as having the capacity for autonomous and collective action (action agency), recognizing children's moral responsibility and competence, the transformative power of their role (moral and transformative agency), and promoting their civic participation in school-related decision-making processes, on issues that interest and concern them (participatory agency).

Zooming in on the Spanish case, Morentin-Encina et al. (2022) seek to describe the state of children and adolescents' participation in 179 of the municipalities that

form part of the International Association of Educating Cities and Child Friendly Cities (CFC-UNICEF). To do this, they compile data from a questionnaire applied to 279 people (191 technical figures and 88 elected officials), and a qualitative analysis is made of those questions concerning strategies used to promote inclusion. Their results show that there is an agreement that Children's Councils are inclusive bodies, but the means and procedures adopted by them do not guarantee this.

Finally, based on a survey of 191 local youth workers, Laforgue et al. (2022) present a study on the inbuilt structures that help or hinder children and adolescents' participation in the local arena. The survey helps the authors determine the youth workers' perceptions of inclusivity in child participation bodies across their cities and the specific measures in place are discussed. Challenges to children's inclusion in local participation processes are identified, as well as strategies for advancing towards the creation of more diverse and inclusive arenas of participation. In this sense, the intersectional approach can help us avoid the exclusion of children and adolescents with added social barriers.

Challenges in a special educations school are addressed in the contribution by Argemí-Baldich et al. (2022). The authors present a case study from a carpentry classroom-workshop and try to identify the different meanings that participants (students and teacher alike) attribute to inclusive education, especially regarding presence, participation, success, and the relationship between students. By focusing on the specific context of the classroom-workshop, the article promotes a novel approach to research on inclusive education.

On the topic of young people in situations of social vulnerability, Ferrer-Fons et al. (2022) reflect on how non-formal education in the arts can attenuate socioeconomic and cultural barriers in a vulnerable context. The authors present the case study of an artistic non-formal educational organization located in a deprived neighborhood of Barcelona, Spain, and identify several key factors associated with successful social inclusion, albeit with limitations. This article concludes with the recommendation that artistic non-formal education can be used as a tool in the social inclusion agenda.

Raposo (2022) contributes to this discussion with an article on social inclusion policies for underprivileged youth based on the ethnographic accompaniment of an associative experience promoted by the Choices Programme ("Programa Escolhas") on the outskirts of Lisbon. An important contribution to the topic of social vulnerability among young people, the author questions the limits of citizen participation as a means to stimulate the political engagement of adolescents when participation is tied to individualist ideologies far removed from a "grammar of rights."

Finally, to address the subject of social inclusion also in a higher education setting, Binoti Simas et al. (2022) present the results of their documentary research on the interiorization program of public higher education in Brazil through the specific example of Unifesspa, a federal university created in 2013 in the relatively new municipality of Santana of Araguaia. While the creation of this campus in the specific municipal context of Santana of Araguaia was not without its challenges, the case study provides an example of how it must be possible to overcome aspects of inequality and guarantee the right to free public higher education of quality in the area.

Kasztan Flechner et al. (2022) deepen the debate on social inclusion opportunities by focusing on the important issue of women of migrant origin in the active labour market. Focusing on Flanders, Belgium, and using longitudinal microdata from the Employment Office and social security registers, the authors analyse the extent to which women' household composition is associated with their perception and usage of occupation-specific training. An important contribution to the topic of social vulnerability among women of migrant origin, their findings suggest that women's uptake of active labour market programmes is related to household characteristics such as the origin of their partner and the presence of children, and argue that family policies (e.g., childcare) are instrumental in increasing women's enrolment in such programmes.

As Sánchez-Martí et al. (2022, p. 139) eloquently put it, "equal rights and opportunities must be a social imperative that unites us all." This idea is pervasive in their contribution as the authors engage in a participatory research the main goal of which is to analyze how we can promote the construction of a pluricultural collective identity. Delving into public policies in Catalonia, their article sets out to identify situations and social spaces prone to discrimination and racism, exposing the hurdles to building a common public culture that includes an unprecedented diversity of origins and experiences.

A key element in our continuous search for belonging, identity, and connection, is media and social representation—and Masanet et al. (2022) provide a valuable contribution on this subject. The authors develop a close reading analysis of the first season of the American series *Euphoria* (Levinson et al., 2019–present) and use the example of Jule, a trans female character, to showcase how media portrayals can promote representation that is, on the one hand, aspirational and, on the other, improves visibility and a sense of social inclusion. The results of their analysis show that representation in the series moves away from the traditional portrayal of trans characters in three significant ways: (a) The narrative moves beyond the "trans fact" and presents complex and plural stories; (b) the trans individual is represented as an element of value and love (away from fetishism); and (c) there is a link between the trans realm and specific spaces of comfort and freedom.

3. Conclusion

This collection of articles aims to contribute to the literature on social inclusion, delving into this complex

concept, as well as its social transfer, from a multidimensional and interdisciplinary perspective, essentially highlighting limitations, challenges, and proposals for the construction and development of social inclusion in contemporary societies in times of transformation and uncertainty. The contributions in this thematic issue will be especially helpful and useful to professionals responsible for care services in fields of social inclusion (educators, teachers, social workers) as well as to political decision-makers. Each article in this issue illustrates how social inclusion is a complex, multidimensional process requiring clear definitions and indicators, as well as the need for it to be developed in a transversal way in all spheres of social life—education, culture, childhood/adolescence, city, participation—so that socially inclusive conditions emerge and become a driving force for social transformation oriented towards societies' sustainable development and social justice.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

Music to Face the Lockdown: An Analysis of Covid-19 Music Narratives on Individual and Social Well-Being

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Abstract
When the world seemed to collapse due to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, music was employed to promote positivity and strength among citizens and communities, especially during worldwide lockdowns. Because the general context of the pandemic was saturated with anxiety, uncertainty, and fear, music—in all its forms of production—became an ideal resource for entertainment and accompaniment, and helped people face the challenges associated with the crisis. Following a qualitative content analysis, this study deeply examines 13 examples of music production published by the United Nations during the Covid-19 crisis, highlighting the narrative elements and how they relate to individual and social well-being. In so doing, the study identifies eight main categories among both lyrics and performances in the music examples. These are: (a) desires, (b) emotions, (c) people, (d) practices, (e) reflections, (f) education/entertainment, (g) allusion to war, and (h) nationalism. The results suggest that music narratives have empowered individuals and social groups by evoking sentiments of solidarity and kindness at both individual and community levels and, in so doing, have contributed to individual and social well-being.

1. Introduction

The SDGs of the 2030 agenda interrelate both health and well-being to promote certain measures designed to improve life quality and inclusion of individuals in social activities (United Nations [UN], 2017). From this perspective, it is possible to start connecting how the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns of 2020 not only impacted health systems worldwide but also the well-being of society in general (Gerez et al., 2020; Yang & Ma, 2020, 2021). As people attempted to adapt to the so-called "new normal," a large number of sentiments were shared in the news, on social networks and, notably in European countries such as Spain and Italy, through public rituals on apartment balconies. The effects of the virus were not limited to the symptoms of disease and illness. The situation also evoked

uncertainty and fear (González-Sanguino et al., 2020; Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2020), which made the crisis even deeper and altered peoples' lives in both their individual and social spheres. In this context, professional and amateur musicians started to produce and share music to transmit positivity and strength (Cabedo-Mas et al., 2021; Mas-Herrero et al., 2020), thereby contributing, perhaps unconsciously, to improving personal and social well-being (Martínez-Castilla et al., 2021).

Owing to the cancellation of concerts and events and the mandatory nature of online activities during the quarantines, social media became filled with music videos and songs that related to the lockdown, carried messages of social cohesion and solidarity (Montejano & Rojas, 2020), and promoted a generally positive view of the future (Zhao et al., 2020). Such sentiments were represented in musicians' initiatives that appeared all over

the world such as #SolidaritySession by Chris Martin of Coldplay ("Chris Martin se solidariza," 2020; Perea, 2020), #LaGiraSeQuedaEnCasa by Juanes and Alejandro Sanz ("Juanes y Alejandro Sanz en concierto," 2020), and "One World: Together at Home," an initiative created by Lady Gaga that assembled numerous musicians and celebrities (Muñoz Pandiella, 2020).

The UN (2020) article *Music Does Not Cure a Pandemic, but It Cheers the Soul* (author's translation from Spanish) presented examples of music practices that had emerged during the pandemic, evoking the idea that music had been a source of optimism and solidarity throughout the crisis. Within this context, the present study will analyse those music examples promoted by the UN and explore the relationship that music narratives might have for both individual and social well-being. In so doing, the study combines a deductive analysis—following the categories of (a) desires, (b) emotions, (c) people, (d) practices, and (e) reflections (Alvarez-Cueva et al., 2020)—and an inductive analysis that incorporates the principles of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), thereby allowing new data to emerge from the analysis itself. In other words, the inductive process will identify new categories by the combination of the literature review and the listening/watching process itself.

Section one of this article reviews the current literature and theoretical considerations. Section two provides a description of the data, method employed, and analysis. Section three presents the results. Section four discusses the main findings.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Considerations

2.1. Music and Well-Being

In recent years, music has been analysed in terms of its role in life on both the individual and the social level. Audiences use music not only for entertainment (Bennett, 2001) but also as a "resource for the conduct of emotional 'work,' and for heightening or changing energy levels" (Denora, 1999, p. 31). Studies have also shown that music can be incorporated into different forms of therapy to prevent mental illness (Poulos et al., 2019) and to mitigate the symptoms of other illnesses such as dementia (Ho et al., 2019). Music, in all its forms of production, accompanies daily life with a great impact on identification processes (Acord & Denora, 2008; Hall & Du Gay, 2003). Acord and Denora (2008) argue that aesthetic objects function as arbiters of social relations, meaning, and action and that they are used to organize the daily existence of both individuals and groups. Therefore, understanding the relationship between music and well-being is particularly relevant during crisis scenarios such as the pandemic. In this sense, music—both lyrics and visual performances—may help organize the so-called new normality while exacerbating emotions to face the crisis. Indeed, several stud-

ies have highlighted the role of music in promoting social cohesion and support. Moss (2019), for instance, argues about the spiritual benefits of music therapy and how music helped to transcend difficulties and find meaning in suffering. Similar ideas are present in a study of community choir initiatives, in which the authors argue that music practice reduces loneliness and increases the interest of older adults in community life (Johnson et al., 2020). These works suggest that music engagement and practice may lead to subjective and social well-being.

Lindblad and de Boise (2020) argue that music creation and/or practice fills psychological, social, and emotional needs among older men. Based on a set of semi-structured interviews with Swedish men aged 66–76, their study draws a contrast between "being" with music and doing/practising musical activities. In the context of crisis that concerns the present study, these findings connect with both practices of listening and producing music during the pandemic. In this sense, the work of Kwok (2019) suggests that students who experimented with music therapy from a positive psychology perspective had significant increases in emotional competence, hope, individual happiness, and a significant decrease in anxiety. It is well known that music therapy requires professional assistance, but Kwok's (2019) study suggests that we should think about music as a broader resource for emotional competencies. In this regard, it is important to recognise that the emotion that was transversal during the pandemic was anxiety.

As Keng et al. (2021) suggest, music therapy stress reduction (MTSR) may have a unique impact on negative emotions. Enge and Stige (2021), for their part, argued that music therapy nurtures a child's capacity to regulate emotions and engage in social activities. These works do not suggest that music itself is a form of medicine, but rather—considering context, environmental conditions, individual and social values and beliefs, social inequalities, and social dynamics—it influences subjective and collective well-being (Daykin et al., 2017).

Fanian et al.'s (2015) study of Canadian indigenous youth analyses creative arts workshops that explored community issues and possible solutions by using the arts. They report that indigenous youth gained confidence and new skills. Furthermore, Calderón-Garrido et al. (2018) used a questionnaire to explore the experiences and opinions of 462 people of different ages, sex, educational levels, and artistic backgrounds. They found that a large majority believed that art (particularly music) improved their state of mind. Therefore, it is possible to see that arts in general, and engagement and participation in music practices in particular, have the potential to build resilience and stimulate social dialogue (Calderón-Garrido et al., 2018; Fanian et al., 2015).

Furthermore, emotional intelligence—which corresponds to both intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence—is also related to listening to and making music. Oriola and Gustems (2015) argue that music education contributes to developing and improving

emotional competencies. In so doing, the authors addressed five different forms of emotional intelligence within musical education: (a) emotional consciousness, (b) emotional regulation, (c) emotional autonomy, (d) social nature capacities, and (e) capacities related to wellbeing and life. Nevertheless, these different forms of emotional intelligence can also be discussed in other contexts, such as the pandemic, where emotional intelligence played a key role in relation to well-being.

Within this context, this article argues that at the same time the world was facing the challenges associated with Covid-19, music indeed functioned as a sort of escape route, not only for amateur or professional musicians but also to people, in general, while making sense of the crisis. In so doing, music helped strengthen both individual and social spheres that, in turn, are the basis for well-being. Although the notion of well-being has been analysed from different perspectives (Fletcher, 2016; Stone & Mackie, 2013), this study understands well-being as "the series of momentary affective states that occur through time" (Stone & Mackie, 2013, p. 29) that may impact in both individual and social spheres.

2.2. Music, an Antidote to the Effects of the Coronavirus

During the pandemic, music was used as a therapeutic vehicle to reduce discomfort while strengthening emotional support (Partida Valdivia, 2020). In this sense, music achieved two main actions: it alerted and informed about prevention strategies (Mulemi, 2021) and it mitigated the impacts of the administrative measures to contain the virus spread, which included social distancing and lockdowns (Beam & Kim, 2020; Tull et al., 2020). Beam and Kim (2020) draw attention to both young and old adults who faced problems due to isolation measures and loneliness. Likewise, Tull et al. (2020) analysed the psychological consequences of Covid-19 prevention measures (such as stay-at-home orders) among women and men around 40 years old, highlighting that prevention strategies were associated with greater levels of health anxiety, financial worry, and loneliness. These studies suggest that social connection is crucial to mitigate the negative consequences of the pandemic, a scenario that also extends to healthcare personnel and people on the front line (Giordano et al., 2020).

A previous study (Alvarez-Cueva et al., 2020) drew the remarkable benefits on people's well-being of making, sharing, and seeing music, classifying them in four main areas: (a) physical health, (b) self-confidence and optimism, (c) solidarity and social support, and (d) the development of skills and knowledge related to a particular situation. Other studies have analysed the role that music played during the pandemic and the lockdown periods in different places around the world. Ferreri et al. (2021) conducted a study in the USA, Spain, and Italy and argued that people spent more time than usual on activities related to music during the pandemic, pointing out

that music selection depended on individual sensibility, emotional regulation strategies, regulation of stress, and cheering themselves up. A study developed in France, Germany, India, Italy, the USA, and the UK demonstrates how important real-time musical responses are when facing societal crises (Fink et al., 2021). Martínez-Castilla et al. (2021) argue that musical activity was carried out to support emotional well-being during lockdowns in Spain, where more vulnerable people found greater benefit from musical behaviours. The study conducted by MacDonald et al. (2021) analysed improvisation of musical practices with artists in Glasgow. From the interviews, key topics have been highlighted: "enhanced mood, reduced feelings of isolation, and sustained and developed community" (MacDonald et al., 2021, p. 1). Likewise, Martín et al. (2021) point out that, during the lockdown in Spain, music emerged as the form of artistic expression most used to face situations of loneliness, to maintain relationships with others despite the social distancing measures, and to minimize possible psychological states and negative emotional factors derived from, among other causes, nostalgia and anguish, which have been broadly associated with crises (Gibbs & Egermann, 2021).

Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al. (2020) argue that stress derived from the lockdowns in Spain mainly affected young people including those with some type of chronic illness. Similarly, González-Sanguino et al. (2020) explore the effects on 18–25-year-olds and 26–60-year-olds whose emotional states during lockdown were also associated with anxiety and depression. In this scenario, Covid-19 and the different measures implemented over the last year and a half have had an enormous impact on society.

The virtual stages on which musical activity was developed during lockdown (Montejano & Rojas, 2020) have been key in helping people face the changing reality brought about by the pandemic (Calvo & Bejarano, 2020; Daykin et al., 2018). For this reason, it is not surprising that various studies highlight the effects of music on the regulation of mood and the promotion of social cohesion in times of adversity such as the pandemic (Chiu, 2020). For instance, Cabedo-Mas et al. (2021) suggest that during periods of confinement, there was an increase in the time used for activities related to music and that music was seen as a tool to escape from reality and improve one's mood. This idea is consistent with the work of Ferreri et al. (2021), who argue that the activities that people carried out while listening to happy music and discovering new songs are linked to the regulation of healthy emotions (Fink et al., 2021; Hansen, 2021). Music was of such relevance during the pandemic that Hansen et al. (2021) propose the term "coronamusic" to emphasize the role it had among individuals and social groups. Indeed, all these studies point out the relevance of music in helping people face the crisis (see also Zhao et al., 2020). Therefore, it is possible to understand music as Rimé (2009) suggests, this is, as a tool that stimulates

social ties, collaborates with mental health, and impacts well-being on both personal and social levels.

This article builds on the work of scholars who have argued that music helps regulate one's emotional state (Mas-Herrero et al., 2020) to the point of being the most efficient activity and resource for the promotion of well-being (Granot et al., 2021), by unravelling music narratives that emerged during the pandemic and critically analysing their relationship with both individual and social well-being.

3. Data and Methods

3.1. Qualitative Data Approach and Method

The sample of the present study has been established on the music list published by the UN (2020), where a total of 13 songs and videos were presented, divided into four sections: (a) viral music from the initial period of Covid-19, (b) online festivals, (c) old songs as anthems, and (d) UN professional collaborations. One characteristic of the music list is its connection to Hispanic identity. Most of the examples are in the Spanish language and come from different Spanish-speaking countries. The sample includes a broad range of Spanish singers, artists, and campaigns that were aimed at helping to combat the health crisis from different positions: to favour children, to help first-line personnel, etc. Although the sample covers only a small proportion of what people were listening to and sharing during the pandemic, it represents a remarkable variety of productions that have connected people.

The first section of the music list comprises three examples: Horacio Rodrigues' song, an amateur Argentinian production with more than 65,000 YouTube views; the Catalan trio Stay Homas, which started producing music during the lockdown in Spain; and Sheila Blanco, a professional singer and journalist who uses YouTube to make classic composers accessible to a broader audience. The first section, therefore, includes an amateur musician, a small group that became famous during the pandemic, and a professional education initiative. The second section of the music list includes different examples, ranging from a Cuban artistic initiative to the #YoMeQuedoEnCasaFestival in Spain, where more than 160 artists collaborated. The third section of the list explains how some old and classic songs were revived due to the Covid-19 crisis and helped unify society. To exemplify this, the list includes the songs *Contigo Perú*, performed by members of the National Choir of Peru and the National Children's Choir, *Como la Cigarra*, a collaboration of more than 30 Argentinian artists, and *Resistiré México*, which resonates in different countries since versions of the original song (by Dúo Dinámico) have been made by Spanish, Ecuadorian, Colombian, and Chilenian artists, among others. Finally, the fourth section of the list combines music initiatives that aimed to gather contributions for different

social campaigns related to the Covid-19 crisis. The list includes *Pa'lante* by Salomon Beda—part of the campaign #VolveránLosAbrazos, that assembled artists from countries including Venezuela, Puerto Rico, Chile, Perú, and the USA. The list also includes Pablo Alborán with the song *Cuando Estés Aquí*, who contributed to a UNICEF's campaign, and the worldwide initiative led by Lady Gaga "One World Together at Home," which raised more than 125 million dollars and included Hispanic artists such as Juanes, Luis Fonsi, and Maluma. In sum, the sample contains a variety of examples that share characteristics with other similar music productions that are not considered in the present work. The sample, therefore, provides the means of highlighting elements that resonate with other examples of music that emerged or became popular during the Covid-19 crisis.

In this study, both music lyrics and videos are considered. The analysis is carried out following a deductive method (Alvarez-Cueva et al., 2020) based on five categories of music creation in times of confinement—i.e., (a) desires, (b) emotions, (c) people, (d) practices, and (e) reflections—and an inductive method supported on the fundamentals of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This entails an iterative process of data collection from the units of analysis—both lyrics and videos—and the process of qualitative analysis within the theoretical framework. In so doing, the study develops a qualitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004) of lyrics and music videos that allows the analysis to move randomly through the different elements of the music narratives to include as many as possible. This refers, for instance, to artists' speeches (when necessary, e.g., during online festivals). All the data was organized and categorized using Nvivo12 software.

3.2. Conducting the Qualitative Analysis

The first step consisted of codifying the thirteen cases and revising each of their videos and lyrics. The units of analysis were separated by differentiation regarding lyrics and videos—with "Y" if available and "N" if it was not accessible. The study dismissed lyrics and/or videos if the example was unsuitable for the analysis. Three of the units of the analysis presented a sort of limitation in this sense. To still include as many units of analysis as possible, the study determined the following: for the first case (C_004), the analysis would only include the video of the song; for the second case (C_006), the analysis would focus particularly on the artist's speech during her participation in the online festival; and, finally, the study eliminates the last case (C_008) because it was the only one transmitted in segments via Twitter and was neither an original song nor had a significant number of plays. The units of analysis were established as elaborated upon in Table 1.

In addition, transcription of lyrics was done prior to analysis using the software. For the codification, both deductive and inductive processes were developed.

Table 1. Total sample and the final units of analysis established.

Code	Title and artist	Lyrics	Video
C_001	*Me Quedo en casa Porque te Quiero* (Horacio Rodriguez)	Y	Y
C_002	*Ya No Puedo Más* (Stay Homas, Sílvia Pérez Cruz)	Y	Y
C_003	*El Moderno Debussy* (Sheila Blanco)	Y	Y
C_004	Sheila Blanco and Federico Lechner performing at IFEMA	N	Y
C_005	"Tunturuntu Pa' Tu Casa Sábado: 21 de Marzo de 2020"	Y	Y
C_006	Live concert #YoMeQuedoEnCasaFestival (Sofía Ellar)	Y	Y
C_007	Argentina sings *La Cigarra* by María Elena Walsh (various artists)	Y	Y
C_009	*Contigo Perú* (National Choir of Peru and the National Children's Choir)	Y	Y
C_010	*Resistiré México* (various artists)	Y	Y
C_011	*Pa'lante* (Salomón Beda feat. 16 Latinoamerican artists)	Y	Y
C_012	*Cuando Estés Aquí* (Pablo Alborán)	Y	Y
C_013	*Smile* (Lady Gaga at the "One World: Together at Home" festival)	Y	Y

Nodes in Nvivo12 were created for the deductive categories mentioned above. Sub-nodes were created for positive, negative, uncertain, and longing emotions (Alvarez-Cueva et al., 2020). This deductive strategy allowed the data to be detected and organized following the narratives and elements of lockdown music production, mainly because not all the songs were created for the pandemic but were rather recovered because they resonated with it. The inductive strategy of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) allowed the codification and analysis to interrelate the literature review with the most important elements of each unit of analysis and, in so doing, three additional nodes (categories) were identified: education/entertainment, allusion to war, and nationalism. Before presenting the results, it is pertinent to mention that the analysis determined most of the videos as homemade because both amateur and professional musicians were singing mainly from their homes. The exceptions are examples C_012, which features a professionally produced animation that accompanies the artist, and C_004, in which the artists are singing outside a hospital in Madrid, Spain.

4. Results

A total of eight transversal elements are highlighted from the analysis: (a) desires, (b) emotions, (c) people, (d) practices, (e) reflections, (f) education/ entertainment, (g) allusion to war, and (h) nationalism. The results are presented in two sections: The first section will focus on the deductive results, while the second will present the inductive data. In both sections, results will be accompanied by some video screenshots to illustrate the findings. Nevertheless, in the discussion, the article presents how all the elements are interconnected with one another and with questions of well-being at an individual and social level.

4.1. Music and Lockdown: An Opportunity to Rethink the Battle to Win

The five deductive categories were identified, although four of them were more remarkable among the sample, these are reflections, emotions, practices, and desires.

Reflections are mainly related to two ideas: On one hand, a sort of unity—meaning the strengthening of social ties to face the virus and the crisis; on the other hand, reflections on life while being separated from others. Most of the references in this regard link with the necessity of helping individually—a sort of "do your part" message. Reflections, in general, allow us to understand music as part of a process of rethinking life and seeing lockdowns as opportunities to learn and resist. This idea, precisely, links with Moss' (2019) argument on the benefits of finding meaning during hard times. During the Covid-19 crisis, and particularly when lockdowns started being imposed, the difficulties that music helped people go through encouraged the individual to embrace collective resistance and, in so doing, alluded to "war" and "battle." Both of these scenarios would need to follow a strategy of fighting as a team and watching each other's backs to finally be able to see life value and take back good moments with the loved ones. According to this category, the future would be a "new beginning" in which hugs and smiles would return. In one example (C_013), Lady Gaga illustrates this idea when she sings "you'll see that life is still worthwhile if you just smile" (see Figure 1).

The second most important category is emotions, which relates to the different feelings both amateur and professional artists shared through their music during the crisis and lockdowns. To examine each of these emotions thoroughly, the study subdivides them into longing, positive, negative, and uncertain emotions.

Longing emotions were common to most of the songs among the sample, related to missing loved ones as crucial in this regard. In dialogue with a previous

Figure 1. Lady Gaga performs *Smile* at "One World: Together At Home." Source: Global Citizen (2020).

study (Alvarez-Cueva et al., 2020), longing emotions link with the desire and need to return to a pre-pandemic lifestyle. Through these emotions, it is possible to see how Covid-19 shifted known life worldwide, resulting in the emergence of romanticized references to what people used to do before the pandemic—a state that is both valuable and achievable with patience and faith.

Positive emotions are also highlighted among the sample. As mentioned before, most of the categories are interrelated to one another and positive emotions were fundamental to all the narratives analysed, either because the lyrics made direct references to "smile," "hug," "resurge," or because the videoclips suggested positivity through its presentational style, especially when the screen was split into many spaces where different people were singing together while smiling at the camera. The online interaction due to social distancing measures not only contributed to trying to hold social networks but, particularly in the case of music, permitted the reinforcement of previous ties through the energy that is conveyed in music. As argued in relation to com-

munity choir (Johnson et al., 2020), the examples of positive emotions shared by multiple singers might help reduce sentiments of loneliness and increase the interest in helping and supporting each other (see Figures 2 and 3).

Positive emotions are consistent even when a melancholier melody is used, as demonstrated in C_012 by the metaphorical reference portrayed by free-flying birds at the end of the clip (Figure 4). This in turn links back to the longing emotions explained above. In general, positive emotions nurtured individual and social bonds during the crisis and, in so doing, stimulated social ties and had a positive impact on well-being (Rimé, 2009).

Negative emotions were also combined with longing emotions, transforming feelings of missing loved ones, sadness, and suffering into a sort of motivation to keep waiting and hoping for a better tomorrow. "Learning from suffering" (Moss, 2019) takes place so that the individual (as well as others) understands and values social bonds, takes care of missing ones and, as a consequence, "does it right" when the moment comes. This

Figure 2. Screenshot from the official music video of *Pa'lante*, by Salomón Beda feat. 16 artistas Latinoamericanos. Source: Beda (2020).

Figure 3. Screenshot from the official music video of *Resistiré México*. Source: Warner Music México (2020).

social dialogue (Calderón-Garrido et al., 2018), even when considering negative emotions, promotes the idea that moods can still be improved in uncertain times.

Applying the same principles of music as a resource for building resiliency and relationships (Fanian et al., 2015), we can see that uncertain emotions are also highlighted among the narratives analysed. One of the sample songs (C_011), translated here from the original Spanish, proves a remarkable example (from Spanish):

> As much as the vertigo of not knowing exactly what can happen can have you cornered against the wall / Now that she comes, she will be the one who left, everything that she was now is not, she will continue to be so later / It has been that way since there once was.

Practices were the third most important category in the sample. These narratives were mainly used as reminders of the official measures (C_001, C_005, C_006, C_008, C_013) and made frequent mentions of social distancing and stay-at-home as an obligation and responsibility for

yourself and others during the crisis (see Figure 5). When thinking about the relationship between emotional intelligence and music (Oriola & Gustems, 2015), it is possible to associate the practices described in the narratives with consciousness awakening as well as with emotional regulation and autonomy during the crisis. This means realising that part of the solution (at least) relied on each person following the recommended prevention measures. Furthermore, the capacities related to well-being and life might also be stimulated through the constant reminder of environmental conditions and individual and social implications and dynamics (Daykin et al., 2017; Mulemi, 2021).

The fourth category is desires, which is linked with spirituality (C_001) when evoking, for example, God to save Argentina and all countries, from Latin America to China. Desires also evoked memories of hugs, of being together, of smiles (C_013), or simply of being able to continue doing the activities we enjoyed the most (C_002). In so doing, they reinforce the idea of keeping moving forward (C_011). In this category, most of the previous elements convey again stimulation of social
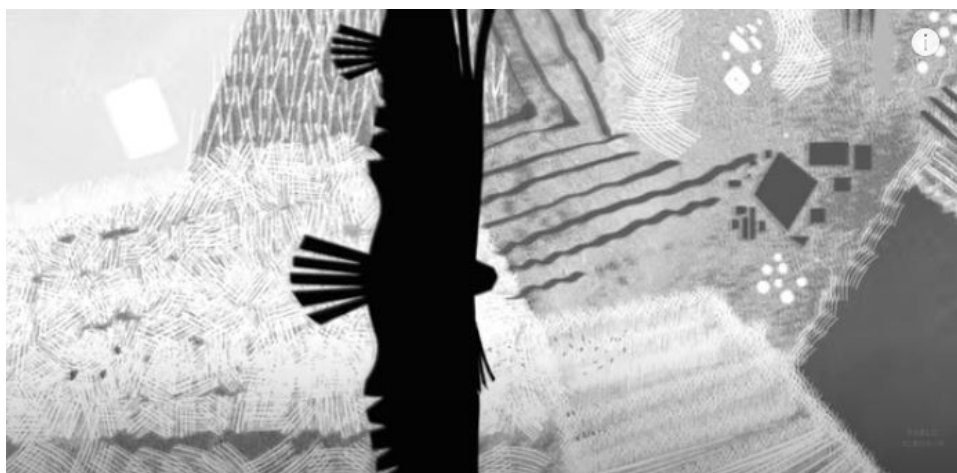

Figure 4. Screenshot from the official music video of *Cuando Estés Aquí*. Source: Alborán (2020).

Figure 5. Screenshot from the project Tunturuntu Pa' tu Casa Sábado: 21 de Marzo de 2020. Source: Tunturuntu Cuba (2020).

bonds (Rimé, 2009) that go beyond geographical borders. Desires are particularly relevant for the study because music creation implies an intentional message in their lyrics. Therefore, when transmitted, desires connect with one's individual and social sphere through a reality that arguably became very similar around the globe. If the pandemic demonstrated anything at its inception stage, it is that humanity shares much more similarities, such as vulnerability and anxiety, than differences. An interesting example of new and global lifestyle practices—the result of adapting our means of communication—is present in C_007, an intervention of various artists, performing on what seems to be a WhatsApp group entitled #ArgentinaCanta (see Figure 6).

4.2. Linking the Personal and the Collective: Weaving Emotions to Act and Be Safe

Three final categories were inductively found among the sample: education/entertainment, allusions to war, and nationalism.

The education/entertainment category is represented in C_003. This is remarkable, since the Covid-19 crisis demanded, among other factors, working from home and online activities that ruled people's daily lives. In this sense, education also faced a significant challenge (Cano-Hila & Argemí-Baldich, 2021). By mirroring life, music contributed to combining emotional competencies (Kwok, 2019) and the context of the pandemic (Daykin et al., 2017). The category of education/entertainment is combined because music affords a more creative form of self-expression at the same time it opens new ways for teaching and learning (DeNora, 2003). These activities can improve the development of emotional consciousness, regulation, and autonomy, as well as comprehension of the social situation, self-awareness, and well-being (Oriola & Gustems, 2015).

The second category is allusions to war. Some lyrics evoked memories of war and resistance, presumably because of the uncertainty and fear caused by the pandemic. As mentioned before, this narrative links back to Moss' (2019) reflections of learning from difficulties
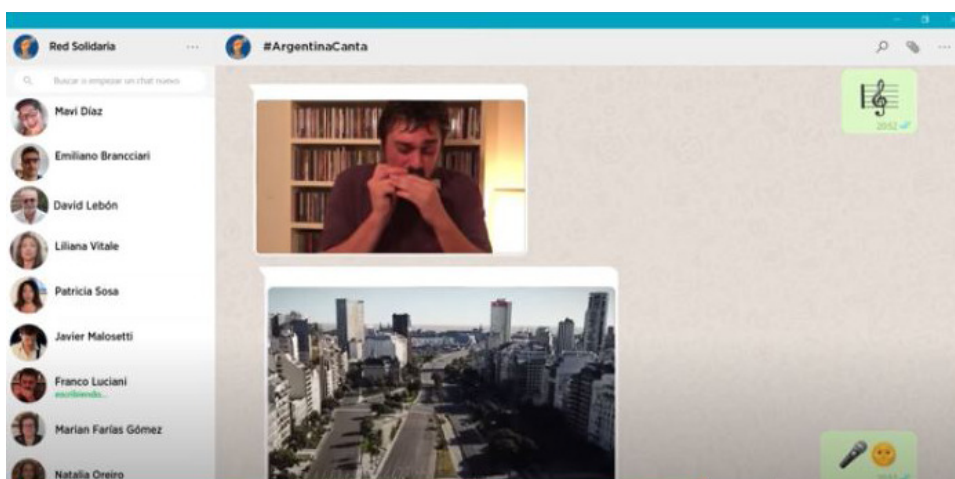

Figure 6. Argentina sings *La Cigarra* by María Elena Walsh. Source: Televisión Pública (2020).

and finding meaning in the suffering they often provoke. Allusions to war, however, are interrelated also to the need to influence collective well-being (Daykin et al., 2017) by appealing to individual responsibility and emotional autonomy (Oriola & Gustems, 20115). War scenarios are charged visual imaginaries that are capable of influencing memories of catastrophe that many people would prefer to avoid. However, these narratives can enable a more valuable sense of autonomy and heroism specific to this crisis context. Several songs (C_001, C_007, C_010) employed allusions to war to unify society against a common enemy: the virus. Therefore, both strategies to prevent contagion and encouragement to "fight" the battle were important. In this context, C_010 repeatedly used the same narrative in different countries and different languages. Resistance (*resistiré*) became a sort of anthem, especially during lockdown—indeed, it was included in the sub-headline of the UN article previously alluded to. One song (C_004) also portrayed a sort of tribute to healthcare personnel and people on the front line in a hospital in Madrid, Spain. This action combined feelings of gratitude and thoughts of strength to keep battling adversity (see Figure 7).

Building on the idea of an anthem to unify society, the last category explored in this article is nationalism. This narrative reinforced the message of unity and strength to face the crisis with a more profound impact on one's individual and social spheres (Daykin et al., 2017). If allusions to war might provoke responsibility in such a way that the individual felt responsible for the situation, the addition of nationalism goes even further, evoking the sentiment that "patriotism in battle" is the key to success. This "military squad" allusion is identifiable in one example that includes images of men and women in uniform (C_009; see Figure 8). In this sense, feelings derived from nationalism narratives might also produce an increased cohesion of existent social ties and even build new ones (Calderón-Garrido et al., 2018; Fanian et al., 2015). Feelings of patriotism encourage people to take their part in the crisis scenario and be responsible for helping themselves and others. In so doing, these emotions also produce feelings of satisfaction and pride that serve as a basis for promoting individual and social well-being. We recall the lyrics, here translated from the original Spanish, to *Contigo Perú*:

> When I wake up and I see that I continue to live with you, Peru, I thank heaven for giving me life with you, Peru....We are all with you, Peru....We are your children, and we will unite, and thus we will triumph with you, Peru.

Figure 7. Sheila Blanco and Federico Lechner performing at IFEMA. Source: IFEMA (2020).
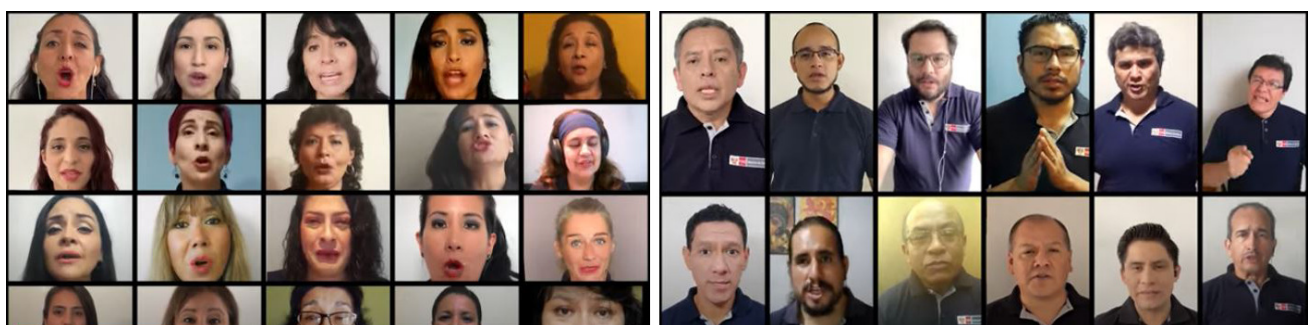

Figure 8. Screenshots of *Contigo Perú* being performed by the National Choir of Peru and the National Children's Choir. Source: Ministerio de Cultura de Perú (2020).

5. Discussion

The present study identifies eight elements present in the narratives of the so-called "coronamusic" (Hansen et al., 2021) identified by the UN (2020). These elements are (a) desires, (b) emotions, (c) people, (d) practices, (e) reflections, (f) education/entertainment, (g) allusions to war, and (h) nationalism. Combined, these elements played a crucial role in transmitting sentiments of solidarity and responsibility during the crisis. The study argues that music enables a social dialogue (Fanian et al., 2015) that improve emotional competencies (Kwok, 2019), appealing in particular to the individual (Oriola & Gustems, 2015) and, in so doing, resonating with the collective (Daykin et al., 2017). Therefore, ideas of "unity" were crucial not only to maintain faith in the future but also to encourage people to think of themselves and others and help them face the situation. Most of the songs analysed in this article repeat messages of seeing the crisis and lockdowns as an opportunity to learn and to resist (Moss, 2019), to dream of new beginnings. In a context that is constantly being compared to scenarios of war and battle, feeling the absence of loved ones (the very emotion it entails) demarcated a space in which individuals may have felt responsible for themselves and others, but where they also promoted attitudes and routines that helped them cope with the crisis.

This study argues that music relates to individual and social well-being. Music helped people navigate the situation by empowering them in their individual and collective spheres, while they were learning how to prevent contagion, appealing to emotions that create a positive view of the crisis. This lesson might help us grow and build a better future. In sum, the music of both amateur and professional artists produced in the pandemic evoked solidarity and kindness, thus helping people remain calm and providing them with the faith they needed to face the crisis.

Future studies may include audiences' perspectives to deeply problematize the relationship between music and one's individual and social spheres, particularly in scenarios of crisis.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

Meetings Between Professionals for the Inclusion of Children in Citizen Participation: A Formative Experience

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Abstract

Municipalities must take steps towards an "educational action" that welcomes children into environments that estimulate their involvement and participation in issues that mean something to them. Professionals working directly with children in the municipal sphere must strengthen the development of their active and committed citizenship (SDG no. 4), relating to them as citizens capable of transforming their environment. Children's participation requires adults who recognise them as interlocutors and establish relationships of trust and mutual respect with them. Municipalities need to create opportunities for children to be included in the co-production of local projects and to take a leading role in public policies. This article aims to offer elements that can nurture professionals' readiness and "capacity building" to facilitate children's participation. These elements are formed in the context of a pedagogical practice (the "coffee meetings") and emerge through a systematisation of experiences (Aguiar, 2013; Barnechea & Morgan, 2010; Jara, 2012, 2018; Mera, 2019). Coordinated by an inter-university team, the reflective exchange promoted by the meetings between municipal technical professionals and elected representatives generates knowledge, ideas, and changes in participants' approaches to children's participation in municipalities' decision-making processes; content analysis, development, and evaluation of the meetings by participants provide insight into the value of a learning community established as a tool to innovate child participation, build professional capacity towards this goal, and strengthen the work of local administrations in the field of citizenship.

Issue

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1. Introduction

The complexity of local social realities emphasises the need for putting arguments and political programmes into action. Innovative meanings are consequently given to words that appeal to social participation, youth empowerment, social justice and equity, lifelong learning, etc., all of which are fundamental to making the local space a hub for policymaking. In most municipalities, this fact has changed the role of the local authorities on behalf of a better development of people and communities by becoming a relational administration. These administrations focus on the reduction of the conditions of vulnerability and the improvement of the living conditions of all citizens. The 2030 agenda for sustainable development, approved by the UN in 2015, offers local administrations a framework to combat and reduce poverty, reduce inequalities, protect the planet, and improve people's living conditions. To this end, SDG no. 4, "to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all," is key. However, it certainly needs to be harmonised with

target 16.7 of SDG no. 16, which states: "Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels." Promoting an active, inclusive, and governance-engaged citizenry promotes democratic and sustainable communities. This article aims to strengthen the role of children as active citizens who participate in municipal decision-making.

This article argues that a competent adult capable of recognising children's citizenship will be able to broaden their opportunities to participate in the city. Professionals' formative experience should be based on and progress according their needs. Our intention is to contribute to overcoming the conception of children as an invisible and vulnerable group to achieve a conception of children that recognises them as capable of taking co-responsibility for their environment and their community and shape a more inclusive society.

1.1. Municipalities as Educational Agencies

The leadership of municipalities as territorial entities and subsidiary administrations is indisputable in improving citizens' quality of life (Pose & Caride, 2019). The most proactive municipalities have set themselves up as true educational agencies, which do not leave the education of their citizens to chance. The firm commitment of a few cities to mainstream the principle of education and culture as the hallmarks of their political initiative led to the emergence of the International Association of Educating Cities (IAEC) in 1990. The movement began to differentiate education from schooling from the outset, opening up to more holistic and integrative perspectives on lifelong citizenship education, involving multiple actors and in diverse contexts. Among its principles was promoting the city as an educational agent and space and, above all, recognise that the city can be transformed through education. The city is understood as the space of public affairs, the opportunity for access to socialisation, equality or freedoms, public goods, work, social relations and exchanges, culture and leisure, participation, solidarity, and the exercise of democracy. Thirty years after the emergence of the Educating Cities movement, its renewed Charter advocates in the preamble for an autonomous, committed, and supportive citizenship, capable of living together in difference, of taking part in its community, of seeking peaceful solutions to conflicts, in short, a citizenship that is aware of the challenges facing humanity and co-responsible for the solutions.

The diversity of possibilities that emerge for municipal workers with socio-educational sensitivity is enough to achieve an educational labour that searches the maximum appropriation degree of the city by its citizens. The role of the municipality as an educational and local administration extends to areas that encompass all the citizenship: in school or informal contexts, in educational times such as leisure and social interaction, in training tasks like knowledge updating, sensitization, or as civic pedagogy. The approach to the

SDGs by local governments requires social innovation and citizen participation. Only through collaboration and mutual co-responsibility will it be possible to promote the empowerment and sustainability of communities (Dos Santos Figueiredo et al., 2018).

The city requires citizen participation as an indispensable condition. It requires the exercise of citizenship in the face of collective commitments (Giménez Romero, 2020; Subirats, 2008). This process also implies a city that forms a culture of citizenship that empowers its citizens and enables them to exercise their right to take part in public decisions. Del Pozo (2020, p. 98) summarised the concept of civic culture in four basic notions: interpersonal respect, responsibility, valuing that which is public, and ethical-political commitment. This last notion reinforces the need for a participatory basis in the city, charged with a sense of ethics and political will, to optimise all citizens' living conditions.

1.2. Inclusion of Children in Citizen Participation

In recent years, participatory democracy and citizen participation have emerged as socio-cultural challenges to promote an active citizenry committed to the governance and leadership of their collective and community projects. However, underneath this conviction lies the violation of the rights of vulnerable groups such as children. The exclusion of children in the city means that their citizenship is denied, postponed or, at best, limited to being heard. An image of childhood as a life stage preparatory to adulthood continues to be forged, characterised by the stigma of immaturity, innocence, inexperience, and insufficient knowledge; participation conditional on age, maturity, and voice (Wyness, 2013) is anchored by its future value—arguments based on which citizenship for children has been dismissed. According to Wilks and Rudner (2013), children must be recognised for who they are in the present in terms of their diversity, potentials, knowledge, and experiences, as no other citizen group can replace them.

The representation of children begins to shift considerably from its political place following the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Subsequently, UN General Comment no. 12 on "the right of the child to be heard" (CRC, 2009) and UN General Comment no. 20 on the implementation of children's rights during adolescence (CRC, 2016) are reference frameworks for promoting children's political participation. Children need active practices from which they can be incorporated into processes where they can participate and creatively appropriate participatory procedures and strategies. Participation in these practices entails a process of self-assessment, as well as constant attention on learning for change and social transformation, as is required by all participatory action research (Percy-Smith, 2018).

At the same time, inspiring initiatives arose in the late 1990s and early 2000s: experiences like the Children's

City in Fano (Italy), by the pedagogue Francesco Tonucci, or the Agenda 21 for Child-Friendly Culture or Cities, which combine the understanding of child participation as a substantive right that must be naturalised and gain presence in the everyday life of children in any of the contexts of the educational ecosystem. These initiatives provide an opportunity for addressing children's rights not only in their legal form but also in their interaction with children's ideas about their rights in local contexts (Liebel, 2020, p. 219) and the opportunities they create to transform their environment.

Child participation is a responsibility of local governments in the framework of the 2030 agenda and from the commitment to the inclusion of children as active citizens. Investing resources and programmes in pedagogical initiatives for participatory democracy based on the co-responsibility of children and adolescents for the common good transforms their being in the world and their communities. Cultivating children's participation generates benefits in terms of democratic culture and individual competencies: to critically understand reality; to communicate, dialogue and listen better; to cooperate and take co-responsibility (Trilla & Novella, 2011). Only by including children as active citizens is it possible to govern, mitigate, and satisfy dramatic emerging social needs and improve the living conditions of all. If those in power and their technical professionals approach children and activate cooperative actions, this will foster the achievement of an educating, democratic city. According to Rudner (2017, p. 204):

Participation enables children/young people to inform professionals and other stakeholders about their successes, struggles, and aspirations for their lives. When acted upon, children/young people can contribute to better policies that improve health, education, legal rights and safety and reduce discrimination and violence.

There is a global movement for the inclusion of children's participation, but it needs to break down barriers and resistance to gain sufficient strength to influence local government policies that conceive children as naturalised citizens (Moosa-Mitha, 2019). As well as accompanying the inclusion of children's participation as a political and educational citizenship process, going beyond being a formative requirement. Save the Children Sweden (2020) mapped child participation initiatives in 14 countries in regional programs in Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern and Southern Africa, and Europe, providing diverse structures and forms of participation. Tools such as the *Handbook on Children's Participation for Professionals Working for and With Children* (Crowley et al., 2021), in collaboration with the Council of Europe's Children's Rights Division, offer elements to overcome these constraints and provide keys for professionals to work with children for positive, ethical, and effective participation that has an impact in

their community. This material points to the need for professional capacity building for children's inclusion at all levels to bridge the gaps between participation recommendations and opportunities generated at all municipal levels. The notion set by Percy-Smith et al. (2019, p. 198) that "cooperation and dialogue between young people and adult-professionals are essential if young people are to achieve a sense of inclusion as equal citizens" poses a challenge that can only be answered by professionals relating to children through trust and recognition.

This article offers an analysis of meetings between professionals during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, which began amid strict confinement measures. These meetings took the form of a learning community on the culture of child participation at the local level. The reconstruction of this experience makes it possible to identify how to better support professionals in strengthening their capacities to understand and develop the inclusion of children in municipal affairs by internalizing child participation as a continuous, ethical process, with repercussions but, above all, as an inclusive process.

2. Context of the Study and Research Method

The data included in this article come from an experience that arose at the beginning of the pandemic in the framework of the research project Childhood and Participation: Diagnosis and Proposals for Active and Inclusive Citizenship in the Community, Institutions, and Governance. This project aims to determine the state of child participation in Spain and to approach the components that make the inclusion of children in citizen participation possible through a participatory diagnosis. The project started at the beginning of 2019; at the end of January 2020, a collection of data was launched using a questionnaire technique with elected officials and municipal technicians to explore the state of child participation in Spanish municipalities belonging to the IAEC and UNICEF Child-Friendly Cities (CAI-UNICEF). At the end of February, due to the health emergency, everything came to a standstill.

Due to Covid-19 pandemic, the Spanish population, as in so many other countries, was strictly confined from March to June 2020. Jobs, health, economic and spatial resources, social relations, among others, were altered. Local administrations were exposed to high stress because of social control measures, the lack of assistance and operational resources, and the need for taking decisions straight away.

The pandemic displaces the efforts of municipal technicians to accompany situations of vulnerability aggravated by the dramatic circumstances arising from the pandemic context. Data collection slows down or even grinds to a halt. In this context, the research team asks itself what it can contribute to overcoming the moment's uncertainty.

As part of the research team, we found ourselves not giving up on our prospective approach to the object of

study, questioning what to do so that the inclusion of children as participatory citizens in their environment does not take a step backwards. These are times when children are forbidden to move around the city and organised groups of boys and girls do not meet, so municipal technicians must consider how to continue accompanying them and including them in the exercise of their citizenship. This concern was shared with the IAEC and CAI-UNICEF partners, and the idea of organising a virtual meeting place was born with a double purpose: on the one hand, to have a space of assembly, empathy, and solidarity where we could share how to keep facilitating the participation of children in the municipalities; and on the other hand, to give local visibility to the issue of

child and adolescent participation even in such exceptional circumstances.

This space was called "Let's Have a Coffee #participatorychildhood." It was first convened on 17 April 2020 and developed into weekly meetings for the first two months, moving on to fortnightly and monthly meetings. At the time of writing, 15 90-minute meetings on different themes have been held. Table 1 shows the date, theme, and attendance rate of each "coffee meeting." The space has evolved over time, becoming consolidated as a monthly meeting point for the community to share and contribute different points of view on the participation and inclusion of children and adolescents in municipalities. Participants have been male and

Table 1. Regularity of the meeting, topics addressed, registrations, and attendance.

	Date	Coffee meeting theme	No. registrations	Approx. no. of attendees	No. of participants
1	17/04/2020	Shall we have a coffee while sharing challenges on #participatorychildhood in times of Covid-19?	X	55	X
2	24/04/2020	Participation and the digital divide	85	62	9
3	08/05/2020	Participation and summer activities in times of Covid-19	153	97	14
4	15/05/2020	Participation and summer activities in times of Covid-19 (II)	127	98	13
5	22/05/2020	Boys and girls have to participate in how to plan the new educational scenarios, the new city scenarios. How can we encourage this participation?	116	87	13
6	05/06/2020	Inclusive democracy and political engagement	101	80	11
7	19/06/2020	Children's communication and participation. Strategic alliance?	76	60	10
8	03/07/2020	Families educating in citizenship	74	45	5
9	17/07/2020	Reviewing inputs and devising challenges in #participatorychildhood	58	40	13
10	16/10/2020	What next? Let's have a coffee #participatorychildhood	97	55	7
11	06/11/2020	Participatory democracy: What can we learn from social movements?	86	55	10
12	19/02/2021	How do we move towards authentic child participation? Recognition of children as agents.	132	80	X
13	16/04/2021	How to strengthen the identity of participation groups? Video stories and other creative languages as expressive tools for participation.	79	65	X
14	11/06/2021	Children, participation, and the environment: Are children leading the way towards eco-citizenship?	101	70	14
15	08/10/2021	Strengthening child participation for the achievement of the SDGs	91	60	10 (+6 chat read)
		AVERAGE	98	67	11

female technicians responsible for promoting participation in their own municipality, plus one municipal councillor. On average, each participant attended between 5 to 8 meetings, with an average of 270 attendants from 219 Spanish municipalities.

This article adopts the methodology of systematisation of experiences (Aguiar, 2013; Barnechea & Morgan, 2010; Jara, 2012, 2018; Mera, 2019) that allows us to reconstruct and reflect on practice, through which we interpret events in order to understand them. Our object of study is the experience of the "coffee space," an intervention designed to promote the inclusion of children as subjects of rights, political subjects, and active citizens. Through the systematisation of the experience of the coffee space, we will critically analyse the experience to review and improve it, rethink meanings and signifiers that have guided and shaped the experience for it to generate a reflective meeting and amplify the opportunities to include children and adolescents in decision-making. Specifically, three objectives are pursued:

1. To understand the processes that emerge in the development of the "coffee meeting" experience, sustaining it.
2. To know the representation that the participants make of this space.
3. To identify the advances that participants' acknowledge having made as to the inclusion of child participation in the municipality.

The informants who generate knowledge in the practical experience of the coffee space, as well as contribute to its systematisation, are: municipal professionals and technicians who have been involved in at least one "coffee meeting"; research partners who participated in coffee meetings and were part of the monitoring team; and the 23 members of the research team, including four members from the University of Barcelona who also led the experience.

Qualitative data collection techniques bring us closer to reconstructing the experience of the coffee meetings, providing a deeper understanding of the importance and meanings that participants attached to them (Mera, 2019). For the present systematisation, collection techniques were as follows: 42 surveys were collected after the 5th coffee meeting and 43 surveys after the 14th coffee meeting; there were 16 minutes of monthly planning meetings between partners and the team at the University of Barcelona; 12 newsletters were written by the promoters; 10 summaries generated by the IAEC. All the questions posed by participants about the proposed theme have been considered. The diversity of sources allows us to reconstruct and reinterpret the experience according to the different perspectives involved.

The information gathered was analysed using a combination of two qualitative techniques. On the one hand, we carried out a frequential lexicometric analysis that identifies words with the same origin, focusing on their

essential significance through the software for lexicometric analysis Iramuteq (de Alba, 2004; Molina-Neira et al., 2017; Ruiz, 2017).On the other hand, we conducted an inferential content analysis based on the constant comparison method (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; García, 2019) to identify the codes used by the informants for understanding the meanings and senses they give to the experience. Based on the inductive analysis, those dimensions that informants value and consider relevant for the development of this practice were identified, and fragments of narratives have been selected to illustrate the meanings attributed to them.

The process of this systematisation study includes informed consent and procedures to guarantee anonymity and confidentiality under the European General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation EU 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016), as well as the research team's commitment to return the knowledge generated to the community.

3. Results and Discussion

The results are organised into three different units of analysis: (a) reconstruction of the experience, a collective process; (b) joint interpretation, meanings, and senses of the coffee space; and (c) contributions and knowledge generated.

3.1. Reconstructing the Experience: A Collective Process

This defining process takes shape through constant joint dialogue and review between the research team and partners. The opinions and evaluations offered by the participants at different times are also taken into consideration. This evolution is accompanied by many uncertainties and questions that define each encounter and course of action: What can we offer? What issues are you interested in addressing? What do they need right now? For how long and how often? Who will organise and energise them? How will attendees be allowed to intervene? How will the sessions be run? How to share the knowledge generated? How to present the topics? Questions stemmed from the desire to generate a useful space for those professionals who work daily with and for childhood participation.

Given that "Let's Have a Coffee #participatorychildhood" was born during the pandemic, it has been developed through virtual means. Online connectivity has made it easier for the entire target community to attend the meeting and opened the door to greater representativeness and diversity. However, adapting to this environment meant, especially in the first meetings, revising and adjusting the process. This was due to the novelty of virtual communication and the need for training for both promoters and participants.

The elements that shape each session of the "coffee meeting" are described below:

1. Review and determination: The development team and its partners analyse a meeting and adjust elements for the next one. After the first eight coffee meetings, the working and review sessions required online meetings with the IAEC and CAI-UNICEF; subsequent sessions focused on reviewing the contents and dynamics of each meeting. The aspects that were analysed before each coffee meeting were:
   - Date and time: Initially, coffee meetings were held weekly, an immediate response to the general climate of uncertainty people were living in, but the workload for the development team was unsustainable. This was followed by meetings every fortnight. The situation has now somewhat normalised. From the 10th meeting onwards it started to be held monthly.
   - Themes: Topics for subsequent meetings arise from asking ourselves: What have participants suggested? What is interesting? Where can the research team contribute? Answers must emerge from previous coffees meetings and dialogue with partners, and thus the topic for the next meeting is defined.
2. Drafting the coffee meeting announcement: A few lines are written to present the topic from a theoretical and practical standpoint and raise challenges and questions to participants. Partners help clarify and bring these lines of enquiry closer to the municipal reality. The call is sent by e-mail to participants of previous meetings and the registration form is activated on the project website. Especially for the first few meetings, partners use their networks to raise awareness to the meetings.
3. Communication with the community: The topic of the coffee meeting is announced, participants register in the meeting using a short form, and send in questions or experiences to guide the session. On occasions, as a result of their experiences, they are invited to share their experience in the coffee space and encourage exchange. Registrations have never been intended to gather personal data beyond name and e-mail address, nor were they intended to monitor attendance for accreditation purposes.
4. Session development: On the day of the meeting, two team members follow up on e-mails and registrations to resolve any possible access issues. Initially, the sessions were moderated entirely by the same member of the team. After a few coffee meetings, and to give visibility and responsibilities to different members of the team, the moderator was changed and, in some sessions, two people were in charge of moderating the same meeting. A meeting can be divided into four main parts:
   - Welcome session: The meeting is introduced and technical indications are given. In the first few meetings, partners were given time and the space to introduce themselves.
   - Theoretical framing: Space is given for suggestions and questions to emerge. The aim is to offer theoretical argumentation and generate exchange, dialogue, and reflection. This space has been allocated a duration of about 20 to 40 minutes.
   - Reflection, debate, and exchange: This is the core of any meeting, nourished by participants' reflections, doubts, and contributions based on their practical involvement. In more recent meetings, some municipalities have been asked to share their experiences, thus generating dialogue based on specific experience. This decision stems from the knowledge and recognition that municipalities are successfully developing practices related to some of the topics discussed and to make space for a more dynamic dialogue. This space has been allocated a duration of about 50 to 60 minutes.
   - Ending session: The meeting concludes by gathering some ideas, thanking the participants for their contributions, announcing the date of the next meeting, and sharing news related to the project. Partners can also conclude the session themselves with a brief intervention.
5. Documentation: After each meeting, the team writes a newsletter with the key ideas generated from the meeting. This is posted on the project website. Minutes of the meeting are drafted as internal team material. Likewise, there is a constant follow-up of e-mails, since evaluations, comments, or experiences may be used in future sessions.

The review process allows us to establish those elements whereby participants feel that a bond has been built between all those who have attended the meetings. These elements are: the newsletter that allows us to visualise the contents generated during each session; the brief registration form prior to each meeting, where participants can leave questions or examples of practices; the space for exchange and collective construction during each session. Figure 1 illustrates the different moments and actions that today structure, from the perspective of the research team, the #participatorychildhood coffee meeting.

3.2. Joint Interpretation, Meanings, and Senses of the Coffee Space

Participants have constructed representational cores around their involvement in the coffee meetings. A survey was carried out to ask municipal technicians and researchers what their representation of the space was
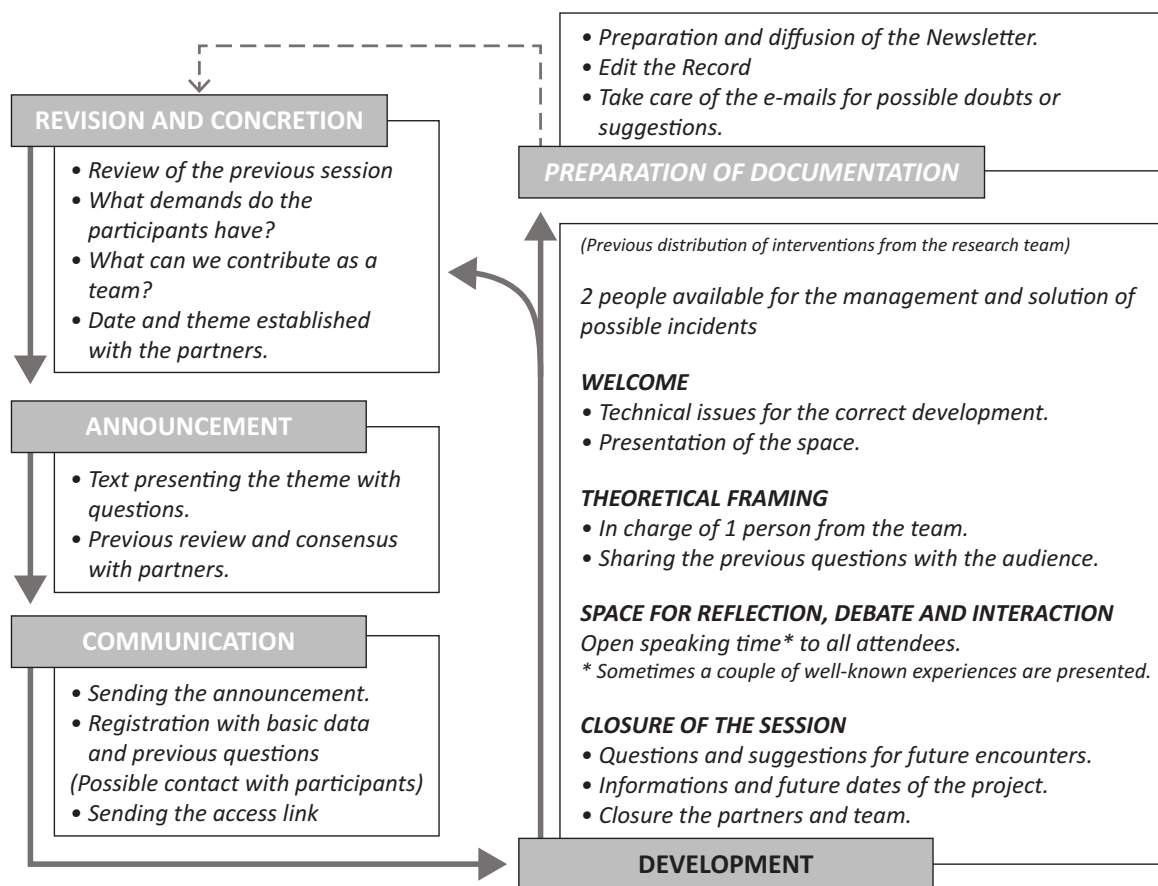
Figure 1. Reconstructed sequence of moments and actions that structure the coffee meetings.

following the question: "When I think of the coffee space, the three words that come to mind are…"

If we look at the contributions made by the 43 municipal professionals (see Figure 2), the words that are most present are sharing (23 occasions), experience (16), participation (9), and learning (12). Meanwhile, for the 18 members of the research team, the most repeated words are sharing (11), experiences/experiential (4), meeting (4), participation (3), and learning (3).

Based on input from municipal technicians and researchers, five representation cores are identified:

1. Sharing, learn, learning: Representation derives from the action that has taken place in the coffee space, which is deemed a sharing space/moment that has made learning possible. Participants mentioned: "sharing, learning and generating knowledge" (T, 41); "sharing, learning, dialogue, respect'' (U, 4).

2. Knowing, knowledge: Value is placed on what the space offers in terms of knowledge and the construction of shared knowledge. Participants mentioned: "to know, share, build" (T, 22); "relationships, experiential knowledge" (U, 13).

3. Experiences: Value is placed on the content that has been the main focus of the meeting from an exchange perspective. Participants men-

tioned: "experiences, good practices and shared resources" (T, 18).

4. Participation: The thematic specificity of the practical community that comes together to talk about childhood and participatory experiences is emphasised. Participants mentioned: "experience, participation and organisation" (T, 29).

5. Network: Representation derives from what is generated in the participant after the reflective meeting and exchange with other people with the same concerns, interests, and/or motivation around child and adolescent participation in municipalities. Participants mentioned: "sharing, network reflections, generating cohesion of discourse" (T, 20); "sharing experiences, learning, professional networks" (U, 17).

Both groups agree on the meaning of the coffee meeting as an act of sharing that produces knowledge and learning. Among the municipal technicians, the representative core of experiences and participation is more significant than in the research team, for it means, to a greater extent, the opportunity for professional exchange.

Finally, it is interesting to note the adjectives that have been attached to the experiment. On the part of the professional technicians, the following adjectives emerge, from most to least frequent: interesting (4);

good (2); practical (2); adequate (1); friendly (1); necessary (1); professional (1); theoretical (1); and useful (1). In the case of researchers these are: professional (2); collective (1); experiential (1); global (1); good (1); informal (1); and virtual (1).

The coffee meeting has proven to be a space that both groups value. It should be noted that they emphasise different aspects, which is why they are presented in different ways. When professionals were asked about the degree of usefulness and satisfaction with the meeting, 36.6% gave the space a score of 9 out of 10, followed by 24.39%, who gave it the highest score, and 19.51%, 17.07%, and 2.43%, who gave it scores of 8, 7, and 6, respectively.

So far, meetings have been deemed agile, brief, "entertaining," "approachable," and interesting in the way they generate proximity; it is perceived that everyone shares and is open to explaining what they need. One participant elaborated: "[The meeting] is entertaining and approachable, with interesting topics, without being overly theoretical" (T, 18).

The content of the meetings have been enriching, useful to "take away ideas" as well as "theoretical and methodological contributions": "The learning and knowl-edge shared by the research team and the municipalities, the exchange of tools and good practices, have been very enriching and nourishing" (T, 6).

The meetings have been so far regarded as spaces that strengthen one emotionally, since they respond to a need to reflect within a group, allowing one to see beyond their professional work and share their feelings: "The great need to share views, experiences and difficulties that arise in the daily work I do….[Here you don't] feel alone" (T, 32).

Finally, the meetings have been praised for the close dialogue between universities and municipalities they facilitate:

The cohesion of a network discourse can only be effective if it is validated through dialogue between the real experiences of the municipalities….For this reason, I value…being able to share university studies and theories on the pedagogy of child participation with the contrasted reality of the municipalities that carry out the real experience. (T, 20)

The research team highlighted other aspects associated with the origin of the initiative, the context in which it
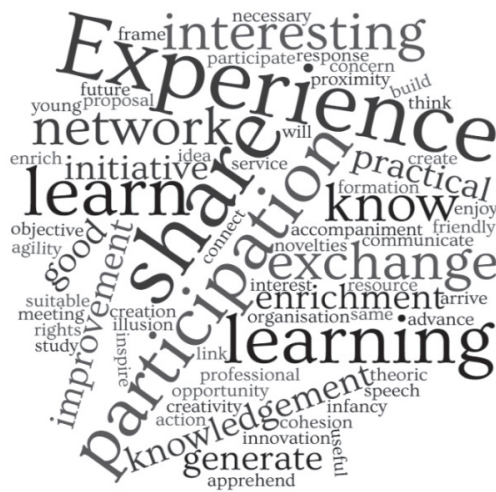
NAME						VERB		ADJECTIVE	
Experience	16	creation	1	interest	1	share	23	interesting	4
participation	9	creativity	1	young	1	learn	6	good	2
learning	6	rights	1	frame	1	know	5	practical	2
exchange	5	speech	1	novelties	1	generate	2	suitable	1
network	5	meeting	1	objective	1	apprehend	1	friendly	1
knowledgement	3	link	1	opportunity	1	advance	1	same	1
enrichment	2	study	1	organisation	1	communicate	1	necessary	1
initiative	2	formation	1	concern	1	build	1	professional	1
improvement	2	future	1	proposal	1	create	1	theoric	1
action	1	idea	1	resource	1	enjoy	1	useful	1
accompaniment	1	illusion	1	response	1	enrich	1		
agility	1	infancy	1	service	1	inspire	1		
proximity	1	innovation	1	will	1	arrive	1		
cohesion	1					participate	1		
						think	1		
						connect	1		

NAME				VERB		ADJECTIVE	
experience	3	equity	1	Share	11	professional	2
knowledgement	3	exchange	1	learn	3	collective	1
meeting	3	interest	1	do	1	experiential	1
participation	3	motivation	1	establish	1	global	1
communication	2	network	1	meet	1	good	1
learning	2	professionalization	1	talk	1	informal	1
action	1	reflection	1	think	1	virtual	1
ambient	1	relation	1				
bond	1	resource	1				
concern	1	respect	1				
contact	1	synergy	1				
dialogue	1	technical	1				
energy	1	visualisation	1				

Figure 2. Word clouds and frequency tables according to the answer to the question: "When I think of the coffee space, the three words that come to mind are…"

was developed, and its continuity based on participants' feedback:

- Timeliness, stability, and regularity: "The continuity and opportunity [the meetings] have offered during these difficult times, amid a pandemic, the content and shared experiences should…be valued. They have allowed us all to learn" (U, 10).
- Climate generated, the creativity involved, and organization: "I think it has been a very creative and stimulating initiative, especially in times of [a] pandemic" (U, 7).
- Diversity, horizontality; a plural participatory space: "The will to make these participatory spaces and to give a voice to people who are working at the municipal level on issues of child participation. Also, the diversity of trainers and the expertise in these issues" (U, 6).

In these interpretations of the coffee space, those involved say that they feel they learn in optimal and satisfactory conditions, and are connected through their interest in the theme and the climate generated. In this way, they overcome the sense of defeat or loneliness that some feel in the face of the challenge of child inclusion in municipalities. Consequently, the definition of the coffee space goes beyond the original intention and is configured as a reference to advance towards the goal of inclusion, since participants recognise themselves as a group and weave networks by sharing feelings, knowledge, and experiences.

3.3. Contributions and Knowledge Generated

Our coffee space has been associated with a space for knowledge and learning. It has made it possible to consolidate and update existing knowledge and create/acquire new one. One participant highlights in a very generic way the contributions it has made for him: "knowledge of other experiences, opening up my work perspective, broadening my knowledge, taking on new work challenges" (T, 4).

It has been a concern of the development team and their partners to always know that the space was useful and offered working elements to promote the inclusion of children as citizens in decision-making processes. The different contributions generated by the learning community are identified below, ranging from conceptual knowledge to know-how and handling oneself:

- Representation of children and adolescents as subjects of rights, political subjects, and active actors in their municipality: A change of outlook towards children, considering them as citizens capable of being involved in constructing the municipal model, is encouraged. Taking the CRC as a framework, we go further and highlight the need to include children in the configuration of institutions

and the municipality, as underlined in the following participant's quote:

> Incorporate the Convention's approach in the different programmes: Involve children and adolescents in the municipality's projects. (T, 39)

- Readjusting the meaning of children's participation to make it inclusive, proactive, and impact-generating: A concept of participation is recognised that goes beyond giving a voice or being listened to, which should be closer to a protagonist's participation far from adult-centrism. The need to include the participation of children and adolescents at different stages of the participatory process is highlighted, opening up more opportunities to influence and transform:

> [The meetings] have allowed us to learn about approaches that focus on participation beyond the simple gathering of opinions of boys and girls, moving towards a more transformative participation and governance. (T, 8)

- Addressing child participation in the municipality in a cross-cutting manner and within the socio-educational ecosystem: The promotion of children's participation in the municipality needs to be incorporated from all government areas, not only as a commitment to education but also as the inclusion of active citizenship. It also requires going beyond the school and involving more actors and more children:

> [There was a] comprehensive approach to the importance of cooperation within different municipal areas and social agents of the municipality. (T, 6)

- Discovery of good practices and different ways of doing things: Contributions related to how to promote participation from other paths and innovative actions that open up a range of possibilities in a given municipality were highlighted. Participants especially recognise practical contributions of a methodological nature (know-how):

> Knowledge of other realities, innovative approaches, participatory methodology, meeting place for professionals, relaxed ambience. (T, 18)

- Strengthening motivation, recognising oneself within a network of professionals who share hopes and challenges that encourage them to continue: Reports show that sharing with others has revitalised the desire to continue doing things and the

value of the work our participants do. Emotional and professional links and connections have been generated, anchored on companionship, which has helped mitigate feelings of loneliness:

Motivation (you are not alone), learning from the experiences, tools and networking, the possibility of contacting colleagues from other cities that we might be interested in contacting for discussing projects. (T, 7)

The coffee space offers elements for professional training: Here, participants claim to have acquired knowledge, skills, and confidence to perform at their best. This element of self-confidence is especially important, for it comes with these professionals recognising themselves as a professional network, which brings trust into their daily work. The perceived learnings furnish these professionals with new parameters from which to think about the inclusion of children and design innovations to promote this includion.

4. Conclusion

The coffee meetings emerged in a pandemic context to avoid that the inclusion of children in decision-making in their city took a step backwards. The experience has been consolidated over time and was transformed by participants' adjustments. It should be noted that, for its participants, our coffee meetings have become something more entirely: Reviewing referential frameworks, the lived process of the experience is identified as "a learning community" and a "community of practice."

Communities in which people learn, share knowledge or professional experiences, and solve problems collaboratively are a reality (Sanz, 2012). For this experience, we opted to establish a "community of value" where knowledge can be shared. The coffee space is also a "community of learning," as those who participate and become involved with the research team learn and teach. Finally, this is too a "community of practice," as these groups share a concern or passion for something they do and acquire tools to do it better, interacting regularly (Wenger, 2014). If we pay attention to the three characteristics of "community" as proposed by Wenger (2014), we recognise the elements that shape the coffee space:

- Domain: a common interest that connects and holds the community together. The coffee space brought together municipal technicians who were interested in ensuring that children's participation did not regress in times of crisis. The community needed to know how to continue promoting participation in a changing scenario where living conditions altered our daily lives and opportunities to participate.
- Community: A community is bound by the shared activities it pursues (e.g., meetings, discussions)

around a common domain. It has been shown how the elements introduced in the coffee experience promoted bonding before, during, and after the encounter. They were facilitating activities that helped one stay connected in complex times without requiring excessive time dedication.
- Practice: Members of a community of practice are practitioners. What they do involves their participation in the community and what they learn from the community affects what they do. Participants from our coffee meetings recognised that they were amidst a process of revising their frameworks, consolidating them while also questioning them. This knowledge had a practical aspect with specific actions that could be implemented and transferred. That were visualised as opportunities.

It should be noted that this learning community is made up of people who approach child participation from different realities, points of reference, and backgrounds. On the other hand, as a learning community, the coffee space seeks to be a meeting place for collective construction, hoping that each person involved manages to broaden, deepen, and establish their reference frameworks to include the participation of children and adolescents in their professional horizons. In the process of shaping itself as a learning community, there have been two other elements around the coffee space that have strengthened it:

- Innovation: New references to the inclusion of children as citizens have been sought. In the coffee space, possible responses to situations were collectively generated from ideas that were not previously available or accessible. Furthermore, "new" questions have been posed that have changed participants' views of children's participation and their inclusion as citizens.
- Well-being: Feeling accompanied and heard in the face of adversity (the complexity of life during the pandemic) generated proximity between participants, who were also able to establish relational bridges on an issue in which they have felt neglected. Recognising a shared identity renews hopes and generates new expectations based on trust and the value of children's participation within the municipality.

The design, organisation, and implementation of the weekly coffee meeting brought about issues related to the approach and meaning of the meetings, timing, contents, technological and operational needs, responsibilities of those involved, and co-participation. We unanimously understood from the outset that the effort would be worthwhile. The topics to be addressed, the dissemination and registration process, the availability of documents to support the sessions, the availability and encouragement of those who wished to speak,

and the flexibility in the duration and dates of the sessions were variables decided in a democratic and inclusive process. Spokespersons from IAEC and CAI-UNICEF, researchers from the four universities participating in the project, elected officials, and technical figures make up a highly beneficial, horizontal, and transparent space, both emotionally and in terms of collaborative learning. Meeting, seeing each other, expressing ourselves during these complicated days has been somewhat healing—and learning from each other, based on specific demands and diverse experiences, pedagogical.

We have verified that partners, elected representatives, municipal technicians, and team researchers found the experience very positive because of the number and diversity of participants, the quantity and quality of the interventions, and the demand for new themes and meetings. This is confirmed by the words of recognition expressed by all participants. At a time of crisis, in which social deprivation has made it especially difficult to undertake our work in usual circumstances, the coffee space has been an opportunity to address important social questions that needed to be answered quickly. More importantly, it has also provided room to rethink the future of our institutions in favour of childhood participation.

Generating initiatives such as the coffee space, in which professionals who are directly and closely linked to child participation in their municipalities can raise and resolve their doubts and concerns, is beneficial to their professional development. They also promote a shared vision of children as present and active citizens. Sharing and exchanging opinions and experiences has enriched the confidence of involved participants in their work, allowing them to weave networks that will favour opportunities for the participation of children as provided by municipal administrations. Naturally, moments like those provided in the coffee meetings shouldn't be the only step being taken for the recognition of children's citizenship rights and their civic participation. Nevertheless, the coffee space has turned out to be a good strategy to train and accompany professionals who share a common objective: to strengthen the participation of children in their municipalities.

The coffee meetings have been a formative space: They have generated professional capacity, strengthened the understanding of children's participation and their role as citizens, and favoured the inclusion of children's opinions in municipal decisions. Participants will be encouraged to replicate the experience in their municipal professional teams in order to better adjust it to each municipality's reality. That will also allow sharing the leading role of children in local participation processes.

Regarding the potential of the "Let's Have a Coffee #participatorychildhood" initiative, we propose that it is necessary to maintain it live for as long as it is relevant and demanded by its participants, for the experience has proven useful in engaging participants by finding answers to their practical problems and needs. Therefore, this community of learning and practice has an interesting future.

Acknowledgments

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

Child-Led Participation: A Scoping Review of Empirical Studies

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Abstract

Children's participation is a universal right recognised by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This right corresponds to an image of children as social actors because of their relevant role in achieving inclusive, equitable, and sustainable development. Participation can take different forms and levels of involvement: consultative, collaborative, and child-led. This study aimed to explore types and results of child-led participatory practices. A scoping review was carried out to find out what evidence is available on child-led participatory experiences. Based on 674 identified papers, a total of 33 studies met the inclusion criterion. The qualitative analysis employed in this review allowed us to explore the depth and themes of these experiences. The results obtained showed that the experiences analysed differed in (a) the research design and data collection methods of the studies, (b) the age of the participating children, (c) countries in which the experiences took place, (d) specific topics, and (e) outcomes. Moreover, they all shared a non-adult-centric view of children's capacities for transformative action. The review has contributed to improving our understanding of children's transformative capacities based on the possibilities offered by adults when they adopt a child-rights approach and integrate co-participatory approaches, encouraging us to rethink childhood from other cultural codes inspired by equality, recognition, and agency.

Keywords

activism; child advocacy; children's rights; decision making; participation; participatory approach; student empowerment; student participation

1. Introduction

Child-led participatory practices are a clear example of the active role that children can assume as social actors, participating in social and political life in different ways, and in such a way that is different to adults' participation. It is possible that this "generation gap," which also entails differentiated social representations for childhood, youth, and adulthood, explains why social expectations children have regarding the possibilities of action and influence in social and political spheres are lower than those projected by adults onto youth and adult citizenship in general (Liebel, 2020).

If we focus on the political sphere, child-led participation in modern democracies usually develops in a consultative manner, initiated, led, or managed by adults. This is a basic but no less important form of participation in democratic societies, whereby children's citizenship can influence decision-making processes on issues that concern them. Even if not mentioned as such, this basic form of participation is enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 1989). This international convention positions children as subjects of rights and includes, among others, their right to freedom of expression, thought, conscience and religion, association, leisure,

play and enjoyment of cultural activities, as well as free and full participation in cultural and artistic life. More recent policy documents, such as the *Recommendation on the Participation of Children and Young People Under the Age of 18* (Council of Europe, 2012), are more specific about protecting children's right, promoting, informing, and creating spaces towards this goal. However, advocates of a more deliberative democracy (Adorno, 1998; Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1967) emphasise the need to broaden and extend the involvement of citizens in social and political life to promote changes in the public sphere for the common good (Cussianovich, 2018; Lansdown, 2001, 2011; Liebel, 2013). In this article, we try to provide evidence of research and experience on child-led participatory practices in collaboration with adults.

The second decade of the 21st-century ushers in a new historical era in which the active role of citizens, including children, is taking on a more prominent role. The horizon outlined by the 2030 agenda points to a new global social contract in which civil society becomes more relevant compared to other stages in the development of democratic societies. Reducing inequalities, promoting the social, economic, and political inclusion of all people (regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status), eradicating poverty, especially among children, achieving gender equality through the empowerment of women and girls, transforming sustainable consumption and production patterns, the fight against climate change and, with it, the capacity to face responsibilities and facilitate a prosperous future, in solidarity and compatibility with climate security and the limits of the planet, as well as the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies that enable human development and material prosperity at a global level, synthesise the Sustainable Development Goals that in recent years have catalysed some of the individual and collective actions led by children and adolescents (880 Cities et al., 2017; Croke et al., 2021; Cuevas-Parra, 2017; Hujo & Carter, 2019; O'Neill, 2010; Rodgers, 2020; Unicef, 2013).

This new social contract on a global scale challenges not only adult citizenship but also children's citizenship, whose relevance and forms of participation take on different tones and forms depending on the countries and their social problems. This is the case in Latin American and African countries, where it is common to think about and promote children's participation from a critical-emancipatory, decolonial, or feminist perspective (social justice, the eradication of poverty and child exploitation, peace and reconciliation, and the empowerment of girls tend to be the focus of a large part of child-led participatory experiences in these countries). This is also the case in North American and Anglo-Saxon countries, which are more focused on a pragmatist-liberal reading of this participation and usually centred on the capacity for representation and protagonism of children in different spheres of social life (school, health, justice, urban planning, research, environment), and in European countries, which offer a guarantee-based approach that is more focused on the protection of the right to children's participation than on its expansion and promotion.

Children's participation means the informed and voluntary involvement of children in any matter directly or indirectly related to them. In practice, it involves children expressing their views, having them taken seriously by adults, and having the opportunity to influence decision-making (Lansdown, 2018). Child-led participation, corresponding to Lansdown's (2011) third level, emphasises the protagonist nature of children in decision-making processes adopted from and by children. In this third level of participation, children "jointly establish an associated relationship to assert their interests and rights, where age, gender or class are not discriminatory or exclusionary elements" (Lay-Lisboa & Montañes-Serrano, 2018, p. 3). The role of adults or institutions is that of an accompanying adult, builder of opportunities and environments conducive to the exercise of such participation, individually or collectively, in order to undertake actions with an impact on the environments in which they coexist.

According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 1989), children are defined as persons under the age of eighteen, of different genders and abilities, regardless of their lesser or greater social vulnerability. The value of this definition is tied to the very nature of participation, which recognises children as competent social actors and social participants. This theoretical dimension allows us to consolidate the most genuine aspect of participation by identifying children and adolescents as active subjects and not merely passive recipients. From this perspective, the aim is to highlight the importance of child-led participatory processes to achieve a participation model that guarantees the true objective of this process. The value of self-management involves a reflective analysis, awareness, and internalisation of the tasks that allows incorporating all dimensions. With this scoping review, a new contribution is made to childhood studies, especially from the perspective of projects led by children and adolescents themselves.

From a practical perspective, moving forward in participatory projects means using the voice of students as a catalyst for change (Sandoval-Mena et al., 2020), as well as students' own initiatives and strategies to manage that change.

This scoping review, which analyses a series of child-led participation projects, is focused preferably in a non-formal educational setting. However, an active, young, and in many cases inexperienced citizen also requires a formal learning model. This gives great value to school education, as this is an essential life stage for the development of active citizenship. If throughout the school stage the foundations of active and constructive listening are laid, learning can be transferred to a different situation. Throughout this process, the guidance of the teacher is vital, so that their training, of greater or lesser

quality, can lead to the success of this model. Training teachers to acquire the appropriate and applicable tools for each occasion and style of participation should be included in teacher education programmes and, more systematically, incorporated into teacher education curricula. In short, it is essential to articulate teacher training processes around participation (Ceballos-López & Susinos-Rada, 2014; Saiz-Linares et al., 2019).

Different studies show that the school system is not the best place for learning citizenship and participation (Aguado et al., 2018; Conseil National d'évaluation du système scolaire, 2016). However, schools have the potential to become the most common setting where dialogue is encouraged and children rights and empowerment are promoted (Sandoval-Mena et al., 2020). This provides greater strength and learning for the rest of the non-formal spaces where children and adolescents live together. In this way, following Damon's (1988) philosophy, participation will be truly effective if it is offered an institutional framework that reinforces it and, likewise, if there are projects and public policies that promote it.

This scoping review focuses on child-led participation, which will be discussed in the next section. The aim has been to explore types and results of child-led participatory practices. This scoping review was guided by the following research questions: What types of child-led participatory practices have been corroborated? What kind of issues do they address (e.g., environmental, violence, health, and well-being, etc.)? What role do adults play in child-led participatory processes?

2. Methodology

2.1. Working Definitions

2.1.1. Child-Led Participation

According to Lansdown (2011), children's participation can be classified into three levels: consultative, collaborative, and child-led participation. The types of children's leadership and the role of adults are different at each of these levels. Child-led participation occurs when children are given the space and opportunity to identify issues that concern them, as well as initiate activities and take on decision-making processes for themselves. Adults take on a "dynamizing" role as facilitators and act as support persons so the children can focus on finding the solutions and making the decisions that most directly relate to the issues that affect them and their communities. Adults provide children with information, advice, and support. Non-governmental organisations such as World Vision and Save the Children have in recent years prioritised children's self-leadership in decision-making.

2.1.2. Types of Child-Led Participation

In this scoping review, the classification proposed by World Vision has been used to differentiate between various forms of child-led children's participation (Cuevas-Parra, 2017), namely: (a) child-led mobilisation, in which children engage in social movements and participate in public policy debates through campaigns and awareness-raising actions; (b) child-led research, in which children undertake their own research on issues that affect their daily lives, including their immediate community; (c) child-led accountability, in which children monitor local policy and practice and use this information to take action with local policymakers and service providers; and (d) child-led social accountability, which is organised based on a collaborative network of children from different countries and regions. The participatory processes generated through this network enable children to influence, individually and collectively, their communities, countries, and regions.

2.2. Empirically Exploring Child-Led Participatory Processes

Recently, the Commission on the Futures of Education (2020), established by UNESCO, has outlined nine ideas to drive education forward in the new post-Covid era. These include prioritising the participation of students and young people so that they take on an active role in social change. Involving them in decision-making processes in matters that affect them (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 1989) is an excellent indicator of the development of the right to children's participation in practice. Despite the practical complexity and limitations of this right, there are interesting child-led participatory experiences that show another image of children as social actors.

2.3. Study Design

A scoping review of the available literature was adopted to respond to the objective and questions of the study. This type of review is used in multidisciplinary scientific fields (e.g., health, social sciences) to answer questions relating to complex multidimensional phenomena or to learn about the available evidence (type and quantity) in a particular area (Munn et al., 2018). They provide an overview and follow a rigorous and systematic process that makes it transparent and replicable (Verdejo et al., 2021). Their usefulness lies in the fact that they synthesise the available evidence (quantitative and qualitative) to understand, in general terms, what is already known about a specific phenomenon. They allow, among other things, to explore the extent, breadth, and nature of research in an area of study.

The methodological strategy adopted in this scoping review follows Arksey and O'Malley (2005), Levac et al. (2010), and the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) protocol for scoping reviews (Peters et al., 2020). The PRISMA-ScR protocol developed by Tricco et al. (2018) was also used.

Searches were limited to three databases: Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC), Scopus, and

the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO). The Participedia platform (https://participedia.net), which is an international online collaborative network that disseminates cases of participatory experiences in the public sphere, was also used for the documentary search.

The search was carried out using keywords extracted from the ERIC thesaurus and completed with other terms used in articles related to the subject. The search terms used were: "empowerment," "child-led," "participation," "participatory approach," "youth-led." Given the amount of content in Spanish in the SciELO database, we also used keywords in Spanish: *participación*, *protagonismo*, *infantil*, *adolescente*, *empoderamiento*. To narrow down the search, relationships and combinations between keywords were defined using the Boolean operators "AND," "OR," and "NOT."

Inclusion criteria were as follows: original peer-reviewed articles and online documents at the international level that conceptually analysed, evaluated, or described experiences of child-led and adolescent-led participation. Descriptive, evaluative, review, or empirical studies of a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed nature were considered. The search period focused on the period ranging from 2000 to 2020. The search was limited to English and Spanish.

The exclusion criteria were studies on consultative or collaborative children's participation (either theoretical, evaluative, empirical, or review studies).

The quality of the selected papers was assessed based on the protocol developed by JBI for overview literature reviews (Munn et al., 2018).

For the identification and screening phase of the studies and experiences, each co-author was assigned a database. The search on the Participedia platform was assigned to another co-author. The final phase, which was the final selection of studies, was organised on a peer-to-peer basis among the authors of this article. In this way, each pair of co-authors assessed the potentially eligible papers in this exploratory review, reading the full texts, and crosschecking the eligibility of the pre-selected studies against the pre-established inclusion criteria.

3. Findings

A total of 48 complete records were analysed and a total of 33 documents were finally selected for the scoping review. One duplicate record and 16 records that did not fit the specific subject of the review were rejected. Figure 1 provides the flow chart of the scoping review, according to the model proposed by Page et al. (2021).

Of the 33 documents included in the review, 24 were peer-reviewed articles and nine were cases on child-led participatory processes disseminated on the Participedia platform. Most of the studies and experiences correspond to the "child-led research" modality (19 records), followed by "child-led mobilisation" (10 records). A total of four documents corresponded

to the "child-led accountability" type. Of the 24 publications selected from the databases, two publications used quantitative methods, 20 used qualitative methods, one applied a mixed methodology, and one adopted the literature review methodology. The studies included in the review differ in (a) research design and data collection methods, (b) age of the participating children and adolescents, (c) countries in which the experiences took place, (d) specific topics, and (e) outcomes (see Supplementary File).

3.1. Child-Led Accountability

Of the 33 projects analysed from the selected documents, only four projects a child-led approach in which children monitor policies and service delivery in their community and propose improvement actions to governors and service providers. Equity, empowerment, and social justice are the issues of greatest interest in the analysed projects. Two of the reviewed experiences show that this type of leadership enables children to work collectively, to engage with their community, and to demonstrate to the adult world that participatory approaches can be transferred to important decision-making spaces (Participedia, 2008b, 2008c).

Examples of child-led social accountability can be found in the projects led by Walker and Saito (2011) and Camden Children in Care Council's Deliberative Forums (Participedia, 2008a). Both are based on a model of networking and collaboration between young leaders from different countries to promote campaigns for the development and improvement of their communities: promoting programmes and places for youth participation or improving the provision of educational services to at-risk groups. In terms of impact, these experiences demonstrate an increase in community awareness, political socialisation, and personal development of children.

3.2. Child-Led Mobilisation

Ten of the selected documents—eight papers and two Participedia experiences—correspond to the child-led mobilisation typology: engagement and participation in awareness campaigns, actions, and social movements. Regarding the issues addressed, most projects deal with human/children rights, environmental, or health issues.

The projects show different ways and a broad range of children mobilisation: youth-led videos for raising awareness about sex education (Yang & MacEntee, 2015); a game-based approach for promoting children awareness and engagement in environmental urban planning (Giraldo Cadavid, 2018; Polo-Garzón & López-Valencia, 2020), or the use of children drawings for a similar purpose, in relation to climate change (Demneh & Darani, 2020); the use of diverse creative and popular education methods for saving children and adolescents from child labour (Alberto et al., 2012); a sport-based approach for female empowerment (Participedia,
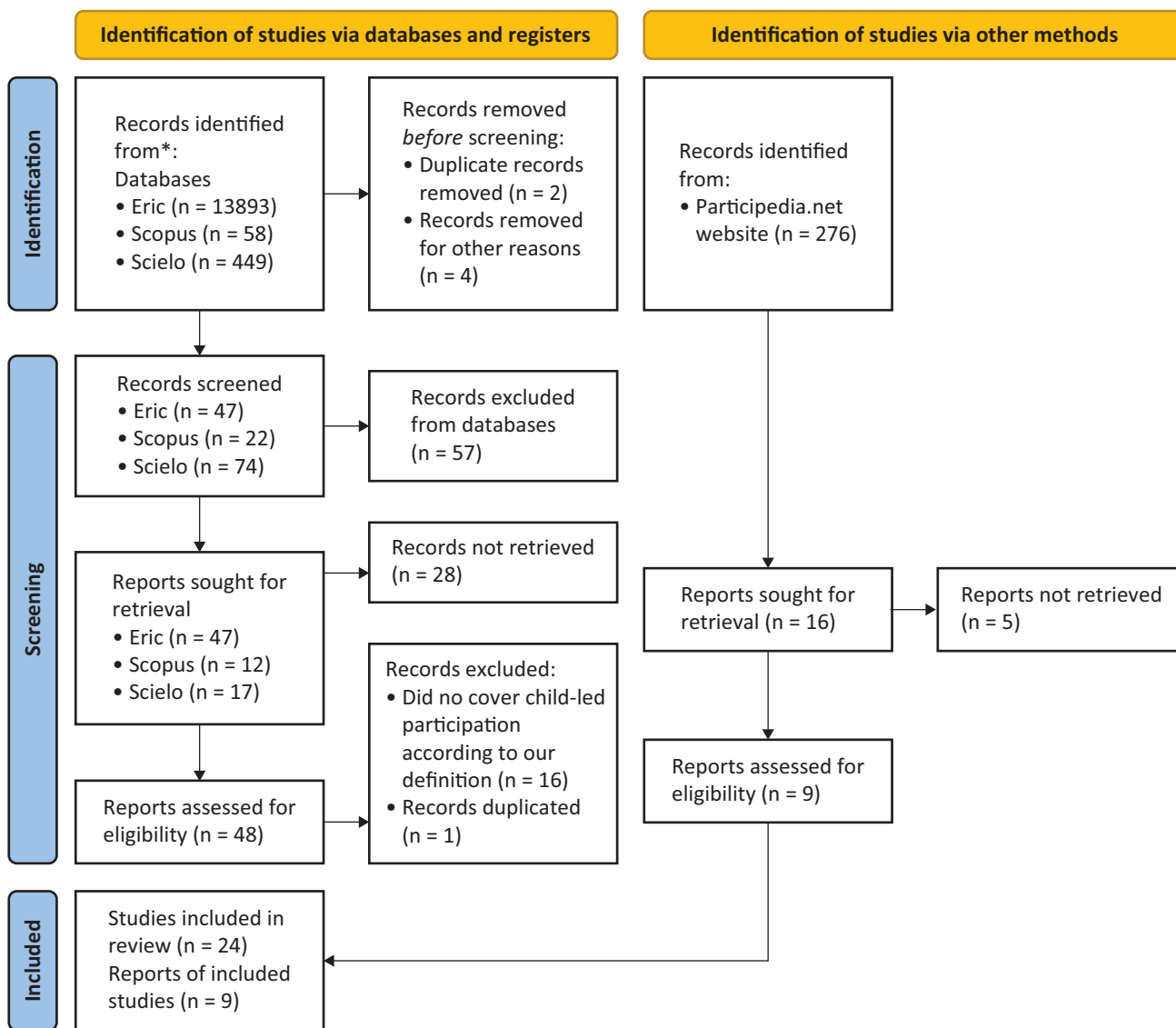
Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram for scoping reviews.

2020b); the use of child-led climate change legal cases for human rights education (Grover, 2018); youth-led protests for defending public schools (King et al., 2018); youth-led participatory budgeting (Augsberger et al., 2019); and the inclusion of children representatives in public debates at national level through different governance structures (Participedia, 2020a).

The projects, despite the diverse topics and approaches they show, highlight the importance of children and youth agency, empowerment, and collective action beyond awareness-raising; thus the experiences deal with mobilisation of children and youth as active citizens engaged in public issues they are concerned about, and not only with the (also relevant) appeal to awareness at a cognitive level.

About the role of adults in these child-led mobilisation experiences, the review highlights, on one hand, their contribution as supporters of children participation and as creators of conditions for actual participa-

tion. On the other hand, given that child-led mobilisation aims to have an impact on public policies, two elements are presented as crucial for the success of the practices: (a) the adults' representation of children as agents and active citizens and (b) the commitments of adults with the proposals that children make.

3.3. Child-Led Research

Most of the research included in this typology reflects the difference between conducting research related to children and conducting it with them, assuming a protagonist and leading role (Cuevas-Parra & Tisdall, 2019). Therefore, the value of offering them the opportunity to engage in research processes is underlined as a stepping-stone to a scenario of engagement and action that generates capacity for improvement in their environment and change in attitudes and beliefs (Kervin & Obinna, 2010). In child-led research, the role of children as active

researchers is as important as the role of adults as facilitators and accomplices in the participatory action (Cumbo et al., 2019; Participedia, 2014a, 2017) or, in any case, as administrators (Cuevas-Parra & Tisdall, 2019).

This type of practices extends beyond the school environment and includes all those people who have been marginalised by some personal or social conflict and who are to be given a voice through a model of investigative participation (Carroll et al., 2019; Graham et al., 2017). But its success will come if ultimately the designed research can influence practice and the policy arena (Kellett, 2011) by giving young people a voice to achieve a model of empowerment (Participedia, 2014b; Trott, 2020), as designed by Zimmerman (1995), in a threefold perspective, with intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioural components.

The literature shows that these research-focused participatory experiences can be articulated through a methodology called youth participatory action research (YPAR; see Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Chevalier & Buckles, 2013; Ozer, 2017; Ozer et al., 2010). The main area in which the selected studies are developed is the school environment, with topics such as school absenteeism, social inequalities, health, and social justice. Several of the studies about participatory projects developed from YPAR highlight the potential of this methodology as a way to foster civic engagement of young people, the democratisation of knowledge, critical thinking, institutional trust, as well as social, emotional, and cognitive development of young people (Buckley-Marudas & Soltis, 2019; Chou et al., 2015; Participedia, 2016; Prati et al., 2020). Likewise, research such as that of Abraczinskas and Zarrett (2020), Anselma et al. (2020), Chou et al. (2015) demonstrate YPAR's effectiveness in promoting the leadership of vulnerable children and young people in participatory processes that enable them to propose actions in line with their needs and interests and to empower themselves.

In all of the three versions, we can verify that the projects relate to the involvement of the adult, who participates as a mediator in the activity, as a referee who lets the "game" continue, intervening only in strictly necessary actions. The adult person has an integrating and, at the same time, collaborative role that implies that they are qualified for the performance of these tasks, that they have the necessary training to strengthen participatory processes, and that the adult does not interfere with the integrity of a project whose leadership relies on the children and adolescents. Institutional processes can help strengthen this path (Pavez-Soto & Sepúlveda Kattan, 2019).

4. Conclusion

Our article aimed to provide evidence of various forms of children's participation led by children themselves. The results of our research show that children can undertake transformative actions in their social environment,

if the adult world provides them with the opportunities to do so and if, in addition, the ways of thinking about children's participation and putting it into practice with children themselves are updated (McMellon & Tisdall, 2020; Nolas, 2015). This leads to the need to rethink children's participation from epistemological keys more closely linked to the daily lives of children and adolescents, and to methodologies more deeply rooted in popular and community education, rather than from the more institutional logics inherent to a governance approach. Indeed, the experiences analysed in this review share this renewed vision of childhood and children's participation.

The results of this research support the idea of the diversity of settings in which child-led participation takes place. The analysed documents show that environmental and urban planning issues are the scenarios where child-led participatory processes are most present. This is probably explained by the greater environmental awareness that occurs during childhood and adolescence, and by the opportunities offered by children's environment (e.g., at school) to foster processes of transformation and change based on the their proposals.

This research will serve as a basis for future studies. One of the lines of work to be developed is related to the age of the participants and their relationship with child-led participatory processes. As various studies have shown, age conditions such leadership. In this sense, we agree with Sheridan and Pramling (2001) and Stephenson (2002) who acknowledge the difficulty of completing a fully self-directed model if the participants are younger than 5–6 years old, since, in such cases, children may decide what to play with, but it is the responsibility of the adult to formalise and make decisions about everything related to the organisation, routines, and activities in the learning space (Manassakis, 2020). This dilemma leads several authors to question whether child-led participatory research can be considered research at all, given that the process requires responsibility and demands knowledge that, at certain ages, children do not yet possess (Hammersley, 2017; Kellett, 2011). In this sense, it would be useful to explore to what extent age becomes a potential barrier to, specifically, child-led participation (and other forms of participation) and to what extent this dilemma about age and competence is biased from an adult-centric perspective, or even an ageist and ableist discourse that hinders the responsibility of adults to create adequate conditions for children participation.

The second line of study that emerges from this review is related to the evaluation of participatory experiences implemented by the children themselves. The experiences described in the documents selected for the review provide data on the evaluation of the participatory processes carried out but do not provide evidence of the final results obtained, knowing that they are part of account rendering (Kellett, 2011) and, more importantly, that this type of information is essential to strengthening the credibility of these new ways of

conceiving and putting into practice children's participation. It would also be of interest to evaluate the influence that place and host institution may have on participation (Cumbo et al., 2019) in relation to the effectiveness and timeliness of child-led participation. The non-formal nature of the environments in which it takes place contributes to greater freedom of action. However, those projects incardinated in specifically formal environments would participate in a model instrumented by institutional characteristics and values (Prosser-Bravo et al., 2020). Therefore, it seems equally necessary to adequately train children and adolescents in participation matters, and also the adults who guide the processes, together with the institution that hosts them.

It would therefore be interesting to evaluate the effects of these child-led participatory projects—for example, by providing evidence of the impact, over time, of such transformative experiences on individual children and its magnitude. This will allow for a redoubling of efforts in the implementation of these forms of children's participation in which children play a greater role (Ho et al., 2015). Only one longitudinal study and one evaluative study of the programme were found in the review.

The most important limitation of this scoping review lies in the fact of the documentary basis on which the records have been accessed. Documents such as doctoral theses, academic papers, and NGO and social organisations reports have not been consulted, which limits the number of sources consulted.

Nevertheless, this review suggests practical implications at educational and socio-cultural levels, highlighting the importance of training in participatory methodologies for both adults and the children involved in these processes and renewing the way we look at children and recognise that children and adolescents have the capacity for agency. The studies chosen for this review provide evidence especially of the former: According to Hulshof (2019) and Purdy and Spears (2020), by adopting these participatory approaches in project evaluation, decision-making, and research, adults relinquish traditional adult-centred hierarchies of power and knowledge and place children at the centre of the action. Our findings encourage us to rethink children from other cultural codes inspired by equality, recognition, and agency.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the author (unedited).

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Article

Children's Participation, Progressive Autonomy, and Agency for Inclusive Education in Schools

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Abstract

Whereas children's agency and their right to civic participation have been extensively discussed in childhood studies, especially within sociology, their presence in pedagogical studies is still scarce. We intend to contribute to tentatively plugging that gap by analysing the need for a change of perspective in school settings based on acknowledging children as participatory social actors. We are committed to an epistemological broadening of the expression "inclusive education" that complements the traditional and necessary meaning of "reaching to all learners"; a broadening grounded on the configuration of intergenerational relationships in which children participate in schools as learners and partners, as agents who are part of their community and take part in it. Schools are thus transformed into inclusive democratic educational communities or fellowships that include children in the decision-making on those aspects that affect them, according to their progressive autonomy, while validating their knowledge and experiences. The article is framed on the sustainable development goals (SDG), specifically on SDG no.4, to ensure inclusive, equitable, and quality education, and SDG no.16, which urges to promote just, peaceful, and inclusive societies and the consolidation of institutions. Our stance is that a significant step forward to achieving these goals is that schools should prepare for life in democracy by being experienced and run democratically. This involves children's gradual participation in school management, from the micro to the macro level. To this end, we focus on three key elements: children's rights to participation, the principle of progressive autonomy, and acknowledging children's agency in schools.

Keywords

agency rights; children's agency; children's participation; children' rights; evolving capacities; inclusive education; progressive autonomy; sustainable development goals

1. Introduction

In this article, a series of reflections on the concept of educational inclusion and how the democratisation of school life can help amplify the epistemologies surrounding the term are presented. To this end, we suggest a complementary approach to its scope based on the observation of three key elements: children's right to participation, support and accompaniment of children's progressive autonomy, and the recognition of their agency. Whereas children's agency and their right to civic participation have been extensively discussed in childhood studies, especially within sociology, their presence in pedagogical studies is still scarce. We intend to contribute to tentatively plugging that gap.

A relevant backdrop for these reflections is the United Nations 2030 agenda for sustainable development and its sustainable development goals (SDGs), a global roadmap approved by 197 countries in November 2015. Specifically, we look at SDG no. 4 towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all. According to UNESCO (2017, p. 10), SDG no. 4 "is both a goal in itself and a means for attaining all other SDGs." SDG no. 16 is another benchmark. This goal urges

to promote just, peaceful, and inclusive societies and the consolidation of their institutions. Target 16.7 of this goal calls for developing effective, accountable, and transparent institutions at all levels (United Nations, 2015). From these premises, this article holds that the school institution can contribute to the achievement not only of SDG no. 4 but also of SDG no. 16 if it is democratised and children are recognised not only as learners but also as participatory social actors of the educational community.

Also considered are articles 12.1 to 15.1 of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC; United Nations, 1989), on the participatory rights of children, as well as the United Nations (2009) General Comment no. 12 on the right of the child to be heard. This context also comprises: article 24.1 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000) on the right of children to express themselves freely and be considered in accordance with their age and maturity; the EU agenda for the rights of the child aiming to inform children, families, and teachers about children's rights after finding, between 2008 and 2009, that 76% of children did not know about their rights (European Commission, 2011); and the *Bucharest EU Children's Declaration* (Romanian Children's Board, Children and Experts From the EU, 2019) in which we read:

> School is the place where we receive information, acquire knowledge, and develop skills. Therefore, we believe that it should become a place where we learn about participation and can exercise participation outside our family. This can only happen if, in school, we are involved in the education process as partners. (p. 2)

While the EU agenda for the rights of the child (European Commission, 2011) informed that 76% of children were not aware of being subjects of rights, the *Evaluation of Legislation, Policy, and Practise on Child Participation in the European Union* report (Day et al., 2015, p. 33) expressed concern that the "UNCRC and the article 12 do not feature prominently within the initial teacher training." In this regard, UNICEF Spain reported that 88% of professionals working with children were unaware of the UNCRC basics. More recent research (see Janta et al., 2021) does not yield more promising data. In the focus groups carried out in various European countries, it was found that, although children were generally aware of their rights, they didn't feel included in decision-making processes on matters affecting them. One of the identified barriers for the inclusion of children as active members of their communities was the attitude of adults: "Societal attitudes of not seeing children as competent social actors who can contribute to decisions in a meaningful way is still common" (Janta et al., 2021, p. 69). These attitudinal barriers represent another critical backbone of the reflections presented in the following sections.

2. Complementing the Epistemologies of Inclusive Education: Children as Learners and Partners

In this section, we seek to amplify the concept of "inclusive education," which can take different definitions (Echeita Sarrionandía & Ainscow, 2011). However, it is generally understood as the reception of student diversity in educational settings. The aim is to raise educational inclusion to the recognition of children—of all children regardless of their circumstances—not only as *learners* but as *partners*, namely, as participatory social actors of the school community whose voices are heard and heeded, and who participate in the decision-making based on their rights to participation and according to their progressive autonomy.

As Messiou (2018) points out, the concept of "inclusive education" gained international relevance since the adoption of the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO & Ministry of Education and Science Spain, 1994). In the document, we read: "These documents are informed by the principle of inclusion, by recognition of the need to work towards 'schools for all'—institutions which include everybody, celebrate differences, support learning, and respond to individual needs" (UNESCO & Ministry of Education and Science Spain, 1994, p. iii). Since then, such an understanding of "inclusive education" has been echoed in various reports and conventions (UNESCO, 2001, 2005, 2008).

The Organisation of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI) defines "inclusive education" as "schools for all, without exclusion, in which students from different social conditions, from different cultures and with different abilities and interests live and learn together, from the most able to those with disabilities" (OEI, 2010, p. 108). This document provides a glimpse of an enhancement of the conceptualisation of "inclusive education" since it states that "an inclusive school is, in essence, a democratic and pluralistic school that welcomes all people in the community…and transforms its culture, organisation, and pedagogical proposal so that all students participate and succeed in their learning" (OEI, 2010, p. 108).

The amplification of the term we propose necessarily involves recognising children's right to education and participation. We suggest a definition of educational inclusion that implies the inclusion of all diversities along with the recognition of children's rights to participation in those issues that affect and are of interest to them at school. This second notion of educational inclusion is the main contribution we are making: an inclusion that involves listening and addressing children's voices and points of view (De Haro et al., 2019; Echeita Sarrionandía & Ainscow, 2011; Farré Riera, 2021; Feu Gelis & Torrent Font, 2018; Sañudo & Susinos, 2018) while making them gradually participants in decision-making processes according to their progressive autonomy; an inclusion that is in line with children's "desires,

interests, experiences and knowledge" (Moreno Gómez et al., in press). Under this principle, children are not regarded as passive recipients of services and rights but as agents and subjects of rights involved in the school community as participatory social actors, together with teachers, other staff, and families.

This right to participation, analysed in further detail in the following section, entails recognising children as subjects of rights within the pedagogical relationship (Sañudo & Susinos, 2018). As a set of rights recognised in the UNCRC, student participation in schools is but a recognition of a fundamental right that in no case should be presented "as a concession tinged with a paternalistic attitude that we adults make to the youngest" (Feu Gelis & Torrent Font, 2018, p. 44). In this regard, Echeita Sarrionandía and Ainscow (2011, p. 33) note that educational inclusion in schools should focus on the "presence, participation and achievement of students," understanding participation as the incorporation of the points of view or voices of students, based on the establishment of schools that are thought, organised, and articulated from a genuinely democratic culture (Apple & Beane, 2007). That is, building inclusive educational democratic communities—or fellowships—where students and teachers work together as partners in their relationships (Fielding, 2012).

In short, we propose a redefinition of educational inclusion as the participation of children as learners-partners in the pedagogical relationship within schools, following their progressive autonomy and evolving capacities, consistent with the recognition of their agency.

3. Participation Rights: Cornerstone of Inclusive Educational Democratic Communities or Fellowships

In this section, we analyse how children's participation in schools can promote inclusive democratic educational communities or fellowships, which Fielding (2012, p. 55) describes as communities built on a relational vision of democracy "which presumes, nurtures and anticipates more inclusive and more generously conceived forms of human sociality." This participation responds to a legal imperative since it is a subjective right granted to children in the UNCRC, and it is one of the conditions set out in this text for children to be included as participatory social actors and valid stakeholders in their educational communities.

Our starting point is a conception of child participation as a pedagogical practice and an educational ideal (Andreasen Lysgaard & Simovska, 2016), as well as the "notion that children have the right to express their views and have them taken into account on all matters that concern them, in accordance with their age and maturity" (Janta et al., 2021, p. II). Likewise, we understand child participation in schools as involving pupils as partners (Romanian Children's Board, Children and Experts From the EU, 2019) in school decision-making

processes (Olufisayo John-Akinola et al., 2014) regardless of personal circumstances. We are confident that all children can and should participate and that no personal circumstance is an obstacle as long as means are adapted accordingly, and their actual capabilities recognised, rather than focusing on those they might lack, as is often the case.

The above should be materialised from the recognition that people who have not reached the age of 18 are citizens of the present (Esteban Tortajada & Novella Cámara, 2018) whose capacities are "differently equal" (Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p. 386) to those of adults, and should not, therefore, be undervalued and disregarded (Liebel, 2015). From this perspective, the concept of participation most used in schools, linked to class attendance or interactivity in the activities proposed by teachers to increase their motivation to learn (Simovska, 2007, 2011), is broadened to the construction of inclusive democratic educational communities or fellowships in which children's status as partners and their right to express themselves, to be heard and to participate in decision-making, according to their capabilities, autonomy and maturity, are recognised and respected.

As discussed in Section 2, participation in decision-making refers to the inclusion of children as participatory social actors in different areas and dimensions of school organisation. According to Fielding (2011), schools can be organised based on a neoliberal or market logic or a person-centred model. The first model encourages the construction of a highly individualistic identity and connects to children's future labour market. Here we will not debate the necessity, or otherwise, of integrating elements of this approach into schools. Instead, we highlight that the person-centred democratic community model promotes children's participation from a relational perspective in which student participation is seen, in partnership with the school's personnel, as "a full range of everyday opportunities in which young people can listen and be listened to, make decisions and take responsibility for both the day-to-day and for creating a better future" (Fielding, 2011, p. 50).

Building inclusive, person-centred democratic educational communities or fellowships require the recognition of children as partners. Thus, the concept of recognition is central to the transformation of schools. Thomas (2012, p. 464) discusses how Honneth's theory of recognition, and despite the author's reluctance to acknowledge "children's agency, sociality and citizenship" can be helpful to analyse the place that children should occupy in society and, consequently, in schools. Thomas (2012, p. 458), in line with the position of this article, maintains:

(1) that children do belong to the class of morally responsible persons, are therefore rights-bearers and are entitled to respect; and (2) that children are people with talents and capabilities, who contribute in a variety of ways to society and culture, and so are deserving of esteem.

The author argues that Honneth's model invites us to consider children as subjects who care and give affection, as subjects of rights, as subjects who respect the rights of others, and as members of their communities. As Honneth and Margalit (2001) and Honneth (2012) state, children will acquire a positive relationship with themselves and others if they are recognised as socially valid and responsible actors of the communities they belong and take part. This should also be interpreted within the school environment. To this element of participation as a critical component for educational inclusion, we add, as discussed in the following sections, the accompaniment of children's progressive autonomy and the recognition of their agency.

4. Progressive Autonomy: Gradually Increased Participation According to Children's Evolving Capacities

The second element that may contribute to the transformation of schools into inclusive democratic educational communities or fellowships is the accompaniment of children's progressive autonomy and their gradual participation in school decision-making. Discussing children's autonomy is always an opportunity to pay tribute to Janusz Korczak. Korczak, a trailblazer in the advocacy for children's rights, held that, despite children's evident lack of experience and knowledge, and their dependence on adults, they should be included and participate in decision-making on matters that affect them by establishing adult-child relationships that give "the child full autonomy in social and political matters" (Liebel, 2019, p. 187). The Polish-born doctor and pedagogue introduced into the collective mind the idea that the protagonism and autonomy of children should be at the centre of education, based on children's responsibility for their own decisions.

The expression "progressive autonomy" is a critical aspect of the UNCRC (Díaz Arce, 2019; Lansdown, 2005; Uriarte, 2013) expressed in terms of "evolving capacities," which appears in articles 5 and 12.1 of the UNCRC. These articles state that the child shall receive appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise of their rights, and that the child shall be able to express their views freely and that these shall be considered following their evolving capacities. In short, the UNCRC argues that children's exercise of rights is progressive. In this regard, Lansdown (2005, p. 19) cautions that this principle should not be understood from a universal approach of a homogeneous succession of stages since "children live in diverse environments and cultures and are faced with different life experiences, acquire competencies at different ages, and their acquisition varies according to circumstances.''

This last point Lansdown warns us about is critical for this article. Some of the aspects that arise most concern when it comes to including children as social agents with the capacity to make decisions in an informed, respon-

sible manner are linked to their capacities—attention to the multiplicity of diversities in the school itself—to gender equity, the inclusion of racialised children or the fear that only those considered "more capable" will end up participating. Unquestionably, these elements can limit or hinder opportunities; however, this epistemological shift could offer solutions—without falling into the ambush of giving straightforward answers to highly complex matters—to the particulars exposed.

The reasonable fear that only those considered "more able" will end up participating, that there will be no tangible gender equity in decision-making, that racialised children will have fewer opportunities, to give but a few examples, can be transcended when a progressive autonomy approach is followed. This approach facilitates children's recognition of who they are and what they do, rather than recognising them from the prevailing social and cultural representations. It is an enabling approach that discards measurement patterns and allows each child to participate according to their possibilities at any given moment, based on trust and respect, or, as Van Manen (2016) would say, pedagogical loving care, trustful hope, and responsibility.

In the perspective of this manuscript, autonomy is conceptualised as the freedom that enables individuals to express their will and make decisions about aspects that affect them, inescapably linked to personal responsibility (Santana Ramos, 2014). Personal responsibility is a pivotal element, signified as personal moral responsibility, contributing to the transcendence of prevailing individualism in our current western societies. In this sense, Molins i Paronella (2020) forewarns of the unavoidable infantilisation of our societies when autonomy is promoted based on individual and individualistic freedom instead of fostering an autonomy built on accountability, responsibility, and otherness. As Mèlich and Bárcena (1999) observed, the modern conception of autonomy leaves the other faceless, voiceless. It is precisely this conception that western societies shall overcome.

These processes of acquiring moral responsibility and progressive autonomy are linked to no less than the guiding purpose of education: the full development of the personality, that is, the awareness of one's values and preferences. As Santana Ramos (2014, p. 107) points out, the educational purpose for the full development of the personality is, ultimately, "the consecration of the principle of individual autonomy." This goal is included in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (United Nations, 1948) in articles 26.2 and 29.1, which state, respectively, "education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms," and "everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible." It is also reflected in the constitutions of democratic states such as Germany (article 2.1), Italy (article 3), Portugal (article 26), and Spain (article 26.2; Santana Ramos, 2014).

The articulation of the gradual nature of participation in schools should have a collaborative character between learner-partners, teachers and other adult staff and be rooted in the implicative action of children from an early age. We propose that this participatory action should take place gradually, starting with spaces for joint deliberation in the context of class-group management and progressively moving towards the co-design of the curriculum and school spaces. This should come about through progressively shared leadership that would allow children's increased accountability and responsibility, culminating in the participation of leaners-partners in the school's governance not only from a representative democracy model but from a participatory one. All in all, a progressive partnership and co-leadership between children and adults. Figure 1 shows this gradual participation of children in schools as inclusive democratic educational communities or fellowships following their progressive autonomy.

This accompaniment and promotion of the progressive autonomy of children in schools linked to the development of their moral personality and rooted in accountability, responsibility and otherness should be one of the backbones of democratic-community life in the school institution if it is to be truly inclusive in the terms set out in Section 2. As Lansdown (2005, p. ix) states, "as children acquire enhanced competencies, there is a reduced need for direction and a greater capacity to take responsibility for decisions affecting their lives." In schools, this accompaniment of progressive autonomy linked to children's participation in decision-making should be based on a gradual increase in both the responsibility and scope of such decisions. Thus, as children acquire autonomy and greater accountability and responsibility, they can be seen as partners in the process, because of their increased participation in school organisation and decision-making, becoming sovereigns of their choices, opinions, proposals, decisions, and contributions (Díaz Bórquez et al., 2019). We argue that a prerequisite for this to occur is the recognition of children as participatory social actors at school: the acknowledgement of children's capacity for human agency.

5. Transforming Adults' Barrier Attitudes: Recognition of Children's Agency

The final component whose importance we wish to emphasise is that of the human agency of children. The concept of agency relates to the capacity for human action and "encompasses a range of ideas including choice, capability, dispositions, self-critique and choice and practices" (Higgs, 2019, p. 10). Zavala Berbena and Castañeda Figueiras (2014) note that Aristotle was the first philosopher to be interested in and analyse the term from studying the ontology of human actions. He conceptualised the term as any activity oriented towards excellence: human action as an active use of reason grounded in the will to achieve goals and articulate desires whose foundation is freedom understood as relational ethics. The same authors, tracing a genealogy of the concept, note that in the Middle Ages, St. Thomas Aquinas defined agency as naturally kindly directed rational action; and already in modernity, Marx analysed the term as historically rooted and from a perspective of action-oriented not only to kindly rational action but to the transformation of the physical and social world (Zavala Berbena & Castañeda Figueiras, 2014).

A core element of human agency is its relational nature. Developing an agentic identity and exercising agency relies on the recognition as agents by the other within the relationship (Edmonds, 2019; Erstad et al., 2021; Sutterlüty & Tisdall, 2019; Thomas, 2007). In this regard, minoritized groups such as racialised people, women, and children have traditionally been excluded from such recognition due to non-participation in private and public decision-making (González Coto, 2012). While women's and ethnic minorities' liberation movements have made great strides forward—not in a globalised way and with much still to be done—children remain largely unrecognised as capable persons (Sutterlüty &
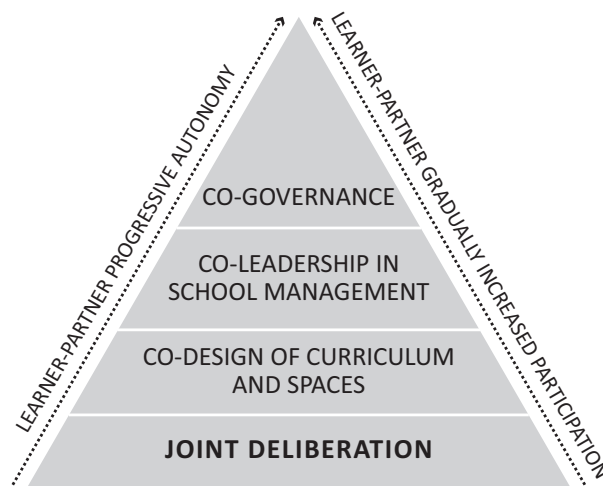

Figure 1. Learner-partner gradually increased participation following their progressive autonomy.

Tisdall, 2019) in the asymmetrical power relations that exist within the intergenerational order (Liebel, 2018; Mühlbacher & Sutterlüty, 2019).

As adults, we can relate to children from either enabling or limiting beliefs (Rodríguez-Moriche & Vallejo-Jiménez, 2019). Limiting beliefs act as adult barriers to the free development of children's personality, autonomy, and sense of agency; Mead (1934, as cited in Mühlbacher & Sutterlüty, 2019) claimed that children and adolescents would develop the capacity for autonomous, intentional, and self-directed action if and only their human agency—their condition as agents in their communities—is recognised. Undoubtedly, since the adoption of the UNCRC, significant progress has been made towards such recognition since it stipulates that children are subjects of rights and social agents. However, Gallagher (2019, p. 189) notes that "the idea that children are active social agents became a familiar mantra from the 1990s onwards," underlining that there is a yawning gap between theory and practice. Much has been written and theorised about children as capable social agents, about children's agency—although the debate is still open as to whether this agency is equal to or different from adult agency—about children's rights and their status as subjects of rights and not only as passive recipients of rights. However, according to Wall (2008), these epistemologies are not reflected in the practice because the adult gaze has not yet transcended historical adultcentrism, to which we add overprotective paternalism, and modern conceptions of childhood. These modern conceptions of childhood led to the constitution of a new representation that persists to this day. As early as 1988, Alanen asserted, citing Ariès (1962), that the construction of the modern representation of childhood took place within the framework of a bourgeois class that needed to ensure its survival and reproduction in a society whose structures were in a dramatic process of change. According to the author:

> The child emerged in this context as a social and practical construct to be realized for the younger members of that particular class. It is for this project that various schemes of child care and education were developed leading to the formation of extraordinary social worlds for their inhabitants—notably the "intimate family" and the school—and consequently to the formation of a particular "habitus" as well. This product—modern childhood—was later made available for other social classes. (Alanen, 1988, p. 64)

The creation of the modern child implied the separation of the adult and infant worlds and an over-theorisation of the new construct developed around the infant stage from different disciplines.

Many efforts have been and continue to be made in the academic, political, and educational spheres to reverse this modern conception of childhood and this separation between the adult and child spheres.

We could affirm that thanks to the approval of the UNCRC and its subsequent general comments and observations, as well as to the substantial body of scientific literature on the subject, an epistemological shift on childhood as a concept has taken place, but has it reached the ontological realm? Has it brought about a genuine transformation of how we as adults relate to children? As Alanen (2012) recalls, the concept of childhood should be approached from its relational dimension, given that it is not so much a category defined by an age range as a concept defined in opposition to the terms "adult" and "adulthood."

All things considered, authors such as Liebel (2018) and Dailey and Rosenbury (2018) argue for the need to include the recognition of children's agency as a right. Liebel (2018, p. 24) argues that "children will only fully become subjects of rights when their human rights are also regarded as agency rights, and when their interests as people capable of acting are recognised." The same author holds that this right implies the recognition of children as capable people—an enabling belief—and the creation of the material conditions for them to be able to use them. On the other hand, Dailey and Rosenbury (2018) uphold that children's rights to agency are not synonymous with advocating for their rights to autonomy. Children can participate in the decision-making while being dependent on adults from their heteronomous condition. As Freeman (2006, p. 90) points out, "rights are important because those who have them can exercise agency." Thus, the exercise of rights, the recognition of the other's agency, and one's sense of agency are mutually reinforcing; they cannot exist in isolation from the others.

Undoubtedly, schools are ideal space-time locations for creating such conditions insofar as adults, who are ultimately responsible for children's welfare and school organisation, assume that "agents are decision-makers. They are persons who can negotiate with others, who can alter relationships and decisions, who can shift social assumptions and constraints. And there is now clear evidence that even the youngest amongst us can do this" (Freeman, 2011, p. 90). We regard the recognition of children's agency as the foundation of their inclusion as partners in schools. This recognition entails a series of enabling beliefs on the part of adults that remove those barrier attitudes that prevent children from participating as partners and stakeholders in their school communities. These enabling beliefs necessarily involve recognizing children as subjects of rights, particularly as having the right to participate in decision-making in matters that affect them, which will gradually increase as they become progressively autonomous. Figure 2 shows the interactions of these three elements in the configuration of a school as an inclusive educational democratic community or fellowship. The figure provides a preliminary outline of how children's participation in decision-making could be progressively implemented in different school dimensions and in accordance with their progressive autonomy.
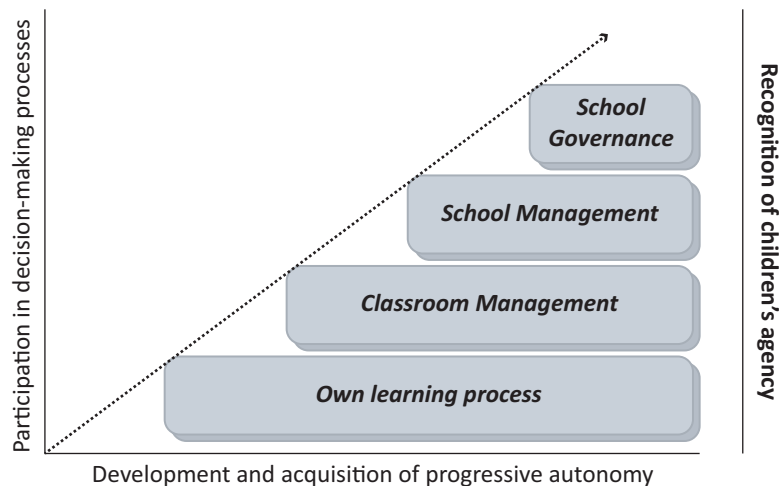
Figure 2. Schools as inclusive educational democratic communities or fellowships.

6. Final Remarks

There is a need for an epistemological broadening of the concept of "inclusive education"; an epistemological broadening that integrates the meaning of "reaching to all learners" with the inclusion of children as learner-partners, that is, as participatory social actors, valid interlocutors, and active members at school, turned into inclusive educational democratic communities or fellowships. To this end, the three elements outlined in this article pose that (a) children's participation in the decision-making should be considered, (b) according to their progressive autonomy and (c) through the recognition of their agency. Otherwise, children may not be acknowledged as learners-partners and concepts such as educational inclusion and children's agency will remain empty aphorisms.

We propose a gradual increase in children's participation in decision-making, in their role as learners-partners following their progressive autonomy, with the following sequence:

1. Joint deliberation with teachers and other school staff: At this first level, children are recognised as agents capable of making decisions in co-responsibility with their peers and with adults at the group-class meso-level. This allows for a first step towards decision-making on aspects linked to classroom management or activities in their free time. Examples of this first foray into decision-making would be associated with the definition of rules and sanctions, distribution of the school timetable or leisure time activities.
2. Co-design of the curriculum and spaces: This second level entails greater involvement in decision-making from the children's commitment to their learning process and responsibility at the individual micro-level and the management of spaces and collective responsibility at the meso-level of the group-class. From this recognition of children's

agency, children make decisions about their learning processes; they define their objectives both individually and collectively, and the time they will devote to the subject to achieve them. Children can also make proposals regarding the use of spaces and their distribution, adapted to their individual and shared needs.
3. Co-leadership in the school management: Achieving a level of participation in co-leadership and management requires prior experience of the responsibility involved in decision-making on relevant and binding issues. At this level, children participate in teacher and management coordination meetings and make decisions on issues directly affecting them at a stage halfway between the meso-level of the group-class and the macro-level of the school.
4. Co-governance: Co-governance implies that children participate directly in the school's management. This co-governance takes place on an equal footing with the management team, where children are informed and consulted and proactive in management, make their proposals, and their voice and vote are given equal consideration to those of adults.

This sequence is grounded on the progressively implicative action of children within the school community. This participation in decision-making in school organisations must respond to the principle of progressive autonomy, an autonomy based on the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and personal responsibility and for others through the construction of a moral personality that combines the need to care for the "I" with the need to place the "we" at the centre of educational action.

Thus, adults and children will be able to see and recognise each other within the intergenerational relationship and the educational exercise from an ethics of care that, far from pretending to build symmetrical relationships, positions the child as an agent, based

on their capabilities and possibilities, recognising their knowledge and experiences, including, and validating them. Thus, children receive the guidance and support required for the harmonious development of their personalities and their moral conscience, guiding principles of education.

Including children as partners in a school transformed into an inclusive educational democratic community or fellowship will not be possible if a subjective children's rights approach is not incorporated into teacher training, which ought to include children's rights of agency. In this respect, the training deficit of teachers is apparent, and there is an urgent need for discussion and the incorporation of these elements in the curricula of trainee teachers and the in-service training plans of active teachers. As Tonucci (Fundación La Caixa, 2021) encourages us to reflect, can a school be considered legal if it does not listen to children's voices? To which we add, can a school be considered legal if it does not heed children's voices and consider them as participatory social actors?

Some believe that schools need to be better resourced to enable their democratisation. However, what do they mean by resources: more staff, more technological equipment, more funding? The experience of educational institutions with small budgets and with a majority of children at risk of social exclusion, which have become genuinely democratic and inclusive thanks to the commitment and determination of the teaching staff, shows us that it is the change in the adult perspective that is essential, and not so much the need for infinite resources. In this sense, it is also crucial for schools to have a stable workforce since any project aiming to be sustained and sustainable over time requires implicated and committed personnel to carry it out and keep it alive, in constant review, evaluation and improvement.

There is no less critical concern about how specific political colours condition the viability of participatory and inclusive educational projects. This is an ideological approach whose logic responds to the polarisation—intentional or not—of democracies, becoming increasingly partisan and illiberal by the day. The social division we are experiencing is much related to and triggered by political colours and bigotry. Contributing to this polarisation by defending or criticising one or another political model gives rise to an ideological bias that transmits the idea that certain parties or ideologies are more conducive to citizen participation and the inclusion of children as capable social agents than others. The issues tackled in this article should be of interest to anyone who considers themselves a democrat, regardless of whether they are more or less conservative, more or less liberal, more or less progressive.

Finally, we are confident that this approach could also contribute to addressing SDGs no. 4 and no. 16. Ensuring inclusive education requires the inclusion of children as learners and as partners in communities that prepare for democracy and are lived democrati-cally. Moreover, the consolidation of democratic institutions can be strengthened if children know that they are part of and responsible members of these institutions from a very early age. The present and alarming discredit on democratic systems could be turned around if children are recognised as having moral, transformative, and action agency. Schools are ideal spaces for such purposes, provided that adults commit themselves to them.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

Inclusion as a Value in Participation: Children's Councils in Spain

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Abstract
The two-way relationship between inclusion and participation makes municipal child participation organisations and experiences a key means of guaranteeing the inclusion in community life of children and adolescents, who are traditionally excluded from decision-making and the promotion of changes in the realities of their lives. One of the main objectives of municipal child participation organisations is to ensure that these spaces are inclusive. This means that they must promote equality of guarantees and conditions in the development of the right to participation from a perspective that addresses the different axes of inequality, not only in access to these spaces but also in the relational dynamics that take place in them. Based on a theoretical reflection on inclusion and participation, this article analyses the data from a questionnaire applied to 279 people (191 technical figures and 88 elected authorities) from 179 municipalities in Spain, which seeks to describe the state of child and adolescent participation in municipalities that are part of the International Association of Educating Cities, Child Friendly Cities, or both. A qualitative analysis is made of those issues related to the strategies used to promote inclusion within the Children's Councils, as well as in the initiatives promoted in the field of child participation. The results show agreement in considering Children's Councils to be inclusive bodies, but the means and procedures used do not always guarantee this inclusiveness.

Issue
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1. Introduction

Social and community participation allows people to be and feel part of their community, get involved collectively, influence their realities, and establish a framework of relationships that will result in personal well-being and the improvement of the collective. Those working to promote quality of life, guarantee rights, and reduce social inequalities agree that participation is a key indicator of social inclusion (Contreras et al., 2015; EAPN Spain, 2020; Emaús, 2015; Verdugo et al., 2021). Access to community living spaces, active presence in them, involvement in common affairs, acceptance, and recog-

nition by the group, taking on community roles, having a support network, and enjoying a sense of interdependence (Sharlock & Verdugo, 2003) are defining features of participation and social inclusion. Recognising people's right to participation allows us to break with the power structure that places them in the position of those assisted and attended, of beneficiaries, recipients, singled out, and consequently excluded. It implies overcoming social, political, and educational dynamics of meddling and interfering in people's lives, denying their knowledge and taking away their autonomy, in favour of an action that respects the dignity of the person and the recognition of their capacities (Varela & Morán, 2017).

Child participation becomes a right and a clear means of social inclusion for a group that has traditionally been placed on the margins of community action and decision-making spaces. This exclusion is due to a conception of childhood as a "lack of," the "not yet" life stage (Casas, 2006), generating a double impact, that is, limiting access to opportunities for the development and emotional well-being of children and adolescents and hindering the advancement of our societies by failing to incorporate their viewpoints.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) indicates in article 12 the right of children to express their views freely in all matters affecting them, their opinions being considered following their age and maturity. Taking this into consideration implies going beyond giving children a voice; it implies guaranteeing that they are heard and that they have an impact on their realities. Lundy (2009), from the study on the obstacles that hinder the meaningful and effective application of this right, defends four principles in its realization: space, voice, audience, and influence. These elements should be approached from an individualized perspective and attentive to the scenarios of difficulty. General Comment No. 5 of the Convention (UN, 2003) indicates that the rights recognized in the Convention must be ensured for all, without discrimination or distinction, calling on states to actively identify children and groups of children who may see this right restricted and to adopt special measures to reduce or eliminate the conditions that lead to discrimination.

In the analysis of child participation or the exercise of citizenship, we cannot limit ourselves to a rights-based perspective. According to Lister (2007), it is necessary to consider participation in terms of "lived citizenship," a key element in children's development, in their sense of belonging to a community and in their recognition as members of that community. The author points out that "children can claim their status as members of the citizen community through their active participation in it; but in order to participate they must first be accepted as members of the citizen community" (Lister, 2007, p. 701). In this line, it is worth mentioning the promotion of mechanisms in recent years that allow this participation around projects such as the Children's City, Educating Cities, Child Friendly Cities (CFC-UNICEF), among others. These models vindicate the role of children as active citizens, enabling various institutionalised scenarios of involvement, such as municipal organisation for child and adolescent participation, participatory experiences of a consultative and projective nature led by the administration, or initiatives led by children and adolescents themselves (Novella et al., 2021). The Children's Councils, proposed by Tonucci (1997), become a key way to guarantee the inclusion of this group in community life. They function as municipal organisations that involve children and adolescents in the reflection and generation of proposals on aspects related to improving their realities of life.

As Trilla and Novella (2011) point out, they not only provide an educational opportunity for citizenship training and the development of associated competencies, but they are also understood as representative organisations, in which their members take on a representative role for those who elected them and, above all, for the children of the municipality as a whole. In general terms, they are usually made up of children and adolescents between 10 and 17 years of age, who meet periodically to deal with issues proposed by the Children's Council itself, by other children in the city, by social entities, or by the City Council's government team, and with autonomy to decide on the content of their work. A professional in charge of enhancing the educational dimension and establishing relations with the different municipal government agencies supports the meetings. Several studies address the concreteness of these participation models in their application in different territorial contexts (Alparone & Rissotto, 2001; Golay & Malatesta, 2014; Percy-Smith, 2010), counting on works that specifically put the gaze on the relationship between children's participation and the diversity of childhood. Wyness (2009) denounces that the methods for electing Children's Council members, based on standard electoral formulas, reinforce existing inequalities among youth groups and are less likely to incorporate the voices of disadvantaged and socially excluded children and adolescents. Children's Councils, as well as other initiatives, may see their function, both educational and representative, weakened if they are not projected as inclusive spaces, guaranteeing the equal possibility of participation of all groups, and integrating diverse children with their different sensitivities and needs.

Therefore, it is not enough to provide avenues for children's participation in community dynamics; we must also ensure that these spaces are inclusive. Recognising children's participation as a right implies assuming the responsibility of guaranteeing it for all people under equal conditions. It is necessary to go beyond formal recognition in favour of effective guarantee, which implies articulating the necessary means and training to make use of those means (Sen, 2000). It involves training for horizontal, dialogic, and egalitarian communication, for dialogic and consensual decision-making, for dealing with the mechanisms of privilege and oppression in these relational dynamics and confronting them, as well as enabling the resources that allow architectural, linguistic, economic, or cultural diversity barriers, among others, to be addressed. Inclusion implies transforming the systems and spaces of education and participation so that all people—without restrictions, limitations, or euphemisms as Echeita (2017) would say—have equal opportunities for their development and for influencing their realities. If we do not adopt the inclusion approach, we run two risks: (a) generating spaces that are tremendously homogeneous and poor in diversity, unrealistic to the extent that, according to Aguado et al. (2018), diversity is assumed as normality, and (b) that the most vulnerable

children and adolescents, due to factors such as socioeconomic level, functional diversity, origin, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual diversity, territory, or unique living conditions, will be left out of these spaces, reducing their educational opportunities and increasing social inequality. An intersectionality approach (Crenshaw, 1989) is required to enable us to analyse and act sensitively on the different axes of privilege and oppression and how these are realised in social dynamics.

In the first instance, inclusion refers to ensuring access to participation opportunities for the whole population. Physical barriers and the absence of adaptation measures in the case of people with disabilities or economic barriers when actions involve a cost (even indirectly) are some of the factors that hinder simple access to these spaces. Considering the territorial variable, for example, we find that children in vulnerable urban contexts show relatively low participation due to cultural elements and a lack of resources and spaces to exercise this right (Cano et al., 2019; Quane & Rankin, 2006). In rural contexts, the dispersion of the population makes it difficult for many children to participate, as well as the lack of resources, and they suffer from the digital divide due to the lack of a guaranteed rural broadband service, which has been particularly noticeable in the current times of pandemic (EAPN Spain, 2021).

However, we must pay attention to dynamics broader than access to Children's Councils, i.e., those dynamics of interaction, exchange, and decision-making. A first step in this direction has been that of representativeness, ensuring that those groups that are less represented in decision-making spaces have access to them. In this case, Children's Councils are made up of diverse children in terms of gender, social context, functional diversity, and other factors. Even so, the question of representation is insufficient; the challenge is to achieve high-quality participation for all children and adolescents, to democratise the educational space by guaranteeing the involvement of all people in decision-making (Aguado et al., 2018). We refer to equal guarantees and conditions in the development of the right to participate.

Romero et al. (2021) propose an analysis of child participation from three approaches: the capabilities, feminist, and intercultural approaches, which complement the extended rights-based approach. These approaches, which are not exclusive, make it possible to highlight the social, cultural, and institutional dynamics and barriers that limit children's participation, reflecting the power structures present in all societies. These structures translate into social dynamics that are reproduced, more explicitly or more subtly, in the spaces of relationships, interaction and social participation. The distribution of spaces, forms of organisation, the taking of the floor, the recognition of people, their speeches and contributions, etc., are all elements impregnated by logics of power, which come into play when promoting inclusive spaces.

In this sense, the attitude and training of the professionals who accompany these processes are key. We are talking about inclusion training in a general sense and, more specifically, in specific areas such as working with people with functional diversity, the implementation of the gender approach, and the intercultural approach as a critical communicative practice (Melero, 2018). However, just as it is a matter of training, it is also a matter of social awareness.

The position regarding diversity and inclusiveness of the people in the community and the professionals who accompany the process is decisive. For example, while it is true that the social participation of young people with disabilities is primarily affected by gaps in access and accessibility (Ferreira & Oliver, 2019), the study by Ali et al. (2008) shows how, even when formal mechanisms are established to promote inclusion, people with intellectual disabilities often do not participate because of rejection and stigmatisation. This dynamic can be extended to any human group that suffers from a social ignorance that leads to rejection, contempt, or intolerant behaviours.

In this regard, it is interesting to highlight the initiatives promoted within the framework of municipal organisations for child participation that deal precisely with issues related to social progress towards more inclusive cities and contexts, which celebrate difference and recognise it as the richness of a territory, noting how children tend to participate from a perspective that promotes care for people.

Echeita (2017) indicates three major challenges for inclusive education in schools, applicable to municipal organisations for child participation: (a) welcoming all people in their diversity, respecting "the right to be and to share the common spaces where citizenship is built" (Echeita, 2017, p. 18); (b) that all children feel recognised and build meaningful social relationships within the group, in dynamics of care, as opposed to the construction of an identity based on lack and differentiation; and (c) to articulate sufficient strategies, forms of organisation, types of activities that allow the learning possibilities and contributions of all people to be enhanced without leaving anyone or anything out.

The challenge is not easy. Our societies are exclusionary and, if we disregard this one aspect, we will tend to reproduce exclusionary social spaces. A conscious effort needs to be made, in terms of process, to move towards other models. It is, therefore, worth exploring the approaches and strategies that are being activated in the municipalities' work to ensure that both the municipal organisation for child and adolescent participation and specific participation initiatives are inclusive spaces that guarantee that all children are part of, feel part of, and are recognised as active agents.

2. Methodology

This article draws on 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), the purpose of which is to analyse the state of child participation in the municipalities that are part of the International Association of Educating Cities (IAEC) and the CFC-UNICEF.

To obtain information, a self-administered questionnaire study (Díaz de Rada, 2012, 2021) with exploratory and diagnostic value was carried out. There were 279 participants (191 technical figures [TFs] and 88 elected authorities [EAs]) from 179 municipalities belonging to the IAEC networks (24.2%), the CFC-UNICEF (35.8%), and other national networks in Spain related to child participation (12%). Figure 1 shows the regions in which the questionnaires were conducted.

Two questionnaires were implemented: one for the TFs and one for the EAs. The research team designed both questionnaires in coordination with the CFC-UNICEF and the IAEC, and these were subsequently validated (Sabariego et al., 2021). Sampling was a two-stage cluster with the primary sampling units selected by accessibility (municipalities) and the final units by non-random routes and accessibility (TFs and EAs). For this article, TFs data has been used. TFs work in different municipal areas such as education (30%), social services (23%), children (12%), youth (11%), participation (8%), culture (5%), sustainability (2%), or "other" (9%). The persons referred to as EAs occupy political governance positions in the different town councils of the municipalities participating in the study.

The questionnaire addressed to TFs consisted of five sections, the third of which ("an exploration of initiatives or practices of child and adolescent participation in decision-making in the municipality that promote the exercise of active and inclusive citizenship, as well as their perceived impacts") has been selected for this study. The questions selected for this article read as follows:

1. Are Children's Councils inclusive institutions (because of social class, gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, and functional diversity, among others) that cater to the diversity of children and adolescents in the municipality? If yes, briefly indicate how this inclusion is guaranteed.
2. Are the specific practices of participation an experience of inclusive participation (by social class, gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, and functional diversity, among others) that caters to the diversity of children and adolescents in the municipality? If yes, briefly indicate how this inclusion is guaranteed.

Questions were open-ended, and while some participants answered, others did not; others gave answers that were not entirely coherent with what was being asked. Finally, the total number of people included in this study was 113, with 140 responses.

The procedure used to make contact was to send an e-mail to the TFs by way of an invitation. After this, they were informed about confidentiality and informed consent following the Organic Law on Data Protection (Organic Law 3/2018 of 5 December). The questionnaires were collected between March and September 2020 and the research report (Novella & Sabariego, 2020) was finalised at the end of October 2020.
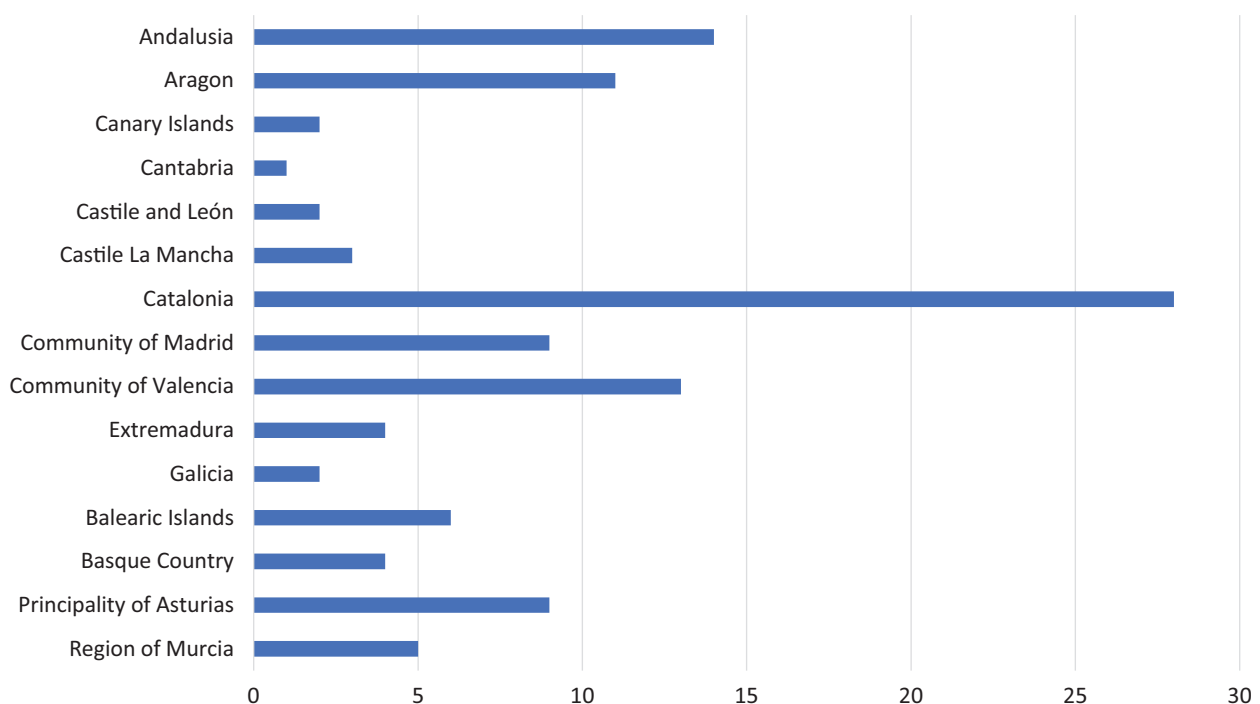

Figure 1. Number of questionaries collected by regions involved.

For the analysis of the open-ended questions, a content analysis has been carried out in a mixed categorisation process (the Atlas.tiv.8 programme was used): First there was categorisation through the previously established questions; then, new categories were incorporated through an inductive process. These categories made it possible to relate the responses to this article's objective and to obtain the results shown in Figure 2.

For the inductive creation of categories, an exploratory study was first carried out using a word cloud to guide us in creating the categories. After this first study, the creation of emerging categories began, resulting in the categories shown in Table 1.

This was followed by an analysis of the co-occurrences between the categories of the research questions (pre-established categories) together with the inductive (emergent) categories, as shown in Table 2.

Next, to analyse the most significant data from the research, a categorical network was generated, taking as a criterion a minimum of 10 codifications per category, resulting in the following network (Figure 3).

As can be seen in Figure 2, the categories with the highest number of citations were the ones represented, and "inclusion openness" and "diversity/deficit" were the most significant for the research.

3. Results

The analysis of the comments made by the TFs yields the following results.

First, the few answers to the question "how is inclusion in participation experiences ensured?" compared to the research question "how is inclusion in participation organisations ensured?" should be highlighted. From the answers obtained, it can be seen that the way to ensure this inclusion in the experiences is by opening the call for participation through the formal education system (primary or secondary schools). The first number indicates the assigned informant number. The second digit is the appointment number created for that respondent:

6:7 The project is aimed at all schools in the municipality.

22:2 The entire school population of the seven schools participates.

23:1 The source of origin is the educational centres, being all the schools in the municipality.

24:1 All adolescents from the city's public secondary schools participate.

In addition, it is also determined that this inclusion is guaranteed by the participation of people from different areas, backgrounds, or groups:

5:5 Special education centres participate.

39:2 For this purpose, we have regular contact with social services and with entities that support children with disabilities, adapting the activities and methodology to their profiles.

43:2 Specific centres for functional diversity also participate.

57:6 The participants are boys and girls with educational needs and from vulnerable social backgrounds.

99:2 Participants from different origins, including North Africans, Africans, Latin Americans, among others. Participants belonging to LGBTIQ+ groups. Participants with functional diversity.

Figure 2. Word cloud.

Table 1. Resulting categories.

Codes	Explanation	Number of quotes
Ensure inclusion in municipal body	Research question.	102
DIVERSITY/DISABILITY	Comments related to the conception of the term diversity, whether understood as a person with a disability, immigrant, social class, etc.	58
INCLUSION OPENNESS	Comments related to the profile of the people targeted for inclusion.	50
GENDER EQUALITY	Comments related to gender equality, parity, the ratio of female to male, etc.	37
Ensure inclusion in experiences	Research question.	36
ELECTION	Comments related to the procedure for electing members.	28
INFORMATION	Comments related to the dissemination of information to raise awareness of programmes, organisations, etc.	21
REPRESENTATIVES	Comments related to those people who participate in inclusion.	20
PARTICIPATION	Comments related to how participation is applied.	14
PROGRAMMING	Comments related to the inclusion that is generated by a programme's objectives or planning.	9
RESOURCES	Comments related to the provision of resources to meet basic needs and generate inclusion.	7
STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES	Comments related to those specific strategies or initiatives that are carried out to generate inclusion.	5

Notes: Codes are ordered according to the number of citations obtained.

On the other hand, about ensuring inclusion in the municipal body, the TFs highlight, as they did for inclusion in the experiences, openness to the participation of different groups, offering training before the development of participation in the organisation, or providing resources for those people who need them:

14:3 Children who want to participate sign up voluntarily after a series of workshops that the educator carries out in all the educational centres of the municipality.

29:1 Open to any child in 4th or 5th year of primary school or 1st and 2nd year of secondary school, without excluding anyone for any reason, and providing the necessary resources that they may need.

89:1 Meetings are held in schools to promote inclusion. 22:1 In the absence of diverse representation in the results obtained in the elections, the psychopedagogical office will propose children to form part of the Council.

Table 2. Table of co-occurrences.

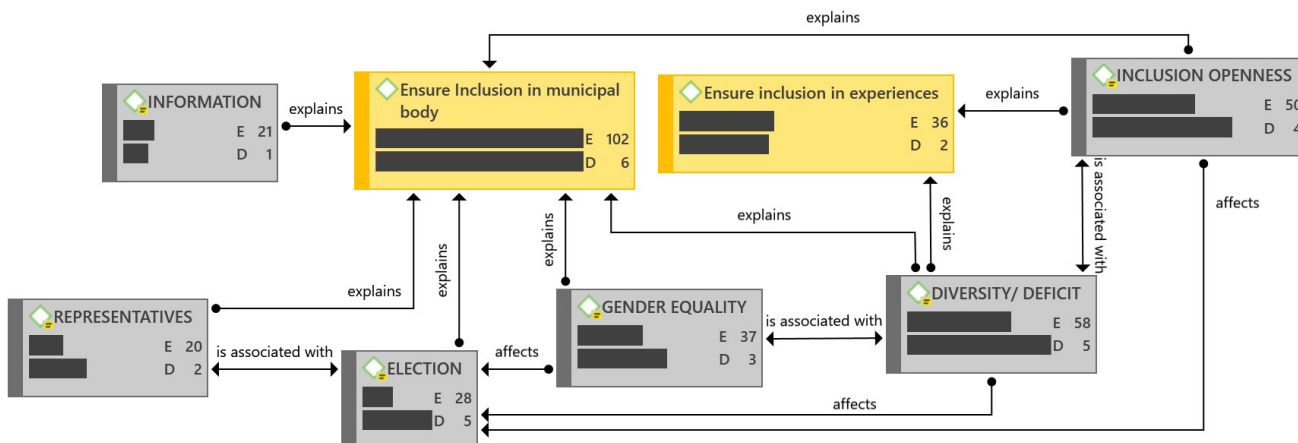|	Ensure inclusion in municipal organisation	Ensuring inclusion in experiences
DIVERSITY/DEFICIT	44	14
INCLUSION OPENNESS	34	16
v GENDER EQUALITY	32	5
ELECTION	28	0
INFORMATION	19	2
REPRESENTATIVES	17	3
PARTICIPATION	9	5
PROGRAMMING	8	1
RESOURCES	4	3
STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES	3	2

Figure 3. Categorial network (image generated by Atlas.ti 9).

52:1 Places are reserved for children with functional diversity and at risk of social exclusion.

Another means of inclusion highlighted by the TFs is that which refers to gender equality. Through the guidelines and indications given to the different educational centres, as well as the regulations governing the election of children and adolescents, they seek a parity of representation that ensures the representation of both genders. The schools are responsible for guaranteeing this equality and, on some occasions, they carry out positive discrimination to achieve it:

26:1 Gender, social class, and diversity are considered when setting up participation groups. Schools are responsible for ensuring this participation.

50:1 Representatives who attend the children's municipal plenary session must be selected based on gender parity criteria.

55:2 In indications before the election of the pupils who participate, gender parity is suggested.

65:2 The only requirement to guarantee this is that there must be at least one girl among the representatives of each centre.

102:3 At the gender level, it is indicated in the municipal regulations that each centre must be gender-equitable.

It also stresses the critical role of representatives' democratic election of the various participation organisations. Schools are responsible for calling these elections, and it is the pupils themselves who democratically elect their representatives. Some of them have guidelines provided by the TFs, which help make this electoral process more dynamic. Others promote positive discrimination within the election system to ensure the inclusion of all students, sometimes after the elections and sometimes

carried out by educational professionals. As a measure of inclusiveness, in some cases, several representatives are elected by the school educators, and in other cases, these elections are carried out by drawing lots among the participating candidates:

9:1 The election of members is carried out democratically with an election process that educators drive in coordination with schools and local associations that work with children and adolescents.

20:4 Positive discrimination has an impact on the selection process in order to have a diverse profile of adolescents.

22:1 In the absence of a diverse representation in the results obtained in the elections, the psycho-pedagogical office will propose children be part of the Council.

61:1 The selection of participants with clear criteria of non-discrimination by their peers and part of the members selected by the educators, so that no one is left out.

76:4 The election of the representatives will be carried out by drawing lots among the candidates who decide to apply to be part of the Council in the different educational centres of the locality.

Finally, another measure to ensure inclusion in the children's participation organisation highlighted by the TFs is the dissemination of information. Thanks to this, they motivate and encourage the different educational centres, explaining what the child participation organisation consists of and inviting them to collaborate, thus promoting the commitment necessary for adequate participation:

6:6 Inclusion is ensured by paying special attention to and disseminating information in those schools

where the most vulnerable groups are represented in order to make the integration of diversity possible.

17:1 The aim is to ensure that information on the formulas and channels for participation reach all children in the municipality, adapting to the needs of each child.

53:4 Work is carried out in schools explaining what the Council is and its functions, encouraging them to become candidates.

77:2 The first thing that was done was to encourage and invite them.

82:2 Information is provided to all citizens and anyone who wants to can participate.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

This article has sought to delve deeper into the inclusion of children and adolescents in participation to propose strategies that favour it not only as a policy approach but also in practice so that it can be implemented. The motivation is to promote participation and social change towards more meaningful equity effectively. We start from the inclusion of children and adolescents in municipal organisations, but we want to ensure that these children and adolescents are representatives of all children and adolescents and that they participate in inclusive experiences.

The total number of respondents included in this study was 113, with 140 responses, out of 191 questionnaires. This selection was made because the remaining questionnaires did not refer to participatory bodies or initiatives promoted in the municipality that dealt with inclusion, or the responses did not address what was asked. This lack of response is also relevant, given that it seems that they have not reflected on or are not activating specific strategies around this subject. Based on the obtained results, we consider that the omission of answers by technicians regarding the inclusion element in the experiences might be due to a lack of knowledge of what is specifically carried out in these experiences.

In the theoretical section, we talked about three spheres for ensuring inclusion and it is interesting to explore to what extent they are addressed: equity guarantee, equity in the forms of participation, and the themes on which the participation is based.

According to García (2019), any citizen should have the possibility to participate and exercise that right, and in the case that they do not get involved, it should be by choice and not because they do not have the opportunity or the information to do so. Many of the responses on inclusion in participation experiences and organisations refer to guaranteeing access; however, it is interesting to reflect on how they care about access.

The responses range from very limited discourses, which indicate that inclusion means allowing everyone to participate, without excluding anyone, to others who understand it as guaranteeing access from different spheres, backgrounds, or collectives, usually through institutional linkages. They cite linkages with specific functional diversity and special education institutions, support entities for children with disabilities, social services, institutions, and groups from different ethnic backgrounds and LGBTIQ+ groups. On the other hand, they do not mention adaptation measures in the case of people with disabilities, financial aid when the actions involve a cost or strategies to deal with territorial dispersion, among other aspects of inequality in access to participation.

As previously discussed, in the analysis of child participation or the exercise of citizenship, we cannot remain in the rights-based perspective. We have already referred to studies on participation models in different territorial contexts (Alparone & Rissotto, 2001; Golay & Malatesta, 2014; Percy-Smith, 2010), which draw a link between child participation and diversity. Wyness (2009) denounces how the election process for Children's Council members, based on standard electoral formulas, reinforces existing inequalities among youth groups and is less likely to incorporate the voices of disadvantaged and socially excluded childhoods.

For this reason, we highlight the importance of disseminating information to ensure inclusion in the organisations for children's participation. We must motivate and encourage the different educational centres to explain what child participation organisations consist of and encourage pupils to become candidates. Furthermore, we must work to ensure that schools do not reproduce segregationist patterns, selecting students with better academic performance or better communication skills. Participation must be understood as a right for everyone and as a learning opportunity, especially for those with greater difficulties. The objective is that the information on participation formulas and channels reach all children in the municipality, adapting to their individual needs. For this to happen, we must go beyond the schools, generating linkages with institutions that work with those children who tend to be left out, as the TFs shared in the questionnaires.

The questionnaire also allowed us to explore the responses that refer to the second level of inclusion, the strategies put in place in participatory spaces to ensure equal guarantees and conditions in developing the right to participate. The responses focus on representativeness, the activation of positive discrimination mechanisms, and parity and representation quotas, which allow diversity within the organisations but do not include specific strategies for moving from representativeness to real inclusion in the dynamics of participation.

As we said in the theoretical introduction, Council's members must assume a representative role of the municipality's children as a whole and incorporate diverse childhoods, with their different sensitivities and

needs. Politically, they must assume the responsibility of guaranteeing the inclusion of all people, under equal conditions, who have equal opportunities for their development and for having an impact on their realities of life. This must be explicitly stated in institutional documents, in the Councils' rules and regulations.

From the analysed data, the different participation organisations representatives' democratic election critical role stands out. The responsibility for calling these elections lies with the municipalities or schools concerned, and it is the pupils themselves who democratically elect their representatives. Some of them have guidelines provided by the TFs that help make this electoral process more dynamic. Others promote positive discrimination within the election system to ensure the inclusion of all pupils, sometimes after the elections and carried out by educational professionals. Sometimes, as a measure of inclusion and to ensure fairness, some of the representatives are selected by the institutions themselves (schools and local associations working with children and adolescents). These elections are carried out on other occasions by drawing lots from the candidates who presented themselves. Sometimes the psycho-pedagogical office can propose children and adolescents to form part of the council, facilitating a diverse representation in the results obtained in the elections; places can be reserved for children and adolescents with functional diversity and at risk of social exclusion.

Another form of inclusion highlighted by the TFs is that which refers to gender equality. Through the guidelines and indications given to the different educational centres, as well as the regulations governing the election of children and adolescents with criteria of gender parity and equity, the aim is to achieve parity representation that ensures the representation of both genders. The centres themselves are responsible for guaranteeing this equality, and on some occasions, they carry out positive discrimination in order to achieve it.

Positive discrimination has an impact on the selection process to have diverse profiles of adolescents. There should be a selection of participants with clear non-discrimination criteria. Moreover, a number of participants could be selected by the school itself so that no one is left out.

Nevertheless, we must be aware that, beyond representation, there are power structures reproduced in the spaces for participation that we must address. Ensuring this aspect may be a question of both sensitivity and professional training. It is interesting to promote meeting spaces to reflect on what inclusion in a broad sense implies, as well as training in strategies to promote it. Besides, according to the work done in the research project Childhood and Participation: Diagnosis and Proposals for an Active and Inclusive Citizenship in the Community, Institutions and Governance, if we strengthen the coexistence of different scenarios, we will be bringing participation closer to the diversity of

children and adolescents in the municipality, allowing them to develop participatory action from their scenario of affinity and comfort (Novella et al., 2021). Therefore, diversifying the spaces for participation can be another effective strategy.

In this last section of the article, we point out some limitations and proposals for continuity.

Concerning the sample and data collection, there was a limitation in conducting the questionnaire derived from the pandemic situation, and as the questions were open-ended, there were participants who did answer, others who did not, and others whose answers did not comply with what was asked. Undoubtedly, the pandemic (including confinement) exacerbated difficulties in access for TFs and different children and adolescents.

On the other hand, the results need to consider other contributions. The study we have carried out gathers the perceptions of the municipal technicians involved in the dynamization of child and adolescent participation on access to the Councils and inclusiveness in participation experiences. As a continuation of the research, a future line of work is proposed to deepen the impact analysis from other complementary perspectives (gathering data from children and adolescents themselves). Impact assessment requires a multidimensional vision and opens up new lines of research and action, such as longitudinal studies that follow up children throughout their participation trajectory or evaluation for empowerment, which focuses on the assessment of impact in terms of personal and social development (Cano et al., 2021).

We have described that the third sphere for ensuring inclusion is that of participation themes. However, the questionnaire did not allow us to analyse this particular dimension as this was a closed-ended question, and the categories did not directly relate to social inclusion issues. We consider that it would be interesting to explore this aspect at a later stage. We hope that in other phases of the research we will obtain more information on these issues using other instruments such as interviews and other qualitative techniques currently being implemented.

As future lines of research, we also consider that it would be interesting to explore institutional documents in order to analyse the specific measures that are articulated to guarantee inclusion.

Another consideration is the incorporation of a participatory methodology including young people so that they contribute to or guide the process and share the role of researchers, taking into account the concept of "ethical symmetry" proposed by Christensen and Prout (2002) to find a balance between the right to participation and the ethical dimension (Alfageme et al., 2003; Orgambídez et al., 2020).

As we have seen, the approach does not guarantee the result. There is political will, and there are policies of access to organisations as spaces for participation, but the relational dynamics within them need to

be improved. There are tokenistic inclusive practices in the processes of participation, and these have little or no transformative power in society because the means and procedures used do not guarantee it, and we must improve them to enhance inclusion.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

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

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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.

Issue
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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 (Pozo, 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

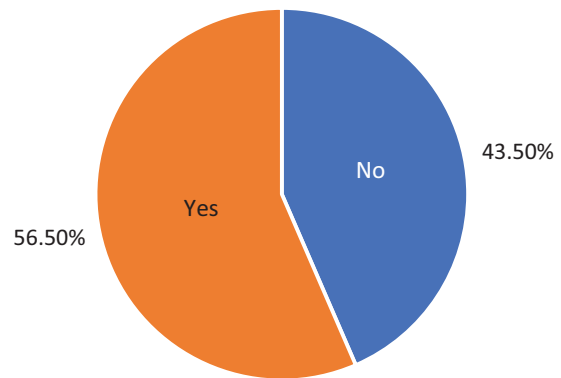council was not inclusive applied a stricter concept of inclusivity to the practices in question.

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).

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

What Is Inclusive Education? Voices and Views From a Carpentry Classroom Workshop

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Abstract
Theories of inclusive education usually assume the schooling of all students within the same educational contexts, focusing on presence, participation, and success. However, the current implementation of inclusive education in regular schools has encountered resistance and difficulties that have led to special education schools assuming a complementary role in ensuring that all students' educational needs are met. In this context, the limited scope of inclusive education theories is evident. Therefore, the present case study addresses the need to develop new theories to adapt inclusive practices to a carpentry classroom workshop. Our research took place in a carpentry classroom workshop in a Catalan special education school and aimed to identify the various meanings that participants (students and teachers) give to inclusive education, especially regarding presence, participation, success, and relationships between students. The results indicate that, while literature on inclusive education is divergent, literature on the Sloyd methodology converges. In conclusion, we invite readers to consider the need for more research on inclusive education in a given context and in relation to the Sloyd educational methodology.

Keywords
carpentry students; educational needs; inclusive education; Sloyd; social inclusion; special education school

Issue
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1. Introduction

Since 2015, the sustainable development goals (SDGs) have focused on ensuring a sustainable, inclusive, and resilient future for the planet and its people (United Nations, 2017) based on economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection. Social inclusion during childhood and adolescence is promoted by inclusive education (Razer et al., 2013), assured through national and international treaties and legislation such as the SDGs, which advocate for an inclusive and equitable quality education. However, and in the face of the difficulties and reluctance that implementing inclusive education in mainstream educational institutions encounters globally (Florian, 2019; Paliokosta & Blandford, 2010; Verdugo &

Rodríguez, 2012), special education schools play a complementary role in ensuring that all students have access to good quality education (Shaw, 2017).

In Catalonia, special education schools play a complementary role to inclusive education. Thus, given the deficiencies in the implementation of inclusive education, particularly in secondary education (CERMI, 2021; Síndic de Greuges, 2021), special education schools are responsible for ensuring meaningful inclusion. They do so by enabling the schooling of students who do not require high-intensity media but who have encountered impediments, rejection, or reluctance in mainstream schools. Therefore, the Catalan special education schools are committed to decidedly inclusive methodologies, such as educational workshops based on experiential

learning (Bandura, 1977; Dewey, 1938; Gibbs, 1988; Kolb, 2015).

This article presents the results of a case study conducted in a carpentry classroom workshop of a special education school. This case study aimed to identify the various signifiers and perspectives regarding inclusive education, analysing the following four categories: presence, participation, success, and relationships between students. This work contributes to developing the theory of inclusive education (Nilholm, 2021). To this end, the article is organised as follows: A review of the literature is first presented on inclusive education and the difficulties of its implementation and the Sloyd educational methodology. This is followed by an explanation of the research methods and data, and the presentation of results, discussion, and conclusions.

2. Inclusive Education: Limits and Challenges

2.1. Boundaries of Inclusive Education, Presence, Participation, and Success in Special Education Schools

Razer et al. (2013) argue that one of the main promoters of social inclusion during childhood and adolescence is inclusive education, which assumes that all students, regardless of their status (e.g., race, gender, language, ability, socio-economic status), should be schooled in the same educational contexts (Plaisance et al., 2007; Slee, 2018). Such education aims to eliminate exclusion and all barriers to access, whether physical, educational, psychological, or social (Ainscow et al., 2006; Booth, 2011; Plaisance et al., 2007), with a focus on presence, participation, and success in special education schools (Ainscow et al., 2006; Slee, 2018).

First, when talking about presence, we refer to the place where students are educated (Ainscow & Messiou, 2018), although, as Bossaert et al. (2013) and Vyrastekova (2021) argue, mere physical presence does not guarantee inclusion; rather, both peer acceptance, and the feelings and impressions that presence itself generates in a student must also be considered. Second, participation relates to the quality of experiences, whether through social interaction with peers, peer acceptance, increased opportunities for contact, or the perception of being accepted (Ainscow & Messiou, 2018; Juvonen et al., 2019; Koster et al., 2009). Third, success is understood in a polysemic way, and not only in relation to test results but to social interactions as well, to intergroup friendships, perceived acceptance, or satisfaction within the school environment (Bossaert et al., 2013; Juvonen et al., 2019; Vyrastekova, 2021). Likewise, the relationship between students—understood as peer acceptance or interaction, friendships between group members (Bossaert et al., 2013), or the subjective perception of the feeling of relatedness (Le Boutillier & Croucher, 2010)—has been revealed as one of the most important elements for ensuring students' presence, participation, and success in inclusive education.

Nevertheless, the current application of inclusive education in schools has been met with criticism. Various authors (Amor et al., 2018; Armstrong et al., 2011; Qvortrup & Qvortrup, 2018; Slee, 2011) claim that it tends to be relegated only to an aesthetic subversion, focused on changing the language and the number of students, rather than changing educational practices. In line with this, other studies have found that the model of inclusive education applied in regular schools often leads to school failure (Juvonen et al., 2019; Zablocki & Krezmien, 2013), isolation, marginalisation (Juvonen et al., 2019; Pijl & Frostad, 2010), or bullying (Black, 2014) of students. Thus, inclusive education often encounters serious difficulties in its implementation. In an educational context that increasingly values the principles of academic excellence, choice, and competence (Florian, 2019; Laval, 2004; Paliokosta & Blandford, 2010), inclusion is perceived as a burden (Florian, 2019; Norwich, 2014; Shaw, 2017). In addition, there is strong resistance from the educational community, including teachers, families, and peers (Paliokosta & Blandford, 2010; Verdugo & Rodríguez, 2012).

In sum, in the current climate of inclusive education, regular schools have difficulties in incorporating variability, inequality, or difference, and the notion that regular education is the ideal place for the educational development of all students (Florian, 2019) does not always hold true. However, to ensure that the educational, emotional, social, and personal needs of all students are met, special education schools play a complementary role (Black, 2014; Shaw, 2017), whether in terms of personal experience (Shaw, 2017) or the sense of belonging (Haug, 2017; Hornby, 2015), rather than educational achievement (Parsons et al., 2009).

2.2. The Carpentry Classroom Workshop as a Tool for Inclusive Education

Following previous works on the importance of presence, participation, and success, as well as the scope of the subjective perception of these areas, particularly in relation to the construction of inclusive education, and ultimately of social inclusion itself, the methodology of the carpentry classroom workshop—inspired by the Sloyd educational methodology—is presented as a tool for educational and social inclusion.

Sloyd has its origins in Uno Cygnaeus, the father of Finnish public education, who, influenced by the pedagogical principles of Pesatalozzi and Fröbel (Ólafsson & Thorsteinsson, 2009), introduced Sloyd to Finnish schools in 1866, based on woodworking (Autio et al., 2012). At the same time as Sloyd was being introduced in Finnish schools, the Swedish pedagogue Otto Salomon, with the support of Cygnaeus (Ólafsson & Thorsteinsson, 2012) developed, disseminated, and expanded woodworking based on the Sloyd system, initially from the teacher training school in Nääs (Sweden), which became an international centre for teacher training in this

pedagogical system. From the 1880s onwards, Sloyd was introduced into the various Scandinavian education systems (Thorsteinsson & Ólafsson, 2014).

Sloyd is an educational methodology developed in Scandinavia that focuses on the overall development of children, based on learning technical skills for the manual manufacture of objects in wood, metal, textile or sewing, enhancing the creativity, imagination, or expression of thoughts or emotions at work (Borg, 2006; Thorsteinsson & Ólafsson, 2014). Sloyd can clearly be distinguished from the manual instruction of craftsmen (Salomon, 1892) and openly advocates the central idea of experiential learning. This approach was initially developed by Dewey (1938) and refined with the contributions of authors such as Bandura (1977) with the theory of social learning, Gibbs (1988) with the theory of the reflective circle, and Kolb (2015) with the theory of experiential learning. In short, it is an idea, thought, and/or previous experience driven by the task/creation where a result is achieved through the evaluation of the actions performed.

Although Sloyd is currently more widespread in the Nordic context, where it promotes both the integral development and independence of learners, similar educational experiences still exist in other educational contexts. For instance, in New Zealand, during early childhood education, woodcraft is considered to help children develop expression, creativity, confidence, or bodily self-control. In the United States, schools consider that woodcraft builds character and a sense of purpose in students' development. Finally, in Scotland, Sloyd is used to foster vocations in STEM (Moorhouse, 2020). However, in Scandinavian countries, there is some misunderstanding of Sloyd, either on the part of parents, who consider that it would be more useful to allocate these hours to learning subjects considered useful, such as English or mathematics (Borg, 2006), or on the part of schools, which sometimes reduce or share Sloyd hours with other subjects (Ólafsson & Jóelsdóttir, 2018; Perlic, 2019). These misunderstandings are qualified by teachers who emphasise that pupils like it very much and are highly motivated to participate in it, and also by pupils who state that the subject is important, fun, attractive, practical, useful for life, and forces them to work with their hands while being creative. Therefore, they perceive it as something different from other subjects taught at school. However, they criticise it on the grounds of being unable to practise at home, the short time devoted to the subject at school, the long projects, or the dust in the classroom (Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut, 2019; Kjosavik et al., 2003; Skolverket, 2015).

From this perspective, one might understand a woodworking classroom workshop as a learning environment inspired by the educational methodology of Sloyd, where wooden objects are created manually, driven by the inspiration of learning by doing (Bandura, 1977; Dewey, 1938; Gibbs, 1988; Kolb, 2015), experience and reflection, and based on the fundamental principles of (a) student-centred activity and (b) encouraging teachers and students to develop the activity jointly and communicatively.

In the Catalan educational context, the implementation of inclusive education practices has encountered difficulties and reluctance. Currently, special education schools play an additional role in ensuring that pupils' educational needs are met, for instance, through the implementation of the carpentry classroom workshop methodology. Likewise, and following Nilholm (2021), it is necessary to develop new theories on inclusive education that go beyond the existing literature. A case study is particularly suitable for this purpose since it allows for collating views and expressions, giving a voice to the protagonists of inclusive education practices. Thus, the present case study—focused on a carpentry classroom workshop—seeks to show how all the agents involved conceptualise the various categories that create and/or reinforce inclusive education strategies.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Context and Questions

In Spain, educational policies are decentralised through the Autonomous Communities, based on state legislation. Thus, in the case of Catalonia, inclusive education is governed by the Organic Law 3/2020 and the Decree 150/2017, which guarantee educational care within the framework of an inclusive system while educational care in special education schools is provided to cases that require measures of high-intensity educational support. Likewise, and within the inclusive system, special education schools can also provide services and resources for teachers, to guide and specify the actions best suited to the educational needs of pupils, developing specific programmes to support their schooling (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2017).

Nevertheless, the number of students enrolled in Catalan special education schools continues to increase year after year (Síndic de Greuges, 2021). This could be due, at least in part, to the reluctance of teachers to change their professional practices and classroom dynamics; barriers to the full participation of all students in some schools; the lack of support resources such as speech therapy or physiotherapy; the numerous cases of bullying, isolation, rejection, or exclusion they suffer; or some families' rejection that delay and hinder class performance (CERMI, 2021; Síndic de Greuges, 2021). Likewise, the distribution of pupils enrolled in special education in Catalonia is somewhat unequal, with 5.48% in early childhood education, 24.61% in primary education, 51.47% in compulsory secondary education, and the remaining 18.44% in post-compulsory education (Departament d'Educació, 2020). In addition to the data presented, the former General Director of Catalan Education stated that early childhood education is very inclusive and primary education is quite inclusive.

In contrast, compulsory secondary education is essentially segregated (Vicens, 2020).

The present research was conducted in a public special education school in Catalonia, where pupils aged between 12 and 21 years old require high-intensity educational support. However, in the 12–16 age group (corresponding to compulsory secondary education) many students come from primary schools who, at the end of this educational stage, and given the current perspective of inclusive education in secondary education, are recommended to enrol in a special education school. In addition, there are a few pupils previously enrolled in ordinary schools, who, given their experiences, have opted to switch to a special education school.

3.2. Research Objectives and Design

The primary objective guiding this study is to identify the presence, participation, success, and relationship between learners in the context of the carpentry classroom workshop.

The secondary objectives guiding this study are:

1. To analyze the carpentry classroom workshop participants' perception of presence, participation, success, and relationships between learners.
2. To study the influence of participation in the carpentry classroom workshop on the perception of presence, participation, success, and relationships between students.

For these purposes, this study employed a qualitative text analysis where the dimension and categories of analysis are deductive and formulated based on existing theory or previous research (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1281), which in this case is the present analytical framework. Likewise, a new category emerges inductively from the contributions of the field diary. Thus, a three-stage process was used to create the categories. The central dimension of analysis—inclusive education—was identified in the first stage. In the second stage, the three categories associated with the dimension were identified: presence, participation, and success. Finally, in the third stage, based on a detailed reading of the field diary, a fourth category emerged (associated with the previous categories), that is, the relationships among the pupils.

The research is based on a case study due to the specificity of the carpentry classroom workshop. Further, since the researcher is the teacher of the carpentry class-

room workshop, it was possible to access both the carpentry classroom workshop and the students.

3.3. Participants

The participants were the pupils of the carpentry classroom workshop and the researcher himself. The sample consisted of 19 pupils (17 boys and two girls) aged between 12 and 16 years in the special education school, who participate at least once a week in the carpentry classroom workshop, and the only teacher of the workshop and principal researcher of this study (Wolcott, 1985).

The researcher is also a teacher in the carpentry classroom workshop, which allows for an immersive experience. As a result, the researcher can gain knowledge and a deeper insight into the educational practice developed in the classroom and the participating students. However, this dual role has its limitations concerning the interpretative frameworks of the reality observed, as the perception of events is fully influenced by the dynamics developed over years of daily classroom practice. In this respect, it has sometimes been challenging to achieve the emotional distance required when researching these contexts.

3.4. Data Collection

The data for the present study were collected during the academic year 2018–2019, using two methods: (a) unstructured participant observations of the pupils during the carpentry classroom workshop and (b) student ratings.

The unstructured participant observations were conducted daily between September 2018 and June 2019, in the carpentry classroom workshop sessions, where the researcher is both teacher and investigator. Relevant observations were systematically recorded in a field notebook at the end of each session and subsequently transcribed and anonymised for processing and analysis.

The students' evaluations consisted of a voluntary document in which they were asked to write what they liked the most, what they liked the least, and what they would change about the carpentry classroom workshop. The seven pupils who finished their educational stage at the school were asked to make the evaluation, and only five responded.

To maintain the anonymity of the participants and to process and analyse the testimonies, the data were coded according to the source of origin (see Table 1).

Table 1. Coding of data depending on the source of origin.

Code	Description
DC_XX	Transcribed text of the field diary
V_XX_AL	Student ratings
XX_AL	Verbatim transcript of learner comment or statement
RA_D	Verbatim transcript of teacher's comment/statement

3.5. Data Analysis

For the analysis, the study adopted a triangulation technique (Flick, 2014) between the participant observation and the student ratings, allowing for in-depth thematic analysis and a more accurate view of the object under study. Thus, our analysis made use of the following progressive levels:

- Level 1: Identification of the dimension and categories of analysis derived directly from the theoretical concepts.
- Level 2: Manual coding based on the detailed reading of the transcripts of the participant observation and the student ratings, based on the coding of the texts according to the dimension and the categories of analysis.
- Level 3: Inductive identification of a new category of analysis based on the coding of the field diary.
- Level 4: Qualitative analysis of the information: interpretation of the data based on the dimension and categories of analysis.

A penultimate level of analysis was conducted where the following categories were identified: presence, participation, success, and relationships between students.

As stated in the theoretical framework, the four categories refer to: (a) *presence*, that is, the place where pupils are educated, but also being in the same place where their peers are educated, acceptance by peers, the feelings that presence generates for them, or the perception of sharing the same space with them; (b) *participation*, i.e., the quality of experiences through social interaction with peers, their social acceptance, increased opportunities for contact, the feeling of active participation among peers, or the perception of acceptance; (c) *success*, which, in addition to educational attainment, is also understood in terms of social interactions within and outside the school context, friendships between students, friendships between groups, perceived acceptance, or satisfaction with the school context; and (d) *relatedness between students*, which is based on friendships between group members, peer acceptance or interaction, or subjective perception of the feeling of relatedness.

4. Findings

The following results are divided into participation, success, and relationships between learners. The category of presence was not identified.

4.1. Participation

We have identified two main ways of encouraging the participation of all learners in the classroom workshop: by respecting the personal characteristics of each learner, adapting to their needs, interests, and poten-

tial, and by enabling them to experiment and reflect on what they are doing. However, and depending on the role developed, these ways are interpreted differently. Thus, the students understand their subjective experiences through the creative process fostered by the teacher, while the teacher is concerned with facilitating student participation in this process.

Regarding respect for personal characteristics, both students and teachers have highlighted the three most frequently used strategies: (a) adapting the creations to the interests and needs of everyone; (b) respecting their pace of learning, capacities, and potential; and (c) adapting the creations to the demands of the students. Thus, concerning the strategies used, the students perceive adaptation of the created objects and respect for their rhythm and capacities as fundamental for their participation in the classroom workshop. In this sense, everyone produced their creations based on their needs, interests, potential, and learning rhythm: "In the classroom workshop we all work together and each one with what they can do, look, he just polishes a car and I make a lamp, but we are all together and we will take the work home" (PM_AL).

The teacher, however, perceives both strategies as a challenge for making the creations feasible for each of the participants, adapting both the design and the creative process to the heterogeneity of the students:

> They have decided to make a Parcheesi, I have never done it before, I have to look for models and think of a way that allows them to develop the creation and that at the same time is feasible for them. (RA_D)

And finally, concerning the strategy of adapting the creations to the demands of the students, the classroom workshop methodology encourages the involvement of the students. In this sense, they are allowed to propose their creation, taking control over their decisions and actively participating in the design: "I ask what task they want to do. The group of students starts talking among themselves, and after a while MAS_AL proposes making a Parcheesi, and the rest of the group say that they would also like to do it" (DC_12/02/19). However, although choosing and deciding what creation to make is valued positively by the students, the same does not always happen in the collaborative design process between students and teacher. Some students prefer to begin the creation without designing it, and when the design process takes longer than necessary, they can become demotivated.

In concordance with the students' experimentation and reflection, students are encouraged to experiment and reflect on what they are doing in both the design and construction process. This means living, enjoying, or suffering the processes involved, which, at the very least, ensures the transformation of future experiences. In this regard, from the teacher's viewpoint, the pupils are motivated, supported equally, or guided in the creative

process so that each one can experiment and reflect on the process. Thus, for example, the teacher states: "I have been giving intense support to GI_AL and NP_AL in the sawing of the toy cars for some sessions, although their classmates have enough with occasional support" (RA_D). As far as the students are concerned, they understand experimentation and reflection in relation to the actions developed in the first person. Their subjective perception—and the subsequent experience—allows them to face the same task again in this or any other field.

4.2. Success

Success is interpreted in relation to the increase in confidence and empowerment of the students. The completion of the creation itself is a source of personal satisfaction for all the agents involved in the carpentry classroom workshop, which is expressed in various ways. Satisfaction can be gained from the students' achievements, from the participation, collaboration, and/or cooperation among participants, and from other people's recognition. However, with the completion of the creations, some students feel neither satisfied nor happy with the experience: "I really didn't like coming to the classroom workshop at all, there's dust, noise, I'm afraid of cutting myself" (MAS_AL).

The pupils recurrently recount the results of the experience in comments and conversations through expressions linked to overcoming, achievement, satisfaction, or empowerment due to completing a piece of work with their hands from scratch and, in so doing, taking the power to decide what they wanted to do. In this sense, pupils recall starting with a simple piece of wood and finishing with a tangible object which they could feel proud of: "I drew the car on the wood and sawed it, it seemed impossible!!!" (V_JS_AL). On the other hand, from the teacher's perspective, the result of the collaborative work with students is perceived based on the participation, collaboration, and/or cooperation of all participants, where completion of their creations has required bringing into play various workgroup strategies: "It has been nice to see how they have agreed to find solutions to the problems" (DC_29/04/19). Finally, the results are also reported in terms of the recognition that other people give to the creative efforts and the resulting product. Thus, posting a photo of the creation on the school blog, having their creation in a prominent place at home, or words of praise from family or friends, are all understood as success from the students' perspective.

4.3. Relationships With Pupils

Two clear types of interaction can be observed in the relationship between pupils: friendly relationships and relationships of conflict. However, it can also be observed that class group configuration is not random. An attempt is made to ensure those students who may have

good relationships with each other can work together. However, the incorporation of classmates whose relationships might represent a problem into the class group is also encouraged with the aim of fostering better relationships among the students.

Both friendship and collaborative relationships generate a valuable working atmosphere that the students consider fundamental in their subjective experience of the classroom workshop. The development of these relationships fosters closer ties between classmates, with the classroom workshop space and the tasks conducive to, for instance, helping, talking, joking, and even being able to meet up with classmates outside school, all of which are part of the experience: "I like to share with classmates and talk to them while we make our creations" (V_NG_AL). Not surprisingly, conflict relations also arise in the classroom workshop, whether due to small misunderstandings or arguments between classmates, or the personal discomfort towards their classmates because of noise, shouting, annoyance, insults, or sometimes aggression. This type of relationship is experienced from different positions. For the pupils it is an unpleasant experience that they want to put an end to—either by redirecting the attitude between them, mediation, or through action on the part of the teachers: "We are fed up with MF_AL constantly bothering us, we don't like it" (DC_12/02/19)—and perceived in terms of displeasure, sadness, or tiredness. For the teacher, however, it is viewed as a brief maladjustment in the relationships between classmates, addressed by mediation between students, more individualised attention to students, incorporating an extra teacher in the classroom workshop, or reconfiguring the group if necessary.

5. Discussion

This case study suggests that, while the literature on inclusive education is often divergent, the literature on Sloyd is convergent, which leads us to assume, in line with Nilholm (2021), that the research context is important to understand inclusion.

5.1. Inclusive Education

The conceptualisation in the literature on inclusive education and that of the actors involved—pupils and teachers—do not coincide in terms of their perspectives. Thus, while in the inclusive education literature the central focus is on the pupils, their relationships, and their feelings about the experience, the results of this case study have emphasised certain aspects related to the framework of the carpentry classroom workshop. These aspects have a decisive influence on the participating actors' perception of the categories of participation, success, and relationships among the learners.

Various authors advocate presence (Ainscow et al., 2006; Ainscow & Messiou, 2018; Slee, 2018) based on the premise that presence with peers is fundamental

for inclusive education, while others also add the importance of the subjective perception of belonging (Bossaert et al., 2013; Vyrastekova, 2021). However, in the case analysed here, no such category was identified.

Participation is eminently conceptualised in the analytical framework based on the relationships that the subject establishes, be it opportunities for participation in relation to peers (Ainscow & Messiou, 2018; Juvonen et al., 2019; Koster et al., 2009), or the subjective perception of such participation (Juvonen et al., 2019). Regarding the results of the carpentry workshop classroom study, it appears that as the carpentry workshop classroom is adapted to the needs and interests of the pupils in the process of making, it influences the way participation is perceived. Thus, participation is interpreted by the participating actors—pupils and teacher—as to aspects related to the tasks carried out, such as respect for personal characteristics (whether through the adaptation of creations, respect for rhythms, or adaptation to needs) or the predisposition to experimentation and reflection (Bandura, 1977; Dewey, 1938; Gibbs, 1988; Kolb, 2015). Likewise, it is also noted that students perceive participation based on their experiences of the creative process (Borg, 2006; Skolverket, 2015), while for the teacher, the chief concern is how to facilitate the students' participation in this process.

Aside from an assessment of results in terms of evaluation, success is also conceived as social interactions, intergroup friendships, or subjective perception of acceptance (Bossaert et al., 2013; Juvonen et al., 2019; Vyrastekova, 2021). However, for the participants of the carpentry classroom workshop, success is nuanced through the framework that the classroom workshop exerts, mainly in the form of empowerment. Thus, the notion of success translates to improvement, satisfaction, achievement, empowerment, or recognition for the students. In contrast, for the teacher, empowerment is based on collaboration and cooperation between students, through, for example, participation between actors—whether between students or students and teachers. Thus, the way of developing the creative process seems to have a determining influence on the pupils, either through their achievements, learning, or overcoming of failures, which becomes the main axis of perceived success.

In the relationships between pupils, there is a partial agreement between how the literature perceives them and how the actors involved perceive them. This could primarily be because the context is not as important as the subjects with whom the relationship is established. From the various perspectives of students, teachers, and the literature, relationships between students are valued based on the relationships established, where participants describe them in terms of mutual help, talking, joking, or otherwise distorting or annoying, while the literature views these relationships in terms of interaction or acceptance between peers (Bossaert et al., 2013). However, affinity is valued by both the literature and the

actors, with actors basing this on shared affinities, and the literature on friendships between group members (Bossaert et al., 2013). Finally, only in the literature is affinity valued as the subjective perception of the feeling of relatedness (Le Boutillier & Croucher, 2010).

5.2. Sloyd

Comparing the results of the carpentry classroom workshop case study with the Sloyd literature, there is a strong similarity between the two concerning the categories of participation, success, and student relationships. This similarity between results may be due to the fact that both the Sloyd and the woodwork classroom workshop are learning contexts that are somewhat different from traditional academic subjects, and that both promote the development of skills such as working with the hands or creativity, thus exerting a strong influence on the perception of inclusive education.

Thus, participation is interpreted by the actors in the carpentry classroom workshop based on respect for personal characteristics and a willingness to experiment and reflect, while the Sloyd literature highlights how historically the pupil has been placed at the centre of learning, adapting teaching methods and content to their individual abilities (Salomon, 1892; Thorsteinsson & Ólafsson, 2014; Thorsteinsson et al., 2015). In addition, Sloyd has always attached great importance to experiential learning and reflection in the learning process (Borg, 2006; Skolverket, 2021). Regarding success, the participants in the carpentry classroom workshop interpret this in terms of empowerment resulting from the completion of the creations and the cooperation and collaboration between students. In a similar vein, the literature on Sloyd shows how students emphasise that the completion of the Sloyd subject provides them with a sense of improvement, satisfaction, motivation, or increased confidence (Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut, 2019; Kjosavik et al., 2003), as well as the experience of collaboration between students (Børne- og Undervisningsministeriet, 2019). Finally, this case study highlights that these social relations are mainly interpreted in terms of affinity and established relationships, while the literature argues that talking to peers, moving freely around the space, or a more relaxed atmosphere are all fundamental for fostering social relations (Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut, 2019).

6. Conclusions

This study highlights the limitations of the current literature on inclusive education. In particular, the literature usually views inclusive education through a broader lens, where the particular context is not considered. However, the present case study shows that the protagonists—pupils and teachers—in the carpentry classroom workshop interpret inclusive education in that particular context. Thus, according to the participants, to develop

educational inclusion in the carpentry classroom workshop it is necessary to:

- Respect the individual characteristics or rhythms of the pupils.
- Adapt work processes to enable the participation of all pupils.
- Obtain recognition for oneself and others once the task is completed, which leads to an increase in confidence and empowerment of the participants.
- Conduct the activities in a friendly and trusting environment while fostering shared experiences among peers.

Therefore, and following the line of argument proposed by Nilholm (2021), we subscribe to the need to develop new theories on inclusive education based on the accumulation of empirical evidence from case studies. Accordingly, the present findings suggest the need for further research on inclusive education in a given context and in relation to Sloyd.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Youth Empowerment Through Arts Education: A Case Study of a Non-Formal Education Arts Centre in Barcelona

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Abstract
This article discusses how non-formal arts education attenuates socioeconomic and cultural barriers in a vulnerable context. Although cultural capital has usually been conceived as dependent on high socioeconomic status, we explore the inclusiveness of a project of non-formal education and how it enhances the capacity of youth to achieve empowerment and self-confidence through the arts. We analyse the case study of a non-formal arts educational organisation located in a deprived neighbourhood of Barcelona (Spain) and identify several key factors associated with successful social inclusion and its limitations. We find that the pedagogical processes involved create both learning opportunities and social and interpersonal skills useful for the present and future lives of the young participants. Methodologically, the case study combines non-participant observation of the different activities of the organisation and semi-structured qualitative interviews with young people and educators. The article concludes with some recommendations for considering artistic non-formal education as a tool in any social inclusion agenda.

1. Introduction

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 (art. 27) states that everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts, and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits. This statement already highlights that cultural participation and equal access to culture entails benefits and well-being for individuals. Despite there being different forms of cultural participation such as creating, volunteering, or simply being a spectator in many offline and online cultural activities (Council of Europe, 2017; UNESCO, 2012), it seems to be that formal culture, or "legitimate culture," including artistic expression, is less accessible to the working class and vulnerable population (Eurostat, 2019), taking into account the cul-

tural distance and the influence of habitus explained by Bourdieu's theory (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Willekens & Lievens, 2014). This means that cultural capital is a cause of inequality among young people, as a consequence of the reproduction of social inequalities. From the theory of Bourdieu (1984), those in advantaged socioeconomic positions have greater familiarity with high-status cultural practices (such as playing musical instruments, painting, or acting). In the face of this, we propose another point of view, one based on the power of arts and culture to empower young people in vulnerable situations. The question that we discuss here is how cultural participation employing an inclusive strategy through non-formal education can subvert this role of reproduction and turn it into an opportunity for empowering young people in a vulnerable context.

To explore this, we focus on how non-formal music and arts education can have a great emancipatory capacity and a higher profile in the social inclusion agenda through its potential for personal and community empowerment (Forrest-Bank et al., 2016; Pineda-Herrero et al., 2018). We argue, first, that the particular appeal of arts to expressivity and emotions represents an extraordinary way to encourage personal growth, collective recognition, and self-esteem, and contribute to the empowerment of young people in a vulnerable environment. Secondly, we contend that non-formal education allows for the relaxation of the procedures and standardisation of formal education, offering the opportunity to include dialogical and horizontal educational dynamics that break down some of the barriers that young people from low-income households face in other educational contexts. Thus, despite the role of cultural participation in the reproduction of social inequalities, in certain circumstances and contexts, non-formal arts education can become a transformative tool to promote the empowerment of young people in situations of social vulnerability.

This is presented through a case study of a non-formal arts education entity located in the Raval neighbourhood in Barcelona (Spain) that works with children and young people, many of whom are at risk of social exclusion. The educational proposal of this social actor is based on teaching them to sing, play an instrument, musical sensitivity, dance or act, offering them specific courses and combining different art expressions with special projects involving all the pupils of the school into the community. Thus, the aim of this arts centre is not only to teach art in all its forms, but to create a broader and inclusive educational and community process through non-formal artistic educational practices that build the youths' self-esteem, the feeling of belonging to a community, values of cooperation, empathy, and critical thinking.

The case is relevant as an example of how non-formal arts education can be an appropriate formula to provide an environment for empowerment in a vulnerable neighbourhood. As presented here, regardless of the personal and collective empowering ability of the project, there is constant tension with structural constraints and individual circumstances that limit the impact on reversing social inequalities. This article explores how the arts centre works and how, despite all the obstacles, it has become a model of effective youth social inclusion. The features of an environment conducive to genuine social inclusion and empowerment processes (Berg et al., 2009; Cargo et al., 2003) and the values which are central to this are also considered.

2. Theoretical Framework

Inequalities in cultural participation of the youth population reflect inequalities in the socioeconomic sphere at large. Since Bourdieu's original conceptualisation of the concept of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984), many studies have shown the relationship between socioeconomic position and cultural participation in "legitimate culture." As Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) explained in their book about the education system as a reproduction of the class habitus, socialisation in a particular cultural background is embodied by individuals and oriented by their praxis. Cultural factor, then, is considered as a dependent variable of socioeconomic status (SES).

But what happens if we consider cultural participation as an independent factor of a new socialisation in education? In opposition to the reproduction theory of Bourdieu and Passeron, DiMaggio (1982) proposed a new theory of cultural capital as a factor of mobility among the low-SES classes, converting it into educational success in a context with low cultural capital. Recent studies confirm the capacity of the mobilisation of cultural capital in education for low-SES children (Blaskó, 2003; Jæger & Karlson, 2018). As pointed out by Jæger and Karlson (2018), unequal distribution of cultural capital shapes educational inequality at the macro-level. But culture can also be a factor of mobility at the micro-level in a context of low cultural capital. This means that a specific project in a vulnerable neighbourhood can produce a reverse process of familiarisation of cultural capital for children from families with low cultural backgrounds. In the case of young people, we also take as a reference the theory of Willis (1990), which explores how the everyday culture of young "normal" people is full of creativity and cultural significance in the era of modernisation. We have to consider the encounter of youth creativity and cultural education as potential ways to reshape inequality.

In the specific case of arts education, the transformative capacity of the arts is often considered one of its contributions to fight educational exclusion (Belfiore, 2002; López-Peláez et al., 2018; Murrey & Crummett, 2018) toward producing a more equitable society. As Milbrandt (2010) pointed out, democratic societies can use arts not only to maintain social traditions but to create frameworks for social justice, identity, and freedom.

Non-formal education can be defined as "the voluntary, but intentional, planned, and permanently flexible educational process, which is characterized by the diversity of methods, areas, and contents in which it is applied" (Herrera Menchén, 2006, p. 13). Non-formal education is provided by public institutions or private organisations apart from the school (formal education). The terms "formal education," "non-formal education," and "informal education" have been extensively discussed in the last 20 years and are no longer considered mutually exclusive terms (Brown, 2013; Chisvert-Tarazona et al., 2019; Herrera Menchén, 2006). In many cases, these educational models can be interrelated and non-formal education is something in between. In this sense, non-formal training includes a deliberate, voluntary decision to participate in certain educational processes that take place outside the educational system.

In Spain, there is an important tradition of imparting non-formal education in very diverse fields: environmental topics, social education, socio-cultural animation, education for leisure time, education for peace or equality, education in democratic values, lifelong learning, etc. (Herrera Menchén, 2006).

Non-formal education can have as great an emancipatory capacity, as literature on social resilience (Bandura, 1993; Rodhes & Schechter, 2012; Zarobe & Bungay, 2017), on the "pedagogy of the oppressed" (Freire, 1970) or participatory education (e.g., Castelloe, & Watson, 1999) have shown. Non-formal education contributes to relaxing some of the procedures of formal education that act as barriers to certain students, particularly those coming from more disadvantaged backgrounds. In this sense, non-formal education might be a precious resource for the artistic education of young people growing up in vulnerable areas. In this regard, the value of non-formal education, very often promoted by civil society actors, is to make access to culture and arts possible in a vulnerable context. The capacity to develop participatory and inclusive methodologies based on promoting a sense of freedom and empowerment of adolescents and young people appears a remarkably influential aspect. This is considered one of the key factors to enhance the capacities of young individuals to develop themselves as creative and confident persons. In parallel, the involvement of the community in the educational process, in a less formal way than that used at school, reinforces the effect of empowerment on adolescents and young adults involved. The non-formal education methodology tends to foster creativity, horizontality, and openness, and this represents an opportunity to include the interests of pupils and their cultural background in a more flexible way into the learning process. We understand that this leads to social inclusion by involving young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in community activities and strengthening personal and collective self-esteem (Greene et al., 2013).

Moreover, non-formal education through the arts can help young people acquire resources and develop their cultural and artistic skills and interests, promoting creativity as an inclusive strategy and as a form of cultural expression (Glăveanu, 2011). This approach allows young people to develop their own resources and capacities to get involved and create cultural activities while acquiring artistic skills. This also implies that the cultural activities are conceived within social relations, in the community, and with a participatory perspective, because culture defines our relationship with the community and our role in it (Giroux, 2001). In addition to the teaching methodologies, cultural creation and cultural skills can be considered tools for social transformation, considering the capacity of cultural creation to build imaginaries in which young people feel represented. Hence, being creative and involved is key in ensuring young people are included in what we understand as cultural practices. Thus, non-formal education in the arts can repre-

sent an extraordinary activity to enhance personal and collective empowerment.

This article aims to contribute to the literature on the potential of culture as a tool for emancipation and social inclusion. Specifically, through the analysis of a case study, we want to show how the combination of arts teaching and non-formal education offers an ideal environment for young people from vulnerable backgrounds to connect with their own potential and that of their community. Our research questions are oriented through the analysis of our case study to understand what values non-formal education spaces convey, how they work to engage diverse young people in their activities, the nature of the cultural learning that takes place in these spaces—as opposed to formal education, or even the family home—and, finally, how these processes of learning create an inclusive process in a specific deprived and culturally diverse area of Barcelona.

3. Methods, Data, and Site Description

3.1. Methods and Data

To explore how non-formal arts education can have an impact on youth empowerment and inclusion, an extreme case study strategy (Flyvbjerg, 2006) has been adopted. In this type of case study strategy, the selected case does not aim to represent a given universe but, precisely because of its uniqueness in some of the factors under study, it can demonstrate the potential of the phenomena studied under certain circumstances. The Center for Music and Performing Arts (CMPA) is taken as an extreme case study to investigate the role of non-formal music and arts education in social inclusion. As explained further, this centre has developed an unusual transversal, open, and flexible non-formal education working methodology specifically aimed at functioning across transversal aspects of the community and its individuals through the arts.

The case study combines non-participant observation of the different activities done by the organisation and semi-structured qualitative interviews with young people and educators. The fieldwork began in April 2019 and finished in October 2019. The first months were devoted to attending different meetings and activities by the organisation and gaining an understanding of the underlying dynamics. This marked an early stage in the process of selecting potential candidates (both educators and young people) for the interviews. Three researchers were involved in the fieldwork and we collected around 20 field diaries from the observations. The observation notes were used to understand the nature and the informal dynamics of the organisation. The field diaries consisted of a combination of descriptive notes of the activities, the relationships among young people and educators involved, and the subjective interpretation of the dynamics observed. The notes were compared and contrasted among the

three researchers. Moreover, visual material (brochures, pictures, and videos) was also collected during the observation of many activities.

The interviews took place between June and October 2019. To select the young people for the interviews, we first chose potential candidates after an observation of the educational activities and then asked one of the educators for advice on the family background of our candidates (social class, life history, time involved in the project, current personal situation) to guarantee certain diversity among respondents. Concerning the interviewees' demographic profile, eight women and five men were interviewed. The age of the practitioners was between 43 and 60 years old and the young people were aged between 16 and 21. Two of the young interviewees were born in a foreign country and three were second-generation migrants. Some of the young people interviewed were living with a grandmother, aunts, or came from monoparental families. For eight of the 10 young people interviewed, their parents were either working in low-qualified jobs or unemployed. Thus, 13 interviews (10 with young people and three with practitioners) were conducted, transcribed, and anonymised.

For the analysis of the transcribed interviews, we used the NVivo 12 software. One single researcher was in charge of coding the entire project after having agreed on an initial proposal for the coding with the rest of the research team. Initially, the coding of the transcripts was based on the thematic topics of the interviews, but new topics emerged during the interviews that were also included. The purpose of coding the answers and comments of the interviewees was to make it easier to understand their meaning. The original first-level nodes were very scattered but also very illustrative, and they allowed for a very quick overview of the results. Once the coding was completed, some re-structuring and re-coding of the data was carried out. The quotes used here are the result of this codification process and were selected by their illustrative capacity of our main arguments.

3.2. Site Description

The CMPA is located in the Raval, one of the neighbourhoods with the greatest cultural and ethnic diversity in the city of Barcelona. The Raval is a historic neighbourhood in the centre of Barcelona that belongs to the Ciutat Vella District. It is located near the port and counted 48,688 inhabitants as of January 2021, 56% of which was foreign, according to official statistics from the Barcelona City Council. After the Spanish, the most common nationalities are Pakistani and Filipino. It is one of the neighbourhoods in which people live in the worst conditions in the entire city, with education levels below the city average and many cases of substandard housing. It is the neighbourhood that receives proportionally more financial aid offered by the city's social services. To reverse this situation, there is a wide network of social and community organisations with social projects.

The Raval has a very rich artistic and cultural tradition. For over a century, it has welcomed working-class people from different migratory waves from other parts of Spain and around the world, creating spaces for artistic expression and cultural interaction. At the same time, it has suffered periods of institutional neglect and degradation. During the 1980s and 90s of the 20th century, the local administration promoted a policy of reformation and rehabilitation of houses, creation of open spaces (such as the Rambla del Raval), as well as the creation of facilities for the community. This project of urban regeneration was promoted, precisely, through major cultural projects (Jauhiainen, 1992) such as El Liceu, the Museum of Contemporary Culture of Barcelona (MACBA), the Center for Contemporary Culture (CCCB), or the Filmoteca de Catalunya, and aimed to strengthen the global brand of Barcelona by using the "authenticity" of the neighbourhood and its "cultural mestization" (Rius Ulldemolins, 2014). This has turned the Raval into a pole of cultural dynamism and tourist attraction coexistent with pockets of poverty and the social stigmatisation of part of its inhabitants.

The CMPA project started in 2005 on the initiative of a music foundation to fight social exclusion through the arts. The CMPA is defined as a socio-educational entity that works to promote a citizenship status for all people, fostering a culture of peace, respect for diversity, and social justice. The arts (basically music, theatre, dance, singing) are used as a means to achieve educational experiences. The CMPA's educational goals have a cultural focus, centred on cooperation and values. Although the majority of the teaching staff are of local origin, there are educators of other nationalities. They all have an artistic background but from varying paths: Some of them have earned higher degrees in music, theatre, choral, or artistic teaching, whereas others are self-taught. There is diversity in their ages and gender but they all share a very critical view of elitism in artistic training and a commitment to social education. They conceive of culture as a right for all to attain. The centre is financed with public and private funds and it has won several awards for its educational role through the arts, its culture of peace, and respect for diversity. The organisation plays an important role in the district's community network and also participates in educational activities outside their premises, linked to local intervention plans or the city's educational actions.

The main activities of the centre are aimed at children and young people (mainly from five to 20 years old), although they also work with parents or other older people, albeit less frequently. They organise learning activities like percussion, theatre, choral singing, as well as combo and orchestra workshops. Families pay a fee but, even if they cannot afford it, their children can still take part in the activities. Participants include people from the local neighbourhood and other parts of the city. The activities bring together a very diverse typology of families and young people. There are about 350 participants. Most

people come by word-of-mouth, but there are also families or young people who are involved in the project on the recommendation of several social entities and other educational spaces of the district.

4. Results of Analysis

In this section, we present the empirical evidence produced by our research on how the CMPA is an example of youth empowerment through cultural participation. This should lead us to a more thorough understanding of the effects non-formal teaching of music and other arts have on inclusion and the acceptance of diversity. First, the reflections and experiences of the young participants and educators on how the arts and non-formal education, as a more relaxed and horizontal setting, facilitate empowerment processes are presented. Second, how these processes of empowerment contribute to social inclusion and enhance the transformative power of culture is examined.

4.1. Empowering Disadvantaged Youth Through Non-Formal Arts Education

Participant observation provided the research team with some evidence about the methodology of the centre and its environment. The school is located in a small building and families freely go and stay inside, waiting for their children while they are in the classroom. Classrooms are always open for the young people who wish to attend and they do not get into trouble if they go in after "lessons" have begun. The observation of teachers training the theatre group reveals a kind treatment of everyone, whatever the level of engagement and proficiency of the young people. They encourage each individual to improve their performance and make proposals, trying to adapt the text to their needs, interests, and levels of speech. They also respect the attitude of one young boy who seems insecure with the theatre play, is shy and stands away from the group all the time, but finally participates in his own way. During the observation period, students and educators were preparing a theatrical performance with dance, singing, and music of different styles and orchestra groups. The script of the play was centred on gender equality and in memory of the struggles of women in history. All the students and groups in the centre were to participate in the play, as well as some neighbourhood musical groups, including a rapper and a chorus of old women with disabilities. The play was performed in a neighbourhood theatre with 900 seats.

This is just an example of what can be observed in the CMPA. They use a methodology oriented to the inclusion of everyone: children, young adults, and families. Furthermore, we can observe an environment that is open to the needs and interests of the young participants, empowering them with competencies in music, dance, and theatre acting. Classroom dynamics are tailored to create group dynamics but respecting the

rhythms, attitudes, and behaviour of all those involved. We observed some dynamics, as in a percussion class, which included young people with mental disabilities, mixing them with the other participants without barriers or precautions.

In this sense, we can deduce that artistic learning through different practices (playing an instrument, theatre, singing, dancing) is not an end in itself, but rather a mechanism for activating personal and collective experiences different from what these young people experience in their daily lives while making them learn other competencies and about values different from their own. Several practitioners recognise that music and the arts are disciplines that can be very powerful from an educational emancipatory perspective. The fact that music and performing arts can have an emotional impact on young people is highlighted by the educators and guides the learning process of the CMPA:

> Music and the arts, in general, are extraordinary tools from an educational point of view, because they have an emotional impact, and the arts over time are so ephemeral, so we have to do it here and now, because of the nature of this language that allows you to mix diverse aspects at the same time, and the result is beautiful. And when you realise all this, you think: "What are we doing that means we don't use this anymore? (Sílvia, female, practitioner)

The process of teaching through artistic activities is an excuse to generate the climate and conditions for young people to learn to have more empathic and assertive relationships. A good environment is highlighted in the CMPA. For that, the student is treated as in a non-hierarchical relationship of equals:

> Many people also develop close relationships with the teachers, since apart from music or guitar lessons, there is another bond and the trust that you feel. If something has happened to you, the atmosphere is good, and more so at this age when young people need spaces to speak and be listened. I think it's super important. (Veronica, female, young person)

> I went [to the CMPA] to try modern singing. It was a discovery, really, because it's a place where you learn music, but music isn't essential, so music is what drives you there. You learn to experiment, not to be afraid, not to be afraid of making mistakes. Classes are experimental, [there's] no set pattern. If you're wrong, nothing happens, go back. It's not a school to read music, and if you don't know, for example, how to read music fluently this is not a barrier or obstacle for you to make music and this is what hooked me the most. (Cristina, female, young person)

The fieldwork, both from observation and interviews, reveals that CMPA practitioners are very aware of the

environment in which their training activity takes place, as well as the profile of students and the need to prioritize empowering experiences, offering young people tools to grow personally and improve their environment. This involves, for example, learning to develop empathy towards others and have self-esteem, learning to work together and becoming aware of the context the individual inhabits. Some of these values that guide the process of artistic learning are expressed by one of the practitioners interviewed:

> Interviewer: Could you explain to me what values you want to convey to the children and young people from your project?
>
> Respondent: Trust. Self-esteem. Self-image. Humanism. Positive values. Respect. Freedom. Feeling comfortable. Being comfortable without being forced. (Hector, male, practitioner)

At the same time, non-formal arts education also offers an opportunity to work together for collective empowerment. In CMPA other pedagogical methods are used that focus on working cooperatively, as a group—in the words of CMPA, in a "choral way." The use of artistic language in a choral way means that individuals need to become actively involved and make individual contributions within the framework of a collective, cooperative process:

> I learned to work more as a team, to coordinate more with my stage partners. And if at one point I have a problem, something bothers me, and I am not happy with something, I have to express myself and say it, which is something they let me do here and not in my house. (Madelyn, female, young person)
>
> They are strongly encouraged to come here to experience art, just so that you can enjoy it, not to be the musician, the actor of….What happens next, that many have a lot of talent, this is secondary. Here the emphasis is on coexistence, living with a group of people who do things, who have concerns in a relaxed workspace, without [the] artistic pressure [you would feel in] a conservatory or a theatre school that wants to get people to work professionally. (Marta, female, practitioner)

4.2. Empowerment for Social Transformation and Inclusion

In the environment of the CPMA, a climate of acceptance is generated, with much attention given to personal and emotional needs. From this starting point, it is also possible to work on collective dynamics, acceptance of the other, and community building. When young participants are asked what lessons they learn in the organisation, the most common answers involve (a) the expe-

rience of community and a family feeling, (b) learning to interact with diverse people and accepting cultural diversity, (c) learning to work in groups and collectively, (d) learning to listen and share, and (e) the friendships that are created:

> Interviewer: And what have you learned so far?
>
> Respondent: Well, I've learned to listen. So, I have learned….Just as you learn to open your mind, you learn to open your ears and eyes. And it's very nice because here, I have changed the way I communicate. (Xavi, male, young person)

And another example:

> Interviewer: When you said that the CMPA is not just about teaching you how to sing, read a score, or play an instrument, what did you mean?
>
> Respondent: So, for example, the chorus: Everyone can come. That is to say, there is no "you're not coming because you sing badly." We always try it, to help others, to be cooperative, to be…how do you say that? Thinking about others?
>
> Interviewer: Empathy, maybe?
>
> Respondent: Empathy, yes! Be empathetic with people, always help everyone. Go all together, right? (Cristina, female, young person)

If one word has been prevalent during the interviews we conducted with young people at the CMPA when they were asked to define their educational environment, that word is "diversity." Their understanding of diversity is that each individual is unique and individual differences must be recognised. The dimensions that were most mentioned are ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and religious or political beliefs. Moreover, several young people we interviewed expressed an open and positive outlook towards cultural diversity, which in many cases has to do with their experience within the non-formal context:

> What I like most is social inclusion. It's the fact that, no matter where you come from, how much money you have, what talents you have, your capabilities….It's a place where we all have to accept each other, we have to help each other, and we have to learn. It is total diversity. Honestly, I really like this idea. (Lila, female, young person)

The interviews also show that this work for the empowerment of young people participating in the activities also contains a purpose that transcends the young people themselves, and that is taking into account its effect on the community. This is evident in the discussion of

the concept of culture. A common conception among the practitioners of the CMPA is that culture is closely linked to the world around us. Culture and access to culture are seen as relevant elements in the society we live in and practitioners want to transmit this to the young people involved. Concerning the concept of cultural education, the organisation follows the intercultural and critical pedagogy of Freire (1970), in which, through educational practices, individuals and society can be transformed:

> Interviewer: What do you understand by cultural education?
>
> Respondent: What Freire says: That the academy is too important not to leave it in the hands of the people, and so for culture it is the same. Culture is the heritage of humanity, and generating it is the heritage of the community. Therefore, with educational action you generate culture. (Sílvia, female, practitioner)

4.3. Limitations of the Project

The project also has its limitations. On the one hand, one of the practitioners explained to us that many of the vulnerable children who arrive at the centre when they are in primary school through the neighbourhood social entities or by recommendation from their school teachers stop participating when they reach their teenage years. In other words, the success of the project is conditioned by a proportion of young people who drop out due to various reasons, such as lack of personal motivation, family mobility, or severe family situations that make it difficult for some youth to maintain their involvement. In addition, young people are asked to dedicate themselves and commit to the project quite intensively, which often means that the most motivated are those who continue participating in the project in their teen years.

On the other hand, another constraint, according to some of the young people interviewed, is that artistic education that wants to be accessible to all sometimes makes it difficult to achieve a high level of proficiency, learn more technical skills, and excel (the case of music is mentioned several times) in playing an instrument. This makes it hard to be accepted at the competitive level of high education music centres in the city—which follow rigorous admission procedures and follow the official arts curriculum. For those young people whose wish would be to continue studying music or improve their mastery of an instrument, they need to go to other sorts of artistic centres—to cope with this situation, the CMPA tries to get some scholarships for some of their more skilful students:

> Well, [the CMPA] is super inclusive and everyone has access [to the classes]. The problem, sometimes, is the fact that everyone has access here….When I first started, I learned a lot of things and I grew a lot but, of course, there were also people four years

older than me learning the same [thing] after a few years….So, this means that people who have been coming here for ages haven't got past the first steps of learning. (Xavi, male, young person)

5. Discussion

In our research, we have observed how inclusive arts education can be to adolescents and young people coming from vulnerable environments. Our research question was whether cultural and artistic learning can overcome the barriers that are often common against children from deprived environments. We have shown how non-formal education, through flexible methodologies, can provide tools for inclusion. By strengthening empathy, being adapted to the student process of learning, and creating cooperative work and youth involvement, the CMPA achieves a collaborative and motivational learning environment and the empowerment of young participants.

There is currently a consensus that artistic learning and performance provides skills for empowering individuals, encouraging expressivity and emotions, on the one hand, and creating ways to cooperate and share with others on the other. Non-formal education is also relevant and may be complementary to those educational processes applied in traditional formal education. More relaxed and experiential, non-formal education spaces can provide rich learning processes for youths and fight against educational exclusion (Belfiore, 2002; López-Peláez et al., 2018; Murrey & Crummett, 2018). The evidence we have gathered from this case study analysis also supports this. The young people interviewed and the practitioners themselves have highlighted the great number of lessons in terms of cultural practices, values, and skills they have learned thanks to their involvement in these projects.

The first research question focused on how these non-formal organisations work and what values they convey to encourage diverse young people to participate in their activities. It is clear that these activities are adapted to their target participants and contexts: They are multidisciplinary, participation is voluntary, they are carried out in diverse spaces, they use participatory practices, and provide a relaxed learning environment. On the other hand, we have to aknowledge teachers' attitudes towards what Allsup and Shieh (2012) named a "public pedagogy," oriented to the "moral imperative" to care about others. In the case we analysed, there is a clear ideology (or ethics) about the need to work for social justice, gender equality, and respect for diversity. Commitment to the community is crucial to the practitioners involved and the management of the centre demonstrates leadership that reflects this. Learning music, singing, engaging in the performing arts, as we have seen, not only has an artistic component but it also involves a set of values about education as an inclusive process.

But how is "cultural learning" transmitted in these spaces of non-formal education different from formal

education? In non-formal education, the process is richer and more interdisciplinary than the memorising or routine learning experienced in formal education. Cultural learning, in the non-formal and informal contexts we observed, is experiential (Gross & Rutland, 2017). Young people learn by doing and by feeling emotionally touched. This means that there is an expressive link with the educational organisation, rather than an instrumental one, breaking down the logic of reproduction (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Learning through emotional experiences has positive incentives among young people and fosters their empowerment. These are very particular experiences that do not always take place in formal education (Bisquerra Alzina, 2010). Both the practitioners and young people we interviewed highlighted these more emotional and active educational processes as something that attracted young people to a learning process through cultural activities and the sharing of values.

Because of this, non-formal arts education seems to contradict the determinations of cultural gaps and overcome the idea of Bourdieu's (1977) "habitus." Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997), through an analysis of career decisions, discovered that life histories have to be understood through interaction with significant others and with the culture in which the subject is living. We can consider that young people's experience in the CMPA constitutes a new horizon of action for their decisions about their careers and their lives. The transformative capacity of these cases of non-formal education in the arts must be understood as an interactional change between the centre and young people, that creates new expectations about what can be done.

Therefore, in addition to the centre's values, the centre itself is important as a mechanism through which young people acquire skills and attitudes for their future (e.g., developing empathy and a critical perspective of the environment they live in, exploring their creative side, committing oneself to a project, and self-awareness). The approach of practitioners towards young people, in a more egalitarian and relaxed relationship, appears to be an important element of the process in the case analysed. Many young people and practitioners said that the centre was like a second family to them—and this has particular merit when we take into account that some of the young people came from unstructured families (for instance, single parenthood with scarce economic resources) and very vulnerable living conditions.

However, the case of the CMPA also allows us to see the limitations of this cultural education in disadvantaged environments. The lack of continuity in their artistic education for many of the young participants is one of these limitations. The other challenge is the capacity of the project to have an impact on their environment. Obviously, the CMPA project does not change the structural inequalities in the neighbourhood. The question here is whether it would be possible to implement

this sort of cultural education into the formal education system to assay a more inclusive and participatory form of education. Otherwise, we have to maintain the point of view postulated by Bourdieu about the education system as a "reproduction of inequalities." We have seen the possibilities of another type of education as a way to break the social and economic barriers. But it remains as an example of a small case as long as it does not result in more global change. Undoubtedly, however, non-formal education can provide methodologies and solutions that help to increase equal opportunities, empowering pupils.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

As a conclusion of this case study, we can highlight several key aspects that enhance the capacity of non-formal education and civil society, in its globality, through the idea of producing transformation and empowerment among young people in vulnerable neighbourhoods: the promotion of emotional ties to the learning process; flexibility and adaptation to the needs of each individual, an empowering process which enables young participants to make decisions, creating an environment of trust and empathy; and assuring the inclusion of the social and cultural diversity outside the arts centre inside the classroom.

Additionally, the diversity of cultural activities, educational styles, and organisational structures is very positive because different young people are attracted to different aspects of culture and education. Fostering a diverse spectrum of participation possibilities can give more young people access to opportunities. This could be approached ideally by involving young people from different social groups in the conceptualisation and development of educational programmes.

Supporting young people is proving to be the key to their inclusion. This accompaniment is a tool for empowerment, to build their self-esteem and create the possibility of having new life horizons through art. In this sense, treatment and care mechanisms are critical for young people's subjectivity and for improving their self-esteem and expectations (Parcerisa & Montes, 2017). The contribution of non-formal education as a space for innovation in educational processes that promote inclusion, diversity, and flexibility must be a condition.

Finally, we recommend that cultural and educational policies must be oriented to facilitate the increasing activity of the organisations devoted to non-formal education in the arts to be accessible to anyone. Unfortunately, public investment in cultural literacy education appears to be increasingly targeted towards larger institutions (typically associated with high culture) and projects that are considered to produce either observable returns or economically self-sustaining cultural practices (CHIEF, 2020). Small initiatives need public support because they can work better in disadvantaged neighbourhood contexts, taking advantage of the proximity and the day-to-day

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interaction with neighbours and the social environment. The third sector can also play a key role in the social inclusion agenda of cultural urban policies and youth access to culture.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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COGITATIO

Article

The Art of Governing Youth: Empowerment, Protagonism, and Citizen Participation

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Abstract
This article discusses social inclusion policies for youth from vulnerable socioeconomic contexts, based on the ethnographic monitoring of an associative experience promoted by the Choices Programme ("Programa Escolhas") on the outskirts of Lisbon. Considered the main public policy directed at poor, racialised, and peripheral youth in Portugal, the Choices Programme is driven by strategies of empowerment and protagonism with a view to engaging youngsters in resolving the problems faced in the neighbourhoods in which they live. Both strategies call for citizen participation but restrict the youth's field of political action to the rules drawn up by the state, discouraging emancipatory and subversive discourse. The result is biopolitical control and management of marginalised youth, masking a domination that has domesticated their collective action. By recreating the meetings and activities that sought to inspire in these youngsters the virtues of associativism, I discuss how the discourses of empowerment and protagonism are incorporated as new devices of agency and community governmentality. In particular, I question the limits of citizen participation as a means to stimulate the political engagement of youth when this is tied to individualist ideologies distant from a grammar of rights.

Issue
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1. Introduction

The social inclusion policies directed at youth underwent considerable changes from the late 19th century up to today. Currently, these youth are not mere objects of care and control programmes, but rather participants of government strategies that seek to instil in them a sense of responsibility for resolving the social problems that affect them and the neighbourhoods in which they live (De Tommasi, 2014; Souza, 2008). The use of empowerment and protagonism has become central in this type of approach which perceives poor, racialised, and peripheral youth in the dual position of subjects "at-risk" and subject to change (Kwon, 2013). This article does not aim to summarise the social inclusion policies directed at youth, whose manifold approaches vary

according to geographic, historical, and political contexts. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that over the last few decades their interventions have shifted to prioritising the active participation of the youngsters, no longer framing them in a passive position of mere beneficiaries. Encouraged to participate in citizen responsibility projects in their neighbourhoods, the previously labelled "problem youth" have been converted into current "solution youth" (De Tommasi, 2013; Souza, 2008), some performing the role of mediators in community-centred social inclusion projects (Raposo & Aderaldo, 2019).

This article will address this new role that young people are performing in social interventions, focusing on the Choices Programme ("Programa Escolhas"), considered to be the main inclusion public policy directed at youth from vulnerable socioeconomic contexts in

Portugal. Through ethnographic monitoring of activities aimed at reinvigorating a youth association under this programme on the outskirts of Lisbon, I discuss how the call for citizen engagement of youngsters is incorporated as a new device of agency and management of segregated territories. In particular, I question the effects of the strategies of empowerment and protagonism on fostering youth associativism. As this article reveals, both are formulations of a discourse of power, promoter of a community governmentality that regulates youth participation according to the interests defined by state and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), restricting young people's field of political action.

The ethnographic fieldwork in a project named Skills, funded by the Choices Programme, was crucial to understanding the implementation of this public policy "from the bottom up," in a neighbourhood where the experiences of the youth took place, going beyond the merely institutional perspective (Trouillot, 2011). My first field trip was in 2015, but it was only in February 2016 that I started to visit the neighbourhood on a regular basis, an ethnographic immersion that required 48 field trips up to August 2018. The ethnographic monitoring of the "Youth Meetings" and other activities organised by the Skills project opened the door to an extremely fertile situational context, where I was not only (a) offered "privileged" vision of the Choices Programme's mode of operation, but also (b) able to grasp the impact of that policy in terms of youth associativism; on the other hand, this allowed me (c) to observe the control and management mechanisms in the project's activities, whose encouragement towards the youngsters' participation left little room for their emancipation, conditioning them to the interests of the programme. A total of twelve semistructured interviews were conducted with youngsters, community leaders, Skills project technical staff, and other workers from the Choices Programme. In addition to the analysis of the recorded interviews, the field diary records of observations were very important, embodying an efficient means of organising my experiences in the field. Due to ethical precautions, I decided not to reveal the real name of the project or my interlocutors, thus assuring their right to anonymity. Consequently, I used false names to avoid revealing information that could unveil the neighbourhood's location, allowing me to describe my observations without harming them.

2. Representations, Policies, and Strategies of Youth Governance

Youth populations became a category of governance and intervention since youth became a "social fact," at the turn of the 19th century into the 20th century (De Tommasi, 2014; Kwon, 2013). Problematised through the viewpoint of crisis and conflict, youth (or adolescence) was understood as an intermediary stage between childhood and adulthood, a portrayal that is still commonly accepted today. The work of Hall

(1904/2004) was a forerunner in the theoretical development of this type of approach, in framing youth in the Darwinist paradigm of biological evolution. From his point of view, the hormonal and emotional turmoil experienced by adolescents would reveal, in organic terms, the supposed evolution of human beings: from savagery to civilization (Feixa, 1999). Influenced by these formulations, the so-called "crisis of youth," was theorised by functionalist sociology through the lens of deviation and anomy, arising from maladjusted socialisation, meaning the adolescents, primarily the poorest, were unable to assimilate roles considered legitimate in society (Raposo & Aderaldo, 2019). From this adult-centric perspective, the association of youth with crime and incivility continued to be a recurrent practice (De Tommasi, 2013), escalating the social concern with this part of the population, in addition to the growing number of institutions, social programmes, and public policies directed at their control, punishment, and/or social inclusion.

Combating delinquency based on the behavioural and ecological components inaugurated the first experiences of intervention with youth coming from vulnerable socioeconomic contexts in the USA, in the mid-19th century (Mennel, 1973). A series of institutions (judicial, correctional, and welfare) were created by social reformers to bring moral order to a youth considered susceptible to deviant behaviour. The first juvenile court of the USA, created in Chicago in 1899, clearly illustrates the transformations of an era undergoing rapid urban growth, in which youth embodied a category that required urgent intervention (Kwon, 2013). For some scholars (Boyer, 1978; Schlossman, 1977/2005), in creating these institutions, the social reformers' intention was both to prevent youngsters from falling victim to the world of crime, and ensure "the best interest of deprived children particularly and the dispossessed classes generally" (Mennel, 1973, p. 278). More critical of the network of juvenile institutions that was forming at that time, other researchers considered it an instrument of social control (Platt, 1969; Ryerson, 1978; Shelden, 1993), aimed at imposing normative behaviour on youth, especially immigrant-background youth from the lower classes (Chavez-Garcia, 2007). The Hull Houses, founded by Jane Addams and Ellen Starr in Chicago, at the end of the 19th century, became a model experiment in "social work" with marginalised youth (and children) for the entire globe (Brieland, 1990). Supported by prosperous social reformers of what is known as the progressive era, the Hull Houses was an educational and philanthropic venture set up in socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods, where recreational activities through art and culture were fostered with a view to poor adolescents of immigrant origin overcoming "the overwhelming temptation of illicit and soul-destroying pleasures" (Addams, 1909/2005, p. 107). Even endorsing innovative practices, the "youth-saver" attitude reproduced the moralist discourse of the time (Platt, 1969), normalising the idea that the immigrant-background youth from the

working classes were devoid of civilization. Accordingly, the care and control procedures at the Hull Houses aspired to rehabilitate them to be better citizens and thus avoid a path towards delinquency.

These interventions with youth were strongly influenced by the notion of anomie, theorised by the Chicago School. For Robert Park, one of the advocates of this current of thought anomic behaviours would emerge in certain "moral regions" of the city, fostered by social contagion:

> Social contagion tends to stimulate in divergent types the common temperamental differences, and to suppress characters which unite them with the normal types about I hem. Association with others of their own ilk provides also not merely a stimulus, but a moral support for the traits they have in common which they would not find in a less select society. In the great city the poor, the vicious, and the delinquent, crushed together in an unhealthful and contagious intimacy, breed in and in soul and body….We must then accept these "moral regions" and the more or less eccentric and exceptional people who inhabit them, in a sense, at least as part of the natural, if not the normal, life of a city. (Park, 1925/1984, p. 45)

For Park, it was compelling to spatially situate certain deviant behaviours and sociabilities, particularly those with a prevailing morality crisis, in which customs, traditional values, family and neighbourhood ties would be weakened. The social disorganisation caused by the migratory flows to specific areas of the city, marked by poverty, marginality, and segregation, would be responsible for generating a social context of anomie, producing the phenomenon of juvenile delinquency.

The social inclusion strategy of that time, as well as others of punitive nature, is described by Kwon (2013, pp. 47) through the "kid-fixing" metaphor, as imbued with the overriding idea that problem youth need to be "repaired" or "saved" by charitable souls. According to the author, this model follows the premise of "youth as risk" (Kwon, 2013, p. 48), in which youngsters are characterised as vulnerable people prone to violent behaviour, symptomatic of an inner disquiet understood as inevitable at a stage of life marked by turbulent psychological changes (Mead, 1939/1993). This generalist conception of youth was progressively replaced by another, focused on certain young people, particularly those who are supposedly exposed to a "culture of poverty" (Lewis, 1959/1975), living in broken families and inhabiting neighbourhoods considered "problematic." A series of terms were created to describe these problem youngsters in need of intervention, among which "culturally disadvantaged," "culturally deprived" (Lubeck & Garrett, 1990), and "at-risk" youth. Dominant from the 1980s onwards, this last term is consistent with the new social approach aimed at youth nowadays,

in which social risks or problems are transformed into opportunities. This shift of approach was investigated by Kwon based on the reality in the USA during the 1990s, when numerous youth organisations became partners of public and private institutions advocating the construction of a model of "positive youth development" (Kwon, 2013, p. 52). Based on this new strategy, youth empowerment and community accountability became central to safeguard youngsters against risks. The report *A Matter of Time: Risk and Opportunity in the Nonschool Hours*, funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York (1992), played an important role in the reconfiguration of these youth policies in the USA, according to Kwon (2013), where the skills of the youngsters were perceived as a resource in the search for solutions to the problems faced in their living areas.

The International Youth Year, proclaimed by the United Nations (1985) under the theme of "participation, development and peace," was a decisive milestone in the shift of certain paradigms that, up to then, characterised the interventions directed at the sector, by boosting a set of understandings and initiatives in different nation-states with a view to youth being covered by specific public policies. As demonstrated by the sociologist Regina Souza, a series of international treaties and documents were produced between 1985–2005 aimed at encouraging the implementation of public policies, in which youngsters are in the dual position of object and agent of the interventions (Souza, 2008; United Nations, 1985, 1995). The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and UNESCO performed an important role in converting youth into participants of governmental care and control programmes in Latin America. Referred to as "social leader" (ECLAC & UNESCO, 2001, p. 74) or "strategic development actors" (UNESCO, 2004, p. 129), the new hegemonic discourse was based on the premise that youngsters should be encouraged to play an active role in social responsibility projects through "youth empowerment to exercise leadership and participation in the preparation and monitoring—social control of public policies" (UNESCO, 2004, p. 115). In Brazil, the statement of youth empowerment and protagonism gained significance after the turn of the millennium, sustained both by philanthropic foundations and government entities, and the actual youth organisations, attracted by a discourse that promised them visibility and acknowledgement (De Tommasi, 2014; Souza, 2008). In Portugal, it was following the Choices Programme, created in 2001, that youth participation in inclusion projects would become public policy, when statements on empowerment and protagonism began to be disseminated. The Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes (United Nations, 1998/2001a) and the Braga Youth Action Plan (United Nations, 1998/2001b) greatly contributed, with both being committed to the need to implement national public policies fostering "youth participation," "sustainable development," and the "prevention of conflict" and

"crime," primarily among those in situations of "social and economic vulnerability."

Moving at different rates, the statements on empowerment and protagonism have become cornerstones in the youth policies of various countries, promoting a positive vision of what was formerly perceived as synonymous with a social problem. However, this positive vision is only assigned to part of the youngsters: the part able to become empowered and be a protagonist via social inclusion programmes. As for the youngsters not covered by these programmes or who fail to absorb their principles of citizenship, based on individual accountability and self-empowerment (Cruikshank, 1999; Kwon, 2013), a criminal framework is applicable, legitimating punitive state measures in the eyes of society (Raposo et al., 2019).

What is crucial in the guidelines of the new social inclusion policies for youth from vulnerable socioeconomic contexts is that the discourses of empowerment and protagonism depend on their willingness to develop skills, influence and leadership to affirm their interests (Cruikshank, 1999). Both instrumentalise the youngsters' desire to gain positive visibility, calling upon citizen participation to motivate them to carry out activities for the benefit of their communities (Rose, 1996; Souza, 2008). However, this does not entail participation aimed at political action or the affirmation of collective interests based on social rights, but rather taking a particular route of inclusion that is profoundly individual and meritocratic. Seduced by these discourses, the youngsters join social inclusion projects that seek to empower them to exercise responsibility and self-government, in what Kwon (2013, p. 9) coins "affirmative governmentality." This technology of power appropriates the strength, creativity, and rebelliousness of the youngsters, and "seeks solutions to political problems in the governmentalization of the everyday lives of citizen-subjects" (Cruikshank, 1999, p. 123). This is a governance model that promotes the figure of youth, especially those in poverty and social vulnerability, as a driver and beneficiary of change through a discursive grammar moulded by government interests (Souza, 2008).

The art of governing the youth labelled as "at-risk" also employs other terms in its lexicon, prescribing values and guiding their conduct (De Tommasi, 2014; Rose, 2011). Entrepreneurism, voluntary action, leadership and resilience, combined with the afore-cited empowerment and protagonism, reaffirm entwined relationships of power and knowledge serving the internalisation of social control (Foucault, 1977). Involved in that community governmentality, poor, racialised and peripheral youngsters are called upon to manage the structural inequalities of neoliberalism, turning them into protagonists of poverty management programmes. This is an effective strategy to dilute antagonisms, mask injustices, and ensure social peace, restricting the sphere of political action of marginalised youth to the norms of solidarity drawn up by the State (Kwon, 2013; Raposo &

Aderaldo, 2019). Depoliticising the reproductive mechanisms of inequality is crucial for the success of this biopower, which governs in a horizontal fashion through the subjection of the youngsters' subjectivities.

3. Inclusion Policies for Racialised Youth: The Portuguese Case

Public policies aimed at youth from vulnerable socioeconomic contexts in Portugal are relatively recent, initially being linked to education strategies against academic underachievement at a time of massification of public education enforced after the Revolution of 25 April in 1974 (Ferreira & Teixeira, 2010; Seabra et al., 2016). At that time, the portrayals of youth were circumscribed to middle and high-class university students engaged in student movements, a restricted sector of the Portuguese population assigned the imagery of "militant," "conscientious," and "compassionate" (Cruz et al., 1984; Pais, 1990). Those belonging to the working class were simply absent in the sociological or journalistic incursions in the incipient Portuguese democracy. These youth would only gain a public image from the 1990s onwards through their association with criminality and certain territories on the outskirts of Lisbon perceived as predatory, in particular the "shanty towns" inhabited by black and Roma populations (Raposo et al., 2019). The discovery of these peripheral suburbs as precarious, uncivilised, and dangerous places occurred simultaneously with their association with immigration, primarily African, in the early 1990s (Alves, 2013; Raposo & Varela, 2017). This period experienced a severe housing crisis combined with increased migratory flows in Portugal, forcing thousands of families, many of which were of African origin, to live in the self-built shanties that cropped up around the country's capital city. Racially connotated, these territories gained hypervisibility due to their young population, when the political agendas and media joined forces to blame the black youth and those of African descent for the problem of urban violence (Raposo et al., 2019). These stereotypes were fuelled by an avalanche of newspaper and television reports aligned with the poverty-blackness-violence-neighbourhood equation (Raposo, 2007), generating a narrative that connected the poor ecological (and cultural) conditions to deviant behaviour. Thus, the peripheral neighbourhoods in which they lived were considered areas of ecological and moral debasement, "lawless" territories justifying repressive state action (Raposo et al., 2019). The outcome of this criminalising scenario was the transformation of black youngsters into the archetype of the new dangerous classes, a stigma that classified them as a threat to Portuguese societal values.

The Choices Programme was created in these circumstances of "social alarm," in which the media massively conveyed distorted and damaging portrayals of the black youth of the suburbs. One incident in particular was striking in the criminalisation of black youth in the country.

The sequential robbery of three fuel stations and the alleged attempted rape of an actress, well-known among the general public in Portugal, lent credibility to the discourses of racialisation of crime, inciting tougher measures to combat the supposed increase of youth delinquency. The article published in the broadsheet *Público* newspaper clearly reveals the atmosphere of that time:

> Violent robberies paraded along the motorway of Greater Lisbon. All very fast. All terrifying. All very clean. Seven to nine black youths, transported in fast cars robbed three fuel stations, five car drivers, and a food and drink truck. Everything in two hours. Along the way, they also robbed people and almost raped an actress. The police forces (PSP, PJ and GNR) immediately set up an impressive operation encircling them. There were Hollywood-style chases. But the robbers escaped. (Viana & Felner, 2000)

The widespread media exposure of this episode, which occurred in the summer of 2000, consolidated a transgressive view in the public sphere of black youth of the suburbs, perceived as inherently incapable of integrating into Portuguese society and associated with the phenomenon of so-called gangs. The Choices Programme was designed in that context of fear, when numerous voices clamoured for public policies to control and manage these youth labelled as "at-risk" (Raposo & Aderaldo, 2019).

Under the wings of the High Commissioner for Migrations (ACM), the Choices Programme was launched in 2001 aimed at the "prevention of youth criminality" and the "insertion of youth from the most problematic neighbourhoods," as stated in Council of Ministers Resolution 4/2001 (Council of Ministers, 2001). Years later, the premises of this programme were redirected towards boosting the "social inclusion" of "children and youth coming from vulnerable socioeconomic contexts" (Azevedo, et al., 2014), extending the target group to children and youth aged 6 to 24 years old. Despite the greater coverage of the Choices Programme's target group nowadays, the purpose of that public policy largely continues to be to prevent the real and potential risks of young people acquiring delinquent behaviour, especially those of African descent from the outskirts. The fact that the Choices Programme is under the ACM— the reference state institution for citizenship issues associated with immigrants and "ethnic minorities"—is illustrative of how political institutions comprehend youth inclusion, circumscribing their difficulties to those they consider to be the "other" in Portuguese society: Roma, black people, and immigrants.

Currently with 105 projects spread over 68 municipalities countrywide, and an estimated 27,704 participants for the two-year period 2021–2022, the Choices Programme is in its eighth phase of implementation: 8th generation. Empowerment and protagonism have become pivotal elements in its governance model, principles that seek to implicate youth from vulnerable socioeconomic contexts in the resolution and management of the problems that affect their neighbourhoods, recruiting them as partners of social inclusion projects. However, this partnership presupposes a staged and restricted participation, as well as the concealment of the systems that underpin their marginalisation.

4. The Invention of a Youth Association

Support to youth associativism was one of the purposes of the Skills project, funded by the Choices Programme in a neighbourhood on the outskirts of Lisbon. Based on a top-down approach, this project's staff wanted to promote a youth association in the neighbourhood, underpinned by the concepts of empowerment and protagonism advocated by the Choices Programme. Various young people accepted the challenge of joining this association, participating in the Skills project activities to this end.

Primarily black, they were children of parents born in Portuguese-speaking African countries (PALOP)—Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, and São Tomé e Príncipe— who had emigrated to Portugal in search of better living conditions. The racialised neighbourhood in which they lived was one of the first to be covered by the Choices Programme in 2001, being associated with an image of youth delinquency. At that time, the neighbourhood had just been built and experienced severe problems of urban segregation and family breakdown, thus summarised by the rapper Kiluange (interviewed in 2016):

> The fact was that there was nothing around us, the neighbourhood was isolated....That, of course, had some negative consequences: People felt isolated, marginalised, everything bad that happened was blamed on the neighbourhood. The police would swing by due to any problem, it was easier, because everything was caused by the youngsters here....There began to be many problems of youth delinquency, broken families and lots of conflicts with those outside.

A participant of the Skills project since his adolescence, Kiluange, 28 years old, became a leader for the neighbourhood's youth, having been invited in 2006 to enter the Choices Programme's technical team as an urban mediator, a position created since the beginning of this public policy. Over the six years that he was there, he promoted various activities for the benefit of the community and recalls that time with satisfaction. However, Kiluange did not conceal the various mistakes of that public policy, such as the pressure to attain a growing number of youngsters to the detriment of the quality of the interventions:

> The Choices Programme lives off numbers, it has to show results to get funding. And in that drive for

results it started to treat people as numbers. Basically, this is where its superficiality emerged. It no longer showed a human nature….The field staff are almost enslaved to get numbers, to show results.

From the 4th generation (2010–2012) onwards, the Choices Programme established a minimum quota of participants in each project, dividing them into "receivers" ("at-risk" youth) and "beneficiaries" (youngsters exposed to lower risks). The expansion of the Choices Programme's target group was consolidated during this generation, when the areas of vocational training, entrepreneurism and civic participation were strengthened. At the same time, the engagement of youngsters as agents of interventions was bolstered in this public policy by the introduction of the community facilitator in the Choices Programme's technical team: "youngsters from communities with a positive leadership profile'' and "strong potential to create positive reference models" (Council of Ministers, 2009). Kiluange's tasks included attracting the "receivers" to the project activities, those whom the Choices Programme classifies as in "pre-delinquency situations" (Guerra et al., 2010, p. 8), supporting them in their transition to adult life. The information gathered about the project participants was subsequently entered into a specific database to generate statistical data to "show results" (and the effectiveness) of the Choices Programme.

Due to the "preventive" focus of the Choices Programme towards children, Kiluange experienced great difficulty in working with older youth. In fact, many of its staff complained that the Choices Programme developed few structured activities for the older youth, given its emphasis on children and adolescents. Seeking to overcome this gap, Kiluange and his colleagues created the Associação Juvenil Semear o Futuro (AJSF, literally meaning "sowing the future youth association") in 2011, in partnership with the Skills project. The underfunding of the Choices Programme projects was also criticised, as the scarcity of resources compromised the interventions in the field and the payment of staff salaries. Worn down by the precarious working conditions, Kiluange moved away from the Choices Programme in professional terms, although he continued to cooperate with the Skills project as a volunteer.

The AJSF operated in the first two years of its existence but became inactive as its members no longer had time for associativism. The transition to adult life led many of them to assume responsibilities they did not have in the past, creating conflicts between working/family time and leisure/associativism time. Nevertheless, this youth association proved effective in what it had set out to do: inspire youth in the virtues of citizen participation. Invited by the Skills project in 2015, Kiluange began to informally promote one of its activities: Empower Jovem ("empower youth"). The plan was to stimulate empowerment, community spirit, and protagonism aimed at preparing young people to take over

the association that he helped set up. In one of the Empower Youth dynamics I attended with ten youngsters, Kiluange exhibited the photographs of four historic figures—Amílcar Cabral, Agostinho Neto, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, and Nelson Mandela—to highlight what they had in common:

> These people broke the silence and started to do things in benefit of the collective. Rather than just criticising, doing is very important….Many people here in the neighbourhood don't do anything, but there's a lot to do. We can't just wait for others to do it for us….These are people who went beyond their comfort zone, they're not superheroes, because they don't exist. We are the superheroes….Everyone has a place in this society, we are all useful. We just have to find our place in society. (field diary, 2016)

At the end of this presentation, Kiluange asked the youngsters to write down the names of the people they considered to be their superheroes. One referred to the neighbourhood's postman, others pointed to Barack Obama or the Minister of Justice Francisca Van Dunem, of Angolan origin, while others wrote down the names of family members or Skills project staff. The appeal for empowerment and protagonism was the essence of Empower Youth. By encouraging youngsters to leave their "comfort zone" through self-reliance and "doing things" to solve problems, it proposed an inclusion model that did not address the inequalities and injustices of their social environment. Decontextualised from the political struggles they fought, the historic figures served as a backdrop to encourage youngsters to be superheroes of their community, whose enhanced agency and self-empowerment was stimulated for the exercise of domesticated citizenship.

In the middle of the Skills project room, where the activity was taking place, a poster displayed the rules at Empower Youth: (a) when a monitor is speaking everyone should be silent and listening; (b) respect the opinions of your colleagues and monitors; (c) raise your finger before speaking; (d) tidy up the room before leaving; (e) attend the sessions until the end; and (f) no swearing. Other messages on the wall testified to the project's disciplinary nature: tidy up the room and materials, speak one at a time, always eat everything, participate with interest in the activities, etc. A "behaviour table" with the name of those attending the Skills project recorded the number of green or red balls according to compliance with the established rules. This table was used as criteria to choose the young people who would participate in activities such as excursions and beach trips, especially when the number of registrants was higher than the available places. Alongside this, the youngsters who accumulated too many red balls were suspended from project activities. Signatures were collected at the beginning or the end of these activities, a usual practice aimed at recording the number of youngsters covered

by the Skills project and generating statistics for the Choices Programme.

Shortly after, a meeting promoted by the Skills project with 20 people would give rise to the first Youth Meeting. This was a mandatory initiative of the Choices Programme, aimed at legitimising the project's actions, engaging youngsters in its initiatives and nurturing their civic awareness through a democratic experience. As would be explained by a Skills project staff member:

> [The Youth Meeting] is a space of citizenship where the neighbourhood's youth who are linked to the Skills project meet to talk about various issues related to the project, your own realities and needs. You may ask questions or offer suggestions, give your contribution. The aim is to have representatives. (field diary, 2016)

In that activity, Kiluange sought to raise the youngsters' awareness of the importance of becoming leaders, challenging them to join the AJSF, an instrument to accomplish beneficial actions for the neighbourhood. The importance of this meeting for the neighbourhood's youth was also debated and three representatives for the Youth Meeting's board were elected. Lacking time for an in-depth discussion on youth associativism, a debate on this topic was scheduled for the next Empower Youth sessions.

I participated in three other sessions of Empower Youth, when future AJSF activities and the need to elect a new management board were discussed. Some of the ideas shared by the youngsters were: graffiti workshop and organisation of a street art festival; creation of a music studio; parties; foreign language courses; and identification of urban facilities requiring maintenance. Skills project staff who accompanied the debate reminded them of the fundamental principles on which such proposals should be based: (a) promotion of activities for occupation and capacity-building of the neighbourhood youth; (b) opening of the neighbourhood to outside youth; (c) neighbourhood enhancement and strengthening of community spirit. The sustainability of the association and the proposed activities was one of the core concerns of the staff, who reiterated the importance of their members' financial contribution. Delighted with the impetus of the discussion, one of the staff members stressed the youngsters' sense of self-reliance, viewing them as "examples" for others:

> The association should work on raising the awareness in youngsters that they must not wreck the neighbourhood's infrastructures but preserve them. Especially as you are the examples of the neighbourhood's youth. (field diary, 2016)

The second Meeting Youth was well publicised and attended by more than thirty people, mostly boys aged 13 to 16 years old. The Youth Meeting board was chaired by Nuno, 27, who called upon Kiluange to present the main goals of the AJSF: (a) engage youth, foster cohesion, and change the image of the youth and neighbourhood; (b) work on skills concerning associativism, entrepreneurism, and innovation; and (c) occupy free time and create sustainable projects for the community. After listing the ideas of activities drawn up by the youth for the AJSF (music studio, language course, parties, street art festival), he summarised the association's purpose as follows: "Work with the youngsters, and not for the youngsters, so as to make this happen in the neighbourhood." Subsequently, Kiluange recalled some of the activities previously organized by the association: swimming pool, football tournaments, the Zero Poverty Festival, etc. The exhibition of a graffiti of a black boy with the phrase "proud of what I am" served as the motto for Kiluange to appeal to youngsters to mobilise in favour of the neighbourhood and counteracts the territorial stigma to which they were exposed on a daily basis:

> I chose this image for a purpose. In the old days, our parents or even us when we went to school or were job-searching, we didn't say that we were from this neighbourhood, but from other places. That image is the opposite of that. When we were outside the neighbourhood, we didn't acknowledge who we were or where we came from. And what I propose is that none of us go through that ever again: being ashamed of where we come from. None of us should be ashamed of who we are. (field diary, 2016)

For Nuno it was essential to have "new blood in the association," as Kiluange would not be able to make it work alone. The first steps would be the creation of an election committee and the scheduling of elections for the AJSF board members. After debating the bureaucratic aspects of the election committee's operation, the election date was scheduled for the summer holidays. Upon closing the meeting, the youngsters hastily departed. Kiluange said he was enjoying this initiative, as he had not seen the youngsters so excited around a common goal for a long time. He would not join any list of board members, confessing a certain fatigue of his leadership role:

> Although I am not part of any list, my idea will always be to supervise the association's progress. I know that if I were a board member of the association, I wouldn't do anything else, space must be made for new members….Being a leader requires lots of resilience and the ability to suffer. I sacrifice myself a little to help others….Sometimes I ask myself if it's worth it to give up so much of my time to work for the community. (field diary, 2016)

The election of the new AJSF board did not go ahead because the youngsters stopped participating in the election process. Although the Skills project staff had taken on various bureaucratic tasks, the youth

protagonism required to resuscitate the association was not strong enough.

The third Youth Meeting was held at the end of 2016. With much lower attendance than the previous meeting, its discussion focused on the activities of the Skills project, spotlighting Mundar, a youth entrepreneurship competition of the Choices Programme that funded the winning ideas. The inexistence of competing projects of the neighbourhood's youth in that year was a "missed opportunity," according to one of the project staff members, who encouraged those present to deepen their engagement in the Empower Youth and Ideas Factory sessions devoted, respectively, to empowerment and youth entrepreneurism. This was followed by a discussion on the difficulties of organising the AJSF elections, raising the possibility of the youngsters creating another association. Failing to reach a defined strategy on how to develop youth associativism in the neighbourhood, the meeting ended in a disheartening tone for its participants. The no-show of Kiluange, one of the few youngsters who spoke in public, threw further light on the bureaucratic framework of the meetings, whose dynamics were of the meeting were firmly in the hands of the project staff. It was the staff, as a rule, that spoke and decided on the paths to be followed, with the Youth Meeting's board playing a minor role. With little room for the issues of interest to the youngsters, the meetings imparted notions of associativism and citizenship that were rather unrelated to their everyday lives. Topics related to the youngsters' specific problems like poverty, violence, sexuality, drugs, leisure, racism, or the history of Africa were rarely addressed in those meetings that remained impermeable to the youth experiences outside the institutional environment. Other Youth Meetings, held in the following year to revive the AJSF, were unsuccessful due to the disaffection of the participants. The members of the Youth Meeting's board at that time drifted away, meaning that a substantial part of the time spent in the meetings was absorbed by the election of new representatives who successively failed to attend subsequent meetings. Unappealing, these bureaucratic discussions were increasingly irrelevant to the aspirations and needs of the youngsters who progressively stopped participating in the Skills project.

In view of the distancing of the youngsters, the Skills project staff involved another group in the project's activities, where the creation of a new association was decided. These youngsters chose to embark on a new associativist pathway, delineating the goals, statutes, and name of the future youth association. However, the protagonism that was given to them in this process, like in the Youth Meetings, did not allow room for emancipatory discourses, being constrained by the governance structure of the Choices Programme. In the meeting I attended in 2018, the topics under discussion and the speeches followed the roadmap previously established by the Skills project staff, a staging of participation that kept them in a situation of dependency. That was the opinion expressed by one of the founders of this youth association years later (interviewed in 2021):

> We were always waiting for the staff to be able to move, but why? Because we regarded them as more experienced, but that led to dependency. When you are always dependent on someone or an entity, you don't think freely, you lack freedom or initiative to talk to the community, or even hold meetings with the youngsters without any staff orders. And when it's too artificial, the community has no faith….My conclusion was that it's artificial, it's not being real or organic, it's not true.

Devoid of a militant strength, the youngsters' associative engagement was stimulated by the principles of empowerment and protagonism, whose accountability for resolving the neighbourhood's problems was embodied in actions not defined by them. The absence of the autonomous discourse made the young people objects of policy, "not subjects," as their subjectivities were placed at the service of the purposes of the Skills project managers and Choices Programme. Not by chance, partnership with the Skills project would occur in all the activities held by the association, many of them of a charitable nature: neighbourhood cleaning campaign, Christmas party, and youth fitness.

In that simulacrum of citizen participation, the majority of the founders moved away as their initial enthusiasm faded and the responsibilities of adult life curtailed their time for associativism. A few months after its creation, the association ceased functioning. Despite its negligible impact on the neighbourhood's daily life, this association generated precious statistics for the Skills project and Choices Programme, constituting an output legitimating the supposed success of this public policy.

5. Conclusions

The ethnographic reconstitution of an associative experience in the outskirts of Lisbon gave me an insider's understanding of some of the control and management mechanisms linked to the social inclusion policies directed at poor, racialised and peripheral youth. Differently from what was done in the past, these youngsters are encouraged to undertake responsibilities in confronting the adversities that affect their community, no longer being "problem youths" but transformed into "solution youth" in delinquency prevention projects (De Tommasi, 2013; Souza, 2008). Discourses of youth empowerment and protagonism are crucial to encourage youngsters to become engines of change in their neighbourhoods, in which citizen participation is converted into a community governmentality resource. This is because that participation does not aim to raise awareness on the structures underpinning their marginalisation in society, nor claim rights, but rather to stimulate self-reliance and self-government among youth,

voluntarily involving them in neoliberal structures of governance (Kwon, 2013; Rose, 1996).

A follower of this model, the Choices Programme appropriates the talents of youngsters to secure them as partners in the implementation of welfare projects, whose individualist and meritocratic principles underlie the transfer of the responsibility for the community's harsh living conditions to the "shoulders" of that community. This strategy not only masks the contradictions generating the inequalities (of class, race, and territory) affecting them, but also subdues their subjectivities, by naturalizing the regime of subalternity in which they are immersed. Instigated to empower themselves to "do their part" for the benefit of the community, the youngsters are entreated to manage poverty, diluting antagonisms, pacifying conflicts, and hindering the emergence of an activism hostile to the interests of the state.

The fostering of youth meetings and youth associations under the Choices Programme proved to be a highly effective strategy of social control of youth, embodying a citizen participation model amounting to what Souza (2008, p. 12) considers to be "political annulment." The protagonism given to the youngsters under the Skills project tacitly implied a limited and unauthentic participation, disguising a domination that tamed their ideals. Stemming from the fake youth meetings and associations, the youngsters' participation was reduced to the mere implementation of tasks whose contents had previously been decided by the upper echelons of the Choices Programme. In this biopolitical operation, the state seized the youngsters' desire for more social justice, aligning their collective actions to the neoliberal strategies of youth empowerment and protagonism. It is in this analytical framework that we should understand not only the artificiality of the youth meetings and association promoted by the Skills project but also the actual premises mediating the current youth social inclusion policies. Without wishing to devalue the beneficial effects of the political-associative engagement of poor and racialised youth, this takes the form of a "citizen technology" when subordinated to individualistic ideologies distant from a grammar of rights.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

The Interiorization of Public Higher Education in Santana do Araguaia, Brazil

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Abstract

As part of the interiorization program of public higher education in Brazil, and following the dismemberment of the Federal University of Pará (UFPA), the Federal University of South and Southeast of Pará (Unifesspa) was created in 2013 in the Eastern Amazon. In 2014, the Araguaia Engineering Institute (IEA) of Unifesspa was set up in the city of Santana of Araguaia, providing a licentiate degree course in Mathematics. The bachelor's degree in civil engineering was added in 2018, and architecture and urbanism in 2019. Santana of Araguaia is a relatively new municipality, located in the state of Pará, away from the main centralities and between the borders of agribusiness and the Amazon. Our research analyzed the evolution of the first years of this university campus in the municipal and regional contexts and reports the development indexes of IEA and Santana do Araguaia. It is observed that there are numerous challenges to improving this asymmetry; however, the interiorization of public higher education does have the potential to overcome some of this inequality, stimulate the development, and guarantee the right to public, free, and quality higher education.

Keywords

Brazil; Eastern Amazon; public higher education; Unifesspa

1. Introduction

Public university education in Brazil has faced—and faces still—many obstacles to guarantee the right to free, high-quality education, especially in the country's interior. In more remote areas of the Brazilian Amazon, the policy of "interiorizing" courses at this level of education requires the analysis of trajectories and impacts to encourage reflection, systematize indicators, and create inductive proposals for public policies that strengthen the different educational contexts of public universities and their campuses. Our study discusses the trajectory and impacts of the public higher education "interiorization policy" in the southeast of the state of Pará, the north region of Brazil until its arrival in the city of Santana do Araguaia.

It is important to emphasize that, until the second part of the 20th century, the capital of Pará, Belém, concentrated most of the higher education courses available to the population, while the interior was mostly dedicated to forest preservation. In southeastern Pará, the main non-indigenous migratory flows occurred during (a) the second half of the 19th century, based on cattle ranching mainly from the neighboring state of Maranhão; (b) the early 20th century, during the exploitation of rubber; and (c) the second half of the 20th century, from the highway works and the exploration of ores that consolidated the city of Marabá as the main urban center of the region (Monteiro & Silva, 2021). In the 1970s, the first higher education classes were given in the city of Marabá; four decades later, in 2013, the Federal University of the South and Southeast of Pará

(Unifesspa) is established. Thanks to this achievement, Marabá becomes the headquarters of a recent regional university that advances through new interiorization fronts, such as the implementation of the Unifesspa campus in 2014 in the city of Santana do Araguaia (see Figure 1).

Our research seeks to analyze the trajectory and impacts of this achievement on inclusion and the social, economic, and scientific development in the region covered by Unifesspa in Santana do Araguaia. To do so, we use the guidelines of a qualitative approach, exploring descriptive data with documentary analysis from institutional collections and official data from the state of Pará and the city of Santana do Araguaia. To understand university interiorization policy in Southeast Pará and its impact, this article will next present a brief history of higher education in Brazil, focusing on policies for democratizing access to federal public higher education.

2. Brief History of Higher Education in Brazil and Unifesspa of Santana do Araguaia

In the European invasion of the American continent, while the Spanish established the press and founded 24 universities in their colonization lands until the 18th century, in the colony of Brazil, people with the greatest resources generally went to study in Portugal. The Society of Jesus was the main body responsible for teaching in Brazil. One of the first higher education courses was the philosophy course offered by the Jesuits in 1572 in the city of Salvador (the capital of the colony between 1549 and 1763) as well as in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Olinda, Recife, Maranhão, and Pará. The Jesuits were also responsible for the foundation of the Faculties of Mathematics in Salvador, in 1726, and in Rio de Janeiro, in 1757. There were attempts to convert the College of Salvador into a university, but these were denied by the University of Coimbra and the Court of Lisbon. With the expulsion of the Jesuits from

Portuguese colonization lands in 1759, the allocation of the Brazilian capital to the city of Rio de Janeiro in 1793, and the French and Dutch invasions, the teaching of military engineering became predominant, with the Royal Academy of Artillery, Fortification, and Design being founded in 1792. However, the most significant changes occurred from 1808 onwards, when the Portuguese royal family came to Brazil to flee the Napoleonic invasion: These included the foundation of the Royal Printing Press in 1808, the creation, between 1808 and 1809, of medical-surgical academies in Bahia and Rio de Janeiro, the establishment of the Royal Military Academy in 1810 and the Royal School of Sciences, Arts and Crafts in 1816, among others (Barreto & Filgueiras, 2007).

In Pará, one of the most prominent and symbolic achievements of higher education is the establishment of schools of law in 1902, medicine in 1919, pharmacy in 1904, dentistry in 1914, and agronomy and veterinary schools in 1918. These courses contributed to the creation, in 1957, of the University of Pará which, in 1965, was renamed as the current Federal University of Pará (UFPA). This university is managed by Brazilian resources and, for much of its history, its activities were concentrated in the city of Belém, the capital of Pará. In 1971, in the southeast region of Pará, the city of Marabá offered a campus to temporarily receive professors from the University of São Paulo in the Rondon Project. Furthermore, in the same year, UFPA began offering special courses in the interior. Then, with the Interiorization Project of UFPA (1986–1989), new academic actions were initiated in Marabá from 1987, offering full degree courses in history, language studies/humanities (*letras*), mathematics, geography, and pedagogy. The infrastructure of the Rondon Project was used with the implementation of interval courses (which occur in the months of school recess), and there was support from the City Hall in the appointment of employees (administrative support, security staff, and drivers) and in the payment of accommodation and food to the eleven first professors
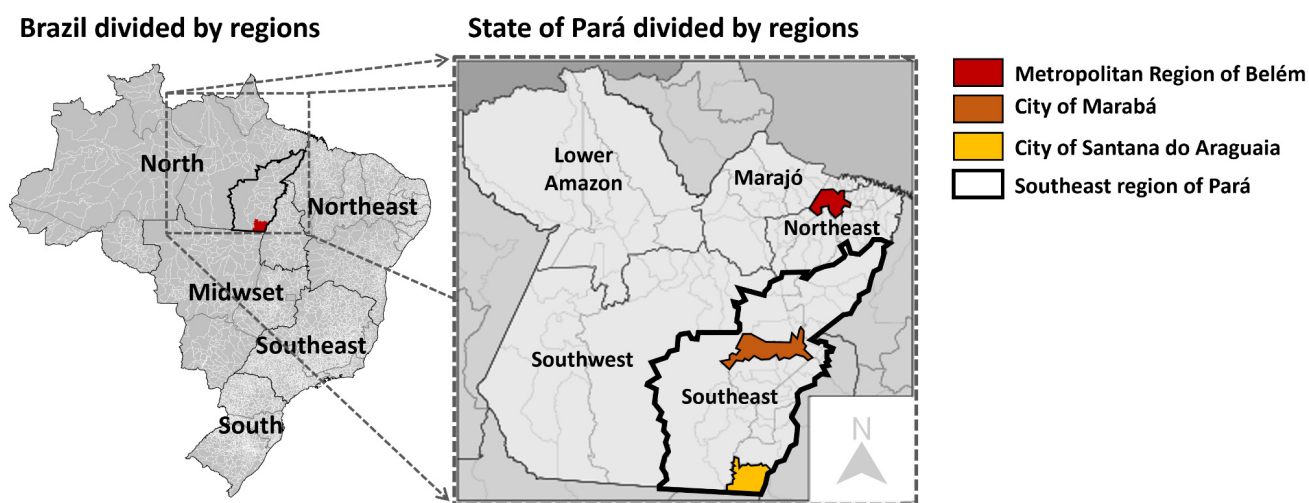

Figure 1. Location of Santana do Araguaia in Brazil and the state of Pará.

who came sporadically from Belém to teach in Marabá. The first courses to be offered regularly in Marabá were humanities, in 1992, and mathematics, in 1993. In 1994, three new centers were created in the nearby cities of Xinguara, Parauapebas, and Rondon do Pará. Over the years, new courses have been implemented both in Marabá and in neighboring municipalities. Moreover, between 1997 and 2000, the number of teachers grew from 18 to 26 (Camargo et al., 2011; Freire & Pimenta, 2010; Sousa, 2011).

At the state government level, the main mark of higher education is the creation of the School of Nursing of Pará in 1940. In 1993, this school and others were also responsible for the foundation of the State University of Pará (UEPA), also based in Belém. In the 1990s, the first interiorization centers were set up in the southeast of Pará, specifically in the cities of Marabá and Conceição do Araguaia, which functioned as an extension of the pedagogy course of Belém through the modular system (offering one subject at a time). By 1996, the UEPA had already recognized itself as multicampus and, in 2001, officialized the campus of Conceição do Araguaia and Marabá (Martins, 2020; UEPA, 2021).

Meanwhile at UFPA, gradually, the interior campus gained greater administrative autonomy and representation in the councils of the university. At the same time, the Federal Government began to encourage a process of expansion and interiorization of the sector with the plan *The Democratization and Expansion of Higher Education in the Country, 2003–2014*: In 2003, the Expand Program was implemented—a public higher education expansion program running from 2003 to 2006—followed by the 2007 REUNI Program, which supported the restructuring and expansion of federal universities (Federative Republic of Brazil, 2007).

The expansion of higher education, in general, could be related to a capitalist society's interest in qualified technical labor (Sousa, 2011). But, in this case, it is known that the right to higher education was expanded throughout the country, although not far enough. Between 2003 and 2008 there was an increase of 104 new campuses and 180 courses with an emphasis on the interiorization of Brazil (Ministério da Educação [MEC], 2009). By 2011, there had been an increase of almost 130,000 vacancies (Guerra & Rocha, 2018).

Although there are still many asymmetries in access to public higher education in Brazil, these transformations contribute to overcoming part of the inequality in the geographical distribution of public institutions. In 2019, 67% of the 302 public institutions in Brazil were in the interior (Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira [INEP], 2020). It is in this context that the UFPA campus in Marabá went through its expansion with the creation of new courses and an increase from 26 to 131 teachers between 2000 and 2010 (Sousa, 2011).

Also, regarding federal policies, in 2008, it was sanctioned that the Federal Network of Professional,

Scientific and Technological Education be created, which then set up the Federal Institutes of Education, Science, and Technology from federal technical schools (Federative Republic of Brazil, 2008). In Pará, the first school of this segment was the School of Apprentice Craftsmen of Pará, established in 1909 and renamed, in 1999, as the Federal Center for Technological Education of Pará (CEFET/PA) and finally, in 2008, as the Federal Institute of Education, Science, and Technology of Pará (IFPA). IFPA offers professional, technological, bachelor, licentiate, and postgraduate degrees. In southeastern Pará, there are the campuses of Marabá, Parauapebas, and Conceição do Araguaia.

In 2006, public higher education institutions in Pará, together with the State Department of Education (SEDUC), signed the SEDUC-IES protocol, an interinstitutional cooperation action aimed at improving public education in the state. Strategies were designed for mixed-degree training with interval courses (SEDUC, 2009). In this context, Santana do Araguaia received its first public higher education classes. In the 2000s, the UEPA offered individual classes of teacher training and a degree in mathematics (UEPA, 2021). Then, CEFET/PA (renamed as IFPA) offered, also in Santana do Araguaia, individual classes in geography and technology in public health in 2007, after the public call of the Open University of Brazil (UAB; SEDUC, 2009).

In 2009, the federal government created the National Plan for the Training of Basic Education Teachers (Parfor), which provided free tuition for a first or second degree. This was available for teachers from public networks who did not already have a higher education degree or for those who were teaching in an area outside the one in which they had been trained (MEC, 2021). In 2010, as part of the Parfor program, UFPA offered an individual licentiate degree in natural science in Santana do Araguaia (UFPA, 2013).

In this interiorization process, the UFPA campus in Marabá was "rebranded" in 2013 as the headquarters of the new Unifesspa. Unifesspa is a regional university composed of four more campuses in the municipalities of Rondon do Pará, Santana do Araguaia, São Félix do Xingu, and Xinguara, as shown in Figure 2. Between 2013 and 2019, Unifesspa went from 16 to 42 graduate-level courses and from 624 to 1852 students. In 2012, the law on quotas for federal universities was created to promote the inclusion of students from low incomes, public schools, black and brown people, indigenous communities, and, since 2017, for people with disabilities. Students from Unifesspa are mostly brown and from public schools. There have been records of self-declared indigenous entrants since 2014, and people from the *quilombola* (Afro-Brazilian) community and with disabilities since 2016 (Centro de Registro e Controle Acadêmico, 2021).

According to Fialho (2005), studies in this area are very limited and restricted to the understanding of campus, regionalization, and geographical interiorization of higher education. Therefore, our research seeks
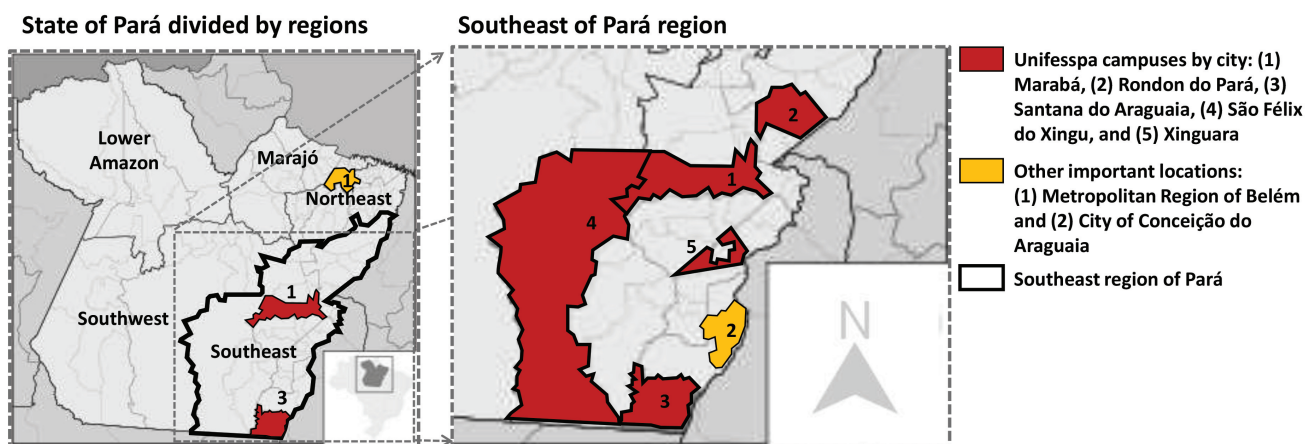
State of Pará divided by regions

Southeast of Pará region

■ Unifesspa campuses by city: (1) Marabá, (2) Rondon do Pará, (3) Santana do Araguaia, (4) São Félix do Xingu, and (5) Xinguara

■ Other important locations: (1) Metropolitan Region of Belém and (2) City of Conceição do Araguaia

□ Southeast region of Pará

Figure 2. Location of cities with Unifesspa campus in the southeast of Pará.

to contribute to the analysis of the evolution of the Unifesspa campus in Santana do Araguaia within its municipal context.

3. Unifesspa Campus of Santana do Araguaia

The city of Santana do Araguaia is in the extreme southeast of Pará, between the borders of the north and midwest regions of Brazil, the states of Mato Grosso and the Tocantins, and the biomes of the Amazon and the Cerrado. It is a relatively new municipality whose current delimitation of 11,591,441 km² was made in 1988, after the emancipation of Santa Maria das Barreiras (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [IBGE], 2021). As the city has no commercial airport and the land route to the capital Belém is 1,082 km, the municipalities of Marabá, the headquarters city of Unifesspa at 541 km, and Palmas, capital of the neighboring state Tocantins 330 km away, become the main hubs for air connection and other services.

The estimated population of Santana do Araguaia, as of 2021, was 75,995 inhabitants. In the last census, conducted in 2010, 56,153 inhabitants were recorded, 52.83% of whom lived in urban areas, in the locality of the municipal office areas, and 47.17% were from rural areas (Cadastro Nacional de Endereços Para Fins Estatísticos, 2021; IBGE, 2021).

Regarding rural activities, it is observed that 55.85% of the establishments, in 2010, were agribusiness whose activity covered (in 2017) 74% of the municipality's territory, while the natural forests represented only 6.73%,

and lands destined for permanent preservation or legal reserve, 14.25%. The herd of cattle in 2019 totaled 422,292: five times larger than the human population. This rural production has been growing in recent years, as observed in Table 1. In 2019, there are records of other forms of production, such as 625,000 units of pineapple, 720 t of watermelon, 8,700 t of sorghum, 313 t of banana, and 1,333 t of latex (IBGE, 2021).

However, despite the significant agricultural production, public administration, defense, education, and health and social security totaled the highest percentage of municipal GDP in 2018, at 30.94%. Services follow with 28.61%, agriculture with 25.26%, and industry with 15.19%. In 2010, the GDP per capita was approximately 10.5 times the minimum wage, which stands in stark contrast with the fact that 44.6% of the population had nominal monthly per capita income of up to only 1/2 the minimum wage, a poverty rate of 37.56% in 2003, and the presence of child labor. In 2010, 3.75% of child laborers were illiterate, 12.11% were not attending school, and 77.36% were black and brown. The city has 11,748 people in the 10–19 age group and 9,845 in the 10–17 age group were registered as child laborers. Although these are not comparisons of the same age group, it is possible to observe a significant level of child labor in the city (IBGE, 2021).

Regarding the total of 14,678 homes, the last census also reveals that only 9.74% (1,430) had a computer and 39.64% (5,866) had no piped water or any other form of water supply. In 2010, the municipality also presented a 0.602 municipal human development index,

Table 1. Rural production in Santana do Araguaia (tonnes).

	2007	2019	Increase
Soy	26,400	191,337	625%
Rice	1,107	6,386	477%
Beans	43	1,700	3,853%
Corn	3,027	109,150	3,506%

Source: IBGE (2021).

15% of adequate sanitary sewage, and 0% urbanization (IBGE, 2021).

In 2020, there were 26 elementary schools (with 214 teachers) and three high schools (with 39 teachers). In relation to the 2010 census, only 1.58% of the population (888 people) had completed higher education, 45.60% (25,604) were not attending school, and 20.60% (11,569) had never even attended. In the 6–14 age group, the schooling rate was 90.9%. The illiteracy rate was significant, although it had fallen from 21.7% in 2000 to 14.7% in 2010 (IBGE, 2021).

The evaluation of the city's public network by the Basic Education Development Index (IDEB) was not good. It is a measurement of the performance of the Brazilian educational system based on the combination of Portuguese and mathematics assessments and the approbation rate. The IDEB of the public network of Santana do Araguaia is below the state, North, and national averages. According to Figure 3, the IDEB in the initial years of public elementary school has shown growth, although it did not reach the target of 4.7 for 2019, and its evolution is lower than the other spheres. However, the performance of the public network in the final years of elementary school is even worse: there was a significant decline from 2011 and a much lower rate than the municipal target of 4.9, which had been predicted for 2019 (see Figure 4). In high school, the public network only presents sufficient data to calculate the IDEB in 2017 with growth for 2019, although much below the average in the other spheres (Figure 5).
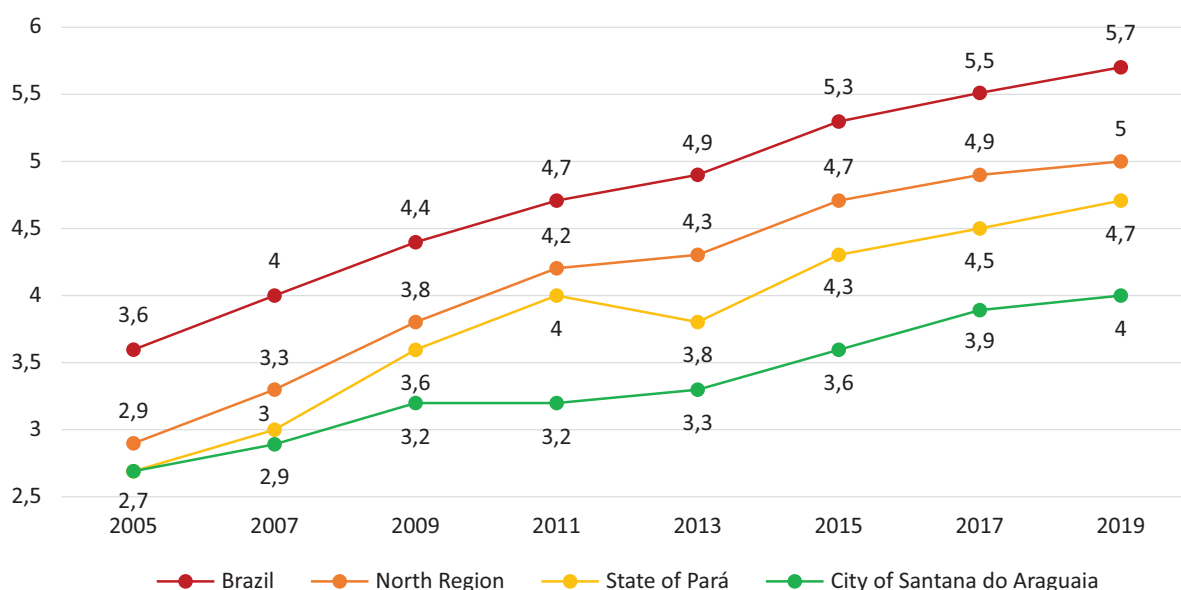

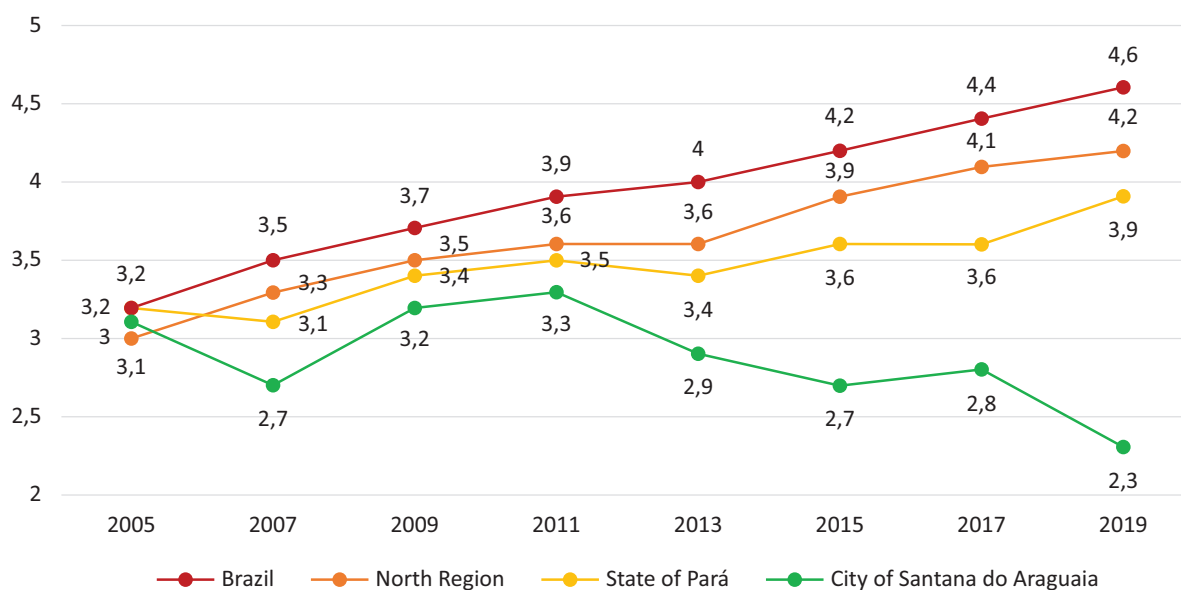**Figure 3.** IDEB in the early years of elementary school in the public network. Source: INEP (2021).

Figure 4. IDEB in the final years of elementary school in the public network. Source: INEP (2021).
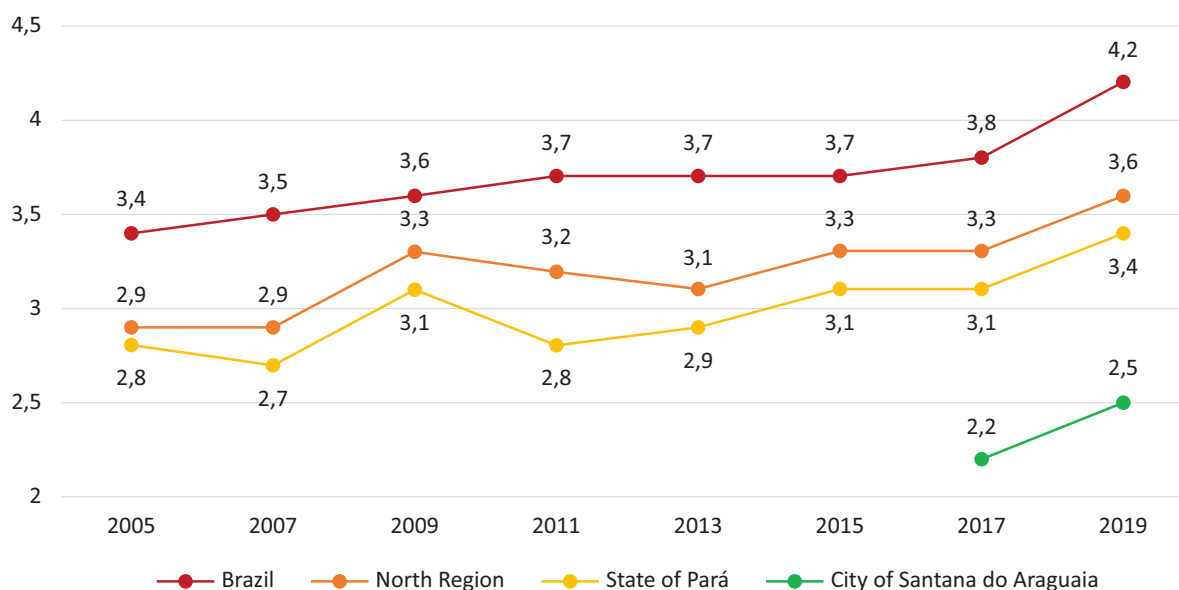
Figure 5. IDEB in high school in the public network. Source: INEP (2021).

It is in this context that the borders of the interiorization of public university education to Santana do Araguaia have been advanced since the 2000s. The teacher training course and degree in mathematics offered by the UEPA, the full degree in geography and technology in public health by the CEFET/IFPA, and the degree in natural sciences by the UFPA are the first records listing public higher education in Santana do Araguaia.

With the creation of Unifesspa in 2013, the possibilities for the interiorization process of public higher education are expanded with the implantation of the first public university campus in Santana do Araguaia in 2014, at the Araguaia Engineering Institute (IEA), by Unifesspa. The investigation presented here is structured with the mapping of official Unifesspa data that were treated in tables, graphs, and descriptive summaries about the process of implementing the IEA and correlated from academic-scientific-cultural activities and actions carried out by the campus with sociodemographic, educational, and economic conditions in the covered region. Data were analyzed based on analysis axes: academic education and the inseparability of teaching, research, and extension.

3.1. Academic Education

In 2014, the Unifesspa campus in Santana do Araguaia started offering the licentiate degree in mathematics. Through the Parfor program and with teachers from another Unifesspa campus, individual classes in Portuguese and mathematics were also offered—but only in 2016. In 2018, the first bachelor's degree in civil engineering started at the IEA. As of 2019, there were three important actions carried out by IEA: (a) the third course in architecture and urbanism was offered; (b) the Unifesspa joined Forma Pará ("To Form Pará"), a program to promote individual classes in other cities (SECTET, 2021) as the IEA's civil engineering class in the city of

Redenção; and (c) at the postgraduate level, the first specialization class (lato sensu) was offered in safety and environment management by civil engineering professors. Currently, in 2021, three more specializations are undergoing approval process: cities, buildings, and sustainability; mathematics education; and work safety engineering.

Between 2021 and 2022, new classes will be initiated through the Forma Pará program: (a) civil engineering in the cities of Rio Maria and Eldorado dos Carajás; (b) mathematics in Cumaru do Norte and Santa Maria das Barreiras; and (c) architecture and urbanism in Redenção and Canaã dos Carajás (see Figure 6). This allows the IEA to build a base of professors who can contribute to the education and training of citizens not only in Santana do Araguaia but also in neighboring cities, fulfilling its role as a regional university.

It is important to place IEA courses in the context of the national scenario. In Brazil, as of 2021, public institutions provide 441 courses in mathematics, of which 25 are in the state of Pará; out of the 174 civil engineering courses in the country, eight are in Pará, and of the 67 courses in architecture and urbanism created in Brazil, the one at Unifesspa of Santana do Araguaia is the second course in Pará (MEC, 2021). In comparison, architecture and urbanism is a course with lower supply at the national level, and there is also an unequal distribution. Currently, according to Simas et al. (2021), the majority of vacancies offered are still concentrated in capitals, even though most institutions are in the interior. Concerning the regions, the North of Brazil has the lowest number of courses and the longest spatial distances, as shown in Figure 7.

Table 2 shows the offer of mathematics, civil engineering, and architecture and urbanism in Brazil in 2019. It is observed that courses on mathematics and the concluding index in public institutions are greater in number than in the private sector, which has more vacancies.
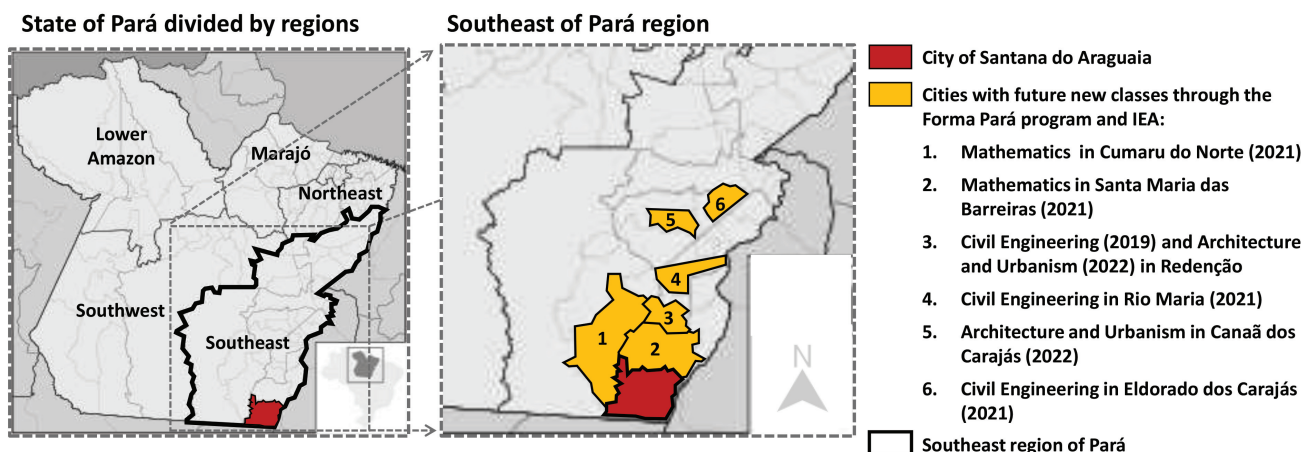
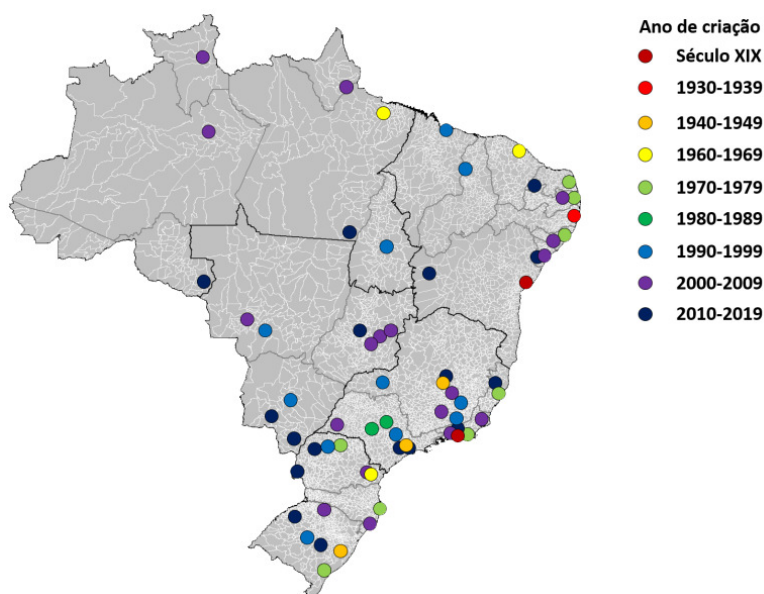**Figure 6.** Individual classes in other cities offered by IEA/Unifesspa.

Figure 7. Map of architecture and urbanism courses by year of creation since the 19th century. Source: Simas et al. (2021).

Table 2. Offer of mathematics, civil engineering, and architecture and urbanism in Brazil in 2019.

		Total	Public	Private
Mathematics	Number of courses	601	403	198
	Offered vacancies	278,091	33,700	244,391
	Concluding	10,670	4,911	5,759
	Concluding index	3.84%	14.57%	2.36%
Civil engineering	Number of courses	1,144	176	968
	Offered vacancies	411,273	14,812	396,461
	Concluding	48,779	6,789	41,990
	Concluding index	11.86%	45.83%	10.59%
Architecture and urbanism	Number of courses	675	72	603
	Offered vacancies	177,408	5,144	172,264
	Concluding	23,753	2,933	20,820
	Concluding index	13.39%	57.02%	12.09%

Source: INEP (2021).

On the other hand, the number of courses and vacancies offered in public institutions of civil engineering and architecture and urbanism is smaller than in the private sector; however, there is a higher percentage of students who successfully graduate (INEP, 2021).

Regarding IEA classes, Mathematic courses admit students annually into a class of 40 vacancies, except for 2015 when two classes were formed. Civil engineering and architecture and urbanism classes also admit students annually with 30 vacancies, apart from the class at Redenção, which had 50 vacancies. However, as seen in Table 3, it is a challenge to fill all the vacancies in mathematics and architecture and urbanism. This low take-up may be associated with low levels of development in basic education, child labor conditions, or a lack of confidence in students from families with no graduates to act as role models. However, inadequate urban infrastructure and pollution from agricultural fires make this region less attractive to people from other cities.

In its recent history, the IEA has already had 13 mathematicians graduate from its classes of 2014 and 2015. Its average number of graduates of 10.83% is above the national average. For Santana do Araguaia, it means that there are more 13 teachers now available to improve the basic education of the city and region. It is important to emphasize that the egress profile has a greater predominance of women (78.57%), brown (85.71%), and those coming from the public education system (85.71%;

Unifesspa, 2021). Other students in 2014 and 2015 classes are still studying, which will result in a greater number of graduates in the future.

3.2. The Inseparability of Teaching, Research, and Extension

Regarding research and extension projects, IEA has been carrying out more and more actions as new professors join the courses. There were 11 projects in 2017, 42 in 2019, when most professors of civil engineering and architecture and urbanism have entered, and 65 in 2020. Among the many projects aimed at the scientific, academic, and local communities, Emancipa is one good example of a preparatory course that helps students from local schools enter university education (IEA, 2021). Thus, professors from the three courses help with reinforcement classes so that candidates can reach the minimum grades for access to higher education.

Professors and students of civil engineering and architecture and urbanism are developing projects for public spaces, improving materials used in the works, and increasing citizen participation in the city's construction process, opening new opportunities to rethink urban and housing infrastructure.

Regarding events, in 2015, the IEA hosted the first Araguaiense Mathematical Meeting with 40 participants and an agenda of lectures, round tables, short courses,

Table 3. Classes of IEA/Unifesspa in 2020.

	Year of entry	Vacancies Offered	Incoming students	Matriculation canceled	Studying	Concluding	Incoming index	Evasion index	Studying index	Concluding index
Mathematics	2014	40	33	23	4	7	82.50%	69.70%	—	17.50%
	2015.1	40	6	3	0	3	15.00%	50.00%	—	7.50%
	2015.2	40	25	14	7	4	62.50%	56.00%	—	10.00%
	2016	40	16	12	4	—	40.00%	75.00%	25.00%	—
	2017	40	22	15	7	—	55.00%	68.18%	31.82%	—
	2018	40	23	6	17	—	57.50%	26.09%	73.91%	—
	2019	40	40	7	33	—	100.00%	17.50%	82.50%	—
	2020	40	21	0	19	—	52.50%	0.00%	90.48%	—
	Total	320	186	80	91	14	58.13%	43.01%	65.57%	11.67%
Civil engeneering	2018	30	30	3	16	—	100.00%	10.00%	53.33%	—
	2019	30	29	4	18	—	96.67%	13.79%	62.07%	—
	2019 Redenção	50	50	0	35	—	100.00%	0.00%	70.00%	—
	2020	30	30	0	30	—	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%	—
	Total	140	139	7	99	—	99.29%	5.04%	71.22%	—
Architecture and urbanism	2019	30	27	2	17	—	90.00%	7.41%	62.96%	—
	2020	30	26	2	24	—	86.67%	7.69%	92.31%	—
	Total	60	53	4	41	—	88.33%	7.55%	77.36%	—

Source: Unifesspa (2021).

and a cultural event. In 2017, the second meeting had 54 entries and offered lectures, short courses, round tables, and presentations of projects and work.

In 2019, through the composition of three courses, the IEA launched itself into the challenge of holding its first congress, with the support of the Amazon Foundation for The Support of Studies and Research (Fapespa). So, in 2019, a free event was initiated, the first Araguaiense Congress of Exact, Technological, and Applied Social Sciences (Conara). With the central theme of problematizing, designing, and building for a more sustainable development, this first event had 168 participants, 37 submitted papers, and a diverse program with short courses, workshops, lectures, a poster exhibition, documentary shows, technical visits, round table, and a physics fair (IEA, 2021). Considering the high costs of other meetings, this was a unique opportunity for many low-income students to participate in such an environment of scientific discussion.

In 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the 2nd Conara event had the challenge of holding a free, socially distanced congress, even though funding calls had been suspended. However, this opened new opportunities of even greater proportions. With the title "University and Community: Knowledge in Integration With the Community," the number of papers submitted and people enrolled almost doubled compared to the first event. There were 72 submitted papers and 323 participants, including researchers from various Brazilian regions, as well as from other countries. A partnership was also made with the *Journal of Engineering and Exact Sciences*, where Conara's best papers were published (IEA, 2021).

In 2021, the 3rd Conara event is set to be free, remotely accessible, and it intends to discuss the "role of universities in a new time," reflecting on actions and challenges during and post-pandemic. The main novelties are the partnership with *ReDIPE: Revista Diálogos e Perspectivas em Educação* and the closing of the congress that will take place with the award ceremony of the first Science and Technology Exhibition of Basic Education of Santana do Araguaia (Moctec).

Regarding the 1st Moctec, it is a science fair with the work of students at schools that can receive scholarships funded by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) and the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovations. This event is expected to further integrate the university and schools of Santana do Araguaia. In addition to advancing scientific discussion, it contributes to raising awareness of Unifesspa among elementary school students and developing their interest in becoming future university students.

4. Conclusion

Historically, public higher education in Brazil can be seen as a right for only a few, although, in recent decades, there have been great federal efforts to expand it and reduce asymmetries, especially in the country's inte-

rior. The state of Pará has also expanded its policies in this regard, and many municipalities have supported such actions, as observed in the interiorization of public higher education to include Santana do Araguaia. It is a relatively new municipality with growth predominantly oriented around agribusiness to the detriment of forest preservation, which presents many challenges to achieving important human rights. Implementing the Unifesspa campus in Santana do Araguaia reverses part of its inequality by reducing the need for students to move to distant urban centers to study.

It is concluded that the presence of Unifesspa in Santana do Araguaia has an initial impact by attracting professors, mathematicians, engineers, architects, urbanists, and other professionals from so many other locations in Brazil to this locality. Research and extension projects have increased in recent years and have generated academic and local community results. However, the biggest step will be consolidated with the training of the local population to become new professors, mathematicians, engineers, architects, and urbanists who will amplify knowledge and drive the transformation toward a more just and inclusive society.

Currently, the number of students enrolling in courses still does not fully meet the expectations of the IEA/Unifesspa. It is considered that Unifesspa needs to rethink its strategies to expand opportunities, considering, in fact, its peripheral location in an underdeveloped city and its local context of poverty, low IDEB, illiteracy, and child labor, among other issues. This also means considering how to increase the support offered throughout the academic career to minimize student dropout rates, although the graduation rate in mathematics is above the national average. This also demonstrates that, despite being low in absolute numbers, the benefits from the recent emergence of the first Mathematics graduates will reverberate through the community through the educational development that they foster in others. Thus, it is believed that this internalization of public and free education aims to better distribute opportunities, especially for non-whites from public schools, who a few decades ago were minorities in public universities.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Article

Exploring Women's Uptake of Active Labour Market Programmes: The Role of Household Composition Across Migrant Origin Groups

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Abstract
Active labour market policies, like training, aim to increase the employability of unemployed population subgroups. Research indicates that the most vulnerable groups—such as women of migrant origin—are less likely to participate in the most effective programmes. Prior studies have established that household composition affects the labour market outcomes of women without and with a migration background. In contrast, research has not addressed the potential relevance of household composition in relation to women's training uptake. Using hazard models and longitudinal microdata from the employment office and social security registers, we analyse the extent to which women's household composition such as the presence and the origin of their partner or the presence of children is associated with the uptake of occupation-specific training in Flanders (Belgium). Our results suggest that, even when we control for previously identified determinants of training uptake such as the human capital of unemployed women, training uptake in most groups varies by household composition. More specifically, the results suggest that women with a partner of non-migrant origin show higher cumulative uptake than women with a migrant origin partner or single women, and that the presence of children in the household reduces women's training participation. Furthermore, household composition is found to be a stronger differentiating factor in uptake for migrant origin women than for non-migrant origin women.

Keywords
active labour market policies; Belgium; household composition; migrant origin; mothers; training

1. Introduction

Labour markets throughout Western Europe are characterised by persistent differentials in employment opportunities and outcomes. Despite increases in female labour force participation since the second half of the twentieth century, the transition towards gender equality in employment is incomplete. Available research indicates that women's labour market positions are strongly affected by household composition and particularly the presence of young children (Biegel et al., 2021; Brekke, 2013; Gutierrez-Domenech, 2005). Additionally, in the context of increasing diversity (e.g., country of origin and migrant generation), but also large and persistent migrant-native gaps in labour market outcomes, previous research provides evidence of differential interrelations between household composition and women's employment by migration background (Khoudja & Fleischmann, 2015, 2017; Kil et al., 2018; Rubin et al., 2008; Wood & Neels, 2017). To correct disequilibria in the labour market, governments have introduced active labour market policies (ALMPs) such as training programmes. However, our understanding of the uptake of these programmes exhibits a striking limitation. Whilst available literature on female employment and the labour force integration of female migrants

routinely addresses the nexus between employment and household composition, available research regarding the enrolment into ALMPs hitherto pays little attention to household composition.

This article puts forward household composition as an insufficiently acknowledged yet potentially important dimension of social differentiation in training uptake amongst unemployed women with varying migration origins. In addition to the theoretical relevance of studying how trajectories in different spheres of life—such as employment and family—are interrelated amongst different population subgroups (Elder et al., 2003), the assessment of social differentiation in the usage and benefits reaped from training programmes bears particular societal and policy relevance. We focus on the uptake of training programmes with applied upskilling components which have been identified as the most effective in Flanders (Wood & Neels, 2020), a finding in line with the general consensus that ALMPs most closely approximating regular employment most effectively stimulate employment (Butschek & Walter, 2014; Card et al., 2017). Unfortunately, more vulnerable groups such as women of migrant origin are less likely to participate in those programmes (Auer & Fossati, 2020; Butschek & Walter, 2014; Wood & Neels, 2020). This results in the so-called Matthew effects in which (non-)participation in public policy leads to an exacerbation of (dis)advantages (Bonoli & Liechti, 2018; Cantillon, 2011). This article explores household composition as a potential new dimension of inequality that should be taken into account by scholars and policy-makers alike.

This study contributes to the available literature in three ways. First, although a handful of previous studies have controlled for marital status and/or children's presence in the household as confounding factors for training uptake (Heckman & Smith, 2004; Vaculíková et al., 2020), this is the first study that explores household composition as a relevant dimension to understand heterogeneity in women's training uptake. Second, since variation in household composition by migration background is often associated with distinct migration histories, we explore the association between household composition and training uptake for each migrant origin group independently, differentiating between first- and second-generation migrants, and between non-migrant origin, Southern European and Turkish or Moroccan origin groups. Third, we study Flanders (Belgium), a particularly relevant setting to assess training uptake in different migrant groups as it exhibits one of the largest gaps in labour market outcomes between subgroups with and without a migration origin (Noppe et al., 2018; Piton & Rycx, 2020), while at the same time being a top-ranked OECD economy in terms of ALMP spending (OECD, 2021). Flanders is also an old immigration region, which has experienced several large influxes of migration (Van Mol & De Valk, 2016), allowing us to distinguish migrants from natives, but also migrant generations and origin groups.

2. The Belgian Context

2.1. Migration and Household Composition

Three post-WWII migration waves can be distinguished in Belgium (Van Mol & De Valk, 2016). The first wave (1950–1970) consisted of guest workers arriving from Southern European and non-European countries (mainly Turkey and Morocco). During a second wave (1973–1980), in the wake of the economic crisis and restrictive migration policies, family formation and reunification became the main entrance route for non-European migrants to Belgium. Finally, the third wave (from the 1990s onwards), consists of a more diverse profile of migrants including intra-European migration, refugees and asylum seekers, and family migration. As a result of these migration waves, 30% of the Belgian population had a migration background (first or second-generation) in 2017 (Noppe et al., 2018). Within this group, 9.93% had Southern European origins, 10.12% had Turkish origins, and 15.49% had Maghrebi origins (Noppe et al., 2018).

Migration policies (in)directly affect household composition, causing differences by migration background. Southern European migration since the 1980s was shaped by the free movement of European citizens, with a strong emphasis on labour migration and a rising likelihood of forming exogamous unions within Europe (Koelet & De Valk, 2014; MYRIA, 2016). On the contrary, restrictive migration policies towards non-European migrants put forward family reunification and formation as major migration channels for these origin groups (Van Mol & De Valk, 2016). While marrying a partner from the parents' origin country seems indicative of traditional behaviour, amongst second-generation migrant women this has been identified as a means for emancipation avoiding the practice of residing with the husbands' parents and assuring a strong socio-economic position in comparison to their husband (Lievens, 1999). In contrast, first-generation migrant women are often more dependent on their husbands due to limited host country human capital, which enhances traditional gender roles (Timmerman, 2006).

2.2. Flemish Labour Market and Active Labour Market Policies

From an international perspective, the Flemish labour market is characterised by high employment protection, relatively high minimum wages, and high unemployment benefit generosity (Andersen, 2012; Eurostat, 2022a). Consequently, the Flemish labour market also exhibits stark differentials in labour market opportunities and outcomes between insiders and outsiders (Doerflinger et al., 2020), mostly affecting outsiders such as groups—and particularly women—with a non-European migration origin (Maes et al., 2019; Noppe et al., 2018; Piton & Rycx, 2020; Rubin et al., 2008).

During the period considered in this article (2005–2016), European countries were hit by the Great Recession (2008–2009) and the euro debt crisis (2012–2013). Although Belgium performed better than other European states and inequality did not increase, the unemployment rates of migrant origin groups, and mainly of non-European origin, were systematically higher than for the non-migrants (Bodart et al., 2018; Corluy et al., 2015; Eurostat, 2022b; see Figure 1).

A wide range of Flemish ALMPs aim to facilitate entry into employment for jobseekers, such as training programmes, which are generally open to all jobseekers. This study focuses on upskilling training programmes geared towards specific occupations, be it through the acquisition of the required skills and knowledge in a classroom setting, a workplace setting, or combination of classroom and workplace settings. Participation in this type of training is voluntary. The employment office uses a voucher system, in principle allowing jobseekers to select a specific training programme. However, since jobseekers are usually not familiar with the institutional set-up, research for Flanders shows that caseworkers hold most decision-making power in assigning unemployed jobseekers to programmes (Wood & Neels, 2020).

3. Household Composition and Active Labour Market Policies

The life course perspective focuses on the complex interplay between individuals' biographies in different life domains and institutional arrangements (Elder et al., 2003), and different theoretical mechanisms suggest that women's training uptake may well be associated with their household composition (e.g., presence of a partner and/or children). Rational choice theory, preference theory, and social network theory offer complementary explanations in this respect.

3.1. Rational Choice Theory

Within rational choice theory, new home economics offers a partial insight on how the presence and characteristics of a partner may be related to female labour force participation (Becker, 1965). Households constitute consumption units that aim to achieve a common

preference. Because households face time and budget constraints, partners pool their resources to maximise their joint utility through specialisation, meaning that one partner takes up the larger share of domestic work, while the other partner specialises in paid work (Becker, 1965, 1991). Becker (1991) acknowledges that specialisation is the result of path-dependent investments, implying that small gender differences (e.g., induced by pregnancy) may give rise to differential investment and thus exacerbate gender inequality through the process of specialisation. In contrast to the new home economics, Oppenheimer (1994) argues that specialisation is not always the most rational strategy, as it entails income risks when the main earner is struck by unemployment or in case of divorce. Hence, to the extent that couples adhere to a specialisation strategy (Becker, 1991), we expect that having a co-resident partner may reduce women's training uptake, provided that the partner can secure sufficient income for the household. Contrarily, if couples pursue a cooperative model (Oppenheimer, 1994), no such effect of a partner is expected in principle, since investments in human capital will increase utility for the two partners, albeit that women may forsake training in favour of lower qualified employment.

Considering the migration history of the origin groups considered, we expect the specialisation model to be more prevalent in the households of Turkish or Moroccan women, mainly for the first-generation, because this migration is often selective in terms of traditional gender roles (Timmerman, 2006). In contrast, we expect the specialisation strategy to be less prevalent among second-generation Turkish or Moroccan women since these women often marry more gender-egalitarian partners from their parents' origin country (Timmerman, 2006). Given their free mobility within Europe and the higher prevalence of the dual-earner model in European countries, we expect the majority of the households of first- and second-generation women of Southern European origin to pursue a cooperative strategy, similar to native women. This could favour training uptake to the extent that upskilling is considered an investment that is preferred over entry into lower qualified employment.

Rational choice theory also provides partial insights on how female labour force participation may be conditioned by the presence of children in the household.
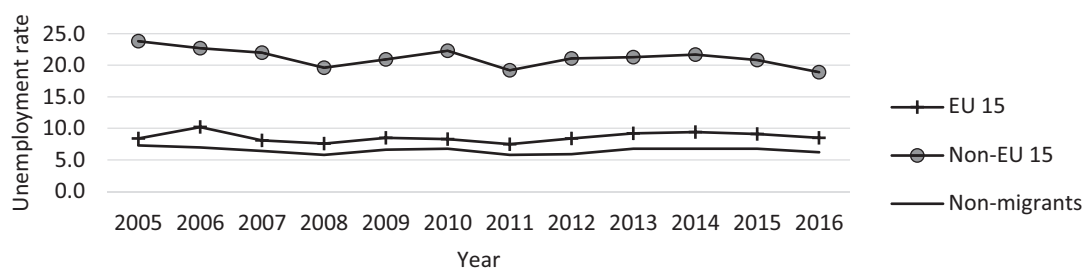

Figure 1. Unemployment rate by origin group, Belgium, 2005–2017. Note: EU 15 includes Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Source: Eurostat (2022b).

The decision to enrol in training is likely to depend on the number and age of children, the availability and cost of (in)formal childcare, the potential opportunity costs associated with enrolment in training and childcare, as well as the available household income to cover for childcare costs (Becker, 1991; Friedman et al., 1994; Liefbroer, 2005). Depending on the balance of costs and (expected) benefits, the presence of children may reduce the enrolment in training if women prefer work over training given the direct financial costs associated with childrearing. However, women may also decide to enrol into training to improve job and wage opportunities after upskilling, provided that sufficient household income and options to outsource care are available. Since employment opportunities vary by migrant origin (Baert & De Pauw, 2014), we can expect that the presence of children in the household is likely to differentially affect the enrolment in training of women from diverse migrant origins. Considering the history of these migrant groups in Belgium and previous research, indicating that migrant origin women face restrictions to childcare arrangements (Kil et al., 2018; Maes et al., 2021; Vidal-Coso, 2019), we expect that the presence of children in the household will have larger repercussions for women with Turkish or Moroccan origins than for women with Southern European origins and particularly non-migrant origin women.

3.2. Preference Theory

Preference theory suggests that women's preferences regarding work-life balance are heterogenous, and distinguishes between home-centred, work-centred, and adaptive women (Hakim, 2002). While home-centred women prioritise the family and the household, work-centred women prioritise their roles in the public sphere, and adaptive women will combine family and work to varying extents depending on context (Hakim, 2002). While home-centred women may prefer to assume household responsibilities rather than participate in training, work-centred women are likely to pursue labour force participation and engage in training, which may even entail postponement of family formation to secure these goals (Wood & Neels, 2017). Adaptive women's training uptake on the other hand may depend more strongly on public policies related to the labour market and the family, such as incentives given by caseworkers from the employment office to participate in training, as well as the accessibility and cost of childcare. Whereas activation and labour market trajectories are shaped by the interaction between preferences and (perceived) opportunity structures, the latter may also shape preferences, as family may offer a positive self-identity to women who face low prospects in the labour market and who are unable to positively identify with their potential career paths (Friedman et al., 1994; McRae, 2003).

Considering the variation in migration motives across origin groups, we expect first-generation Turkish or Moroccan women to be more home-centred as family formation and reunification is often an important migration motive for this group. Education and employment figure more prominently in the migration motives of Southern European women (MYRIA, 2016), suggesting that the share of adaptive or work-centred women will be higher in these groups. Empirical research shows that women's preferences regarding family and/or work explain part of the migrant-native gap in women's labour market outcomes (Khoudja & Fleischmann, 2015). Similarly, research shows that mother-centred care is largely preferred in migrant origin groups compared to non-migrant origin groups (Seibel & Hedegaard, 2017), and that Turkish or Moroccan women in Belgium are less likely to use formal care arrangements than non-migrant groups (Biegel et al., 2021). It is unclear, however, whether the variation in preferences associated with migration motives is reinforced—or even shaped—by the differential employment opportunities by migrant origin that women face in the Belgian labour market. Employment opportunities are considerably lower for non-European migrants than European migrants, which are in turn less favourable than the employment opportunities open to non-migrants (Baert & De Pauw, 2014).

3.3. Social Network Theory

Social network theory refers to the access that other household members may provide to specific networks. Social networks are considered as capital since the people in the network may help to attain goals (Bourdieu, 1986) and have proven relevant in the context of job search behaviour (Caliendo et al., 2011; Heckman & Smith, 2004; Lancee, 2010). Scholars distinguish between "bonding" and "bridging" social networks (Lancee, 2010; Putnam, 2000), referring to connections within and between groups respectively. To the extent that partners draw from each other's social networks that bridge to new social capital, being in a relationship can positively affect knowledge of ALMPs and job openings. Social capital can result in lower training uptake if women primarily use networks to find work, or increase training uptake if they are used for upskilling. Empirical research finds that bridging social capital is positively associated with income and employment (Lancee, 2010; Verhaeghe et al., 2015), but the association may vary depending on migrant origin and context. Brekke (2013), studying Norway, finds that partners transfer social capital, increasing the labour market opportunities of women regardless of migrant origin. In contrast, Seibel (2020) finds that in Germany endogamous co-resident partners of first-generation Turkish migrant women might reinforce bonding instead of bridging social networks. Considering the higher prevalence of endogamous marriages among Turkish and Moroccan women in Belgium (Flanders) compared to European migrants (Corijn & Lodewijckx, 2009), we expect the amount of bridging capital to vary accordingly by migrant origin.

The presence of children in the household may equally affect women's social networks and training uptake. Children can be a source of social integration by enlarging parents' social networks and increasing the information and help that parents can potentially access (Ambert, 2014; Gallagher & Gerstel, 2001; Ishii-Kuntz & Seccombe, 1989). Nevertheless, children may constrain parents' networks through the lack of time available for social contacts (Gallagher & Gerstel, 2001; Munch et al., 1997). Empirical research indicates that local ties are particularly relevant as sources of information on childcare arrangements, but that some parents with a migrant origin have less informed networks (Vincent et al., 2010). Differential enrolment in early childhood education by migrant origin may thus constrain the bridging social capital available to European and particularly non-European women, in turn hindering their training uptake.

3.4. Hypotheses

As a result of the wide range of aforementioned mechanisms rooted in rational choice, preference, and social network theory, two exploratory hypotheses are put forward. First, owing to numerous linkages between household composition on the one hand, and women's labour force participation and uptake of training programmes on the other, we expect differentiation in women's enrolment in training by household composition (hypothesis 1). Second, considering differences in migration history that shape the socio-economic, ideational, and social context in which women live, we expect the association between women's enrolment in training and household composition to vary by migration background (hypothesis 2).

4. Data and Methods

4.1. Data

We used data from the Migration, Integration and Activation Panel (MIA Panel), which links longitudinal administrative microdata from the employment offices to the Belgian social security registers for the period 2005–2016. This rich register-based data-infrastructure allowed us to observe training participation while providing detailed time-varying information on the household composition of women.

The initial sample consisted of 42,362 individuals aged 18 to 65 years who legally resided in Belgium on 1 January 2005. The sample is disproportionately stratified by age and migration origin. As the initial sample ages over time, top-up samples of 18-year-olds were added annually (N = 20,556). Each individual was tracked from sampling until the age of 65, death, emigration, or reaching the end of the observation period (31 December 2016). In addition to the sampled individuals, their household members on 1 January of each year were also included in the panel. Household charac-

teristics were measured annually. The analysis of training uptake used data on 6,813 women who experienced at least one unemployment spell between 2007 and 2016 which caused them to come into contact with the Flemish employment office. The overwhelming majority (94.4%) of the unemployment spells resulted in contact with the employment office.

Using information available in the social security registers on the first nationality of the sampled individuals and their parents, we distinguished five groups of women representing the larger migrant communities in Belgium (other than neighbouring countries): (a) non-migrant origin, (b) first-generation Southern European origin (G1 S-EU), (c) second-generation Southern European origin (G2 S-EU), (d) first-generation Turkish or Moroccan origin (G1 Turkish/Moroccan), and (e) second-generation Turkish or Moroccan origin (G2 Turkish/Moroccan). Individuals were considered to be first-generation if they had a first nationality that was not Belgian, and second-generation if at least one of their parents had a non-Belgian first nationality. If both parents had different first foreign nationalities, the parent origin reflected the first nationality of the father.

Subsequently, using data on household composition in the social security registers, we determined whether women were single, had a co-resident partner (married or legal cohabitation), and/or co-resident children, based on Van Imhoff and Keilman's (1991) household typology. Partners were further differentiated by origin group and migrant generation using the same categories as for the sampled women. This resulted in 12 potential household types (Table 1 in the Supplementary File). To allow robust estimates of women's training uptake by household type, uncommon household types (frequency <50) were excluded from the analysis or merged with similar household types to obtain sufficiently large groups.

4.2. Methods

Training uptake is a dynamic process (people can enrol in training at any given moment in their unemployment spell) that is affected by both time-constant and time-varying characteristics, such as the presence of a partner or children in the household. Using longitudinal microdata from the MIA Panel, we first constructed life tables of training uptake by duration of unemployment and household composition for each of the five groups of women considered (Singer & Willett, 2003).

The employment office provided longitudinal data on a monthly basis, allowing us to follow unemployed women until they took up training. Exposure started when women entered unemployment and lasted until the event occurrence (training uptake), or censoring (reaching the end of the observation period, retirement, emigration/death, or non-eligibility after signing an employment contract). Training uptake was measured using a time-varying dummy variable that attains a value of 1 in the month where women

entered a training programme. For the descriptive results, we plotted the cumulative incidence of entry into training—the complement of the survivor function of remaining unemployed—to document differential training uptake by household composition and migration origin (Figure 2). The cumulative incidence starts at 0 in the first month of unemployment when no one has started training yet, and gradually increases over time.

Second, we estimated discrete-time hazard models for each of the five origin groups separately to assess whether the timing of training uptake varied significantly by household-type, controlling for women's human capital characteristics and temporal variation in training uptake (Figure 3). The hazard models used a complementary log-log link function as the transition from unemployment to enrolment in training unfolded in continuous time, whereas the measurement of uptake in the MIA Panel was discrete (Singer & Willett, 2003). The exponentiated parameter estimates represent hazard ratios of training uptake.

Four models mapped the association between household composition and training uptake for each migrant origin group separately. Model 0 only includes unemployment duration in months as the baseline hazard function. Since different origin groups exhibited varying uptake patterns over time, we used different specifications of the baseline by origin: for non-migrant women, G1 and G2 S-EU women, and G2 Turkish/Moroccan women we used a step function (a categorical specification for the first month with a linear specification for the rest of the observation period), whereas a quadratic specification was used for G1 Turkish/Moroccan women.

Model 1 additionally introduces the household-type as the main variable of interest, along with the interaction between the baseline and household-type, allowing different time-paths of entering training by household-type.

Models 2a and 2b additionally control for temporal variation in uptake and human capital characteristics respectively, which have been identified as factors affecting training uptake (Desjardins et al., 2006; Heckman & Smith, 2004; Öztürk & Kaufmann, 2009). Model 2a includes age (quadratic), and the year of observation (categorical variable). Model 2b controls for Dutch language proficiency, education, previous work experience, and previous wage. Dutch language proficiency (categorical, time constant) represents self-rated proficiency registered by the employment office and distinguishes between (a) little (reference), (b) good, (c) very good, and (d) unknown knowledge. Highest level of education (categorical, time constant) was registered by both the employment office and the social security registers and distinguishes (a) lower secondary education (reference), (b) higher secondary education, (c) tertiary education, and (d) unknown level of education. Previous work experience reflects women's working hours (continuous, time-varying on a quarterly basis) in their last employment spell in the preceding two years (0 for peo-

ple without employment in the previous two years), as the percentage of the standard number of work hours of a full-time position in the economic sector considered. Finally, wage level (continuous) in the last employment spell in the preceding two years represents women's salary for a contract equivalent to 5% of a full-time job (0 for women without an employment contract in the previous two years). Information on work experience was drawn from the National Employment Office and the National Social Security Office.

Model 3 is the full model, including all aforementioned control variables. Following the approach developed by Maes et al. (2019), the parameter estimates of the hazard models were used to calculate the cumulative incidence of enrolment in training by household-type, controlling for temporal variation in training uptake and human capital of the women considered.

5. Results

5.1. Descriptive Results

Figures 2a through 2e plot the cumulative incidence of enrolment in training during the first year of unemployment by household-type for each migrant origin group. Figure 2a shows that training uptake is generally high for non-migrant origin women and that training uptake among non-migrant women is similar across all household-types. In contrast, Figures 2b through 2e reveal that the overall uptake is lower for the migrant origin groups, but also that their training uptake is strongly differentiated by household-type. Figure 2b shows that differentials in training uptake emerge at the beginning of the unemployment spell for G1 S-EU women and subsequently increase over time. Similarly, Figure 2c for G2 S-EU women shows strong variation in training uptake by household-type. Uptake is highest among women with a non-migrant origin partner, regardless of whether children are present in the household. In contrast, single mothers or women with a S-EU partner display the lowest uptake. The difference between these groups amounts to 7 percentage points after the first month of unemployment. Figure 2d shows that training uptake is lower for G1 Turkish/Moroccan women than for S-EU and non-migrant women. Training uptake for G1 Turkish/Moroccan women again varies by household-type. Specifically, the presence of children seems to hinder their uptake. Single G1 Turkish/Moroccan women have the highest and fastest training uptake. Finally, Figure 2e indicates that G2 Turkish/Moroccan women also display a lower uptake than S-EU origin and non-migrant women and that training uptake varies by household-type. G2 Turkish/Moroccan women with a S-EU or non-migrant partner—especially without children—have the fastest and highest training uptake. In contrast, women with a Turkish/Moroccan partner have considerably lower uptake, especially when the household includes co-resident children.
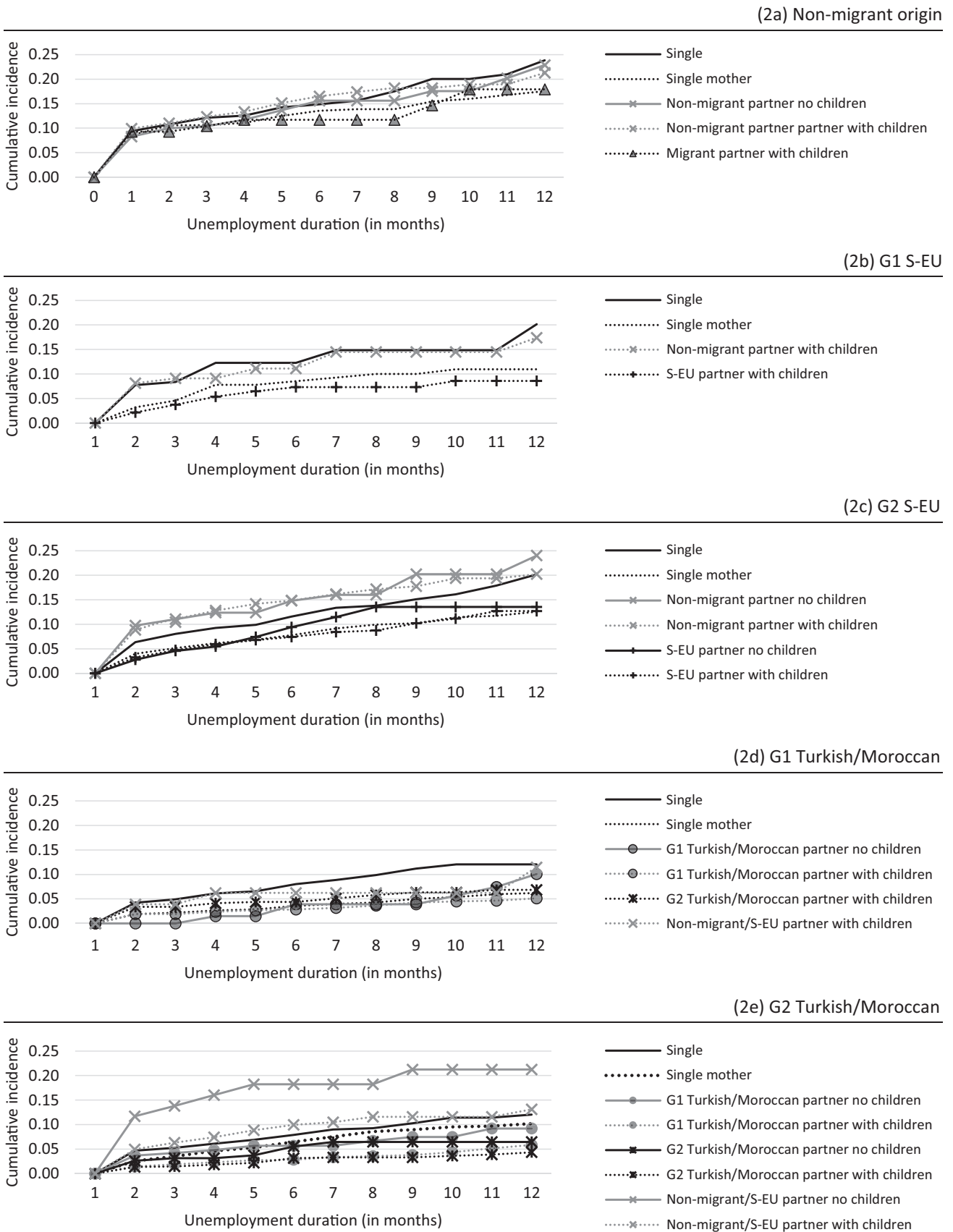
(2a) Non-migrant origin

(2b) G1 S-EU

(2c) G2 S-EU

(2d) G1 Turkish/Moroccan

(2e) G2 Turkish/Moroccan

Figure 2. Cumulative incidence of enrolment in training by household composition in different migrant origin groups. Source: Calculations by authors based on the MIA Panel (2005–2016).

5.2. Multivariate Results

As the descriptive findings do not control for confounding factors, hazard models were estimated to assess whether training uptake differs by household-type controlling for age and temporal variation in training uptake, as well as women's human capital characteristics (language proficiency, educational attainment, and work experience). Figure 3 shows cumulative incidence curves by household-type derived from discrete-time hazard models of training for each migrant origin group (parameter estimates are included in the Supplementary File). Overall, the results in Figure 3 suggest that controlling for the aforementioned characteristics does not substantially modify variation in uptake by household-type that emerged from the descriptive results.

For non-migrant origin women, the likelihood ratio test comparing Models 0 and 1 indicates that the gross differentials in training uptake by household-type are not significant. Although both temporal variation (Model 2a) and human capital characteristics (Model 2b) significantly affect enrolment in training, the variation in uptake by household-type remains limited and non-significant after controlling by confounding factors.

For G1 S-EU women, the likelihood ratio test comparing Model 0 and 1 indicates that including household typology significantly improves the model fit, indicating that training uptake varies significantly by household-type. Training uptake also varies significantly in terms

of age, calendar time and women's human capital characteristics. Controlling for temporal variation in uptake and human capital characteristics, the variation of training uptake by household-type is no longer significant (Δ-2LL = 6.97, Δdf = 9, p < 0.6398), indicating that differences in household dynamics between Southern European women are accounted for by women's differential human capital characteristics. Accordingly, Figure 3b shows that controls reduce the differentials in uptake by household-type.
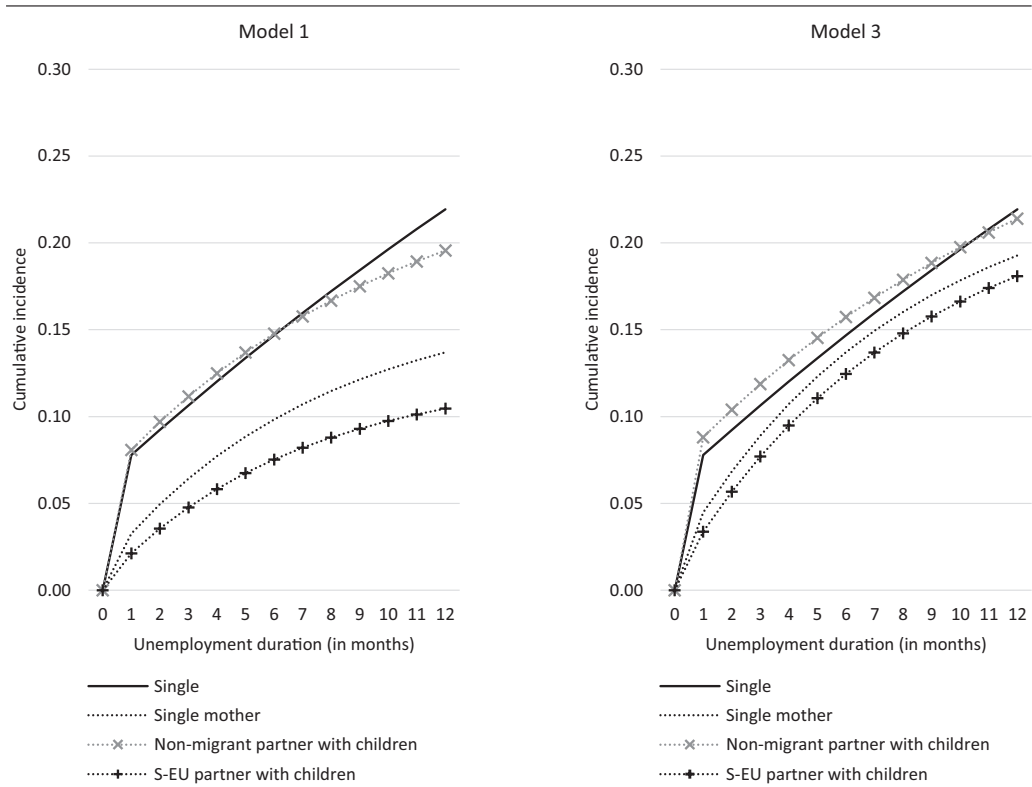
For G2 S S-EU women, gross differentials in training uptake by household-type are also significant. Additionally, period circumstances and human capital characteristics significantly affect training uptake. Moreover, the likelihood ratio test for the net effect of household-type indicates that variation of training uptake by household-type is still significant when controls are included (Δ-2LL = 38.08, Δdf = 15, p < 0.001). As a result, Figure 3c shows that the differentials in cumulative incidence of training by household-type remain largely unaffected after controlling for temporal variation and human capital characteristics.

For G1 Turkish/Moroccan women, enrolment in training is significantly differentiated by household-type. Similar to other groups, enrolment in training is subject to significant variation in terms of period circumstances and human capital characteristics. Additionally, the likelihood ratio test confirms that household-type continues to affect training uptake when controlling for
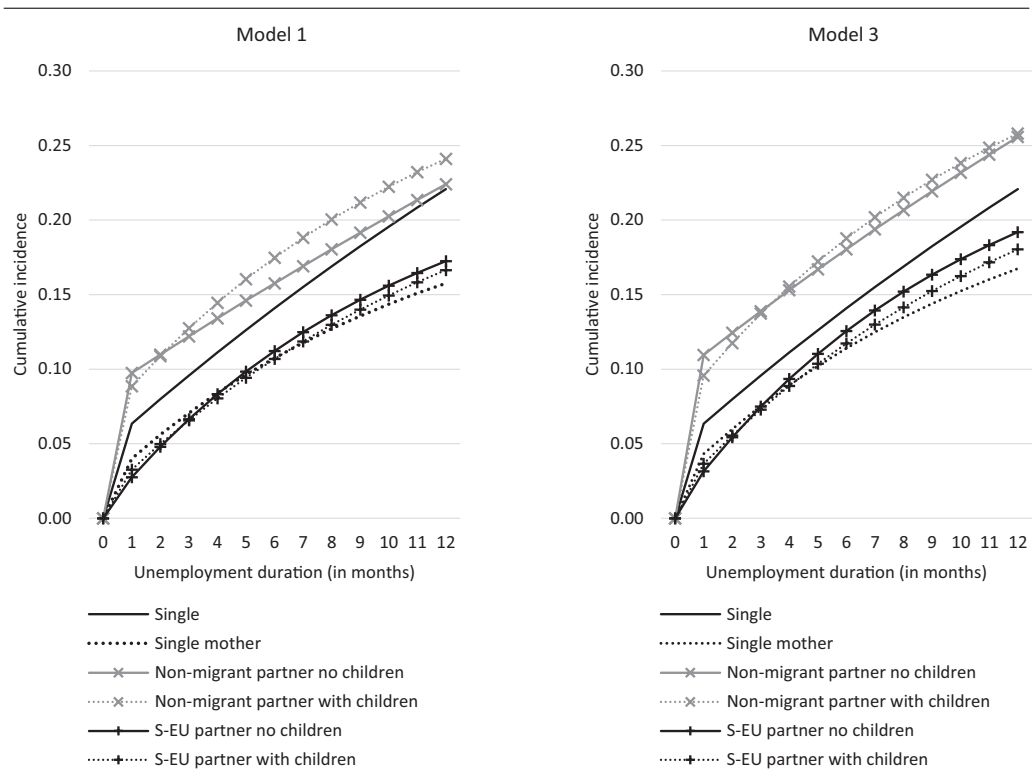
(3a) Non-migrant origin women
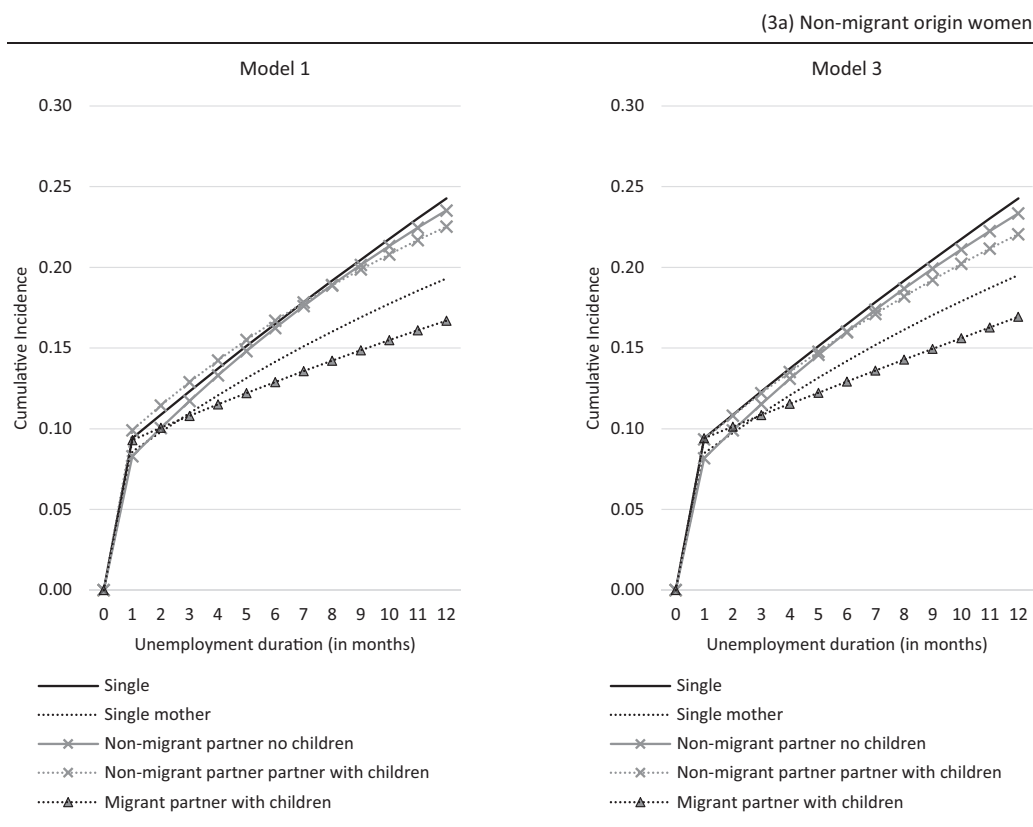
Likelihood ratio test comparing: Models 0 to 1 Δ-2LL = 10.39, Δdf = 12, p < 0.582, Models 1 to 3: Δ-2LL = 101.55, Δdf = 18, p < 0.000.
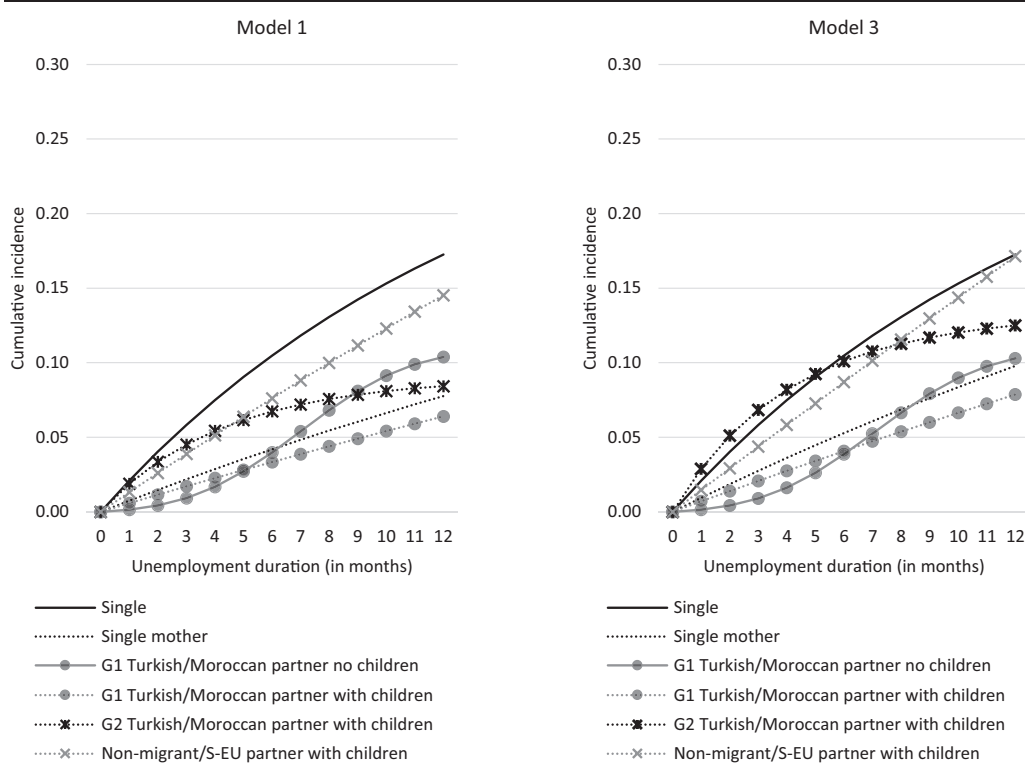
(3b) G1 S-EU women

Model 1

Model 3

Likelihood ratio test comparing: Models 0 to 1 Δ-2LL = 16.23, Δdf = 9, p < 0.062, Models 1 to 3: Δ-2LL = 57.39, Δdf = 21, p < 0.000.

(3c) G2 S-EU

Model 1

Model 3
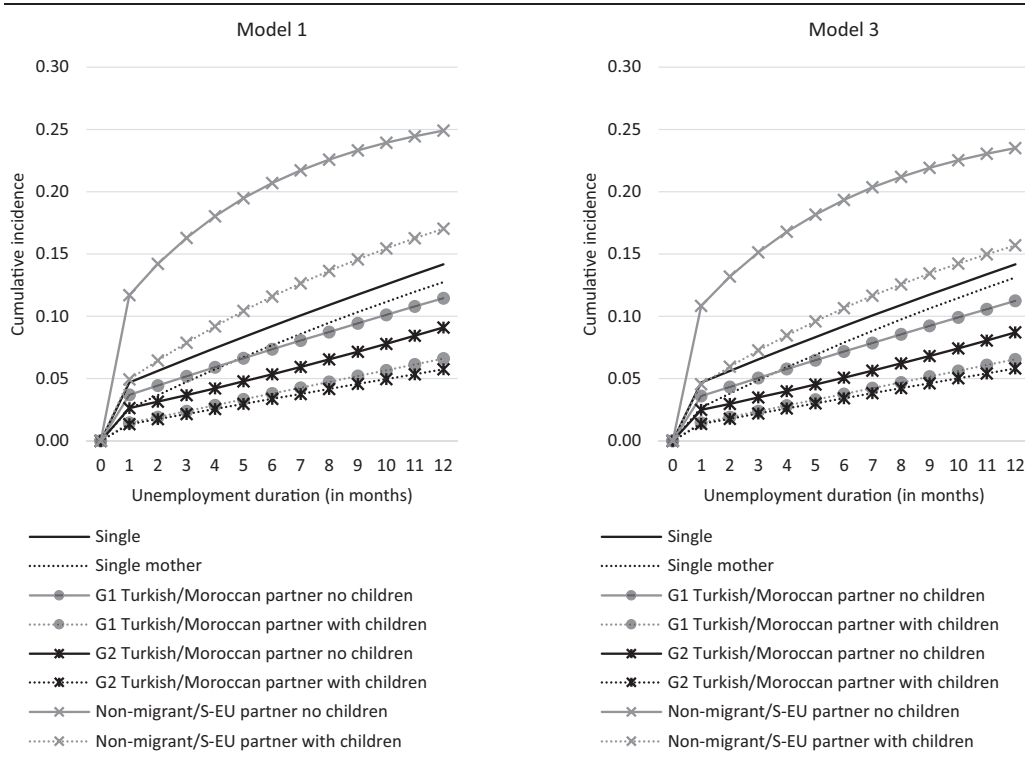

Likelihood ratio test comparing: Models 0 to 1 Δ-2LL = 42.00, Δdf = 15, p < 0.000, Models 1 to 3 (Δ-2LL = 149.32, Δdf = 21, p < 0.000).

(3d) G1 Turkish/Moroccan women

Model 1

Model 3

Likelihood ratio test comparing: Models 0 to 1 Δ-2LL = 76.82, Δdf = 15, p < 0.000, Models 1 to 3: Δ-2LL = 138.32, Δdf = 21, p < 0.000.

(3e) G2 Turkish/Moroccan women

Model 1

Model 3

Likelihood ratio test comparing: Models 0 to 1 Δ-2LL = 129.52, Δdf = 15, p < 0.5000, Models 1 to 3: Δ-2LL = 65.38, Δdf = 21, p < 0.000.

Figure 3. Cumulative incidence of training uptake by migrant origin group and household composition. Model 1 reflects gross differentials, while Model 3 controls for period variation and human capital characteristics. The sample is restricted to women who had been in unemployment between 2007 and 2016. Source: Calculations by authors based on the MIA Panel (2005–2016).

confounding factors (Δ-2LL = 62.12, Δdf = 15, p < 0.000). Consistent with the likelihood ratio test, Figure 3d illustrates that controlling for confounding factors does not substantially modify the cumulative incidence of enrolment in training by household-type.

For G2 Turkish/Moroccan women, the gross differentials in training uptake by household-type are also significant. Similar to other groups, period circumstances and human capital characteristics significantly affect enrolment in training. The likelihood ratio test also confirms that household-type continues to affect training uptake when controlling for confounding factors (Δ-2LL = 62.32, Δdf = 15, p < 0.000). Likewise, the results from Figure 3e illustrate that including controls does not substantially change variation in training uptake by household-type.

Finally, a likelihood ratio test for a pooled model combining all origin groups confirms that the association between women's household composition and training uptake varies between migrant origin groups (Δ-2LL = 118.38, Δdf = 48, p < 0.0000).

6. Discussion and Conclusion

Literature on ALMPs has increasingly focused on differential participation between socio-demographic groups and raises questions on how such differences can be reduced (Bonoli & Liechti, 2018; Cantillon, 2011). Despite the limited attention paid to household composition in studies of ALMP training uptake, the principles of life course theory suggest that women's training participation cannot be detached from their individual biographies and the path dependencies these create, the resources available to them, or their household and family contexts (Elder et al., 2003). These principles are all the more important for migrant households where migration policies and idiosyncrasies in migration histories have often shaped household dynamics in specific ways, in terms of economic opportunity structures, preferences and attitudes, as well as social networks. Linking the life course framework to specific theories on household dynamics—e.g., rational choice, preferences, and social network theories—suggests that household composition is a relevant factor affecting training uptake amongst women (hypothesis 1), but also that the association between household composition and training uptake is likely to play out quite differently for women of Southern European origin or Turkish or Moroccan origin, than for non-migrant origin women (hypothesis 2).

Using discrete-time hazard models and data from the MIA Panel, our results confirm hypothesis 1. Training uptake varies significantly by household composition, even when we control for previously identified determinants of training uptake. Additionally, the analyses show that the association between training uptake and women's household composition varies by origin group and migrant generation, confirming hypothesis 2.

With respect to the presence and origin of the partner, our findings show higher cumulative uptake among women with a non-migrant origin partner than single women, and higher uptake for single women than those with a migrant origin partner. These patterns yield different, yet complementary, tentative theoretical interpretations to be considered. Following rational choice theory, the partner's origin may be associated with different household strategies: specialisation (Becker, 1991) which might limit women's training uptake, versus cooperation (Oppenheimer, 1994) which is assumed to foster female participation in the labour market and ALMPs. Considering preference theory, household composition is potentially selective in terms of work-family preferences, thus affecting training uptake (Hakim, 2002). According to social network theory, the presence and origin of a partner are likely to influence knowledge regarding ALMPs, in turn affecting women's enrolment in training (Heckman & Smith, 2004; Lancee, 2010). Furthermore, our results suggest that the association between training uptake and presence and origin of the partner is more articulated for migrant than for non-migrant origin women, and particularly for the Turkish or Moroccan origin women. Whereas the specialisation model may be more prevalent among Turkish or Moroccan origin women, the cooperative model may be more prevalent among Southern European origin groups and non-migrant women, which may translate into differential work-family preferences (Khoudja & Fleischmann, 2015). Southern European and non-migrant origin women may also be less dependent on their partner's social capital regarding information on ALMPs than Turkish or Moroccan origin women.

Regarding the presence of children, we find lower training participation amongst women with co-resident children in all origin groups. Theoretical interpretations at this point also remain tentative. In line with rational choice theory, lower uptake is potentially associated with child-related financial considerations. According to preference theory, work-oriented women may temporarily forgo childbearing. Following social network theory, time restrictions may hamper networking and the gathering of information regarding ALMPs. The presence of children seems to affect training uptake more strongly among Turkish or Moroccan origin women than among Southern European origin or non-migrant women, which may reflect differential access to formal childcare (Biegel et al., 2021; Maes et al., 2021), or differential preferences regarding women's roles in the labour force and childcare (Khoudja & Fleischmann, 2015; Seibel & Hedegaard, 2017). Social capital available through children may increase the information regarding ALMPs to a larger extent for Southern European women than for Turkish or Moroccan women, as the former's socio-economic position is usually similar to the non-migrant origin group, living in the same neighbourhoods, and using the same childcare institutions (Gallagher & Gerstel, 2001).

The exploratory findings discussed in this article contribute to the literature by showing that household composition is an important dimension to consider when

analysing training uptake. Moreover, in line with the life course perspective, this article suggests that the effect of household composition on training uptake of non-migrant origin women cannot be generalised to women of other origin groups. In addition to the theoretical relevance of these findings, our results also bear particular policy relevance in terms of social inclusion, defined as the ability to fully participate in society (Allman, 2013; Chakravarty & D'Ambrosio, 2006). First, neglecting variation in household composition and the differential association between household composition and the enrolment in training programmes by migrant origin women entails the risk of missing an opportunity to weaken the so-called Matthew effects in ALMPs. Second, the finding that household composition matters for the uptake of training programmes, and that this association varies by migrant origin, suggest that the designs of ALMPs and work-family reconciliation policies, but also migration and integration policies should be carefully aligned to minimise incompatibilities, particularly considering challenges faced by women with migrant origins.

Having established that household composition is essential to understanding women's training uptake, particularly amongst migrant women, we present three fruitful avenues for future research. First, adopting more advanced research designs (e.g., panel regressions), are necessary to contextualise patterns of family formation and assess how a wider range of partner's characteristics and trajectories of family formation (e.g., age and number of children in the household) shape training uptake over the life course (Maes et al., 2019, 2021; Marynissen et al., 2020). Such an approach would allow for a more detailed assessment of the degree to which migrant-native differentials in training uptake are explained by variation in household characteristics. Second, our findings spur more detailed longitudinal research on how women's uptake of the more effective ALMPs is conditioned by their past labour market and civic integration trajectories and prior participation in ALMPs, whilst accounting for time-constant unobservables that may be correlated to both training uptake and household composition. Finally, although there is a weaker link between household composition and men's employment trajectories, it is important to empirically assess whether household composition is a differentiating factor regarding ALMP uptake amongst men.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Article

Towards a Common Public Culture? Boundaries to Belonging in Catalonia

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Abstract
The tension between the will to build a collective national identity and the increasing diversity of today's societies is one of the main challenges facing nation-states today. Catalan society, being no exception, also faces many challenges as diasporic identities and transnational loyalties proliferate, weakening both citizens' roots and their need to belong. The present article aims to identify situations and social spaces of discrimination and explicit/implicit racism, existing mechanisms and responses aimed at avoiding and dealing with these situations, and the groups they affect most in Catalan society. Through a participatory research, 23 focus groups were carried out—of between six and 12 participants—in eight territories (Pàmies et al., 2020). Results reveal diverse areas of discrimination, ranging from the violation of civil and political rights to that of economic, social, and cultural rights. The situations described and named by some as examples of micro-racism complicate the sense of belonging for many citizens, challenging the real possibility of achieving a pluricultural collective identity. Thus, to promote belonging and build a common public culture with which everyone feels identified, as promoted by official speeches, it is necessary to recognize plurality and diversity and promote citizen participation—and representation—in devising public actions, as well as encourage interactions that emphasize all common and shared aspects in a context conditioned by the reactive fragmentation of identity politics.

Issue
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1. Introduction

Societies today are, by definition, multicultural, complex, and diverse. Catalonia is no exception to this, and although the entire region does not fulfil the description of superdiversity (Phillimore et al., 2020; Vertovec, 2007), it is a place where people of diverse origins, social classes, religions, genders, ages, sexual orientations, and more live together. Indeed, Catalan society faces many challenges as diasporic identities and transnational loyalties proliferate, weakening both citizens' roots and their need to belong. It is also undeniable that the increase in migratory processes (Bernad & Llevot, 2018) has accelerated certain changes towards multiculturalism (Martínez-Ariño et al., 2011), polyethnicity, and multinationalism (Kymlicka, 1995), while social inequalities have been accentuated (del Griera, 2016).

All of these relatively new situations facing diversity—in its broadest possible meaning (Todd, 2011)—have forced nation-states to consider how they can successfully build civic communities that incorporate the heterogeneous values, ideals, and goals of all their citizens (Banks, 2007; Moodod, 2010). The tension between the desire to build a collective national identity and the reality of the diversity of their citizens is one of the main challenges facing nation-states in a highly globalized and interconnected context today (Banks, 2008; Moodod, 2021a). The "state" is understood here as the administrative apparatus through which the government answers to its responsibilities. For this reason, although

in the case of Catalonia it is, in many ways, a conflicting term, it can be directly or indirectly extrapolated to the region—our context of analysis.

For years, Catalonia, as well as Spain, has been characterized by fairly tolerant policies and attitudes toward migrants (Burchianti & Zapata-Barrero, 2014). However, as is the case throughout the European landscape, the increasing presence of far-right movements in the region is beginning to shake its 37 years of social-democratic rule, overlapping with other political processes of enormous significance such as the Catalan independence movement (Bernat & Whyte, 2019) or the feminist protest cycle that has turned feminism into one of the main vectors of politicization in Spain (Cabezas, 2022). These ongoing issues represent Spain's worst political crisis in 40 years and their effects loom over the political and social milieu in both Catalonia and Spain today, generating social fractures among their citizens (Byrne, 2021). Caught in the middle of this, in its 2017–2020 Citizenship and Migration Plan (Regional Government of Catalonia, 2017), Catalonia defined its firm will to implement an intercultural model to advance towards the construction of a "common public culture," with which all people living in the region can feel identified. However, this model has not been exempt from exclusionary dynamics and experiences of exclusion and violence, which have been repeatedly experienced by immigrant families and their children (Carrasco et al., 2011).

In Catalonia, but also globally, both diversity management policies and research carried out from the field of social sciences have focused mainly on the integration of migrant people and their children either by engaging host societies as well as migrants (two-way integration) or by acknowledging that the role played by the country of origin (three-way integration; see European Commission, 2020; Garcés & Penninx, 2016). These perspectives, which on too many occasions seems to reduce all the diversity of the territory to migrants and their families, have generated different dynamics and challenges to the critical dialogue that should elucidate us on the cultural dynamics of all citizens in Catalonia and their contribution to Catalan society.

Thus, there is an urgent need for research on the binomial of integration and sense of belonging due to the multiple tensions and hostility that have been installed in the territory, arising from reactions to identities and differences at both the local and global levels. This article wishes to contribute to the literature in this direction. Specifically, we investigate some of the situations of exclusion and violence that represent limiting factors to the development of a sense of belonging in Catalan territory. This development entails building a common public culture that includes all the diversities present within the framework of an intercultural model. This is aligned with European efforts and interest in managing diversity and making social cohesion feasible. The present article is closely linked with previous work developed by Yuval-Davis (2006) and Anthias (2009) about the processes of collective identification, which have overemphasized ethnic issues. However, these processes also form and prevail through other social categories, such as gender, age or life cycle, social class, political beliefs, and values (Narciso, 2021).

In the following sections, we analyse the diversity management model defined in Catalonia as well as other key ideas regarding the relationship between the construction of a common public culture, a collective identity, and a sense of belonging. We then expose the methodology employed throughout our research and discuss our main results following the report *Towards a Pluricultural Collective Identity* (Pàmies et al., 2020) commissioned by the School of Public Administration of Catalonia and the Secretariat for Equality, Migration and Citizenship (SIMC). Finally, the last section of our article presents the conclusions and limitations of the intercultural model in Catalonia, considering the axes of discrimination and the structural factors of oppression identified in the research.

1.1. The Diversity Management Model in Catalonia: Towards a Common Public Culture

Catalonia does not have full competence over migration issues, which has a direct link with how diversity is managed. Much of this competence rests with the Spanish central government. Despite this fact, the will of the Catalan government has been to fully manage migration issues, as evidenced by the signing of the *National Pact for Immigration* in 2008 (Regional Government of Catalonia, 2008). The agreement does not clearly specify Catalonia's position regarding diversity management, although the term "intercultural" appears five times in various sections of the document. The explicit desire to move towards an intercultural model has been reflected in other official documents as well, such as the 2017–2020 *Citizenship and Migration Plan* (Regional Government of Catalonia, 2017, pp. 18–19):

> Our aim is to address the diversity of Catalan society from the perspective of interculturalism, a perspective that seeks to put the ideas and actions of every person or group with specific cultural identities on an equal footing. From this perspective, dialogue, consensus, integration, and coexistence between these diverse cultures are favoured. From this perspective, the reality of conflicts is not denied, but rather their resolution is sought through knowledge, proximity, reconciliation and the search for shared common denominators. This process is building a Catalan public culture and a social ethic that helps us advance in the construction of a democratic, integrated and cohesive society.

However, we must not forget that dynamics referring to cultural diversity, and how these are managed by governments, must be viewed from a historical perspective

in a specific social and political context—or within a discourse, in Foucauldian terms. It is important to bear in mind that said context conditions the implementation of any plan—or "policy as text" (Ball, 1993)—as does its interpretation by the agents who execute it—related to the concept of "policy enactment" (Ball et al., 2012). Given the above, as Shaimi (2018) denounced, differences exist between the discursive and the practical levels. According to him, in practice, the majority perspective contemplates a homogenization of heterogeneity, and conceives autochthonous culture as unitary, relegating "diversity" to migrant people, even if the Catalan model is explicitly labelled as being intercultural. In addition, he states that discriminations preventing the exercise of the rights of freedom and equality, under what he describes as a "culturalization of politics," are not taken into account. In similar terms, Rubio-Carbonero and Zapata-Barrero (2017) point out that there is an implicit discriminatory tendency in the nationalist political discourse that prioritises own identity, culture, and nation. Consequently, the common public culture is not built on a neutral basis of real equality; rather there are structural conditioning factors and social dynamics that limit its construction. These will be our object of study in this article.

There would appear to be a close link between common public culture and the sphere of identity and belonging, and more specifically the construction of collective identities—similar to the concept of citizenship posited by Koopmans et al. (2005). However, these collective identities built on the basis of legal nationality present challenges and limitations related to aspects such as the current context of globalization, the potential homogenization of culture, the progressive disappearance of symbolic and physical borders (Benhabib, 2006; Gangahar, 2015; Pries, 2013), the trend towards increasingly diverse and plural societies (Kymlicka, 1995; Martínez-Ariño et al., 2011), and the plurality of people's identities and their multidimensional nature—that is, multiculturalism (Lapresta & Huguet, 2008; Moodod, 2021b). In fact, nationalism is based on the need to defend national culture, tradition, identity, language, and values, and this promotion of one own's identity has historically defined itself against other nations, races, and ethnicities (Rubio-Carbonero & Zapata-Barrero, 2017).

Therefore, although the sense of belonging to a territory can be developed in different ways, it is always a dynamic process that is socially constructed and intimately linked to power relations (Álvarez-Gálvez et al., 2018; Benhabib, 2006; Giesen & Seyfert, 2016; Pàmies et al., 2020). Such is the case of Spain and, by extension, Catalonia. The articulation of collective feelings of national belonging has been one of its backbones as well as in other countries. This articulation has occurred mainly through nationality, that is, legal recognition as a member of a specific socio-political community normatively regulated by codes that recognize certain freedoms and responsibilities. The state has been articulated as an instrument for the protection of the nation, configured as a collective identity to which all the people who form it belong. Thus, nationality policies have served to define a legally constructed "we" in opposition to a differing "they." In this sense, the role of diversity management policies and the administrative model adopted—whether assimilationist, multicultural, intercultural, etc.—have a strong impact on how identity and belonging processes are constructed, and consequently on the shared public culture sought in said policies.

2. Method

This article is part of a participatory research designed to answer the question: How can we promote the construction of a pluricultural collective identity based on public policies in Catalonia? We aimed to identify the potentialities, tensions, and limits of a collective identity—and, more specifically, to identify the situations and social spaces of discrimination and explicit/implicit racism, existing mechanisms and responses aimed at avoiding and dealing with these situations, and the groups most affected by them in Catalonia.

2.1. Data Collection and Participants

Twenty-three (23) focus groups were carried out, according to their inherent participatory nature, based on group processes (Farinosi et al., 2019). The focus groups—of between six and 12 participants—were held in eight territories of Catalonia, with a balanced participation of 173 people: Barcelona city (12.9%), Vic-Manlleu (16.2%), Olot (11.6%), Baix Penedès (13.9%), Alcarràs (13.9%), Premià de Mar (10.4%), Santa Coloma de Gramenet (9.8%), and Ripoll (11.6%). These territories were chosen based on the maximum possible variability and four inclusion criteria: (a) percentage and (b) origin of the migrated population, (c) size of the municipality, and its (d) location within Catalonia.

In choosing the territories and participants, we counted on the support of the SIMC and the participation of local decision-makers who were familiar with the contexts and acted as mediators. Their predisposition and support were key in forming the groups. Three focus groups were held in each territory with: (a) young people and young adults (28.3%); (b) decision-makers from the local and regional governments (42.2%); and (c) representatives of the associations and citizens in general (29.5%). Santa Coloma was the only territory where a focus group with representatives of the associations and citizens could not be held. Participation was higher in the case of women (65.3% of the decision-makers and 60.8% of the representatives of associations were women), except in the focus group of young people (44.9%). Most non-EU participants were found among the groups of entities (47.1%) and young people (30.6%). Only 12.3% of the participants in the local decision-maker groups

were born outside the EU. Regarding the place of birth, most of the participants were born in Catalonia (63.6%) and among those born outside of Spain, the highest proportion were born in Morocco (13.9%). 6.4% were born in other parts of Spain, 5.2% in other African countries, 5.2% in countries of South and Central America, 2.3% in other EU countries, 1.7% in countries of Western Asia, and 1.7% in countries of South Asia. Of the 173 participants, more than half (71.8%) had higher studies, 18.2% had post-compulsory education or vocational studies, and only 10% had compulsory education.

The focus groups followed a semi-structured script with the main aim of involving all participants in a conversation about "pluricultural identity." The participatory dynamics consisted of three different sections: First, based on a projective technique using Gianni Rodari's story *Chi Sono Io?*, an introspective brainstorming activity was conducted about identity and experiences around it using emic labels. Then, participants engaged in a situated reflection on the concepts of individual and collective identity, before finally exploring different facilitating and limiting factors in the construction of a pluricultural collective identity, discussing the ideal and real role of policies in fostering this.

A previous step taken in this study to prepare the focus group strategy was to hold a meeting with the entire research team to discuss our positionalities and go beyond self-reflexivity. We put into practice the participatory dynamics designed to raise awareness and provoke reflection based on our individual and collective identities and as socially and culturally specific subjects. This also allowed us to create time and a space to engage in critical views while remaining open to disagreement. It is important to note that the team was made up of researchers from various universities, as well as public policy consultants, decision-makers, and researchers from civil society.

2.2. Data Analysis

The focus groups were recorded and later transcribed, and the transcription was then deductively and inductively content analysed with the support of the CADQAS NVivo 12 software. To analyse the findings in greater depth, the following progressive levels of reduction and theoretical structuring of the information were followed: (a) creation of a filing system for the collected data; (b) segmentation, identification, and grouping of units of meaning into initial descriptive categories, initially defined deductively; (c) segmentation and identification of analytical units of meaning from which—based on the discovery, encoding and interpretation of all data—(d) an overall model finally emerged. It is precisely at this last analytical level that Braun and Clarke (2006) state the content analysis begins, which gives rise to the emergence of the main categories from triangulation, fundamentally based on the constant comparative method. The research process followed embraces

the Autonomous University of Barcelona's code of good research practices. In addition, throughout the process, the research team took into consideration the six key axes proposed by the European Commission for a project to be aligned with responsible research and innovation principles, ensuring compliance with the dimensions of citizen participation, gender equality, science education, open access, ethics, and governance.

3. Results

The results section has been divided into the main fields of discrimination identified by participants: (a) labour market and housing; (b) social institutions and public administration; and (c) education.

3.1. Discrimination in the Fields of Labour Market and Housing: Access and Conditions

Two of the fields of discrimination identified are related to access to the labour market and housing. First, participants in all the focus groups agreed that explicit racism occurs in job recruitment processes in Catalonia, based on the alleged origin and/or physical appearance of applicants. In fact, this was identified as a widespread phenomenon in the labour market in general, but most especially in those private sectors with little to no effective regulation in terms of recruitment criteria—that is, little control of non-discriminatory processes. Regarding this, one employee at a public occupation service stated:

> Companies tell you: "We don't want Moroccans." Like this: "We don't want Moroccans!" As an employee at a public institution, I must send them all the applications, but it's the companies who end up choosing. (associations, FG2)

The above intervention illustrates a very common topic in the focus groups: In Catalonia, the business sector often shares this pejorative view towards migrant people—or racialized people in general regardless of their migration background—which excludes them from certain work positions, especially when these positions involve direct contact with customers:

> I remember that one day I was with a Moroccan guy, and he asked me: "Why here in this city don't we see migrant people working directly with the public?" He asked it clearly. And the truth is that most people don't want migrant people, especially sub-Saharan people, dealing with customers face-to-face. (associations, FG3)

This situation creates an image that young people interiorize even when they are still in the compulsory stages of the school system, thus conditioning their future aspirations and pathways. In this regard, a worker in the non-governmental sector revealed both a perceived-as-

foreigner teenager's low future perspectives of access to the labour market and his interiorization of the marginalized position he occupies at school in terms of academic (in)capacity:

> A 12-year-old boy told me: "I know I'm not good at studying, I've already been told. When I turn 16, what can I expect? What can I expect here in this city?" And you need to be sincere and tell him: "If society has advanced enough and you go to a bar and they have a CV of someone called Marc or Manel [used as (stereo)typical traditional Catalan names] and another CV of someone called Mohammed, and they choose you….I'd love to tell you that they'd choose you, Mohammed, because you're worth so much, but I'm afraid they wouldn't." Of course it's prejudice, and I hope I'm wrong, but this is still happening here in this city. (associations, FG3)

The possibility of obtaining a job seems to increase only when the perceived-as-foreigner individual accumulates the necessary social capital, has good references or even a direct recommendation from a local person—something that is not required for those people not perceived as foreigners. In the same vein, the following quote illustrates the racist discourse of the speaker when she recognizes that, unless she has extraordinary information, she will first hire a local white person:

> They'll hire Mohammed [used as a (stereo)typical non-traditional Catalan name] if Mohammed has good references from people you know. One day this black guy came to me and told me: "This guy works with me and he's a very good person." So, I said: "Perfect, I don't mind hiring him." But if you see two random CVs, you think at first: "I'll chose the easiest option, the local, the white guy." (associations, FG3)

This last quote, which was followed by a discussion within the focus group, evinces the complexity of views and experiences from participants. Far from having a monolithic discourse, the participants manifested differential nuances, contradictions, and even conflicts. Still, the degree of consensus within and between most focus groups was remarkable.

Moving beyond difficulties regarding access to also consider working conditions, the following quote provides a good example of a common reality in different areas of Catalonia, especially in those where agriculture represents one of the main economic sectors. Not having the official documents—which might itself become a limiting factor in developing a feeling of belonging to a certain territory, for most rights to citizenship are then neglected—is used by some owners of agricultural businesses to enforce exploitative working conditions:

> Regarding working conditions, it's all the same, I go to workers' settlements and I see…I am told cer-

tain things…I feel embarrassed. "You don't have official documents? Great, I'll hire you, but I'll only pay three euros per hour." So, owners are committing two offences: First, they hire the workers without a contract and without access to the social security system, and, second, workers are paid less than the minimum wage. (associations, FG9)

Along with the labour market, another space where discrimination was identified is access to housing. This topic also emerged in most territories, especially in the associations and the young people focus groups. Firstly, there is an explicit discourse on the part of homeowners regarding not being willing to rent houses or apartments to individuals perceived as foreigners, consequently denying them the right to housing. Secondly, abuse of power was also identified concerning housing conditions, in those cases where access is achieved. Some workers in the non-governmental sector evidenced this in the following quotes:

> I went to a real estate agency and said: "We need some apartments." And they replied: "We have a problem, because homeowners don't want to rent their apartment to black people, Moors, or Romanians." And I flipped out….Others accept renting [out] to them, but when you go to visit the apartment with the clients, you get embarrassed because of the very high prices….Some house owners take advantage of people's vulnerability. (associations, FG12)

> We have big problems with people who have a permanent job and enough income to rent an apartment…but we can't offer them an apartment, even though some are empty, because house owners don't want to. (associations, FG3)

This situation, in which house owners explicitly order real estate agencies not to rent their apartments or houses to certain people represents a clear violation of their rights under an evident racist or xenophobic discourse—despite the Catalan and Spanish legal frameworks prohibiting such discriminatory criteria. As the literature points out (e.g., Álvarez-Gálvez et al., 2018; Benhabib, 2006; Giesen & Seyfert, 2016; Pàmies et al., 2020), these situations of discrimination related to housing and the labour market might difficult the creation of a common sense of belonging—which is socially constructed—for they imply power relations with strong consequences for certain people. All this can be illustrated in the following quote:

> There is inequality regarding access to the labour market, and there is more unemployment depending on your origin: This naturally doesn't facilitate your feeling part of a community, being discriminated against workwise. (young person, FG5)

3.2. Discrimination at the Institutional Level: Administration, Police, and Political Parties

A second field that has been identified is related to institutional discrimination—that is, the discrimination produced by institutional structures, and, by extension, undertaken by actors from public institutions—experienced by marginalized people or groups because of their origin, nationality, or physical appearance. The situations identified arise, first, due to legislation and the public administration, through the actions of the state security forces, and in situations experienced in the daily life of politics.

Firstly, the dynamics of the administration itself are identified as a field of discrimination. A violation of social and political rights was mentioned in most groups (e.g., people who have settled in a municipality not being able to exercise their right to vote). As one participant stated: "We must think in terms of citizenship and political rights if we want to promote pluricultural collective identities." However, the following quote illustrates how the "foreign affairs" competencies of the state have been delimited over time and how this is a limiting factor when it comes to achieving a sense of belonging:

> We [migrant people] first depended on the Ministry of the Interior, 10, 12, 15 years ago, "because we were criminals"; now, we depend on the Ministry of Labour, "because we are workers." Until there is a Ministry of Citizenship or something that involves people just for the sake of living here, of migrating here…we are categorized, and this label has impacts on you. (associations, FG6)

There was a strong consensus among participants in all the territories regarding the restrictive nature of the current legal framework to achieve civil and political rights. In addition to that, they also agreed on difficulties regarding access to public service, which reduces the presence of people from different origins in those services:

> It's true that the legal framework is totally against us….This has many limiting consequences on [migrant] flows, irregularity…it prevents you [from feeling a sense of belonging]….For instance, regarding family reunification procedures, people must wait 10 [to] 15 years to be able to reunite with their family. (administration, FG7)

This unjust situation is reproduced in the behaviour of the security forces—as emerged especially in most young people focus groups. In general, their discriminatory activities are also part of the everyday micro-racism to which young people, the children of migrants, are especially exposed.

> My sister, my mother, my little brother, and I were at Barcelona airport. My sister wasn't with us, she was in the car waiting for us with her husband, and the police officers stopped her because they saw my sister with my mother, who was wearing a hijab, and they asked for our passports….After that, they asked me for my ID card, which my mother has, and they also asked us for our passports, they asked us how old my little brother was, they asked him what his name was, if he was happy….And I didn't understand why they did that….Why that obsession with asking migrants questions? (young person, FG2)

Through the narration of a young woman's experience with her family in the last quote—which constitutes just one example of the many experiences that emerged about racism in the police—the arbitrariness associated with prejudice is pointed out. In other words, police officers tend to have more suspicions about people perceived as foreigners not behaving in a "civilized way," to the point of often questioning their legal status. These situations occur constantly, as the participants stated, and especially, although not only, among young people:

> I took the bus with my daughter and there were two police officers standing at the bus entrance and asking for our passports. My friend said: "Are you asking me for my passport? It's because I'm black, right? In fact, I was born here, and I haven't done anything. Tell me what I have done." She confronted him and the other [police officer] got embarrassed. In the end, she gave him [the passport], but not without yelling at the police officer first. (young person, FG2)

In the field of politics, as stated especially in two territories, the increasing presence of hate speech from the far right, but also less explicitly from other parties, fosters the feeling of certain marginalized groups being excluded from the common public culture. These groups become a focus of attack because the far-right makes them responsible for the faults in the system. In this regard, a young woman explained an experience in her town, where she was heckled on social networks:

> We went to a demonstration with a sign that one of my colleagues had made, that said: "Feminism will be anti-racist or won't be." And the people from the local radio asked us for a photo; lots of people asked us for photos with the sign. And then the photo was posted, and we appeared there, in that and other photos. Well, so the Vox political leader posted the photo on his Facebook saying: "Look at what I found….What represents us in this city." And he let his followers comment with discrimination and hate comments…."They should go and defend their feminism in their country…fucking Blacks, but what are they doing here? If I caught them"….And I think they said they would kill us or something….Well, a lot of things, and we couldn't report it either. (young person, FG2)

The discourse here illustrates the explicit racism of a specific political leader, but, at the same time, it evidences the position of some citizens and their adherence to discriminatory and racist comments that mark the limits of otherness and the boundaries of "us" and "them," especially against certain groups (Carrasco et al., 2011).

3.3. Discrimination in the Field of Education: Teachers and Families

Several discriminatory episodes were identified in the field of education, mostly by young people from a migrant background, but also by educators and other education-related workers participating in the focus groups, with a high degree of consensus between territories. The educators pointed out problems related to segregation across schools, whereas the young participants highlighted segregation within the schools. In other words, these young people identified the fact that some teachers had lower expectations of them, and that they were mostly placed in the lowest groups in those schools with allegedly based-on-ability, homogenous grouping practices—which, as has been stated in international research, has a negative effect on the students in question. Above and beyond this, however, discrimination experiences also reach their families: Despite there being extensive literature that refutes it (El Mouali, 2021; Leiva, 2011), some mothers from a migrant background are considered less capable and even less interested in their children's education—as stated in two territories:

> At the school, we also find that families' associations constantly criminalize women, who, of course, don't attend the meetings because they don't understand the teachers. So, there's often the stigma that those women look after their children in a bad way, that they're not interested in their lives. (administration, FG10)

Additionally, in the field of non-formal education, the participants in the focus groups also pointed out other discriminatory situations experienced by children from a migrant background:

> When I was a child, nobody wanted to take the migrant boys from my football team in their car. I mean, well, my dad didn't mind….In this case, one was called Mohamed and the other one Abdullatif, but nobody wanted to take them in their car, you know? Their families couldn't take them to the matches, and the other families didn't want to take care of them. It was like: "They are rubbish, you take them." (young person, FG5)

This final quote is a harsh example of the explicit racist situations experienced by these migrant children, in this case within a football team, which represent a clear obstacle to creating a sense of belonging.

4. Conclusion

In 2007, the Council of Europe called for societies to become more plural and democratic, a move that necessarily entails them becoming both pluricultural and multilingual. In line with this, the diversity management model proposed by the Regional Government of Catalonia (2008, 2017) has been defined as intercultural and claims to promote the construction of a common or shared public culture based on "mutual accommodation between the various cultural groups" (Regional Government of Catalonia, 2017, pp. 13–14). However, years on from its conception, we can see that policy efforts have been limited. In addition, research trends demonstrate that we still know little about the life experiences and collective perspectives of many citizens, such as young generations in Catalonia (see, for instance, Narciso, 2021), who are characterized more than ever by an unprecedented diversity of origins and experiences. The results of the present study contribute to identifying factors that clearly restrict the construction of this common public culture and a sense of belonging to the territory among all citizens.

Fieldwork has revealed that intercultural education, understood by some as the "conflict prevention device" (Leclercq, 2002) or the "coping strategy" (Batelaan, 2003) for learning to live harmoniously together, which has been used to promote democracy through a dialogue that seeks to avert conflict (Todd, 2011), has failed to achieve its aims. Results show that there are discrepancies between political discourses and official documents—which promote interculturality and mutual recognition of diversity based on a shared public culture—and what happens in practice, certain dynamics of discrimination having been constructed historically (see, e.g., Singh & vom Hau, 2016) and still being constructed in everyday life. To adopt Ball's (1993) terminology, while policy as text points towards an intercultural model of diversity management, in practice, this model is conditioned and limited by exclusive discriminatory dynamics that permeate different social spheres and make such policy as text deviate from reality.

In particular, the results exposed above, which represent the main areas of consensus among participants from all the territories, point out diverse areas of discrimination, some of them involving the violation of civil and political rights (among others, obstacles to access to citizenship and the right to vote, difficulties in accessing the public function, recognition of academic qualifications and skills, submission to greater vigilance by the security forces). Others are linked to the violation of economic, social, and cultural rights (educational rights, greater difficulties in finding work, and obstacles to house access). A part of the explanatory factors of this reality has to do with the effects of the processes of exclusion or discrimination that manifest ethnic coordinates (mainly in access), including family origin, religion, language, etc. (Parella, 2016). Most of the study participants consider

that all of these barriers, without exception, "complicate their belonging" to the Catalan territory and the real possibilities of truly achieving a pluricultural collective identity. There is a persistence of what some participants consider to be micro-racism, while others, without naming it explicitly, describe situations that reveal the difficulties they face in feeling identified with an environment that sends them messages of not belonging in their daily lives. This can be related to the effect of post-racial universalist approaches adopted by current European practices of interculturalism which might be falling short in the fight against discrimination since they are making it more difficult to challenge societal prejudices and structural racism (Lentin, 2020; Rodríguez-García, 2022).

Therefore, to achieve belonging and build a common public culture in which all of the people of Catalonia feel identified, as promoted by official speeches, it is essential to work to achieve effective equality of rights, duties, and opportunities from the point of view of equity and social justice. It is also necessary to recognize plurality and diversity and promote citizen participation in devising public actions, as well as encourage interactions, emphasizing all common and shared aspects (Pàmies et al., 2020). At a governance level, this is possible by addressing each of the five core critiques on which recent criticism on integration has focused: normativity; negative objectification of migrants as "other"; an outdated image of society; methodological nationalism; and a narrow focus on migrants in the factors shaping integration processes (Spencer & Charsley, 2021). From the educational field, we believe that education can play a major role in doing this, since diversity is mobile and complex, and thus requires approaches that foster constructive multiculturalism to combine a flexible, mobile, and different idea of cultural identity with a claim for equity and social justice against discrimination and oppression (Torres & Tarozzi, 2020).

The social dynamics that generate discrimination, such as those that have been explored throughout this article, must necessarily be redirected. In this respect, it should be noted that, although this research has identified dynamics and discriminatory discourses referring to different axes of oppression, the most prevalent boundaries to belonging that have been mentioned relate especially to racism, discrimination based on beliefs, and legal status. Thus, we must consider that discrimination and structural violence—such as racism, economic and social inequality, and the violation of rights, among others—represent clear obstacles to a sense of belonging and the construction of a common public culture. In this sense, research shows that the experiences of "everyday bordering" (Yuval-Davis et al., 2018) that affect large sectors of the population, but especially migrants and their children, can lead to the generation of reactive identities that further aggravate the risks of social exclusion. This article has specifically focused on all those areas of discrimination that limit and hinder the achievement of a shared public culture in Catalonia. In this sense, focus

groups are well fitted for collecting data on this topic but they have been underused, especially in literature on belonging and identity. This approach is useful and necessary to further discourse analysis. Besides, actual participatory ethnographic research in this field is also indispensable for a deeper understanding of the intersecting experiences and effects of discrimination while exploring points of convergence and divergence to build a shared public culture. We also call for new scholarship that moves towards an intersectional analysis and thinking, to address and find responses to the areas that limit and hinder belonging and participation in contexts of diversity.

Undoubtedly, we are faced with a challenge that not only raises questions related to social integration but also questions the very policies of redistribution, recognition, and participation. This forces us to rethink the conditions offered to accommodate minorities, but also how their public recognition is made possible, how opportunities and a sense of belonging are made available to them, as well as how national citizenship is built. Equal rights and opportunities must be a social imperative that unites us all. We cannot remain blind to differences and inequalities and impassive to how individual and group alterities are constructed. As Moodod (2010) stated, we need a conception of equal citizenship, but also mechanisms to be able to address all forms of structural minority and daily exclusion, ending the spaces of impunity of certain groups that do not favour social cohesion, and also reviewing a regulatory framework that substantially discriminates against many people.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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COGITATIO

Article

Beyond the "Trans Fact"? Trans Representation in the Teen Series *Euphoria*: Complexity, Recognition, and Comfort

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Abstract
Recent anti-LGBTQ+ discourse has increased the threat of violence against people who do not follow the cisheteronormative mandates. To face these dialectics, the media can offer alternative discourses, in particular by providing realistic and non-stereotyped LGBTQ+ representations. Media portrayals can be seen as both positive and negative. On one hand, they may offer stereotypical and narrow representations, but on the other, they can include representations that can become aspirational models and improve visibility. The objective of this article is to explore this second perspective by analyzing the representation of Jules, a trans female character from the American series *Euphoria* (Levinson et al., 2019–present). To this end, we conducted a close reading analysis (Castelló, 2008) of the first season of the series. The results show three axes of representation that move away from the traditional portrayal of trans characters: (a) a narrative that moves beyond the "trans fact" and presents complex and plural stories, (b) a representation of the trans individual as an element of value and love, away from fetishism, and (c) a link between the trans realm and specific spaces of comfort and freedom.

Issue
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1. Introduction

In recent times, anti-LGBTQ+ violence has drastically intensified in most countries. Many consider that the growing popularity of the openly LGBTQ+-phobic far-right has led to an increase in hate crimes against the LGBTQ+ community, mainly fueled by their anti-LGBTQ+ discourse (Anarte, 2021; Korolczuk, 2020; Moreau, 2018; Reid, 2021).

In order to counteract these anti-human-rights dialectics, the media can serve as tools to offer alternative discourses, in particular by providing realistic and non-stereotyped LGBTQ+ representations. A broader and more diverse LGBTQ+ representation in media products can contribute to generating pedagogies that reduce social prejudice towards LGBTQ+ people and also offer aspirational models for them to identify with. TV series have the potential to help portray LGBTQ+ people in an everyday way.

From an evolutionary perspective, the media representation of LGBTQ+ people is understood as a process that has evolved through three main stages: invisibility (absence of representation, censorship, omission, underrepresentation, etc.), imperfect representation (stereotyping, only-negative representations, ridiculization, simplistic representations, stigmatizing portrayal, cliché-ridden, queerbaiting, etc.), and fair representation (effective representation, rich and multi-layered

portrayal, positive models, complex and realistic characters, diversity of roles and identities, etc.; see Ventura et al., 2019). It is important to note that these stages are not rigid categories of analysis, but rather a guiding classification that allows us to understand the complexities of the LGBTQ+ representation in the media. A media product could therefore fluctuate between two different stages depending on which elements of its representation are analyzed.

The inclusion of LGBTQ+ characters in fictional products has increased in recent decades, favoring a transition that has left behind the first stage of invisibility. The ingredient that marks the step towards the next stage is basically measured in quantitative values: the amount of LGBTQ+ characters included in media products. GLAAD, a media monitoring organization that advocates for fair LGBTQ+ representation, has published an annual report since 2005 analyzing the number of regular and recurring LGBTQ+ characters in TV series. These reports show a rise in representation from 1.4% of regular characters in the 2005–2006 season, to 9.1% in the 2020–2021 season (GLAAD, 2021).

However, a quantitative increase in LGBTQ+ characters is not enough to achieve fair representation, and most media products are still in a stage of imperfect representation. Furthermore, although this increased representation may be positive on the surface, it is not free from flaws. Media inclusion is marked by the homonormative mandate and privileges LGBTQ+ people who conform to the cisheteronormative model, that is, men, white, Western, middle or upper class, in monogamous relationships, and with a normative gender identity and expression (Francisco Amat et al., 2020; Robinson, 2016). Thereby, gay cisgender men receive much more media attention, while trans and gender diverse people receive much less recognition and are not as positively represented in the media (Capuzza & Spencer, 2017). Most media portrayals of trans women are often stigmatizing and reinforce harmful stereotypes (Glover, 2016). In this sense, trans women are frequently linked to clandestinity, tragedy, and rejection, depicted as sex workers, victims of mockery and violent attacks, and objects of disgust to cisgender protagonists (Solomon & Kurtz-Costes, 2018; Vegas, 2019).

In addition, it is common for the fiction narratives including trans characters to focus exclusively on the "trans fact," that is, when the fact of being trans is the main attribute of this character within the plot. So that the character's journey within the series storytelling is focused on their particularity as a trans individual, which leads to limited characters that rarely explore a richer and multi-layered portrayal. The "trans fact" narrative involves stories centered on the "coming out" and the "transition story": the hormonal process, surgery, depression, struggles and traumas, among others (Funk & Funk, 2016; Tortajada et al., 2021). As a consequence, trans characters tend to occupy support roles but never the lead (Vir et al., 2018).

In recent years, the media have witnessed a constant rise in visibility with a strong trend towards an increasingly positive representation of trans people (Stryker, 2017). Nonetheless, what for some is understood as a positive representation, for others is actually the deployment of logics of transnormativity. Transnormativity privileges trans people who display attributes valued by the cisheteronormative society (chiefly, normative gender expression sticking to gender-binary and heterosexuality), and omit alternative explanations of gender non-conformity that do not fit the medical and legal standards (Johnson, 2016). Transnormativity also reinforces the tropes of the good trans person and the bad queer (Girshick, 2008).

Transnormativity displays a narrow view of the acceptable representations of trans and gender diverse people (Mocarski et al., 2019), which may serve to strengthen the gender binary rather than disassemble it (Funk & Funk, 2016). According to Mocarski et al. (2019, p. 425), these types of representations may narrow the publicly accepted trans identification forms, "thereby stigmatizing those who either do not meet these fully binary and fully transitioned standards." Therefore, trans individuals who do not adhere to transnormativity are more likely to suffer transphobic situations (Miller, 2019), especially because they do not match the transnormative mediated portrayals that the general public is used to.

Following the binary logic, tropes of authenticity via bodily transformation (including surgery or hormone therapy) have enabled transgender to become culturally legible through the wrong body trope (Lovelock, 2017), reinforcing the myth that the trans person lives in the wrong body and that, therefore, their appearance needs to be corrected (Missé, 2018; Mocarski et al., 2019). This assimilationist and exclusionary ideal of "authentic" and "acceptable" transgender subject implants in trans individuals the constant feeling of being incomplete subjects, constantly waiting to reach their true authenticity and acceptance based on external approval.

However, not all media representations of trans people have negative consequences. The media also allows exposure to trans people, which is beneficial to those who are discovering their own identities (Mocarski et al., 2019). It can especially benefit young people questioning their gender (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011). Many scholars have highlighted that media representations of transgender people have significant implications for the identity development of young trans people (Kosenko et al., 2018; McInroy & Craig, 2015; Ringo, 2002). Previous research has also concluded that these representations have an impact on trans people's lives since the perceptions and behavior of people they meet are influenced by the media (Gillig et al., 2018; Heinz, 2012; Shewade, 2020).

Within the "imperfect representation" stage (Ventura et al., 2019), media portrayals can be seen as both positive and negative. On one hand, they may

offer stereotypical and narrow representations, but on the other, they include various representations that can become aspirational models and improve visibility. Some specific media products show an approach that is closer to a "fair representation" stage. The objective of this article is to explore this perspective by analyzing the trans representation in the American series *Euphoria* (Levinson et al., 2019–present), which includes a trans female character: Jules Vaughn.

2. *Euphoria* and Jules: The HBO Teen Series and the Trans Leading Character

Euphoria is the first American teen drama series produced by the HBO company (Porter, 2019). It is based on the Israeli series of the same name broadcasted in 2012. The first season of the series premiered in 2019, and in 2020 and 2021 two special episodes focusing on Jules and Rue were released. *Euphoria*'s views were not significantly high on the days of its premiere, but they were significant afterward on the viewing platform (Porter, 2019).

Euphoria is one of the most discussed and polemic teen series from the last few years. The series explores the experiences and conflicts of a group of teenagers from an American suburb where the middle and lower-middle classes coexist. The character of Rue, a 17-year-old racialized girl with disordered substance use, narrates and guides the story through its eight episodes. In addition, each episode focuses on each of the different young protagonists with whom Rue shares high school and/or social relationships. The series explains to us how these teens coexist and navigate through alcohol and drug use, sex, unstructured families, situations of anguish and stress, "new" identities and their relationships with their own bodies, among others (Goodman, 2019; Kaufman et al., 2021; Masanet, 2021). In a way, *Euphoria* presents a generational break that produces a large distance between the adult and young characters.

One of the main characters of the series is Jules, a young trans woman who, after her mother abandons her, moves in with her father in the same neighborhood. The impact of the series and especially of the character of Jules, played by trans actress Hunter Schafer, has made this actress an important public figure and also a (media) symbol of the LGBTQ+ struggles. Before starring in *Euphoria*, she became famous for her appearance on the cover of *Teen Vogue* magazine in 2017 and for modeling for different brands such as Dior and Versace (Megía, 2019). But it was her participation in *Euphoria* that made her a symbol of the collective.

Despite *Euphoria*'s popularity and the media impact of its protagonists, there are still few academic studies that analyze the representations in the series and the audience's discourses about it. One of the few studies is that of Kaufman et al. (2021), linked to the meanings produced by the audience in relation to drug abuse and mental illness. However, in contrast, there are no studies focused on the character of Jules and her experiences in the series as a young trans woman. This is a key element of *Euphoria* and, for this reason, the series has included on its official website (www.hbo.com/euphoria) a section of resources linked to LGBTQ+ organizations and groups.

3. Materials and Methods

The main objective of this study is to analyze the representation of Jules, the trans female character from the American series *Euphoria*, focusing on the construction of the character and exploring her narratives and interactions with other characters in the series.

To do this, we made a close reading (Castelló, 2008) of the first season of the series. This technique is a method widely applied within cultural studies in the context of contemporary popular culture (Brummett, 2019; Castelló, 2008), and specifically for analyzing fiction series and films (e.g., Araüna et al., 2018; Fedele & Masanet, 2021). In this article, the analysis has been organized into four areas following previous studies carried out by the researchers of the project (Fedele & Masanet, 2021):

- Context: historical-social setting, environments, and spaces.
- Aesthetics: formal, visual, sound elements, technical codes expressed through the construction of the shots, the rhythm of the storytelling, the soundtrack, etc.
- Storytelling: plots, characters, actions, and time structure. Special attention is paid to the most important narrative threads in the story. The main characters are identified and their actions, objectives, and plot resolutions are observed.
- Content and meaning: themes, problems, subjects, and institutions. The main conflict lines are detected in relation to the ideological code that gives coherence to the text and places it in a certain discourse.

Finally, the inductive/deductive analysis process followed five specific steps in which the three researchers in the team worked together, by discussing and sharing their different views:

1. The series was watched several times in order to detect and record the key elements of the three areas of analysis.
2. One of the viewings was specifically focused on the storytelling, noting and analyzing the main plots in which the character of Jules occupied an important position. We analyzed the threads of each Jules' story and the actions of the characters in them.
3. The data from the analysis were contrasted with the theoretical background and previous studies

around the construction of trans female characters in fiction.

4. The data were discussed and a joint final interpretation was reached.
5. The analysis was written up and also the final draft of the article.

Finally, it is necessary to mention the position from which the authors of this article speak and construct the research analysis. We approach the trans issue from the feminist and trans theories (see, among others, Butler, 2006; Halberstam, 2017; Lugones, 2010; Stryker, 2017). However, we are always aware of the implicit limitations in the construction of our discourse due to being cis, white, heterosexual, gay, and Euro-centered people. Our situation of privilege within the scheme of relationships of power and oppression must be taken into account to understand how we structure the analysis objects. Even so, this reflection on the place we occupy allows readers to understand from which "place" we "speak" (Spivak, 1988). Finally, like previous research, such as that of Tortajada et al. (2021), our study is situated within the framework of transfeminism and tries to be useful for the well-being of trans people.

4. Results and Discussion

The results focus on three main areas of representation that aim to move away from the traditional portrayal of trans characters. We consider that these are the elements that are important to highlight in this article, but we are aware that the series contains other elements that could be explored in depth in future research.

4.1. Beyond the "Trans Fact": Complex and Plural Narratives

It is common for the narrative of trans characters in fiction to focus exclusively on the "trans fact," that is, on the "coming out of the closet" and the "transition story." This makes the trans characters flat and not multidimensional because the different facets of their reality are not explored.

In Jules's case, we find a narrative that does not avoid the character's transition story, but doesn't focus exclusively on it either. In fact, Jules' transition story is not introduced until episode four. In it, the series summarizes her experiences from the age of 11 to the present in only eight minutes: her feelings surrounding her body, being put in a psychiatric institution, the suicide attempt (self-injury), her mother abandoning her (the symbolic rejection), and her first sexual experiences (as an object of fetishism and violence), among others. This journey through Jules's adolescence is made through an initial flashback that has a fast and sharp rhythm so that we experience all the traumatic moments of her transition story in a quick and fragmented way. The narrative doesn't stop to explore and analyze in detail all

these moments, but these scenes help us understand who Jules is and what she has gone through. The series focuses on what her life is like today.

The narrative therefore does not forget or omit Jules' individual transition story, but rather summarizes it without focusing solely on it. Through this brief flashback we understand Jules' experiences and feelings, and her own particular transition story. Throughout the series we can observe that Jules has gone through different stages of her transition, but she still has doubts about her own process. Following the reflections of Tortajada et al. (2021) around trans activism on YouTube, we find that Jules' story makes public a different kind of transition story and therefore this allows different experiences and bodily transitions to be collectivized, including unlikely ones, since each story is unique. We thus get particular transition stories that can help us escape from the social constructions that perpetuate transnormative representations (Mocarski et al., 2019), that is: narratives that focus exclusively on the transition of the body as a linear process with specific objectives and milestones that every trans person must follow to achieve a successful transition (Horak, 2014). On the contrary, *Euphoria* does not tell us what exact steps a trans person must follow during the transition process, nor does it explain how these should be experienced. Jules' journey is neither better nor worse; it is her own journey and it is individual and personal.

Beyond this summary of Jules's transition story, we also find some images and scenes in the series that show us that she is undergoing certain transition processes such as hormonal treatment, which becomes visible through close-ups in which Jules injects herself with hormones in front of a mirror (Figure 1).

However, her present storytelling, the one that occupies most of the episodes, focuses on her experiences of friendship, sex, and love. In the first episode, she meets Rue, with whom she will develop a story of friendship, love, and intimacy that will permeate most of her plots. Later, this story will be complemented by the love affair that Jules begins virtually with Tyler (Nate under a pseudonym). Therefore, the main plot of Jules in *Euphoria* does not focus on her transition story, but on the construction of loving intimacy.

It is also important to note that the acceptance of Jules by her close environment seems to be natural (with the exception of her mother). For example, at no point is there a reference to her "dead name." Deadnaming refers to the act of speaking about trans people by the names assigned to them in infancy when they have rejected those names (Turton, 2021). Referring to the "dead name" may lead to the denaturalization or delegitimization of the self-determination acts of the trans person. There is no "misgendering" either. That is, the use of pronouns, designations, or terms that identify the trans person with another gender different from the one with which they identify and, therefore, which do not represent, exclude, or marginalize the trans persona (Julia

Figure 1. Jules injecting hormones. Source: Levinson and Frizzell (2019).

Kapusta, 2016). Only those male characters who define themselves as "heterosexual" and have sexual encounters with Jules do "misgendering" in the series.

We cannot end this section without mentioning that, despite being a complex narrative that escapes the "trans fact," it does not allow the character of Jules to speak for herself. It is the character of Rue who guides the narration through a voice-over and this, in one way or another, ends up compromising Jules's authorial voice. In other words, Rue explains Jules's story based on her own experience, knowledge, and perceptions and, therefore, turns off Jules's first-person voice, the voice of the trans subject. It is a complex voice-over because it comes from a main character, Rue, who narrates her experience in the first person, but also tells the personal stories of the rest of the characters in the series in the third person and in an omniscient way. According to Kozloff (1988), there are a series of strategies that help to build the third-person voice-over as the main narrating voice and, therefore, as "the teller" of the whole fiction. These strategies include placing the voice-over at the beginning of the episode, directing this voice to the audience and not to the characters of the narrative to build intimacy and an exclusive connection with the viewers, and giving the omniscient voice-over access to the intimacy, thoughts, and feeling of the characters, among others. This helps build a powerful all-knowing voice and can guide the viewer, as in the case of *Euphoria*. "These narrators, who speak for (or rather as) the image-maker, are particularly likely to provide guidance concerning what conclusions the viewers should draw. They tend to voice the ideological and/or moral agenda behind the film" (Kozloff, 1988, p. 80). As the author states, all of this means that Jules' world is enveloped by another world, by another speech, by Rue's narrative voice. A voice that can generalize, judge and interpret Jules.

On the other hand, it is also important to analyze how this third-person voice can work in the specific case

of the narrative of a trans character like Jules. From trans studies, we could argue, that being a character with complex experiences and steeped in violence, this assignment to a third voice can serve to preserve the trans character from the obligation to relive her traumatic experiences, and thus avoids re-victimizing her (Fernández-Rouco et al., 2017). This does not escape complexity, however, since turning off her voice to avoid re-victimization also includes turning off her narration of positive experiences, like falling in love with Rue.

4.2. From Fetishism to Love: the Trans Female Character as Subject of Value

It is also common for trans characters to be represented in fiction as "objects" of fetishistic desire (Vegas, 2019). This is the reason why their sexual and love relationships are usually linked to violence, morbidity, and exclusion. Trans characters are subjects who can feel love and intimacy for other characters but their representation in the narrative is often exclusively sexual. It is, therefore, a representation conditioned by a fetishistic and masculine gaze (Serano, 2016).

In the case of *Euphoria*, although in the first episode it seems that Jules will be defined as the object of fetishistic desire for a man three times her age (Cal), we will soon see how her character also becomes an element of value and love. Rue falls in love with Jules and shares with her something that goes beyond physical passion and results in intimacy and loving complicity. Likewise, Jules also shares a love story with Nate, although it ultimately turns out to be unsuccessful and he ends up using extortion against her. It is important, therefore, to analyze these three relationships to observe how the narrative moves from the construction of Jules as an object of fetishism and violence to a subject of love and intimacy.

Episode one presents Jules's first contact and meeting with Cal. They meet virtually in a gay dating app.

Jules finds Cal's profile, where he defines himself as a "dominant daddy" who is "sweet and gentle" and who loves "twinks and femboys." They meet that same night and Jules sets out on her bike to the meeting point. A journey that is, aesthetically, dark, eerie, and lonely. Symmetrical shots with Jules in the center (Figure 2) are combined with subjective shots of the character's gaze on the path that leads her to Cal. A journey through empty streets, with low lighting, cold tones, and a stormy and rainy atmosphere. The cinematography conveys vulnerability, insecurity, and danger, as Jules follows the path to a sordid and dark roadside motel (Figure 2). This journey leads Jules to clandestinity, to a furtive sexual encounter. This representation of Jules' journey, as well as her meeting with Cal, remind us of the trans representations linked to dark, dangerous, and painful spaces, which reproduce that stereotypical vision of the trans character as an inhabitant of marginality (Ford, 2017; McLaren et al., 2021) and the object of extreme, utilitarian, and violent sexuality.

The scene of Jules' sexual encounter with Cal represents an unequal relationship. It is some time before Cal's face enters the shot. We only see his hands and body. Jules is represented through high-angle shots that show her in a situation of inferiority and vulnerability. Cal's face first appears, on the other hand, in low-angle shots that show his superiority and control (Figure 3). Jules is sitting on the bed and practically does not talk, while Cal stands and touches her freely. Next, Cal exercises vio-

lent and painful sex on Jules. This is represented by a fixed close-up of Jules, who closes her eyes and squeezes the sheets tightly (Figure 4). Cal is practically out of the shot throughout the act and is only present in the scene through a joint shot in which we can see how Cal penetrates Jules with force while she writhes on the bed. This scene refers to the fetishistic and violent clichés that are used to represent trans characters in fiction. The scene in the roadside motel brings us back again to other media representations that have tended to portray trans characters stereotypically, usually linked to prostitution or pornography (Abbott, 2013; Ford, 2017).

Later, we will discover that Jules has experienced many other similar scenes. In episode four, Rue explains Jules' first sexual experiences, all of them with the same kind of people: married or engaged white men who define themselves as heterosexual. The series presents various scenes of Jules with different men and, in all of them, it does not show their faces. The shot focuses on their hands unbuttoning their belts and pants to start the sexual act with Jules. These characters always follow the same pattern: They use Jules to satisfy their fetishistic sexual desires. This is how the series traces Jules' first sexual experiences, situating her as an object of sexual use that seems to be limited only to this type of experience, precisely because of her condition as a trans person. This coincides with the "trans/romance dilemma" posed by Abbott (2013), that is, the lack of romance for transgender characters.
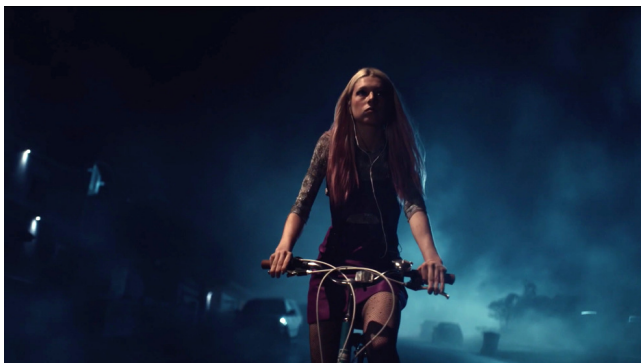

Figure 2. Jules on the way to the motel; Jules in the model's parking lot. Source: Levinson and Frizzell (2019).

Figure 3. Cal touches Jules; Cal talks to Jules. Source: Levinson and Frizzell (2019).

Figure 4. Cal facing Jules in bed; Jules in pain while Cal penetrates her. Source: Levinson and Frizzell (2019).

The relationship between Jules and Nate (Cal's son) is similar in some ways. Nate also approaches Jules anonymously through an app. Jules, rather, never hides her identity. Little by little a complicity between them is established that awakens Jules's loving feeling towards Nate. In episode four their first encounter takes place, in which Nate reveals his identity. As in his father's scene, Nate meets Jules in a dark and remote place, where secrecy and "the forbidden" can take place. The path to the park shows us, again, a lonely Jules who delves into the dangers of the night. The meeting involves the revelation of Nate's secret and, what begins as a declaration of love from Nate to Jules, ends up becoming extortion and threats (Nate is afraid that Jules will reveal his secret). This scene takes many aesthetic elements from the previous motel scene with Cal (Figure 5). Nate presents himself, thus, as a homophobic person who cannot accept his own sexuality. In fact, Nate is obsessed with building a hyper-masculinity that helps him hide his non-normative sexual orientation. The character of Nate seems to put on a "face" and defines the rest of the male characters who have been part of Jules' sex life so far: men who do not accept their own sexuality and use Jules in secret to satisfy their non-normative desires. Again, Jules is presented as an object for the pleasure of others.

The relationship between Jules and Rue, however, is quite different. It is at this point that *Euphoria* attempts to go beyond clichés and stereotypes by trying to represent Jules as a trans woman who also inhabits other spaces beyond those related to the margins and exclusion. This is how a multidimensional image of the character is constructed through the more complex affective relationships she develops (Koch-Rein et al., 2020). The love story between Jules and Rue distances Jules' character from the streets, from violence and death, and therefore, from the archetype of the "fallen woman" (marginalized and humiliated female characters linked to death), which has tended to be connected in fiction to trans characters (Ford, 2017). Already from their first shared scene, we observe that Rue is attracted to Jules. Rue has just got out of the detox center and is driving home when she sees Jules riding her bike. This first contact already indicates that Rue is dazzled by Jules: time stretches, the image lights up with warm tones, the music is relaxed and expansive and the shots slow down to show us Rue's gaze on Jules. Through a game of shot/reverse shots, the image tells us that there is a connection between these two characters, an initial crush. However, it seems that it is only Rue who is attracted to Jules.

In the first personal interaction between them, Rue accompanies Jules home after a party (Figure 6). The streets continue to be dark, reality continues to be harsh and complicated for them, but it seems that now they face it together. Intimate music accompanies them to Jules's room, where she takes off her clothes and shows herself in a natural way to Rue, who heals Jules' wounds (a self-injury) through moments of complicity and intimacy (Figure 6).

Figure 5. Jules on the way to the park; Nate threatens Jules. Source: Levinson (2019).

Figure 6. Rue hugs Jules; Jules and Rue in Jules's bed. Source: Levinson and Frizzell (2019).

This complicity between Jules and Rue increases throughout the series and they build a relationship of emotional intimacy that goes beyond friendship. An intimacy that includes feelings of closeness, bonding, support, understanding, acceptance, and self-exploration of one towards the other (Sternberg, 2000). This is how Jules becomes the subject of value in Rue's storytelling.

In episode 6, *Euphoria* offers us a symbolic representation of their relationship. Rue and Jules go to a party dressed as Romeo and Juliet from Luhrmann's (1996) film and end up representing, literally, a scene from this film (Figure 7). At this point, the series establishes an intertextual relationship with Luhmann's work to take advantage of the film's textual connotations to establish its own meaning (Sorókina, 2006). That is, the series introduces the universal plot of "forbidden love" (Balló & Pérez, 1995): Love that is not possible because of external factors. In this case, their love is conditioned by the emotional burdens and violence that both Rue and Jules have experienced and, also, because of Nate's extortion of Jules. However, the series brings us one of the greatest universal love plots in contemporary narrative.

In short, *Euphoria* presents some clichés associated with the trans individual (fetishism and the male gaze) and gradually moves away from them to end up showing a love story in which Jules is a subject of value. As Jules is a character defined as an object of fetishistic desire, but also as a subject of loving value, it is important here to reflect on how her gender expression is constructed and whether this construction is related to the external recognition that she receives from the other characters. We observe that Jules' gender expression is situated, mainly, in a cisnormative passing space that is located in gender binarism as a necessary prerequisite to obtaining recognition and external attraction. This is even expressed by Cal in their first encounter and, later on, we will see the contrast between Jules and other trans people with whom Cal has had relationships. Characters who, unlike Jules, do not adhere to the attributes valued by a cisheteronormative society in terms of their gender expression and, therefore, distance themselves from transnormativity (Girshick, 2008). This can help us understand why Cal "prefers" Jules and not these other characters.

However, as we already indicated previously, *Euphoria* constructs a complex character who, despite adhering to certain cisnormative mandates, also attempts to escape them in certain ways. It is important, at this point, to note that the relationship between Jules and Rue breaks with certain heteronormative structures (Robinson, 2016): There is no clear definition of their relationship, there are moments that escape monogamy and neither Jules nor Rue define their sexual orientation at any point. This is how *Euphoria* also tries to escape normative sexuality as a possible option for trans people (Tortajada et al., 2021).

Finally, despite the complexities of the narrative, we can affirm that *Euphoria* breaks in some way with the
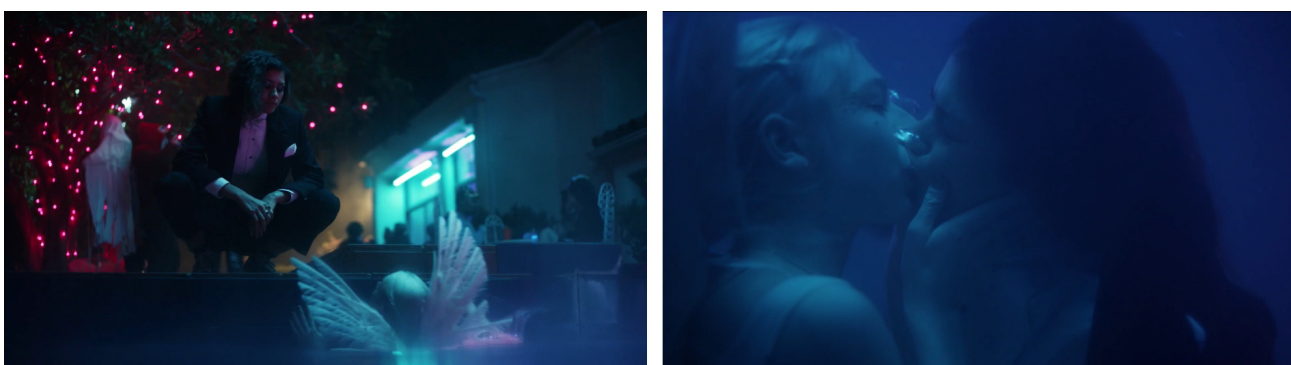

Figure 7. Jules and Rue in the pool; Jules kisses Rue. Source: Source: Levinson and Bianco (2019).

trans/romance dilemma (Abbott, 2013) by constructing the character of Jules and portraying her as likable and complex (McLaren et al., 2021), as well as giving her "recognition" by making her a subject of love who is appreciated and valued.

4.3. Spaces of Comfort and Spaces of Violence

Trans characters are usually presented in fiction as "inhabitants" of marginality and clandestinity (Solomon & Kurtz-Costes, 2018). Thus, "space" becomes a symbolic element of the social place attributed to the character through a system of intersectional oppressions (Crenshaw, 1991; Hill Collins, 2015) in which trans people are normally placed in a peripheral location occupied by various categories of marginalization (Serano, 2016). In some fictions, this peripheralization and marginality is exaggerated and becomes central (and unique) in the representation of trans people. However, *Euphoria* represents Jules by playing with the alternation between dark (nocturnal) and dangerous marginal spaces (motels, parks, or alleys), shown as an existing reality, and spaces of comfort (her room), ease (virtual space), and security (Rue's room). With this, the spaces, far from having an exclusively physical component, contain a condensed meaning (social, economic, and political relationships) that run through them (Lefebvre, 1991) and allow us to analyze and understand the different elements that accompany Jules.

In the first episode, the series already introduces us to the different spaces (scenarios) that Jules will inhabit. Spaces that show the double interaction that the character experiences with the environment and oscillate between violence and discomfort and esteem and comfort. This contrast between situations of comfort, familiarity, or "tranquility" versus others based on danger, fear, or violence is constantly reflected through the different scenarios where her life takes place. Jules's "own room" is the main refuge where the integrity of the character is shown. Despite being wrapped in cold tones, warm colors constantly enter through the window and "fill" this place where she shows her body and her intimate moments with Rue. It is a refuge from hostility and violence, a place where she can take care of herself and, also, be cared for. It is a space of care. The very architecture of the room refers to protection and privacy, simulating the silhouette of what could be a "tree house" (Figure 8). Jules's room contrasts with the rest of the house, which is sad, neutral, and gray.

In contrast, the rest of Jules's affective relationships are built in diametrically opposed spaces, such as run-down motels or the dark and nocturnal streets and parks. It is in these second places, symbols of fear, uneasiness, and mistrust, where her main relationships with men occur. First, in the dark and dilapidated roadside motel, where she experiences Cal's abuse. Similarly, the encounter with Nate takes place in a lonely park, secluded and in the dead of night. Here, again, Jules will be the victim of violence (extortion).

These second dark and restless spaces will alternate with Jules's third space, the virtual space linked to gay dating apps. This space is treated as a place of comfort and familiarity for Jules. In her interactions through the app, she sends pictures of herself naked and develops "deep" romantic relationships. Although the face-to-face encounters that arise from these apps end in disappointment, violence, and abuse, the apps continue to be a space of comfort where Jules moves with confidence. Jules shows herself in these apps, she doesn't hide (contrary to many of the men she interacts with through them). This is because Jules has already connected with her real and digital identity, and therefore, the app becomes a space where she can show herself without fear.

Figure 8. Rue heals Jules in her bed. Source: Levinson and Frizzell (2019).

As the season progresses, Rue's bedroom also becomes a space of comfort and protection for Jules. Indeed, it's the first place where she goes when she's threatened by Nate. It is in these intimate spaces where we can see the character of Jules from a perspective away from marginality, violence, and danger.

This alternation between spaces of comfort and spaces of conflict gives a complex view of the places inhabited by Jules' character. Thus, the series does not construct an exclusive image linked to peace, care, and comfort in all spaces, nor does it construct all spaces connected with violence and insecurity, which can often occur in other media representations.

5. Conclusion

The concepts of complexity, recognition, and comfort reflect the general state of the trans representation in *Euphoria*: "Complexity" because the series presents a narrative that tries to escape from the exclusive representation of the "trans fact." It does not avoid it, but rather also presents other objects of value in the narrative of the trans individual. Therefore, it explores different facets of the character so that "being trans" is not the main attribute of this character within the plot. "Recognition" because the trans character becomes a subject of love and not only of fetishism and violence. There is an acknowledgment of her validity as a worthy and appreciated subject. Finally, "comfort" because the series not only shows spaces that this character can inhabit serenely and calmly, but the general experience of the trans character reflects a state of physical ease and freedom from pain or constraint.

All these constitute examples of good practices that allow us to start leaving behind an audiovisual stage characterized by an "imperfect representation." At the same time, it helps us to begin to materialize the discursive horizon that brings us closer to a "fair representation" (Ventura et al., 2019) of trans characters. In this sense, here we have explored specific examples of how to overcome a simplistic and stigmatizing portrayal and build more complex and realistic trans characters with a richer and multi-layered representation. These are necessary references in the audiovisual context since they can become positive models of inspiration, aspiration, and attraction (Fedele & Masanet, 2021).

However, although we find signs of a "fair representation," we must not ignore some problematic issues that can be ascribed rather to an "imperfect representation," such as the fact that the character does not have her own voice (despite the arguments that can justify this), or that her gender expression is situated within a cisnormative passing located in binarism as a prerequisite for obtaining external recognition (both from the audience and the rest of the characters) as a valid subject.

Despite this, *Euphoria* becomes an audiovisual work that helps us collectivize the stories of trans people (Stryker, 2017) from the representation of different experiences that include unique and also unlikely transition stories (Tortajada et al., 2021). Furthermore, the series contains thought-provoking material that could be used to spark debates and discussions around trans individuals in educational contexts. As indicated by Masanet and Dhaenens (2019), we should take advantage of the critical interplay that can provide fiction representations to work on critical issues in schools. This could help us to fight against the increasing discrimination and violence that the LGBTQ+ community is experiencing.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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