

**ANNIINA LUNDVALL**

**CONCEPT AND PRACTICES OF YOUTH MEDIA  
PARTICIPATION –  
CASE: YOUTH EDITORIAL BOARD PAINOVIRHE**

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<p><b>Tiivistelmä</b>  Tämä opinnäytetyö tutkii mediaosallistumista käsitteenä ja ilmiönä ja ilmenemistä nuorten keskuudessa. Pääpaino on verkossa tapahtuvalla toiminnalla. Aktiivista mediaosallisuutta ja sen mahdollisuuksia tarkastellaan kulttuurin, politiikan, identiteetin ja alueellisen todellisuuden kautta. Teoreettinen viitekehys rakentui tuoreen media- ja nuorisotutkimuksen kautta.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen erityisenä kohteena ovat keskisuomalaisessa Painovirhe-verkkolehdessä toimivat nuoret (N=9). Heidän mediaosallisuuttaan, kokemuksia ja mahdollisuuksia selvitettiin lomakekyselyn ja haastattelujen avulla. Selvityksen tekemisessä yhdistettiin sekä kvalitatiivista että kvantitatiivista tutkimusotetta. Tavoitteena oli luoda kuva nuoresta ja hänen tavastaan osallistua mediassa kansalaisena.</p> <p>Mediaosallistumien on tämän tutkimuksen pohjalta varsin monimutkainen konsepti. Mediaosallistumisen mahdollisuuksia on paljon, mutta nuorilla on vaikeuksia hyödyntää niitä. Painovirhe-nuoret vaikuttavat varsin tavallisilta nuorilta, jotka eivät näyttädy poikkeuksellisen aktiivisina kansalaisia. Nuorten asenne verkkovaikuttamiseen on varsin skeptinen, vaikka he pitävät Painovirhe-lehteä sinäsä vaikuttavana mediana. Painovirhe-nuoret kokevat Painovirhe-toiminnan itsessään lisäävän kansalaistaitoja ja antavan eväitä mediaosallistumiseen kansalaisena. Nuoret kuitenkin tarvitsevat tukea siihen, että he rohkaistuvat julkaisemaan omia mielipiteitäan mediassa. Toimitustyön käytänteitä voidaan kehittää kansalaisvaikuttamisen vahvistamiseksi.</p> <p><b>Asiasanat</b> mediaosallisuus, nuorten mediatoimitus, nuorisotyö, mediakasvatus, mediakansalaisuus</p> <p><b>Säilytyspaikka</b> Jyväskylän yliopisto</p>	

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<b>Faculty</b> Faculty of Humanities	<b>Department</b> Department of Art and Culture Studies
<b>Author</b> Lundvall, Anniina	
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<b>Abstract</b> <p>This study examines media participation as a concept and as practices particularly among young people. The focus is mainly on online media participation practices. Media participation is examined through cultural and political perspectives, as well as part of youth identity. The theoretical framework is based on the contemporary media- and youth research.</p>	
<p>The focus group of this study is young editors (N=9), who are involved in the activities by the youth editorial board Painovirhe. Their media participation experiences and ideas about media participation are investigated by using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The objective of this study is to draw a picture of media participation from the editor's perspective.</p> <p>On the basis of questionnaire, the Painovirhe editors seem to represent quite ordinary young people. The interview data provide evidence that the socio-demographic background and prior experiences on media affect the amount and the diversity of media participation. Young people's attitude to the online media participation is fairly sceptical, even if they think Painovirhe webzine itself as a medium for participation. However, the Painovirhe editors perceive the activity on Painovirhe itself to increase civic skills and providing tools for citizen participation in the media. Young people seem to need more support on producing civic media content and participate on media as an active citizen.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> media participation, youth editorial board, youth work, media and information literacy, civic media participation	
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

A relationship between young people and the Internet is a topic, which has gained a lot of national and global attention in a field of research during the 2000s. The topic has been examined from various perspectives. The emerged perspectives are for example overall use of the Internet, media literacies and media skills and risks of online environments (see Livingstone, Haddon & Görzig, 2012; Aarnio & Multisilta, 2012; Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig & Olafsson, 2011a; Uusitalo, Vehmas & Kupiainen, 2011; Carlsson, 2010) Recent studies have especially increased the general understanding about the relationship between children, young people and the Internet by providing statistical information: how much young people spend time online, what they are doing there and what kind of challenges they face while spending time online.

Alongside with the basic research on children and youth online, the researchers have also paid attention to the perspectives on civic engagement and participation practices online. This specific interest is related to a change in participation and democracy practices on media landscape during the 2000s. Especially social media has enabled young people to create and express opinions and comment current issues in social networking sites, discussion forums, blogs and other interactive websites. Public online space is available for young people, providing possibilities to truly participate in societal discussions. (Kotilainen, 2009a, p. 244; Kotilainen & Rantala, 2008, p. 5.) Means and practices of using online (but also offline) media as a tool for civic<sup>1</sup> activity and participation in a society attracts the interest of researchers from all over the world (see Kotilainen, Suoninen, Pathak-Shelat, Hirsväri & Tayie, 2014; Carpentier 2011; Dahlgren 2006, Jenkins 2006; Bennet 2008; Livingstone, Bober & Helsper, 2004; Kotilainen & Rantala, 2008.) Scholars mentioned above have been especially interested to find out how and why young people participate in media and what kind of consequences participation practices

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<sup>1</sup> In this study, by **civic** I mean first and foremost societal and social issues that have an affect on young people: studying, working, environmental issues and so forth. The issues are not necessarily related to politics, but on the other hand, *civic* is not ruling out the politics either.

by using new media might bring along from the perspectives of democracy, civic activity and decision-making processes.

The Internet has been seen as a tool for encouraging young people to get interested in civic activities and participate in civic and political discussions in the environments they feel comfortable in. Finding ways to increase a civic activity among young people by using new methods is also an interest for politicians, as the traditional political activity (voting, joining in parties) appears to be less attractive option for young people all over Europe (see Suoninen, Kupari & Törmäkangas, 2010, p. 146-147; Paakkunainen, 2006, p. 33-34). However, it appears that most of the young people in Europe are using the Internet for entertainment and social networking instead of using the opportunities of online networks for civic activity and sharing ideas online (Livingstone et al., 2011b, p. 14). There seems to be a minor group of young people who are especially interested in using media for civic purposes. The Internet has not – against the odds – turned all young people into civic activists who fully embrace the opportunities of the Internet for voicing their opinions and sharing thoughts locally, nationally or globally.

The background of this thesis stems from a need to understand, why young people are not particularly interested in the online opportunities for participation and civic activities. Even if they are living surrounded by the *participatory culture* (Jenkins, 2009) and they are capable of using the technology and have the opportunities to share ideas online, young people seem not to take an active role as citizens- why is that? Furthermore, I want also to clear the concept of *media participation* and see what kind of civic or political perspectives (if any) young people relate to media participation in their everyday lives.

In order to get answers, I want to study a group of young people who have gained experience on structural, youth work based media participation processes: a group which publishes journalistic content for online and offline media instead of using the Internet only for casual fun. I have chosen a group of editors, aged from 16 to

20 years from the youth editorial board Painovirhe<sup>2</sup> from Central Finland as my focus group. I am curious to find out, how the editors of Painovirhe perceive the media as a civic tool and what kind of media participation practices they are involved and interested in.

From the perspective of contemporary youth research, gathering more knowledge on the topic is important as there is only a limited amount of research done about the relation between media participation practices and civic involvement (see Kotilainen & Rantala, 2008, p. 61, 130-134; Carpentier 2009, p. 411). Despite of the popularity of the youth and media -theme in academic research, according to my careful examination there is only a small amount of qualitative research, which allows assessing on how young people perceive the Internet as a participatory tool and its relevance to their individual contexts. The frame of this complex field of study is taking shape slowly. (Kotilainen & Rantala, 2008, p. 9, Kotilainen & Suoninen, 2013, p. 140-141)

To be precise, in this study I am interested in investigating following questions:

1. What kind of practices is involved in the concept of media participation? What do we mean, when we talk about media participation among youth?
2. How do the editors of Painovirhe perceive media participation? How do their backgrounds and experiences influence their perception of media participation?
3. What can we learn from the editors of Painovirhe in order to improve youth editorial board activity in general and to increase the media participation among young people?

I have approached these questions by interviewing nine of the Painovirhe editors and collecting comparative data with a questionnaire about the use of the Internet and experiences on participation online. I have also mapped a field of youth editorial boards by conducting a small enquiry to get an

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<sup>2</sup> [www.painovirhe.fi](http://www.painovirhe.fi)

overview on opportunities to participate in media productions and involve in civic-oriented media projects in Finland.

This study is about participatory digital culture but also about youth research and being a young in a contemporary society. When I write about young people in this thesis, I mean young people from adolescence to early adulthood. The respondents of my thesis are aged from 16 to 20 and I call them young people or young editors despite the fact that some of them are already 18 and therefore considered as adults. This goes inline with the Youth Act (27.1.2006/72)<sup>3</sup> in which *youth* refers to young people who are less than 29 years of age.

I would like to explain why I am interested in media participation particularly among young people. I am working in the field of media education and I have co-operated with people who produce and develop web-based participation platforms for young people, organise workshops and camps on journalism and support young people to express their opinions in media. I already knew that there is a need for research knowledge on youth editorial boards. I have also worked in a close contact with researchers in the field. Based on the current debate on youth and media, detailed knowledge on the issues related to youth and their media participation is certainly needed.

When I moved to Jyväskylä and started to work with my thesis, I contacted a local youth editorial board, Painovirhe, and asked if I can use the editors as my focus group. The answer was a positive one and I found Painovirhe as an extremely good example of youth editorial board activity, as they have quite a long history of using media as a tool in youth work. People working for Painovirhe were excited and pleased that their work was assessed by using academic structures. We also discussed about practical objectives for this thesis. By doing this study I try to find ways to develop the activity in Painovirhe and maybe also to help other youth editorial boards all over Finland to develop theirs.

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<sup>3</sup> Youth Act in Finnish: <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/2006/20060072>

Before entering detailed chapters, I will describe how I have compiled this thesis. At first, I will describe the relation between the thesis and a related research project called YMP. Then I will examine youth activity online in general from the perspective of participatory culture. I will also highlight some of the key issues related to politics. I am also going to give a detailed summary on youth editorial boards as tools for participation in Finland. These chapters will give the reader the framework in which I have conducted the research part.

Reflecting the theoretical part, I will move on to analyse the main questions about media participation practices and what kind of active media citizens the editors of Painovirhe represent. These observations will help me to conduct a general view on what it means to participate in media as a young person. I will also introduce some development proposals for people, who are involved in youth work and produce services to young people online. I will try to construct proposals for decision-makers as well on how to recognise the challenges of media participation among young people and how to improve current participation-working methods.

## **1.1 Global Comparative Research on Youth Media Participation 2009 - 2011 -study**

I had an opportunity to link my thesis to a wider global context. *Global Comparative Research on Youth Media Participation 2009 – 2011* (from now on in this study, I use the abbreviation *YMP study or YMP research project*) is a research project administrated by the Research Centre for Contemporary Culture at the University of Jyväskylä. The international YMP study is a comparative study focusing on media participation. A focus of the study is on young people in Finland, Egypt, Argentina and India. The main objective of the study is to find out about how and why young people use new media (i.e. the Internet and mobile phone), what kind of media literacy skills they have gained and how they participate in media environments. Research data was collected both in urban and rural areas in these

four countries. Data was collected by using both qualitative (focused interviews and media diaries) and quantitative methods (a questionnaire) in each country. The total amount of respondents of the questionnaire was 4 300 in all four countries. The analysis of the result was conducted during 2013. The analysis will focus more on similarities and common experiences between countries than finding differences. (see Kotilainen & Suoninen, 2013, Kotilainen et. al., 2014.)

I was offered to use a part of the statistical data of the Finnish YMP survey. I did use the data gathered among 15-19 years old Finnish boys and girls. The amount of respondents in this sample was 425. I was also allowed to use the same questionnaire that was used in the YMP study. By using the same questionnaire, I am able to compare the data between the editors of Painovirhe and the "average" youngsters in order to observe if there are any similarities or differences in media participation practices. Despite the co-operation with the project, my thesis is an entity of its own and is not an official part of the YMP research project.

The YMP research project offered data to another master's student Maiju Haltia as well. She published her thesis *Nuorten kansalaiskulttuurit ja media - Näkökulmia aktiiviseen kansalaisuuteen* (Youth Civic Cultures and Media – Perspectives on Active Citizenship) in April 2012. Haltia was interested in portraying youth civic participation and civic identity, and she was eager to find out what kind of role does media has in relation to active citizenship. She conducted focused interviews in Turku with 12 respondents aged from 17 to 18 years. (Haltia 2012) As we share the same subject of interest and we use the same reference data from the YMP research project, I will use Haltia's thesis as a comparative material especially on the analysis and reflection parts of this thesis.

## **1.2 Painovirhe as an example of youth media participation**

The focus group of this study consists of editors, who are involved in the local youth editorial board called Painovirhe. The Painovirhe activity is a part of youth

work practices in Central Finland, administrated by the youth department of Jyväskylä. The activity, established in year 2000, consists of two different media publications: the webzine ([www.painovirhe.fi](http://www.painovirhe.fi)), which is published almost monthly and printed Painovirhe magazine, which was published twice in 2011 (see Figure 1). Painovirhe has also an active Facebook group in which the editors communicate with the readers, advertise the Painovirhe articles and recruit new editors.

Two youth workers develop and administrate the activity. Both printed and online magazines are edited and young people write articles. Painovirhe activity is directed to young people from eight municipalities of Central Finland: Hankasalmi, Jyväskylä, Keuruu, Laukaa, Muurame, Petäjävesi, Toivakka and Äänekoski. The editors are aged from 16 to 20 at the moment but the activity is allowed to youngsters who have turned 13.



Figure 1. The front cover of the Painovirhe magazine (Winter 2010-2011) and the front page of the webzine in March 2013.

Editors meet each other monthly or more often, if needed, in editorial board meetings, which are organised and supervised by a youth worker. The role of the

youth worker is to help and council the editors and to provide them with sufficient information of working with magazines. For example, the youth worker can inform editors about copyrights and journalistic manners. In addition, the youth worker is a technical support for the editors and helps them to produce media content, whether it is text, images, video or sound. He works as an overall, administrative coordinator of the activity. However, the main idea is that the editors themselves decide what is written, when and by whom. When working with printed magazine, some of the editors are in charge of the whole lay out process as well. Painovirhe has a chief editor and a deputy editor in chief, which work as a team and outline each volume in co-operation with the other editors. (Ijäs, 2007, p. 15-16.)

The Painovirhe activity is strongly related to the regional youth information services, called NuortenLaturi ([www.nuortenlaturi.fi](http://www.nuortenlaturi.fi)). One of the objectives of the services is to encourage young people to produce and publish information, not only for themselves but for their peers as well. The Painovirhe editors are considered to function as peer publicists by providing articles and other media content about important issues for other young people through the webzine and the printed magazine. (Ijäs, 2007, p. 21-22.)

The Painovirhe activity is one of the oldest forms of *journalistic media education* (see Starck, 2010) practices in the field of Finnish youth work. Painovirhe has been published online from the beginning – the potential of the online environment as a support of young people's media participation was seen and understood already in 2000. At first, Painovirhe contained only text, until since 2006, with a help of a project funding, the content increased and enriched with videos and images as well. (Ijäs 2007, p. 16; T. Ijäs, personal communication, January 10, 2012.) Nowadays, Painovirhe has dozens of online readers monthly and followers in Facebook (E. Linna, personal communication, March 5, 2012). The paper version of Painovirhe is delivered to local schools, youth centres and libraries.

## 2 MEDIA PARTICIPATION

In this chapter I will introduce previous studies related to youth media participation as a theoretical concept. I will start by addressing the previous definitions of media participation and explain the concept more precisely. I will link the concept to a wider cultural change called *a participatory culture*. I will discuss about changes, tools and practices, describe what they mean from the perspective of youth. What kind of media participation young people execute, who participates online and why? Due to limitations of the thesis in general I limited the selection of readings to books and articles that are available in Finnish or in English.

### 2.1 Media participation in participatory culture

To understand media participation as a concept we must take a step back and examine a change occurring in the field of culture in general. During the 2000s, media has gone through many serious changes. For example, individuals have started to use the Internet for a social communication, networking, sharing content and publishing creative content by using social media such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs and video sharing sites. Media scholar Henry Jenkins (2006) calls the change a *convergence culture*. He argues that media culture is going through a process, which involves two (opposite but still adjacent) trends: a concentration of media power as “top-down corporate-driven process” and a democratisation of media, which allow consumers to create media themselves and to participate in media more than before, what Jenkins calls “*bottom-up consumer-driven process*”. (Jenkins, 2006, p. 17-18.) It means that while enormous media corporations gain more power and narrow down media alternatives to choose from, at the same time individual citizens are able to join the public discussions, share the knowledge and produce media content independently in their own terms. This cultural change

has been a rapid one, and it is also a phenomenon constantly changing and evolving.

Participatory culture is a term, which refers to a democratisation of media landscape. Henry Jenkins (2006, 2009), as a scholar investigating the potential of participatory culture for civic engagement and creative expression, has defined the participatory culture by the following terms:

1. *Relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement,*
2. *Strong support for creating and sharing creations with others,*
3. *Some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices,*
4. *Members who believe that their contributions matter and*
5. *Members who feel some degree of social connection with one another [...]*  
(Jenkins 2009, p. 5-6)

In the convergence culture a role of an audience becomes more active. The concept of being a member in media audience, as a listener, a reader or an interpreter has changed towards of being a producer, a commentator and a politically active participant of mediated society. (Ridell, 2006, p. 235, 247-248; Herkman, 2011; p. 147-148; Koutilainen & Rantala, 2008, p. 27.). In this sense, publicity is no longer reserved only for celebrities, journalists and politicians, but it is increasingly open for all citizens, and especially for the active citizens who act as an active *public* (fin. *julkiso*) instead of being a passive *audience* (fin. *yleisö*) (see Ridell, 2006, p. 246.).

This also applies to a young generation. Earlier media sphere was reserved for adults and journalists and young people did not have many opportunities to express their opinions or to participate in civic discussions. Today young people have social media that enables the community members to work, create, share and learn together. Youth editorial boards combine the social platforms of online culture and media as a tool to make youth voice heard in public and they function as good examples in the field of youth work of what comes up when the cultural

changes are used as a fuel for developing working methods.

## 2.2 Media participation politics

Why political and civic perspectives are so fundamental in the discussions about media participation? The development of youth media participation activities is strongly related to international treaties and documents as well as to a national legislation and governmental development programmes. Youth participation has gained a great interest among policy makers in European level and by implication in Finland since the early 2000s. Next I will introduce the key documents and initiatives, which have gained a momentum on youth media participation over the last decade.

The fundamental document is the UN Convention for the Rights of Child (1989), which creates the basis for any initiative, which is directed to children and young. The Finnish Government has committed since 1991 to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. According to the international convention, children have the "*right to freedom of expression, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds*". (UN Convention for the Rights of Child, Article 13, 1989). This means that states need to take into account children and young people as citizens, who are justified to not only receive but also create informative content and publish it as well. Painovirhe activity serves the convention by providing a tool to express opinions but also to receive and impart information among young people, as a peer-to-peer activity.

Subsequent national and international regulations and documents on youth media participation acknowledge the demands of the UN Convention from the perspective of online world as well. These documents agree that there is a need to develop ways to strengthen young people's resources and abilities to affect local, national and global issues through social media or other means of cultural expression. One of the documents, which have encouraged states to improve the

situation most, is the European Commission White Paper of 21 November 2001 – A new impetus for European youth<sup>4</sup>. This paper has pushed youth policy forward both in Finland as well as on the whole European level (Kotilainen, 2009a, p. 246). The main objective of the White Paper is to propose framework for politicians and other actors in the field that they should involve young people in decisions that concern them. It is also a response to young people's disaffection with the traditional forms of participation in public life and calls on young Europeans to become active citizens. One of the key messages of the White Paper is that room for expression and participation should be given at various levels and in several forms – not only in political forums – and it should not exclude any type of commitment, “*be it one-off or ongoing, spontaneous or organised*” (European Commission, 2001, p. 12-13).

The White Paper influenced the development of Finnish legislation as well. The Youth Act (2006/72<sup>5</sup>) demands the promotion of an active citizenship in young people's leisure time, an empowerment of young people, a support to their growth and an independence and an interaction between generations. In addition, young people must be given opportunities to take part in the handling of matters concerning local and regional youth work and youth policy. Further, young people shall be heard in matters concerning them. (Youth Act, 2006.) Finland has developed significantly the consultation and participation system for young people during the 2000s. In addition, the government invested on building up youth information and counselling services online, and supported the development of online channels, which are related to youth participation. Most of the youth editorial boards presented in the next paragraph are built up and developed in the 2000s (after the release of the European Commission's White Paper and the Youth Act) with the monetary support of the Finnish government.

The future of media participation activities in Finland seems to be ensured at least according to policy-making documents. The national children and youth policy

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<sup>4</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2001:0681:FIN:EN:PDF>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/2006/20060072>

development programme 2012-2015 adopted by the government demands for example measures that maintains and supports online media participation projects and improves the ability to express opinions in various ways (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2012, p. 17-18.) In addition, the Ministry of Education and Culture published recently the “Good Media Literacy” - National Policy Guidelines 2013–2016 that point out that in youth policy media and information literacy education will be strongly incorporated into advocating the active citizenship (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2013, p. 26).

## 2.3 Towards media participation

The Finnish Youth Barometer shows that youth from 15 up to 29 years are active media users, and the Internet is the most popular media among youth in Finland. Young people spend daily approximately two hours online. What comes to spending time online, sex or age differences among youth are small or non-existent. (Myllyniemi, 2009, p. 88-92.) Living without the access to social media or having any account in social media services is not very common among young people in Finland and young people are using the Internet daily (see Aarnio & Multisilta 2012, p. 6; Livingstone et. al. 2011a, p. 25). According to the previous studies, young people participate in various activities online: they are using social networking sites, publish online videos, blog and participate in discussions online (Livingstone et al., 2011a, p. 33-34, Uusitalo et al. 2011, p. 90-91). Aarnio and Multisilta (2012, p. 8) note that especially social networking site Facebook and video sharing site YouTube are the most used online services among 7-20 years old Finnish people. Half of the Finnish boys and 60% of the Finnish girls use Facebook frequently. When observing YouTube, the situation is the opposite: half the girls and 60 % of the boys use it often. (*ibid.* p. 11.) If the participation culture is understood as an involvement in using the social media or just “*youth engagement with public media*” (see Kotilainen, Suoninen, Hirsjärvi and Kolomainen 2011, p. 215), one could say that the Finnish young people are more or less

participating in online culture. However, is participation more than just using media and involving oneself in media?

A participation in media should be understood more than just youth's ability to log in to social networking sites. Being online and using digital services do not mean that a person understands his capacity of acting as a citizen online. Instead of just being online, the goal should be the participation: a young person is involved in media culture, understands his role in it as a young citizen, is able to join a civic conversation and is able to see what follows from his actions. From this perspective the participatory culture can be seen as a tool for a new rise of democracy. Seeing young people as active agents online has created a faith that democratic online communities increase political activity and encourage youngsters to involve in politics and civic decision making in general (Jenkins, 2006, p. 219-220.) This change has been predicted to lead into more active and more open-minded society. Many scholars (see Buckingham 2007; Tapscot 2008, Dahlgren 2006) have predicted that social communication in online environments has changed and will continue to change the civic participation procedures completely.

Media participation is also seen as one solution to increase global welfare and understanding between people and nations. For example, Finnish scholars Reijo Kupiainen and Sara Sintonen argue that the participatory culture may include elements, which help people to widen their perspective in many ways. When people have an opportunity to create and consume media content done by others in globalised world, it creates understanding, diminishes prejudice and widens the global perspectives of individuals (Kupiainen & Sintonen, 2009, p. 169.)

Media participation is also seen as a part of new political impetus. For example, communication scientists Erik Bucy and Kimberly Gregson refer to a new type of political activity as media participation:

*"Citizen action can take place online, over the airwaves and through exposure to political messages –actions which invite involvement. These*

*actions include [...] public opinion formation, direct leader/legislator contact participation in civic discussions and agenda building, mediated interaction between the candidates and other political actors, donating to political causes and joining mobilizing efforts." (Bucy and Gregson, 2001, p.358)*

*"Media participation provides proximity to political elites, offers an open-mike access to a wide audience, socializes citizens to participate in public affairs and allows voters to cultivate a civic identity[...]" (p. 375)*

Media participation can be comprehended also as a counter-attack against political and economic power in media sphere. Rheingold suggests (2008, p. 97-100) that by producing opinion videos, podcasting, publishing anti-advertisements and sending opinion writings, blogging and co-writing wikis young people might have a chance to "fight back" in their own terms and try to change actively their environment.

Painovirhe is an example of youth activity, which enables media participation. The editors are able to express themselves in an easy way. They get support from each other but also from the readers. They produce knowledge for their peers and publish it online for others to read and share online and offline. Writing articles and producing other media content from an inception to final media products give editors a sense of a responsibility and an ownership in issues related to their own lives (Asthana 2006, p. 11).

Painovirhe is also seen as an example of a convergence culture and how the power relations have changed: young people have "taken over" a journalistic public space and developed a webzine, which is equally available as commercial websites. The journalistic procedures inside Painovirhe are bottom-up-driven: neither the youth department nor the youth workers are in charge of what young people produce and what kind of topics they want to cover. It is up to the young editors.

## 2.4 Media participation modes at a personal level

In this subchapter I will focus on media participation as a personal and individual process. While from the societal perspective the need for media participation stems from the need to make young people active citizens, developing civic identity and the willingness to involve oneself in media participation is first and foremost an individual choice. Professor Sirkku Kotilainen talks about a personal relationship to media (*fin. mediasuhde*) and perceives media participation as an internal interaction between the individual and media:

*"Media participation can be defined as active, as the individual's internal interaction with media, for example creating one's own opinion while watching television reality programming and/or using the offered ways of communicating with the programme such as voting." (Kotilainen, 2009a, p. 249.)*

The Finnish media researcher Seija Ridell perceives the process of media participation as a step-by-step process: each act of media participation from voicing a personal opinion to producing media content moves a person from the private towards the public sphere (Ridell, 2006, p. 247-248). This process is not straightforward or inevitable in every youth's life. Kotilainen follows Ridell's idea and points out that alongside with personal relationship with media, media participation can develop towards a public interaction with and through media, such as writing and publishing articles for various media or publishing videos or photos online (Kotilainen 2009, p. 249).

From the global perspective, Kotilainen and Suoninen have approached the preconditions of media participation by giving socio-cultural frame for youth practices, which are related to media and information literacies:

- *The quality of access: different kinds of possibilities for choosing information sources, meaning-making and activities in relation to media, i.e. media participation,*
- *The social and political situation: there is a need for social and political discussion between the citizens and policy makers,*
- *Local and transnational policies, which either promote or restrict young people's possibilities to learn media and information literacies.*

(Kotilainen & Suoninen, 2013, p.157-159)

Now I will take a closer look at these preconditions. Jenkins (2009, p. 2-3) reminds that in the participatory culture not everyone is considered equal. Some consumers have greater abilities to participate in culture than others. From a global perspective an inequality in access to media in different countries has a major impact on the level of participation (see Kotilainen & Suoninen, 2013, p. 145-147). It is impossible to join in the participatory sphere if there are no media tools available. An access to media resources and online environments is vital in the participatory culture, but the access is it is not a guarantee that participation actually takes place.

However, in Finland youth's access to various online media is secured, as mobile phones and computers are available at homes, schools and libraries. The access itself does not promote the participation but only ensures that it is possible, if a young person wants to participate online.

What comes to the political and social preconditions, Sonia Livingstone and Ellen Helsper (2010) agree that young people should not be considered as a coherent group of the Internet users and participants in media culture. There are a lot of elements that determine the level of involvement, willingness to grasp the positive opportunities as well as exposing himself to risk behaviour. Media skills, amount of leisure time, access to technology, age, social status, family background and other issues may have a certain role when young people choose how to participate in online environments. (Livingstone & Helsper, 2010, p. 332-325; see also Livingstone et al. 2004, p. 14; Kotilainen & Rantala, 2008, p. 25, 36.)

A political situation may also have a great impact on the participation at a personal level. In the YMP research project, the young respondents from Egypt seemed to have a much more active role in creating content through media than did the young people in the other countries. This was probably due to the fact that the research was done right after the Arab Spring revolution in Egypt. (Kotilainen & Suoninen, 2013, p.155.) In Finland, the political situation is not as radical as in many other countries, and young people do not necessarily have a need to participate in discussions, which concern the society or civic issues.

In the political scene, as mentioned earlier, youth media participation has been emphasised a lot in the last few years. However, while basic and upper secondary core curricula stress communication and media skills as a cross-curricula theme, the implementation of media literacy education requires a strong support and concretisation of the theme in local curricula, as well as integrating media literacy practices in the culture of schools (European Commission, 2009, p. 13). It is possible that young people do not get proper tools and knowledge on media participation even if the need for media literacy education is emphasised on the documents and political papers.

Furthermore, instead of merely talking about young people as a competent or an incompetent in media participation, there is a need for adopting a broader definition of participation that recognises the dimensions of youth relationships to media. Segregation between active and passive children is not really accurate especially in online environments. Being active (or passive) is filled with different shades and tones and it depends on the situation and environment, if a person is willing to participate – in the media or elsewhere. (see Sirkkunen & Kotilainen 2004, p. 292; Kotilainen & Rantala, 2008; p. 25,33; Kotilainen 2009; p. 244, 249-250.) Young people seem to choose specific role when needed – same individual can act very differently depending on the website or community his acting on. The participation mode fluctuates from a complete ignorance to an aggressive involvement in civic discussions.

Researchers have tried to categorise young people into various identity groups to gain understanding about the active participation contexts in cases, in which the Internet has a certain role. For example scholars Sonia Livingstone, Magdalena Bober and Ellen Helsper (2004) have studied young people's interaction online in Britain. According to the study, which involved 975 youngsters aged from 12 to 16, researchers were able to distinguish three types of participatory agents online: *interactors, civic-minded and disengaged* youth. Interactors engage actively with websites and publish media content but are not very likely to visit civic websites. Civic-minded are the opposite: they are not interested in interacting but they want to visit civic sites, especially sites concerned human rights and charity. Disengaged are not involved in any online activity but they can have really active practices outside of the online world. (Livingstone et al., 2004, p. 14-15.) This typology offers valuable insight to the complexity of young people in their online environments and shows that young people cannot be lumped together as "young people online" but rather there are sorts of tribes, which have different approaches when using the Internet. However, it is worth mentioning that this typology is constructed before social media breakthrough in Europe. Therefore it is a quite narrow and vague as such because it is quite impossible to label young people strictly in three categories.

	<i>Thin civic self-image</i>	<i>Strong civic self-image</i>
<i>Thin mediated civic connectedness</i>	SEEKERS	COMMUNALISTS
<i>Strong mediated civic connectedness</i>	COMMUNICATORS	ACTIVISTS

Figure 3. Four types of civic identities of young people in relation to media by Sirkku Kotilainen and Leena Rantala (2008).

Sirkku Kotilainen and Leena Rantala's (2008, 2009, see figure 3) subsequent, typology is based on an empirical data that was collected from young people by using media diaries and interviewing young people who were involved in youth editorial board NuortenÄäni in the metropolitan area. Researchers gathered data by using a questionnaire, which was directed to young people who were involved in Vaikuttamo.net-website. The findings of the study widen Livingsstone's et al.

typology by offering four types of civic identities of young people in relation to media: *seekers*, *communalists*, *communicators* and *activists*. The typology demonstrates the complexity of being an active participant in relation to media. The seekers are looking forward in finding civic arenas and communities to engage in. Communalists are more traditional citizens, who are interested in having their say in their own living spheres rather than expressing opinions in public. Communicators are connected to online communities but do not consider networks as places for interaction in politics or civic terms. Activists are interested in civic matters and have found the public spaces where they are able to interact and communicate. Kotilainen and Rantala (2008, p. 55-57; 2009, p. 671-672) suggest that identities are fluid rather than fixed, for example one can use the activist identity when faced with an important issue where action in the public media is necessary. Kotilainen and Rantala (2009) point out that their typology is only a suggestion, which stems from the outcomes of a qualitative case study. They add that the theme should be examined more carefully from the viewpoints of age, gender, ethnicity and economic position (Kotilainen & Rantala, 2009, p. 673).

The EU Kids Online II-research project, which included thousands of children and young people in 25 countries, provides the third typology. In the survey the research group gathered and compared detailed data on children´s internet use and based on the findings, they were able to group the children in the survey according to how they use the Internet. They found six international “user types”:

1. *Low risk novices* who use the internet rather little, focus mainly on schoolwork, watch video clips and read news.
2. *Young networkers*, who are mostly girls, less likely to use internet for schoolwork and more likely to use it for social purposes.
3. *Risky explorers* who do the widest range of activities but also participate in more risky activities. However they are least likely to be upset of anything they encounter online.
4. *Moderate users* who have wider range of activities than young networkers but they less likely to encounter online risks.

5. *Intensive gamers* who are more often boys and they spend a lot of time online, mostly playing games and watching video clips.
6. *Experienced networkers*, who are more girls than boys, use internet less than many of the groups but do more online activities. They also produce content online, such as videos and blogs. (Livingstone et.al, 2011b, p. 40)

This typology takes into an account the age and gender issues and also the diverse ways of utilising the various online opportunities. However, it does not say much about civic or media participation or abilities to participate in media because it was not part of the research focus. Researchers were also heading a difficult challenge in comparing children and trying to fit them in a typology of some kind, saying "*comparing children's experiences in 25 countries is like comparing apples and oranges – there are many variables to consider, most of them difficult to measure*" (ibid., p. 40). When talking about young people, it is also important to pay attention to the fact that they are more or less going through a period of time in which they develop their personal ideology and identity, achieve independence and develop membership in a society. (Stevens-Long & Cobb, 1983, p. 19-26). Therefore the civic identities of a young person might change considerably when he gets older.

These typologies show that being a young person online and growing up to become an active media citizen is a complex phenomenon. The identity typologies above are not trouble-free concepts, as they opt out some perspectives while embracing others. However, typologies provide valuable insight on the diversity and complexity of youth´s media participation. I will use them more or less as thinking tools for analysis instead of trying to fit the Painovirhe editors in a one or other typology.

## **2.4 Media participation without the passion for politics**

Painovirhe is an apolitical magazine that is not focusing especially to civic issues, but does not rule them out either. While the participatory culture enables the

young people to express their opinions on the webzine, it appears to be uninteresting for most of the editors. Furthermore, Mervi Leinonen (2011) studied the Painovirhe webzine as a tool for promoting civic opportunities from the perspective of the European Union. She interviewed professionals of youth information and counselling services and made a group interview among the editors of Painovirhe. In addition, she counted and analysed the EU-related articles published in Painovirhe. The results reveal that 9 % of all articles published during 1/2008-7/2010 discusses about the European Union. The highest average of articles concerning making a difference or influencing to the society was written by the members of the regional youth council. She noticed that the majority of articles concerning participation in public discussion about important matters are written by other people than the members of editorial board, i.e. editors are not particularly interested in writing about these matters (Leinonen, 2011, p. 55-56.)

When Elli Álen and Milla Kuusela (2009) studied the Painovirhe editors, they suggested that because the Painovirhe editors are not aware of the effects of their media participation, they find it hard to perceive the civic opportunities of the webzine. They also pointed out that the Painovirhe editors are not aware of their readers and it is hard to communicate with the readers online (Álen & Kuusela, 2009, p. 31-32.) Why most of the articles and videos on Painovirhe focus on themes that are not oriented to politics or civic issues? Why the editors write articles about fashion, trends and bands, and produce reviews on movies, books and gigs instead of using the public media for more meaningful, even civic or political purposes? The following studies have revealed some of the reasons why young people are not using fully the capacity of the participatory culture.

Even if there are lots of opportunities to participate in media, scholars have found out that young people in general are not particularly interested to take them into an account. Hence, the notions about challenges on Painovirhe activity are not especially surprising. The exquisite discussion in early 2000s about *digital natives* (Prensky, 2001) and the *millennials* (Howe and Strauss, 2000), new generation,

which are particularly skilled in using digital media for their needs, changing the (political) world with new online culture, seems now to be heavily exaggerated (see critics Bennet, Maton & Kervin 2008; Helsper & Eynon 2009; Livingstone, Couldry & Markham, 2007). Young people are willing to use media, but the political or civic perspectives are not necessarily emphasised when an individual publishes content online or in another media. Writing status updates, publishing holiday photographs and thumbing up contents are common ways of participating, while only a minority of young people is publishing opinion writings, videos and discuss actively about civic topics (see Livingstone et al., 2011a, p. 34, Livingstone et al., 2011b, p. 40). It appears globally that young people mainly communicate, search information and entertainment rather than create spectacular innovations or act politically online. For example, motives for using the Internet, such as keeping up the social network, having fun, playing and gaining information, are considered important as well as enhancing one's own skills practicing with media are quite the same in Finland, India, Egypt and Argentina (Kotilainen & Suoninen, 2013, p. 150-151).

Let me take one statistical example, blogging. Young people are actively monitoring blogs as approximately 65 % of 15-24 year olds read blogs often. (Statistics Finland, 2010.) However, blogging itself is an object of interest for a relatively small group of young people; according to the EU Kids Online survey 15 % of 13 to 16 year-old boys and 18 % of girls have been blogging during the past month (Livingstone et al., 2011a, p. 34). Also, young people seem to be quite critical towards the effectiveness of blogs, as 48 % of Finnish 8<sup>th</sup> graders thought that personal blogging could help solving problems only a bit or not at all (Suoninen et al., 2010, p. 88.) Social media participation might be interesting for a few but young people have quite critical attitude towards the effectiveness of blogging in civic or political sense.

Are young people more interested in politics now when they have the social media tools for civic and political processes in hand? Not really. Young people are not particularly interested in politics or notably willing to discuss about it in

media or elsewhere (see Suoninen et al. 2010, p. 150; Herkman, 2011, p. 155). Instead of political activity young people seem to be very interested in participating in media culture without special political commitment. Media participation is mainly executed by consuming and buying rather than participating in civic activities. (af Ursin, 2013, p. 59; Buckingham 2007, p. 13-14; Rahja, 2013.). Instead of voting, young people might get more interested in making consumption choices, which serve their purposes and have an instant effect on their lives.

## **2.5 Why promoting the Internet as a youth civic tool seems to fail?**

There are several plausible reasons why the Internet has not turn young people politically active, civic-minded group who are using the Internet conveniently for civic purposes. The key problem seems to be that the Internet is seen naively as an open place where people are able to express opinions and take a stand on civic issues. First of all, instead of speaking one public sphere – the Internet - we should rather talk about many spheres. (Herkman, 2011, p. 81) People tend to group with their peers, and different age groups use mainly their own media channels and sites. Therefore it is challenging to create unforced public debates, which include opinions from different age groups. (see Kiilakoski & Taiponen, 2010, p. 78; Kupiainen & Sintonen, 2009, p. 164; Dahlgren, 2006, p. 274.) This leads to a situation in which adults discuss in their own channels and young people find their own ways to discuss about various issues. Young people should not be perceived as one group either – there are huge differences in perception of civic and political issues let's say between 13, 15 and 17 year old youth and it is quite hard to get them talk to each other about them. Generating intergenerational civic discussion, which leads to proper communication and is followed by real civic changes is truly a challenging task.

Secondly, young people seem to face a lot of challenges, which might influence their willingness to participate in online media in civic ways. Kotilainen and

Rantala (2009) found that a lack of motivation for not visiting civic sites is dependent on three factors: seeing oneself as a non-political person, a lack of faith that the opportunity to have a say really exists, and difficulties in finding issues to influence. The respondents had also doubts on the Internet as a tool for exerting influence and questioned the Internet as a place for the civic participation.

(Kotilainen & Rantala, 2009, p. 668-669.) The same kind of notions have been made in a study by Couldry, Markham and Livingsstone (2006), in which the researchers found only limited traces of online communication providing an action context, even among young people. They recommended that for public means there should be opportunities for face-to-face contacts with decision makers and the public, instead of providing interactivity online, as *there is no evidence that it is sufficient to restore trust.* (Couldry et al., 2006, p. 36.) It seems that civic sites online and other tools for the civic activity are not providing the content and opportunities people really want and need.

Also, young people might suffer of a lack of proper media and information literacy skills. Basic skills in writing and reading are still important even if the modern society acquires also audiovisual literacy skills. For example, writing well-reasoned opinions for a newspaper is seen as a key media skill and the development of the skills should be guaranteed at schools. (see Hankala, 2010, p. 75-80, 177.) Recent studies have shown that some of young people do not have sufficient media and information literacy skills. For example, when Kiili (2012, p. 44-48) explored high school students and their information retrieval skills, she found out that while a majority of the students were able to locate relevant information, all students needed some guidance for developing their information research skills. She also points out that there is a group of young people who have substantial difficulties in understanding and analysing information online. At its worst, young people without proper media and information literacy skills are automatically excluded from the civic debate in online and offline media.

Kotilainen and Rantala have also suggested that young people might have difficulties to identify themselves as civic debated in public media, as public

media space has been traditionally reserved for conversations between adults only (Kotilainen & Rantala, 2008, p. 25) Even if young people realise and admit opportunities of online publicity, they are not necessarily willing to participate in public. Young people might also understand the concept of media participation and making their voices heard in very different ways than adults. What seems irrelevant fun or play for adults might be very meaningful, even civic-minded activity for young people. These mechanisms of civic-minded play, gaming and sharing knowledge should be studied more in order to understand the concepts of media participation more precisely. A digital native-way of participating in a society might look like participating in an insignificant game but it might include participatory elements that are not visible for a digital immigrant<sup>6</sup>.

Criticisms have been presented towards the efforts that have focused on improving a situation of youth participation and motivate young people to participate. There has been a variety of websites and services launched for young people to take in and use for participatory purposes. For example, Lauri Rapeli and Vesa Koskimaa argue that the recent efforts seem to be a rescue operation of political elite more than a genuine effort to increase the participation opportunities of young people. They question the whole process and ask, if the political exclusion is true, established challenge from the perspective of youth after all. (Koskimaa & Rapeli, 2011, p. 97.) Also Professor Stephen Coleman challenges the fundamental reasons to make young people participate in civic and political processes. He argues that the participation itself seems to be emphasised more than an actual political or a civic influence on participation. He says that while citizens are encouraged to participate, there is no guarantee that political authorities will pick up their ideas and do something about them. Increasing possibilities on the civic participation, do not necessary strengthen the democracy. (Coleman, 2010, p. 86)

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<sup>6</sup> Digital native and digital immigrant are concepts coined by Marc Prensky (2001). A digital native refers to a young person, who has been living all his life with digital technologies, while the immigrants (adults) were born before digital technologies and tries to adapt the digital society.

Questioning the efforts is quite justified, as the monetary investment in developing services for the youth has been remarkable. If young people are not willing to log in services, inform each other about important issues, send initiatives and participate in several other ways the investment will be wasted. Some re-thinking needs to be done on how to activate youngsters as users, producers and citizens. One plausible solution is to involve young people in process by giving them an opportunity to produce content and share knowledge instead of adults producing and designing content for youngsters. Next I will introduce one way, which has turned out to be a quite useful in empowering young people to express their opinions: youth editorial boards.

### 3 YOUTH EDITORIAL BOARDS

In this thesis I discuss about youth editorial boards (*fin. nuorten mediatoimitukset*). I will start by pointing out the meaning of youth editorial board against a background of the traditional media landscape. Traditionally, young people have been treated in media as troublemakers, victims or problematic people. To put it simple, young people are seen as radical animal activists or punks, victims of alcohol/tobacco/drug industries or as bullied, tired or depressed citizens. Young people's positive agency as specialists of their own lives is not often recognised in public media (Kotilainen & Rantala, 2008, p. 16, 31.)

Youth editorial boards play an important role in highlighting the agency of young people and improving opportunities of young people to get their voices heard on public media as well as participating in civic discussions as experts of their own lives. Young people are able to present ideas, express opinions and share thoughts about issues they find important by using media as a tool for making their own perspective visible. In a way, youth editorial boards can be seen as counter-media or fighting against the power of traditional (adult) media. In this respect, youth editorial boards increase the democracy in the field of media: young people have their own say, in their own terms and without any negative preconceptions of

what they are (cf. Herkman, 2011). There is a special emphasis on the activities to support young people's active citizenship and develop their skills as citizens. (see Kotilainen & Rantala, 2008, p. 105-108, Kotilainen, 2009a, p. 252-255.) Through media participation young people are recognised as professionals in relation to their own lives and they are heard as individuals. They participate in societal debates as serious debaters, not just as commentators.

The idea about young people producing media content for specific audiences is not new at all. Workshops for young people focusing on doing videos, magazines, radio and television programmes have a quite long history in the youth work. For example, in 1998 first Curly-magazine<sup>7</sup> was published. Curly-magazine still exists, and it is for stories and articles written and read by young people. The youth department of Helsinki established a media centre for young people in the early 2000s in order to encourage young people to create and publish media content. (see Ruotsalainen, 2000, p. 7.) Nowadays, there are a lot of activities available all around Finland and media educational approaches in the youth work are more and more popular (Kotilainen & Rantala 2008, p. 65). Participants of youth editorial boards produce for example articles to online webzines and printed magazines, online radio programs, TV programmes and online videos.

Media presentations are public to other people, which enable the discussion between the editors and audience. The key idea is to make the opinions and ideas of youth more visible to all people.

However, there was no prior review on youth editorial boards available. Kotilainen and Rantala (2008, p. 14-15) were describing briefly some of the activities from online magazines to online television and radio programmes. Some of them are still active, some projects have ended and some activities have been closed down, such as in Oulu, Kajaani and in Ylivieska. It is unclear what was done, where, with what funding and how many youngsters were involved. As the current situation is blurred, I emailed to the current editorial board leaders or

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.curly.fi>

administrators, and asked them about the current activities. The answers are summarised in a table (Attachment 1.)

Next I will give a brief overlook on the situation of youth editorial boards in Finland. I located eleven actors, two of which operates nationally and others locally<sup>8</sup>. Editorial boards are often administrated and funded by a youth department, a non-governmental organisation or an association. There are also youth editorial boards inside the media industry, for example newspaper KeskiSuomalainen has its own editorial group that consists of young people who produce regularly content on the youth pages. However, in this thesis I focus only on the youth work-based editorial boards.

Most of the activities are located on the west side of Finland (see figure 4). On the basis of this data regional equality is not achieved as it seems that municipalities in Eastern Finland do not provide media participation channels for young people. Most of the activities can be considered as a permanent activity with a permanent funding and at least a part-time workforce. Media editorial boards are very different from each other, but they share the same idea of young people producing media content, which is particularly directed to other youngsters (peer activity). The activity is voluntary for young people and it happens on their free time.

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<sup>8</sup> Later, in 2013 there are some new youth editorial boards and some of boards mentioned here are less active. It seems that the situation is in a constant flux.

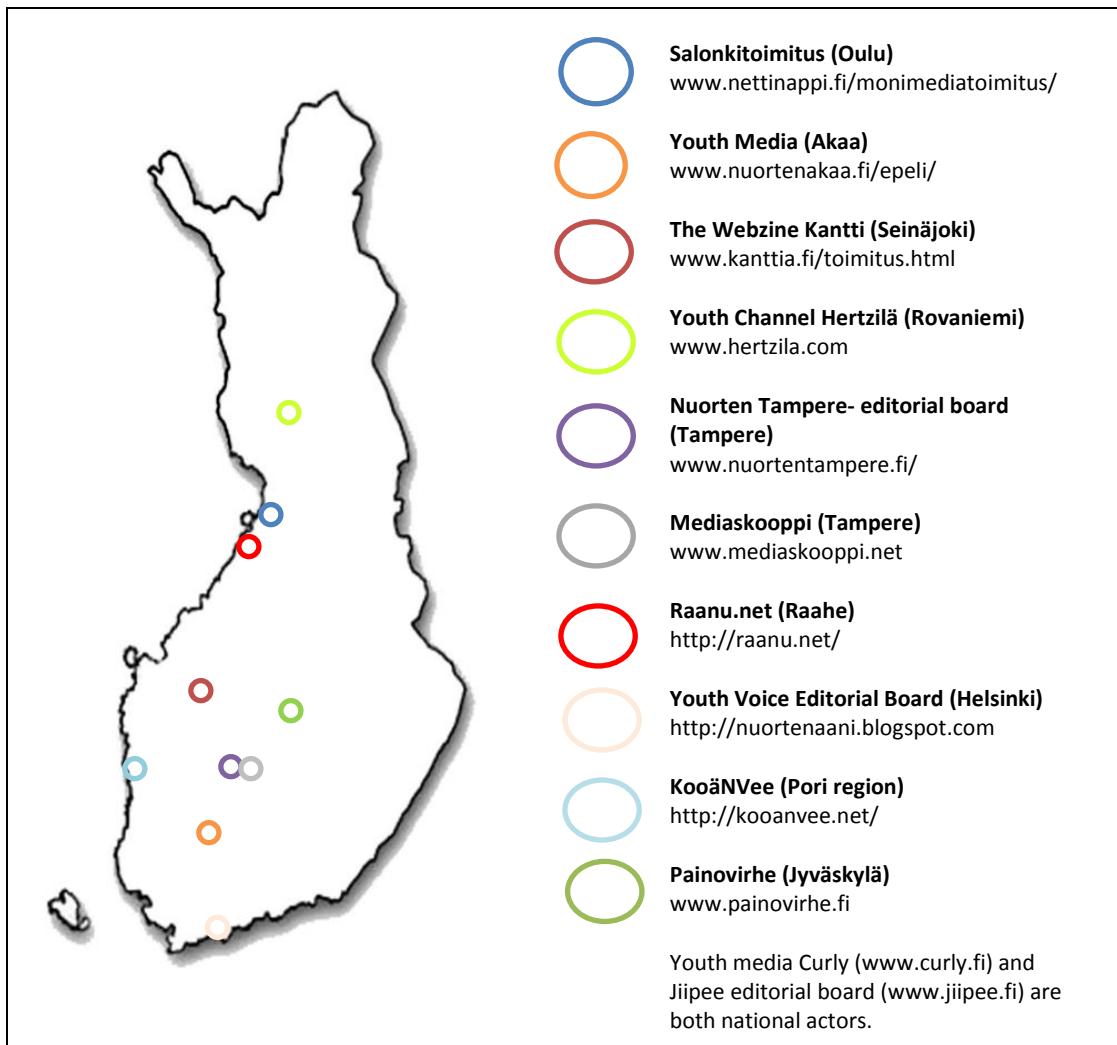


Figure 4. Media editorial boards in Finland 2011.

Participating in a youth editorial board is a hobby for young people. Youth workers and other adults work as enablers of the activity; they provide the tools and help if needed, but young editors, usually aged from 13 to 20 produce contents basically themselves.

There are basically two types of editorial boards according to previous studies. There are groups, which meet regularly and groups, which meet occasionally and are especially based on online interaction. Editorial boards, which meet regularly, involve dozens of youngsters. Group members meet each other in face-to-face editorial meetings at least once a month. Usually the group size is from 10 to 20 editors. Editors work as a team and members are rather involved in the activity. For example, Painovirhe and Youth Voice Editorial Board can be described as this type of *closed* or *fixed* groups. Mediaskooppi and JiiPee -editorial board are

examples of *loose networks*, including up to hundred young editors. Editors might not meet each other at all and they do not work as a team. Editors can publish media content on a specific website by themselves.

Communication between the editors is usually web-based. Some editorial boards combine both aspects: they work mainly online but the group meets if needed. An average size of editorial board is around 20 to 30 youngsters, of which the active group includes around 10 editors. Most of the editors are female.

All editorial boards produce media content to the Internet - a blog, a webzine or a website dedicated to youth information and counselling services. The social media tools are used in promotion of the media contents. Painovirhe, Curly and JiiPee - reporter club publish printed magazines as well. The magazines can be ordered or they are delivered to libraries, schools and youth centres. Fewer editorial boards cooperate actively with the local media. The Youth Voice Editorial Board is the only one collaborating with the national media organisations.

To sum up, the youth editorial boards are very different from each other. However, they face same type of challenges: the writers and producers are mostly girls and the activity seems to be interesting for only a minor group of youth. Also, there is a major regional imbalance because there are areas without any youth editorial board. (see appendix 1.) Later, I will reflect these notions against the results of the study done among the editors of Painovirhe, and come up with (will introduce) some developmental recommendations, which could help youth editorial boards to utilise the opportunities of the participatory culture.

## 4 RESEARCH DATA AND METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I will introduce research methods and data I gathered by using the methods. The research methods consist of practices and operations that the researchers use to make observations about the phenomenon under examination. The method also introduces rules by which the observations are modified and interpreted in order to assess their meanings. (Alasuutari 1995, p. 41-42.)

The objective of this study is to understand the experiences on media participation and the meanings, which a group of young people give to the phenomenon being studied. Hence, this study follows loosely the practices of a case study. In a case study a researcher produces intensive knowledge about his case whether it is a person, a group or an organisation. The case is described accurately and in detail. The followed data develops an entire entity. Understanding the case is considered more precious than an overall ability to generalise the case. However, when one case is described in detail, it creates opportunities to make generalisations on the basis of a certain group or organisation. (Saarela-Kinnunen & Eskola, 2010, p. 189-194; Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, p. 65-68.)

The case in this thesis is a group of editors of Painovirhe. The research data of this study was collected by two means:

- 1) In a questionnaire, nine Painovirhe editors were asked about frequencies of media use and levels of active media participation.
- 2) In the interviews, the Painovirhe editors were asked to tell about their experiences, opinions and meanings in relation to media participation.

This study combines two different methods of gathering information about the same subject, as I used both the questionnaire and the interviews to approach the research questions. It is possible to collect data with a questionnaire to gain a frame and a general description of the subject matter, and then deepen the approach by using a qualitative approach (for example interviews). The objective

is to provide a more holistic and better understanding of the phenomenon under study. (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, p. 70-71.) In this case, the questionnaire was used to collect data for comparison between the Painovirhe editors and the respondents of the YMP study. The qualitative data has a complementary role in this study. It complements the quantitative data. (see Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008, p. 32).

The justification of choosing two methods lies on the fact that my thesis is related to the YMP study, which was providing me the tools to approach the research questions. I was planning to conduct the study by interviewing young people but the prepared and the ready-made YMP questionnaire form encouraged me to take another approach into an account as well. By combining two methods, I have approached the concept of media participation from a wider perspective. I am aware of the risks of combining both qualitative and quantitative approach, as it is rather time consuming. That is why I kept the questionnaire and interviews as concise as possible, but diverse enough to get material for a proper analysis.

This study follows loosely a hermeneutic-phenomenological research tradition. The hermeneutic-phenomenological approach identifies a phenomenon through how it is perceived by actors in a specific situation. It is based on a paradigm, which emphasises the knowledge of an individual and is a subjective, personal interpretation on the subject matter. Instead of testing hypotheses and working with conventional assumptions, the objective is to gain insights into people's motivations and actions without any presumptions. (Laine, 2010, p. 26-27; Varto, 2005, p. 135, Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, p. 17, 19.) In this thesis, the hermeneutics-phenomenological approach is chosen because young people are seen as producers of meanings. The aim is not, therefore, to produce generalised information about young people, but to gain understanding in one case and theme, media participation, which does not necessarily consist of clear concepts. The concept is approached by using the data from questionnaires and interpreting the meanings, which young people verbally point out. The issues, which are seen and experienced, but not consciously thought of or broadly conceptualised, are pointed out and highlighted by using interviews. (see Laine, 2010, p. 28-31)

Next, I will introduce the research methods I used and explain the use of two different data collection methods. Then I will introduce the tools I have used and analyse my results that I have gain using these tools. I will also highlight the methodology and evaluate the limitations and reliability of the method.

## 4.1 Questionnaire

In the YMP research project, the questionnaire was used to gain understanding and comparable knowledge on young people's media use. The YMP research group analysed media use and participation based on the following variables: age, gender, social status, accessibility of media and living area (urban/rural). (see Kotilainen & Suoninen, 2013). In this thesis I collected data about the respondent's age, living area, educational status and parent's profession. In addition with this background information, I collected data about their daily Internet routines, interest in civic participatory activities and opinions on how effective different participatory practices are in their perspective.

For this kind of data, pattern of questions presented on a form to be filled is a good tool for data collection. Questionnaires generate information, which is comparable in numeral form and the information is definable, comparable and calculable. (Taanila, 2012, p. 2, 21; Alasutari, 1995, p. 8-11.) Using a questionnaire as a research tool requires careful preparation. If the questionnaire fails to ask right questions, results are distorted. Questions asked should be unambiguous. It is also important to avoid leading questions. The researcher needs to be sure that the respondents are able to understand the questions and that the questions address rightly to the research itself. Usually it needs a lot of careful examination and testing until the questionnaire is ready to be used. (Valli, 2010, p. 102-104.) To me, this stage was prefaced as the questionnaire was already designed by the professional researchers and tested internationally. Using a questionnaire that was already tested, increases the reliability of the study (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka, 2006). I adopted the questionnaire, which was used in the YMP study

and individualised it to match my needs. The original YMP questionnaire included 34 questions, of which I used 12 most relevant questions. I also added a question about the importance of online practices and a question about common interest on civic activity, which were not asked in the YMP questionnaire.

I will compare the data from questionnaires to the data that was gathered in the YMP study on Finland. Using same questions for the Painovirhe editors, which were used in the international YMP study, allows me to compare the data, and look for consistencies and discrepancies between the respondent groups. The reference group in the YMP study consists of 425 respondents, aged from 15 to 20 years. They represent young people both from cities and countryside. I compare the data in order to find out whether the Painovirhe editors as active media producers are truly more active other ways, for example spend more time online, possess more media devices or have more experience on active media participation than average youngsters in the YMP study. What is important to notice is that there will be only nine forms filled among the Painovirhe editors. The sampling size does not therefore represent any kind of population and the results should not be considered as generalised information about active young people. Hence, the goal is not to make inferences about population but to find out if there are any indications that suggest that the Painovirhe editors are different from the reference group.

I was handing out the questionnaires for the respondents in a training couple of days before the interviews. The questionnaire was a group administered one, which means that each respondent was handed an instrument and asked to complete it in the room. (see Valli 2010, p. 108-109). Editors filled up the questionnaire alone and they had a chance to ask questions if they had some issues when filling up the form. Also, it was possible to me to help respondents if they had any questions about the form. Two of the editors who were unable to join the training filled up the questionnaire on the same day as they were interviewed.

In the field of youth research, questionnaires have been criticised especially because it is hard to analyse social processes and social change based on numbers

(Puuronen, 2006, p. 227). That is why I find important in this thesis to combine numeral information to data, which is gathered in contact with young people. Next I will introduce the interview as my second tool for gathering data about media participation.

## 4.2 The interviews

Research interviews are suitable in situations when the area of research is unknown or blurred and when the researcher wants to deepen the existing knowledge on the topic (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2000, p. 35). Media participation among young people can be considered as a blurred concept because it is constantly changing and does not represent particularly fixed phenomenon.

The interview can be conducted in a variety of ways, which all produce very different standpoints on the studied phenomenon (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2000, p. 43-44). In this thesis, I chose focused interview as my main research method.

According to Merton, Fiske and Kendall (1990) focused interview is a method suitable for research, in which subjects have been involved in a specific, formerly determined situation – for example, they have read the same book. The researcher needs to work with a prior analysis of the situation in order to *distinguish the objective facts of the case from the subjective definitions of the situation*, as Merton, Fiske and Kendall put it (Merton et al., 1990, p. 4). While Merton et al. perceive experimentally obtained study design as mandatory, have Hirsjärvi and Hurme expanded the concept of focused interview by assuming that many kind of human experiences and thoughts can be examined with this method and there is no special need for pre-determined, shared or common situation. They call the method as “a theme interview”, which means that the theme of the interview is determined in before hand. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2000, p. 47-48). Theme/focused interview is a semi-structured method, which means that the theme is set, but the determined questions can be asked in a different order. An interviewer has also an opportunity to ask questions beyond the pre-planned questions and discuss about

the theme freely with a respondent. (Tiittula & Ruusuvuori, 2005, p. 11; Eskola & Vastamäki 2010, p. 24-27.)

A focused interview brings along aspects, which a researcher needs to take into consideration. By using focused interview, the researcher has an opportunity to collect data, which is considered very rich and versatile. The opportunity to ask questions beyond pre-determined question setting and an ability to have a real conversation with the respondent might bring up important issues. However, as the amount of data is wider than structured data and usually analysing data from focused interviews requires more time and effort. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, p. 34, 135.)

For the interview, I built up a question setting, which included 17 questions (see appendix 2). The first six questions concerned Painovirhe activity. The rest of the questions were focusing on two main topics: participation practices and media-related citizenship. This framework was mainly a guideline and it was possible to deviate from it if needed, or go for a more natural sequence of questions. I allowed respondents to have a conversation with me more than just ask questions about the topic.

I had previously agreed with the editors that they are allowed to enter into the interviews in pairs or alone. The original plan included one couple, which were coming to the interview together, but because of a delay, both interviews were held as individual interviews. In the individual interview situation other participants are not interfering the situation or affecting the answers of the respondent. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2000, p. 61-63.)

Nine interviews were carried out on May 2011. The interview duration ranged from about half an hour to 45 minutes. The average length of one interview was 37 minutes. Because interviews are all about verbal communication, I used the digital recorder for saving the interviews. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed. I also wrote occasional notes in a booklet in the interview. By using a

recorder and doing notes, the reliability of the study increases as the results can be traced back (see Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka, 2006).

A location, where interviews are held, is considered as an important factor for the success of the interviews. The environment should be calm and peaceful, letting the respondent and the interviewer to communicate in private (Eskola & Vastamäki, 2010, p. 29). Researchers have been warning about choosing a location such as university premises, as official lecture rooms might cause an experience of uncertainty on respondents (*ibid.*, p. 29-30). I was conscious on this factor when choosing the location for the interviews, but still conducted them at the university premises because the room was easy to book and a lecture room is a quiet place for recording interviews.

Later on, I approached the editors by e-mail, phone and Facebook to get more precise information on their family background and to define some of their answers during the interviews.

### **4.3 Ethical and practical considerations**

Ethical considerations need to be taken into an account always when conducting a research. The dignity and self-determination of a respondent should be valued and a researcher needs to avoid of damaging respondents in any way. (Kuula 2006, p. 192; Nieminen 2010, p. 33, 35-37.) Ethical questions on children and youth are often connected to psychological and medical research but they are relevant in humanities and social sciences as well. For example, when choosing optimal research methods, a researcher must be aware of that the methods suitable for adults may not function when studying children and young people. (Nieminen, 2010, p. 37; Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, p. 128-129). A researcher must also take into account some specific ethical when examining children under 18 years old. Minors have socially vulnerable status and thus require special attention in research practices. When conducting a research among young people, one of the most

important tasks is to ask a permit for research from the parent of a minor. (see Lagström, Pösö, Rutanen & Vehkalahti., 2010, p. 10-16. Alasuutari, 2005, p. 147.) In this chapter I will highlight some of the ethical perspectives that I considered during the thesis project.

First of all, participating in this study was of course voluntary for the editors. Research permits, signed by the parents were collected from those, who were under 18 years old. I also applied and gained a research permit from the administrator of youth department in order to do co-operation with the Painovirhe editors and the youth workers who work with the Painovirhe editors.

Secondly, it is important for me to protect the identities of the editors. The promise of anonymity and hiding personal identities of the respondents are important starting points of ethically solid research. For example, it is rarely necessary to publish names of the interviewees. Above all, it is necessary to assess what kind of information about the respondents is be published and in what context. (Kuula, 2006, p. 201-204.) However, the group of respondents is quite small and they are known as the editors of Painovirhe. Although their names are not published it is still possible that their comments on this study may be linked to a certain editor. This must be accepted, and the matter has been made clear to both young people and their parents. In this case, means of writing have a great importance. Sensitive and private issues that might have been mentioned during the interviews are not exposed and explicit personalisation of comments is used only when necessary.

Young people are not easy to fool: they are able to see when an adult is not truly interested in their issues. In order to succeed in the interviews with young people, the researcher needs to invest in creating trust and to motivate the respondents to work with him. When the trust and confidence is built up, the responses are usually better for the research and material is more valid for research purposes. This increases the reliability of the study. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, p. 132-133.) In order to get a valid knowledge on their media participation, I met the editors a couple of times before the interviews and also held a training session about media

participation. The meetings we had were based on discussion and sharing meanings. I was able to ask a lot and also, the editors had a chance to discuss about the topic and the forthcoming interview situation before hand. I also had some conversations with youth workers who plan and develop Painovirhe activity and gained knowledge on the editors before the interviews. Because of these preliminary activities, I felt that the editors were motivated to participate in the interviews and fill up the questionnaires. They were very interested in expressing their opinions and telling about their experiences in the interview situation. One of them mentioned that for her it is an honour to participate in the research, when someone is genuinely interested in Painovirhe activity.

When conducting interviews, it is important to notice that both researcher and the respondents are active participants in the conversation and they are creating meanings together. The reality and truth – in this case, what is media participation – is built constructively through linguistic interaction. (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, p. 86, 141-143; Ruusuvuori & Tiittula, 2005, p. 22-23) The challenge on meaning making process is to find a common verbal ground between the researcher and the respondents. Challenges emerge from finding concrete terms and a common language and by that, creating understanding between the respondent and the researcher. The researcher needs to approach the topic by using understandable terms, avoiding too complicated questions. In youth research, it is advised to use informal language, which is closer to the respondent's world than using academic language (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, s. 53, 105, 132). According to Pathak-Shelat (2011), especially on the research on youth digital cultures, it is important to pay attention to terms which young people and adults use in very different ways and which have different meaning for adults and young people. For example "media participation" is a term, which can be understood in very many ways depending on age and a background of a person.

To set up a dialogue about the terms and concepts, I held a training session for the editors. The session was focusing on media participation. The training for editors was held before the interviews and it was considered as a part of Painovirhe

training activity. For the editors, it was possible to participate to the training session without participating in my thesis interviews. All of the editors I interviewed were participating on the training as well.

In the training I discussed with the editors about media participation, showed them videos and examples about media participation. I introduced a concept of *active media citizen*, who is a person who wants to affect common, civic issues by using media (see Kotilainen & Rantala, 2008, p. 34; Kotilainen & Rantala, 2009, p. 672) and we discussed together about this concept. The concept was rose up at the interview situation as well, and the respondents had a chance to reflect the concept against their emotions and experiences they had about media participation.

From the perspective of reliability of a study this approach raises a question of whose meanings are we dealing with – the editors or mine. However, this was a conscious decision as the concept of media participation is not clear and it does have different meanings for people. I felt it was important to clear the concept together. I felt it was a lot easier to meet the respondents and talk with them about media participation, when we had created a common ground and discussed about the topic in beforehand. Also, for the respondents it seemed to be a lot easier to talk about concepts that they were already familiar with. Without the training session I would have possibly gained very different data from the interviews, as editors have not had the opportunity to “chew over” the concepts and think about their ideas in beforehand.

As mentioned, the lack of interaction and trust between the researcher and the respondent may cause errors and difficulties during the interviews. These challenges are visible in the earlier studies conducted among the editors of Painovirhe (see Kuusela & Álen 2009; Leinonen 2011.) Kuusela and Álen reported that the editors were nervous and gave only brief answers, because they were filmed during the interviews. (Kuusela & Álen, 2009, p. 12). In addition with the pressure of being filmed, I argue that young people did not feel comfortable of being interviewed by people who they did not know, and found hard to trust.

Leinonen (2011) had a group interview with six editors but in the final thesis only short comments from four informants were used. I think that Leinonen had trouble of getting appropriate answers in 40 minutes from all of six respondents. These challenges indicate that a relationship between the respondent and the researcher is essential. I tried to learn from mistakes of other researchers and pay special attention on issues mentioned above. However, I noticed in one interview that it was very hard to get any answers from the respondent. This might indicate that the trust between us was quite weak.

When doing a study the position of the researcher is acknowledged but not emphasised: the researcher makes clear that he has a specific background which always includes a variety of preconceptions of the subject matter, but he consciously breaks away from preconceptions, and aims to explore the phenomenon openly (Varto, 2005, p. 136-137). To me, it was very challenging to pick up the role of a researcher instead of an enthusiastic and positive media educator who believes in media participation. I noticed during the process that I constantly wanted to emphasise positive perspectives on media participation. When transcribing the recorded tapes, I noticed that in couple of situations I was prompting the interviewee too much. This happened with editors, who were not communicating as much as others and I needed to pump them in order to get answers or evaluation about their media participation practices. Naturally, I did leave these answers out from the analysis.

It was also a bit challenging for me to remain professional and especially in the first interview situations I was perhaps bit too friendly to the respondents. For example, I did not ask the respondents to answer questions clearly enough and therefore I got sidetracked occasionally. This might have been caused by the familiarity with the editors, as I knew them by name and got already to know them as persons. I did not really realise these errors during the interviews and I noticed them when I was transcribing the data. However, I got enough valid material for the analysis. Next, I will introduce how the data was transformed into a material which could be analysed and highlight the perspectives from which I

analysed the research material.

#### **4.4 Analysis on the data**

In general, the purpose of data analysis is to extract as much information as possible that is pertinent to the subject under consideration. A proper analysis increases the information value of the data. Without the analysis data is not particularly valuable. Research data can be analysed in many ways and various means produce different perspectives to the data. (Saaranen & Puusniekka, 2006; Eskola and Suoranta, 1998, p. 138.) For this thesis I have gathered two “data sets”, which I will use for the analysis.

At first I will describe the data I gathered and explain how I analysed it. The sampling size of the questionnaire is nine. The sampling size does not represent population but should be treated as an example group in a specific case (see Mattila, 2003). The response rate is 100 % as all of the active editors, who visit the meetings and produce online content regularly, were taking part into research by filling up the questionnaire during the training day or before entering the interview.

The data gathered with the questionnaire form was tabulated electronically by using Excel. The comparable data includes 425 respondents, aged from 15 to 20 year old from high school and vocational schools, both from rural and city areas. In order to produce information, which approaches towards generalisation and is equivalent with population, the data from the YMP research project was weighted. Weighted data is in balance with the original sampling. (see Mattila, 2003.) The data from the YMP study was likewise in Excel format, so it was easy to formulate histograms and calculate mean values in order to find out if it was possible to find indications to differences. These observations are presented in tables. From the perspective of reliability, it is fair to say that comparing the data (nine against hundreds of respondents) creates unbalanced situation and the results should be

therefore treated as preparatory data, which complete the data from the interviews.

Next I will introduce the content analysis method, which was used to analyse the data from the interviews. Content analysis is a method, which determines the presence of certain concepts within text and aims at organising textual elements in a way that it provides conclusions about the phenomenon at stake. The researcher tries to accomplish a summarised description about the topic and link it to a wider context and earlier research findings. ( Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka, 2006; Eskola & Vastamäki, 2010, p. 41-42.) In order to accomplish a proper analysis the data should be read various times, create brief descriptions and search for relevant concepts. After this type of investigation information is more structured and ready to be analysed. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, p. 152; Laine, 2001, p. 38, 42). I transcribed the interviews and printed a copy of transcriptions for reading. I collected the relevant phrases into a data file and grouped them into separate entities, which reflected the themes of the study. I tried to identify topics, words, meanings and feelings that referred to the research questions and drew a picture of media participation. The themes that were emphasised in the interviews were:

1. Media participation online and offline,
2. Challenges on media participation,
3. Attitudes towards the participatory culture in media.

In this thesis the interviews bring out the “voice of youth” and thus in the result part, I will use citations from the interviews. These citations will help to assess, if the data was interpreted in a rational way. This will increase the reliability of the study (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, p. 181.) I will translate the citations in English for clarity reasons but I will leave the original citations for Finnish readers (appendix 4.) I have used [square brackets] to show the explanatory additions that make the quotations clearer to the reader.

Readers should be aware that the percentages in the figures related to the YMP study have been rounded to the nearest whole number. Thus, for each question

the total percentage may not be exactly one hundred. When the figure focuses on the Painovirhe editors, I have marked the amount of respondents for clarity reasons.

## 5 RESEARCH RESULTS

The following sections will highlight the main results of the questionnaire and the interviews I will reflect the data against each other and with the concept of media participation. I will begin with observing the background factors (socio-economic status, age, education, future plans, interest in politics and civic activity) that might influence the respondents' abilities and willingness to participate in media. I will then highlight the motives of participating in Painovirhe activity. I will then move on to differentiate media participation practices of the editors. The subsequent subchapter will highlight media skills, which the editors have gained in Painovirhe activity. After that I will move on to explain their perceptions of the Internet as a tool for participation and give examples of challenges they have faced while participating online. Finally, I will analyse carefully what kind of active media citizenship the editors represent by reflecting their thoughts on being active online.

### 5.1 Background factors

The group of editors in Painovirhe represents very different types of youth (see Figure 5). Most of them are female, which seem to be common in almost every youth editorial board. (see appendix 1). Six of the editors are considered adults and the youngest is 16 years. Consequently the group consists of young people who have already completed secondary school and could be described as "late-teenagers".

These remarks seem to go in line with the research findings on civic online participation by Livingstone et al. (2004, p. 11-12): it is possible that the older youth are more interested on civic media participation than the younger and girls are more eager than boys to participate in this kind of activities. The Painovirhe

editors have entered the activity when they have been between 14 and 19 years, so it seems that the activity interests young people from various age groups.

All of the respondents live in Central Finland, most of them in urban areas, such as suburban area or population centre. Although the editorial office of Painovirhe is located in Jyväskylä, not all of them live in Jyväskylä but in the local municipalities. Only one respondent lives in a rural area (countryside). One possible explanation for this situation may be traced in cultural differences: young people in rural areas use the Internet a bit less than young people living in urban areas and therefore might not be aware of or interested in the Painovirhe webzine (cf. Myllyniemi, 2009, p. 89). The reason might also be more practical: it is easier for the minors from suburban than from rural areas to find a ride to the regular meetings in Jyväskylä. Youth from the sub-urban areas are able to use bus or bicycle, while the minors living at countryside are dependable of the parents who drive them to the city.

Four of the editors are studying media and three of them are working at the media branch (in local newspapers and in film centre). Many of them were also interested in working as a journalist or work in a film industry (figure 6). It seems that educational choices and participating in Painovirhe activity are integrative factors. Current education programme may encourage an individual to search for a hobby, which supports the educational objectives, or participating in Painovirhe activity may arise an interest in choosing a media-related education programme. The respondents describe widely informational and practical values related on choosing a career and selecting a study programme. Two of the female respondents pointed out that it is important that she is able to practice the studied skills at Painovirhe. Another two female respondents argued that Painovirhe facilitated the decision of choosing a profession at the media branch instead of other careers. One of the males pointed out that Painovirhe activity has also brought up the realistic sides of media industry and therefore had an effect on future plans.

Respondent number	Age	Gender	Area of living	Current education programme	Active in Painovirhe
1	19	Female	urban	Media assistant in vocational school	couple of months
2	17	Female	urban	Media assistant in vocational school	around 9 months
3	20	Female	urban	Graduated from upper secondary school, currently doing an internship	three years (since 2008)
4	19	Female	urban	Graduated from upper secondary school, currently working part-time	five years (since 2006)
5	16	Female	urban	Double degree (visual artisan+ matriculation examination)	three years (2008)
6	17	Female	urban	Upper secondary school	9 months
7	18	Male	urban	Graduated from vocational school (technical branch)	2 years (2009)
8	18	Male	urban	Graduated from upper secondary school	2 years (2009)
9	18	Male	rural	Double degree (media assistant + matriculation examination)	9 months

Figure 5. Background variables of the Painovirhe editors.

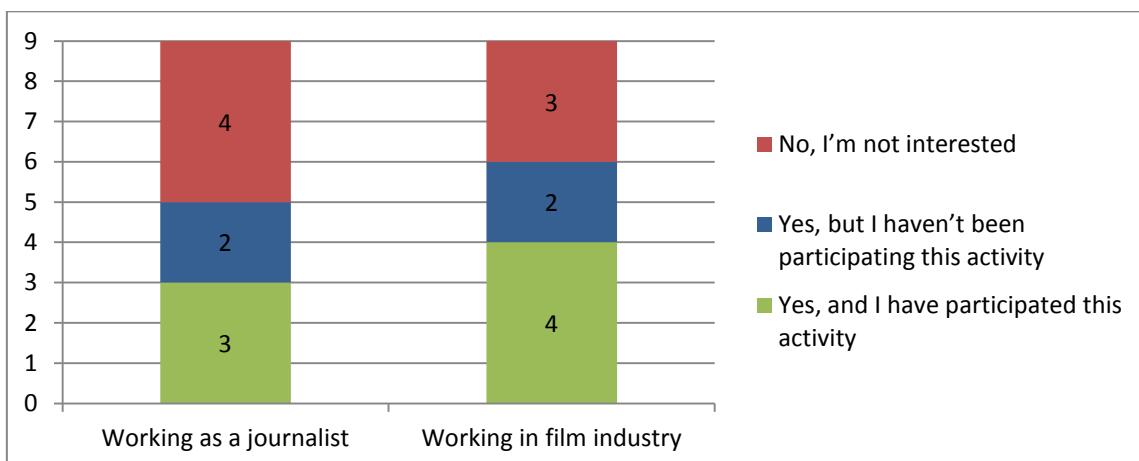


Figure 6. Interest in working in the media branch.

It seems natural that young people who are interested in writing and producing media are more likely to get interested in youth editorial board activity.

Painovirhe activity seems to have a capability to provide practical tools for young people who are making decisions on future careers and also for them who have already made up their mind about choosing media as a future career (cf. Leinonen, 2011, p. 68).

As explained earlier the cultural environment has an enormous impact on opportunities for youth´s media participation. What is important to notice is that the common political and civic debate culture in Finnish families is not particularly strong when compared to other European countries. Researcher Kari Paakkunainen describes Finnish families as "*dramatically silent*" in political debates at home, which also reflects on the youth´s willingness to vote and participate in demonstrations (Paakkunainen 2006, p. 95). The comments by the editors confirm that the discursive, positive culture to media and politics at home and the encouraging attitude of parents and other relatives appears to strengthen the youth´s ability and willingness to get involved in media participation. In this sense, the Painovirhe editors seem to be the lucky ones who have the opportunity to develop civic identity by having discussions and debates with family members.

*"My family has had an enormous impact on me, as it is very discursive and my parents are active and are ready to take a stand and participate even if they are not active in political parties "* (Respondent 6)

*"My mum is very active and interested in media, journalism and movies and all kind of culture so it [the interest in media] has passed into me"* (Respondent 2)

*"[My mum insists that] I have to be informed and become aware of civic issues and therefore the use of media has deeply rooted on me, like reading regularly newspapers and such".* (Respondent 8)

Five of the editors come from families where either one or both of the parents have an academic degree. Four of the editors came from the working-class families. It seems that discursive culture and culturally positive atmosphere at home seems to affect more on the willingness of a young person to participate in media than the occupational or academic status of the parents. It is also worth of mentioning that none of the parents is working in media branch as journalists or other media professionals. The inner drive to participate in the youth editorial board seems not to be related to the professional example of the parents.

According to my findings, the role of the parents in building up the civic identity is seen more important than the role of the friends. The editors of Painovirhe did not perceive the role of their friends outside of Painovirhe significantly important in their willingness to participate in media. Only one of the editors mentioned politically oriented hobby groups and school activities as influential groups, which have boosted her enthusiasm to participate in civic activities. Most of them say that their friends are not particularly active in the media or in politics:

*"Well, my friends are not particularly active, I don't have any environmentally radical friends or such, but they mainly represent ordinary people, who have lifestyle blogs with pictures of friends and nice foods they have been eating."*

(Respondent 5)

To summarise, some of the background factors seem to have an influence on media participation. However, it appears that from the socio-economic perspective, family background appears not to have a significant importance on who gets involved in the Painovirhe activity. More than socio-economic background, interest to participate in the editorial board supposedly stems from a discursive culture at home. Also, the occupational dreams seem in all likelihood to have an effect when choosing Painovirhe as a hobby. The activity appears to engage especially young people who have already completed secondary school and who are interested in working in the media branch in the future. Painovirhe seems to function as a sort of supportive rigorous internship for those who are already interested in the media branch in a vocational sense. Through the hobby, it is possible to learn new civic skills and improve individual media skills that might support them later to grasp civic issues and promote them by using media as a tool for the civic activity.

## 5.2 Media participation practices

In this subchapter I will describe the Painovirhe editors as members of the

participatory culture: what do they do online in general and what kind of acts of media participation they have executed.

According to my data the editors are active users of the Internet and represent the average Finnish youth as their activity level online (see figure 7). They use the Internet every day, mostly from home or from a school or a working place. They all have an access to the Internet at home. These results show that there is not considerable difference between the Painovirhe editors and their peers in Finland.

Respondent number	Mobile phone with internet access	Frequency of using mobile phone for accessing the internet	Frequency of using computer for accessing the internet at home
1	yes	at least once a month	5-7 days a week
2	yes	5-7 times a week	5-7 days a week
3	no	never	5-7 days a week
4	no	never	5-7 days a week
5	**	at least once a month	5-7 days a week
6	yes	1-4 times a week	5-7 days a week
7	yes	5-7 times a week	5-7 days a week
8	yes	5-7 times a week	5-7 days a week
9	yes	5-7 times a week	5-7 days a week
<b>** The respondent doesn't have an internet access in her own mobile, but she has an access to mobile device somewhere else (for example by using a mobile phone of a friend).</b>			

Figure 7. The Internet use comparison (mobile & home).

According to the data, the editors of Painovirhe have the access and the willingness to use the Internet actively. From the perspective of the participatory culture, the editors have sufficient premises for media participation online.

### 5.2.1. Online media participation

As mentioned earlier, the main motives for the Internet use among young people are learning, relaxation by gaming and using video sharing websites, updating social network sites, staying up to date and consuming (see Livingstone et al., 2011a; Aarnio & Multisilta, 2012). The editors of Painovirhe seem not to really differ from the general population (see Figure 8). The results show that even in

such a small group of young people like the Painovirhe editors the use of online media varies greatly – the editors do not represent a coherent group of the Internet users. For five of them, keeping up social relations and getting new friends was the most or second important online practice. While others embrace the social networking sites, one of the editors is not interested at all to sign up on Facebook. Another editor has never participated in discussions online, while two of them considered blogging highly important. One of them considered playing games as the most important online practice. These remarks strengthen previous arguments on young people as very versatile and complex Internet users.

1.	Keeping yourself up-to-date for example by following news sites and feeds
2.	Searching information about different topics
3.	Participating in discussions in discussion forums
4.	Playing online games, watching videos/photos and other type of entertainment
5.	Keeping up social relations and getting new friends
6.	Publishing photos and videos
7.	Updating a blog or other column of your own
8.	Publishing stories, poems and other fiction online

Figure 8. The order of importance on online practices given by the respondents. (1=this is the most important for me, 8=this is the least important for me). N= 9.

The editors of Painovirhe admit that the Internet is a practical tool for sharing knowledge about important issues. According to one of the editors, young people are able to use various tools to exert influence:

*"Well, there are plenty of options. Facebook, by using a blog, writing opinions on websites of tabloids or local newspaper, by publishing own websites and spreading information about them."* (Respondent 1)

In YMP study, signing online petitions, publishing YouTube-videos and blogging are the most common ways to participate online among 15-20 years old (Kotilainen& Suoninen, 2013; Kotilainen et. al 2014). As seen on Figure 9, the same activities are emphasised among the Painovirhe editors. Of course, the Painovirhe editors do have more experience on writing articles to the Painovirhe webzine, but otherwise being active in Painovirhe appears not to facilitate activism online in

other ways, at least not to a substantial extent.

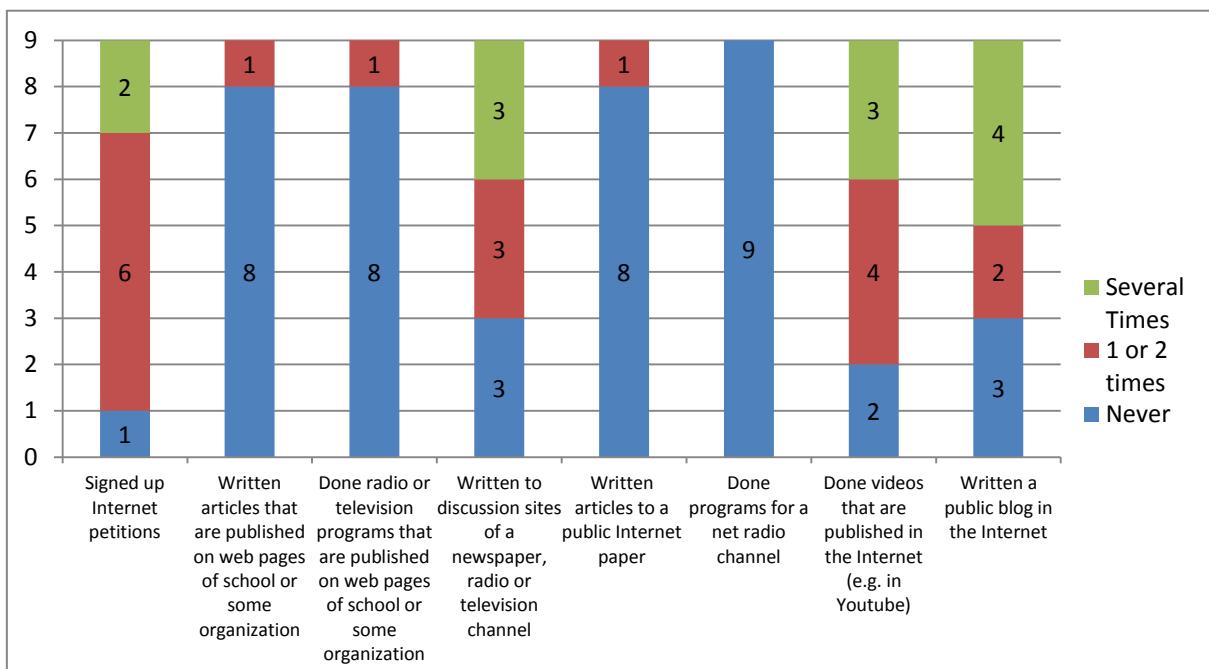


Figure 9. Online activities.

I wanted also to find out, how the editors of Painovirhe have used social media tools in order to examine their abilities to use the tools of the participatory culture for civic purposes. The findings indicate that social media practices, such as setting up Facebook group to promote important issues or sharing ideas on Twitter divided Painovirhe editors into two groups (see figure 10). There is a group of three editors who use Facebook and other social media platforms often to create groups and encourage people from their network to join them. The rest of the group is less active in promoting their opinions in social media.

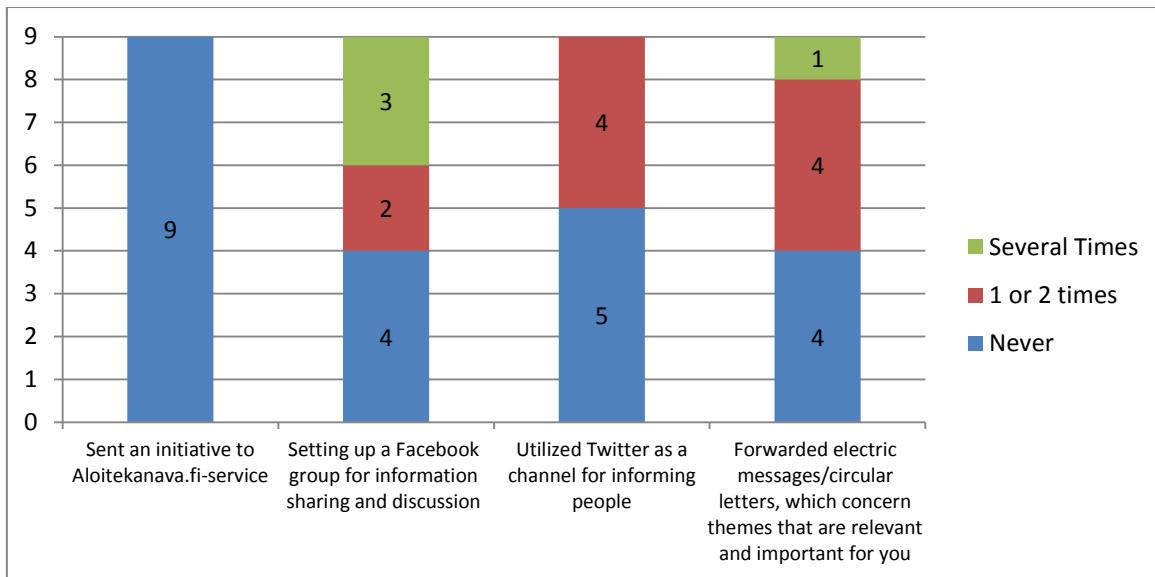


Figure 10. Online activities, which were not asked in the YMP study.

According to these remarks, social media appears to be a participatory tool for some of the editors, but definitely not all of them are actively using them for civic purposes. None of the editors have sent an initiative to Aloitekanava.fi, one of the editors said that she had never heard about the site. I find this missing link a bit surprising, since the Painovirhe editorial board is in close contact with the local youth council and is closely related to NuortenLaturi information and counselling services. Both of the above-mentioned actors are doing co-operation with Aloitekanava.fi-website. Yet, one of the editors told that she has been commenting and “thumping up” the initiatives which are published by other users on Aloitekanava.fi. This comment reflects the complexity of media participation: one might support, comment and develop the initiatives and ideas of others, but not necessarily publish any initiatives by himself – and still participate in media very effectively.

In summary, the editors of Painovirhe do not seem to differ from their peers in Finland by their abilities and experiences in media participation online. Painovirhe may support and offer opportunities for a civic-oriented media participation but in the light of these results, there is no evidence that participating in the youth editorial board would naturally increase the online activity and make the editors to participate more in online media.

## 5.2.2 Traditional media participation

In this subchapter I will examine the experiences of the editors related to traditional media and school media. By traditional media I mean newspapers, radio and television.<sup>9</sup> I was interested in what kind of experiences of publishing media content in traditional media they have gained. It goes without saying that many of them have some experiences on publishing content in various media as many of the editors are studying media branch. The editors of the Painovirhe webzine have also gained experience on publishing printed Painovirhe magazine. Furthermore, few of the editors have also work experience on writing articles to local newspapers. Young people had more experience on online participation than offline participation in YMP study. Approximately a one-tenth of young people had published an opinion or other text in a newspaper or in school media. It is not very common to actively participate in traditional media. (Kotilainen et. al 2014).

The data on the Painovirhe editors follow the notions on YMP study. Most of the editors did not have any experience on offline media participation, and if they had, most of them had one or two experiences on it (figure 11). When comparing the editors of Painovirhe to each other and compare the amount of media participation experiences online and offline, it seems that the experiences accumulate. Two of the Painovirhe editors have marked 10 out of 20 different ways to participate, while other editors have marked "only" 2-7 ways. From the perspective of active citizenship, this can be seen as a positive cycle: good experiences of one form of media participation may cause willingness to participate in other ways. Hence, participating in Painovirhe activity could be seen as an opportunity to get support to a creation of positive media participation cycle and to get more knowledge and tools for media participation outside of Painovirhe activity.

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<sup>9</sup> I'm aware of the fact that separating the online and offline media has become quite artificial in contemporary media culture, however I'm going to use this typology here for clarity reasons.

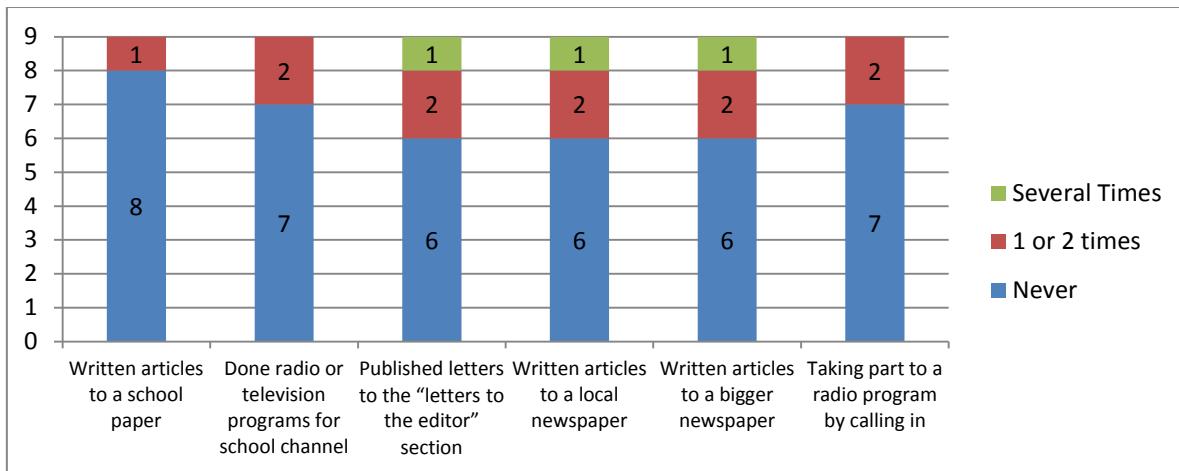


Figure 11. Offline media activities.

While some of the editors did have experience on producing content on school media, most of them had no experience what so ever in producing media at school (figure 11). The results were similar in YMP study as only a small minority of young people had experience on publishing media content at school media (Kotilainen et. al 2014). Schools seem not to support the media participation practices. These notices reflect a contemporary situation at schools where only a minority of the youngsters have an opportunity to work with media at schools. These challenges are generally recognised in many studies that reflect and analyse the challenging situation of media literacy education at schools (for example Hankala, 2011; Kupiainen & Sintonen 2009; Kotilainen & Rantala, 2008; Jenkins, 2006). Also Maiju Haltia (2012, p. 64) points out that according to the experiences of her interviewees, the quality and coverage of media education at schools seems to need more attention.

The challenges in execution of media literacy education at schools clearly defend the existence of the youth editorial boards, as the youth editorial boards provide opportunities for the young people to practice media participation, while it is not emphasised activity at schools. Media-related leisure time activities such as Painovirhe may have a significant role in improving skills, which are relevant in the process of growing up as active citizens.

In conclusion, some of the editors are clearly more oriented towards media participation and seem to have a tendency to gain more experience on media

participation than others. It is not quite clear if participating in Painovirhe has anything to do with it, but it should be noted that Painovirhe activity might function as a support for these highly active young people and encourage them to keep on participating in media as many ways as possible.

### 5.3 Perspectives on motivation

One important question from a perspective of developing the concept of the youth editorial board is to understand how young people get involved in the activities and what makes them engage in activities even for several years. At first, I will point out the issues that attracted their attention in the first place. The editors got interested in Painovirhe activity mainly in two ways: by seeing eye-catching advertisements and posters or getting information from a friend or – surprisingly – from a mother. Mother was mentioned in three interviews as an encouraging figure, who proposed the activity for them to join in:

*"Well, I saw some adds and then mum went online to search information on Painovirhe and proposed that this is something you should consider to participate in" (Respondent 2)*

In addition, editors have gained information about Painovirhe from other adults and friends, who have been already involved in Painovirhe activity. From a perspective of a youngster, it could be easier to join the group when there is at least someone who is familiar in beforehand. The opportunity to hang out with friends and encouragement from the family and other adults supported their decision to get involved in Painovirhe activity.

An artistic and creative expression was mentioned in three interviews. Editors put weight on opportunities to publish their own poems/videos and writings. On one hand, it is related to the private motivation to work with issues they are interested in but on the other, it is also linked to willingness to present ideas in public as described in following quote:

*"Well, originally [I got involved in the activity] because of the group but then it started to in a way [interest me] that it is possible to do articles for some kind of public media." (Respondent 7)*

Willingness to get publicity by publishing writings and other media content, and thus getting a public attention for their work as an important factor was mentioned in three interviews. Three of the editors mentioned publicity as one of the elements, which increased the importance of Painovirhe as a hobby. While Painovirhe is "just a hobby", at the same time can be considered as a public hobby that involves certain responsibilities:

*"Painovirhe comes second, right after school, because you have to invest time on it and it [writings and such] becomes public, so what you do does matter."*  
 (Respondent 2)

Female editors emphasised the social and expressive motives, while male editors mentioned more practical and even economical perspectives that motivated them to join in the activity. Two out of three boys and one out of six girls mentioned opportunities to get free hardware for making own movies or other commodities such as free entries to concerts, movies and gigs.

When conducting a research on Youth Voice Editorial Board, Kotilainen and Rantala noticed that participating in a group and working together with media seems to be a very important factor for the editors (Kotilainen and Rantala, 2008, p. 59). Social contacts with the group were mentioned as a current motivational factor in five of the interviews in this study. One of the editors perceived the editorial board meetings as a place for "goofing around" and having fun. The Painovirhe group was considered as a peer group including other media-enthusiastic people and it seems to empower the editors in a special way. With other Painovirhe editors, individuals are able to exchange views on issues and juggle ideas back and forth in a very different way than in other group of friends. The Painovirhe group seems to function as a dialogic sphere for discussions about current topics and common worries.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there appears to be a strong link between the occupational objectives and participating in Painovirhe. Painovirhe is a creative group that supports the vocational growth. Five of the editors mention that Painovirhe is strongly related to their vocational dreams and growth. Private motivation factors – to get more professional as a media worker, to get work experience that might help in the future and to use Painovirhe as tool to get other job opportunities – were all mentioned. One of the editors, who write articles to Keski-suomalainen, considers Painovirhe a relaxing counterbalance to serious writing. In addition, Painovirhe ease the burden of hard school work and school work conversely supports work at Painovirhe:

*"I'm able to use a text I wrote for Painovirhe at school or use the text I wrote at school in Painovirhe and you learn [about issues] and I think it [being active in Painovirhe] plays a role in the native language matriculation examination"*  
*(Respondent 9)*

The elements of Painovirhe activity, which motivate editors to stay involved in Painovirhe, do not change particularly much during the time they are involved in the activity. It seems that the importance of the group increases during the period of involvement as well as the emphasis on vocational growth.

In general, the Painovirhe editors appear to be very committed to the activity, when compared to other hobbies, the school and other duties. Especially girls stress the meaning of Painovirhe in their lives: all of them mention that Painovirhe has a moderately or very important role in their lives. Two of the boys instead point out that other duties and interests are more important for them than participating in Painovirhe activity.

To sum up the key findings, the Painovirhe editors seem to get motivated by various reasons. They want to publish their creative works online for the public, and hope that the articles find potential readers. However, the publicity seems not to be the first and foremost reason to stay in the editorial board. New and old friends and opportunities to gain experience in the media making processes are

considered more important. Furthermore, exerting political influence through media participation seems not important at all as it was not mentioned when discussing about motives.

## **5.4 Challenges in media participation from a civic perspective**

In this subchapter, I will examine why the editors are more interested in writing about entertainment and fun experiences than picking up topics, which include civic or political perspectives or contains any serious opinions in general. I am also interested to find out, how interested the editors are in politics and civic activities in general.

The Painovirhe webzine is a proper tool for promoting civic issues and share knowledge on civic matters that concern young people (see Ijäs, 2007). However, as I said earlier, the editors are not motivated by the political and civic opportunities of media participation through Painovirhe. On the prior thesis done about the significance of Painovirhe as a local tool for sharing knowledge about the European Union for young people, Mervi Leinonen found out that the Painovirhe webzine contained some articles about the European Union and citizen activism, but the articles were mainly written by the youngsters of the local youth council or even adults instead of the Painovirhe editors. Further, she argued that in the Painovirhe editorial group there was only one editor who was interested in writing articles on issues regarding the European Union and even he was not willing to write articles, because the magazine does not have enough readers (Leinonen, 2011, p. 56, 62).

However, when I participated in the editorial meetings during the thesis process, I noticed that the meetings were often focusing on current civic and political issues. The editors told me that they have very good conversations over civic issues during the editorial meetings. They also emphasised that Painovirhe motivates to monitor current topics discussed in media. It is worth of mentioning that the

parliamentary elections were held in Finland few weeks before the interviews, and it evidently was reflected in the interview situation. Also recent scandals in politics were issues that editors wanted to bring up when I was asking about the current civic interests.

Furthermore, in a closer examination of the data, I found out that the editors are interested in various civic matters. In the interviews they mention challenges related to social issues, politics, economics, young people's position in the society and environment. An inequality between population groups was mentioned in three of the interviews. The editors were contemplating especially the situation of population groups that are considered weaker in the society:

*"Well, [I'm interested in] the balance between the poor and the rich, and like, there should be equality between people and like in Finland, are families with children, poor and student taken into account properly – these are issues I'm mostly interested in and like people who are on a thin ice, like families with children, students, old people and animals as well, they are uppermost important to me" (Respondent 2)*

*"Well, it is related to this inequality-issue, but I feel like throwing up [when seeing] that." (Respondent 3)*

*"Like generally [it bothers me] that people are not capable of appreciating each other and like they see only what they see, believe what they hear from other people but no one seems to understand that there are other ways [to perceive the world], and people who look different." (Respondent 9)*

As seen in the discussion above, editors are angry and worried about civic issues because of the inequality and, like one of the editor points out "*the world is not functioning in sensible way*". An interest in the civic issues derives from a situation the editors themselves are living in:

*"Maybe the issues related to where this world is going [are relevant to me], because, in a way, soon I will have to live there by myself and many of these*

*"issues have an effect on me, like how to cope financially and I'm worried about myself and how I will survive" (Respondent 8)*

To sum up, the lack of civic articles in Painovirhe does not depend on the lack of editors' interest in the civic issues. On the contrary, editors seem to be very interested in talking about the important, societal issues.

What about their attitude towards politics and civic activity in general? Five of the editors are indeed interested in municipal politics, and four of them are interested in working as a politician (see Figure 11). Surprisingly, among those who are already 18 years old, applying to the local youth council does not seem to be particularly interesting option. Maybe they consider themselves too old to get involved to youth politics or find the local youth council unsuitable option for political purposes. Among the 16-17 years old Painovirhe editors, the youth council is considered an interesting option, but none of them have experience in participating in it. However, voting seems to be an interesting way to participate in the society. Five out of six 18 years olds have been voting and those who are not allowed to vote yet are interested in voting when they turn 18.

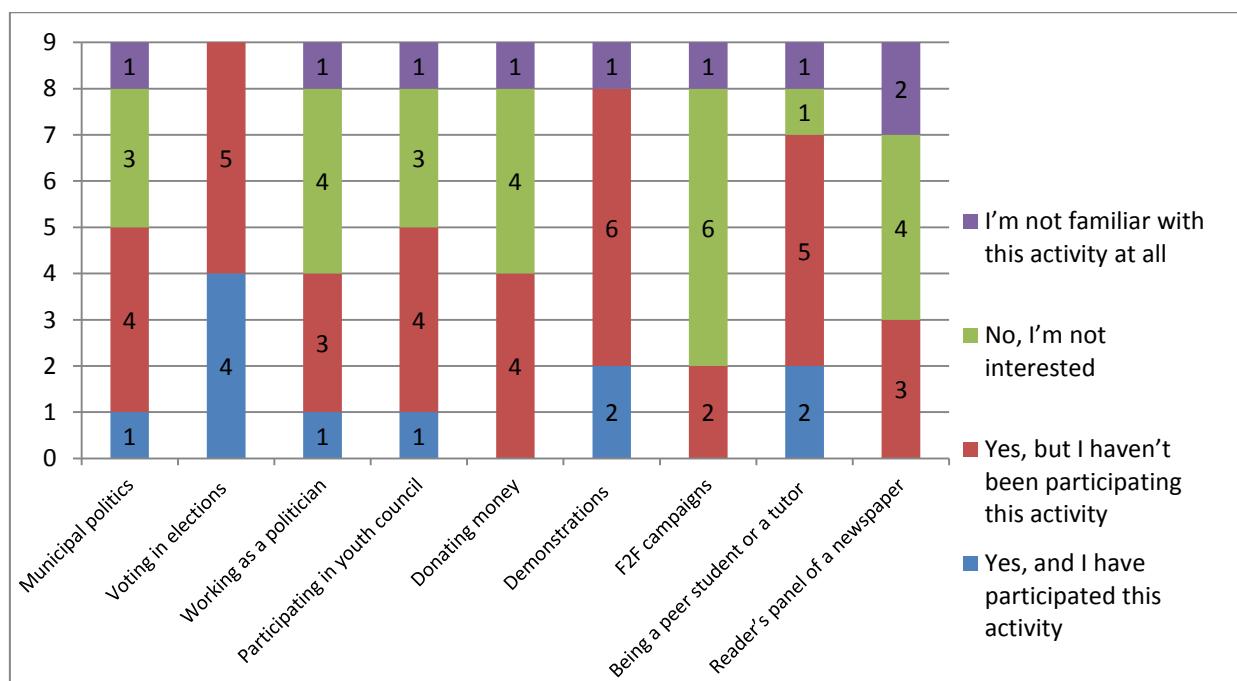


Figure 11. Interest in political and societal issues.

The editors have hardly any experience in other civic activities. This may due to many reasons. For example, they are interested in giving donations for organisations but as young students they probably invest their money elsewhere than for charities. The editors are mostly interested in participating demonstrations in order to express their opinions. Two of them have already participated in a demonstration. Consequently they are quite ready to take a public stand in this respect. However, the area of central Finland does not provide a lot of opportunities to participate in this way:

*"I could really participate in some demonstration but I haven't seen a lot of them in Jyväskylä." (Respondent 1)*

Other type of public work on the streets was not considered interesting. Face-to-face campaigns were the least interesting way for civic activity for the Painovirhe editors. However, most of the editors find interest in participating in face-to-face activities (a peer student or a tutor) at schools. Maybe in this respect the editors are more oriented as communalists (see chapter 2.4) who enjoy influencing at their schools and supporting their circle of acquaintances rather than civic activists who are willing to invest their time on promoting civic issues for strangers.

I think it is interesting that the politically oriented editors – those who are interested in working as a politician and in municipal politics – had more experience in participating in media than those who were not interested in the political activities. The same kind of accumulation of interest can be seen also in the quantity of media participation experiences. On the average, the politically oriented Painovirhe editors have published their opinions in media in seven different ways, when those who were not as interested in politics have published their opinions in five ways. The difference is not striking, but it is logical that the politically experienced and oriented youngsters use media as a tool for civic purposes more often than others. They are probably interested in finding ways to promote their opinions and might find it important to participate as many ways as possible.

I wanted also to examine if the editors were interested to join in a reader's panel, in which newspaper readers can share views on the magazine's content and layout, and thus help to develop the magazine. Four of the editors were not interested and two of them did not know that this kind of activity even exists. Those, who were interested in the reader's panel, were more interested in the other civic activities selectable in the questionnaire than the rest of the editors. This reinforces the assumption of the accumulative participation: once you are interested in the civic activities, you will find more ways to participate and get interested in new ways to participate.

According to these findings, the Painovirhe editors are interested in the civic issues and also in the political decision-making processes and even ready for direct civic actions, such as participating in demonstrations. When reflecting these notions, I was puzzled – obviously the editors are interested in the civic and political topics, but they are not willing to write about them on Painovirhe. Why is that? One possible explanation is that the editors do not consider Painovirhe as a tool for civic-oriented media participation:

*"Well, I don't know if it [writing articles on Painovirhe] has a major impact as we are not a sort of channel for civic activity but more like a magazine [for] opinions, like we write the articles based on our own judgement" (Respondent 7)*

Another explanation might be that the editors want to keep Painovirhe and political approaches separate. The political and civic issues are just not a proper content for the webzine. One of the editors stresses that the readers are not interested in politics and therefore the editors are not willing to write about the political issues. While Painovirhe was not seen as a civic tool in civil or political discussions, it was still considered as a tool, which can be used in media participation with civic or political purposes:

*"Politics and Painovirhe is a sort of difficult to combine, as Painovirhe is not a journal of political party, and this is supposed to be an apolitical magazine, but*

*of course if we make a noise about issues which concern young people, I believe that it makes a difference" (Respondent 6)*

*"It is possible [to participate in civil discussions] though Painovirhe, as many decision makers read the webzine, which tells something about their interest towards issues which are important for young people. When we write about flaws or give new perspectives to readers I believe that by that readers, both young people and decision makers will find us" (Respondent 4)*

Painovirhe is considered as a comfortable way of participating into public discussions, but not in a serious (political) way. Two of the editors stress the importance of Painovirhe being entertaining, non-political media, and differ it from serious, professional newspapers:

*"Mostly it has been funny to notice that we can publish basically whatever we want, and other papers are not able to do that" (Respondent 9)*

I found interesting that the editors of Painovirhe had such a critical attitude towards the civic and political content in Painovirhe even if they were politically and societally oriented people. Many of them are willing to work as a journalist and are interested in the political decision-making, but at the same time writing about "hardcore" issues seem to be an unattractive option. According to these notions the editors mostly refuse to use Painovirhe as a tool for civic or political discussions and instead they want to publish other type of content. However, this might be exactly the way how young people want to participate in the public discussion: in their own terms and talking about issues they think is important to talk about.

## 5.5 Challenging participatory culture

I will continue the discussion over the challenges of the editors in publishing civic-oriented content in the Painovirhe webzine. To get to the bottom of the challenge, I will examine editors' opinions about the Internet as a place for a civic activity and

participation in general. I will also highlight the experiences of media participation among the Painovirhe editors, concentrating especially on media participation online. Then these notions will be followed by the thoughts about media participation in traditional media.

### **5.5.1 Opinions about online and offline media participation**

The editors of Painovirhe perceive the tools of the participatory culture, petition sites, discussion forums and YouTube-videos, quite utilitarian for media participation (see figure 13). The least effective media participation tools from the perspective of youth seem to be blogging and joining a support group for example on Facebook. Especially Facebook as a social media tool was seen as a challenging tool for media participation:

*"Facebook is not concrete to me and I don't perceive it as a tool for civic activity. In my opinion, it is a place where people like different issues and it is full of personal opinions, which just stays there. To me, Facebook represents entertainment channel and I don't take it so seriously. If there is [a group] with three million fans and there is a promise that things will change because of that group, I just don't believe it works like that. (Respondent 3)*

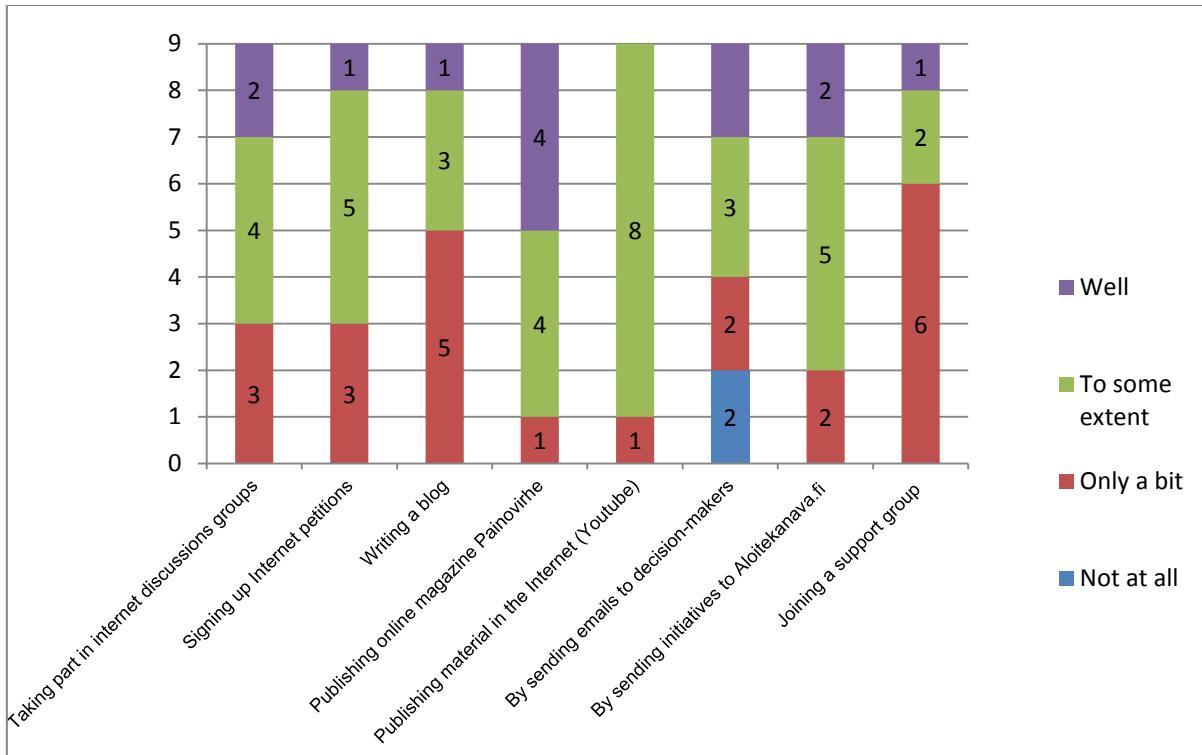


Figure 13. Do you think that young people of your age can get his/her opinions heard to wider public by using following media methods/channels?

Even if most of the tools were considered useful, online environments seem to function as places for general discussion rather as a place for civic activity. It is hard to know if the discussion really matters from the civic perspective, as one of the editors points out:

*"Basically, I [don't go online] to influence [the society] but I have been discussing and take a stand on issues by commenting them on newspapers opinion pages or on discussion forums online" (Respondent 8)*

Another editor points out that the online environments could work only when interests of a writer and a reader meet. However, a challenge in online environments is to find the right place for your content and find the right audience:

*"The Internet is very good [tool] if you can [use it] and it could be the best [of all media] if the supply and demand meet, or like those who are interested in the same issues [as you are] finds your article." (Respondent 8)*

Most of the editors of Painovirhe seem agree that videos are fairly good way to get opinions heard in public. It might be that the respondents have seen videos that have made an impact on them, and also they might have got comments on the videos they have published online. When compared videos on YouTube and Painovirhe, the editors of Painovirhe have noticed that without a proper audience producing videos is a waste of time:

*"The video is easier to watch [online] than read a long text [on screen], but the problem is that the audience should find the Painovirhe website first, and then, when they do, it is possible that the video may have the power of affecting people"* (Respondent 8)

In the interview situation some of the editors had prejudices towards video as a tool for exerting influence. One of the editors, who is especially oriented on making videos and documentaries, is not particularly sure that videos have such enormous influence on people's decisions:

*"I don't think that video or written story makes a difference among the audience, or takes them to another level to do something about it [issue which is dealt on the video]. I believe that you can raise the awareness about issues but whether it leads something or not, I'm a bit uncertain about it."*

(Respondent 3)

A negative attitude of the editors towards online tools might be related to the fact that three of them have been writing and reading blogs and they have formed their opinion based on these experiences. They have also gained experience in writing articles online, and they know that it is challenging to activate readers to comment, let alone change their perceptions on issues. Maybe the experiences they have gained in Painovirhe activity have affected their attitudes and made them more critical towards the opportunities of media participation. Further, an interesting observation was that even if the editors did not perceive Painovirhe as a place for civic articles and were not very willing to produce such articles; they still thought that the webzine was a useful and effective tool for media participation.

Even though the attention of the researchers in the field of media participation is focusing on social media tools, according to my findings traditional media has a truly specific value among young people. First of all, the editors of Painovirhe perceive printed media more effective tool for voicing opinions than using social media (see figure 14). Most of the editors thought that writing articles and opinion writings on newspapers is an effective way of voicing the opinions as a young person at least to some extent. Painovirhe magazine was also seen as an effective tool for media participation. Editors seem to really trust the ability of both printed and web-version of Painovirhe to have the ability to make their voices heard in the public. This is very important as it maintains the motivation to keep on writing articles online and offline. The experience of Painovirhe being a powerful tool for making their voices heard maybe related to the positive feedback that the editors have got from some of the local decision makers. It seems that these kinds of encouraging experiences and communication between the youth and the (important) adults might increase the trust in the effectiveness of the youth media and strengthen editors' belief in the power of media when the opinion of the youth is in concern.

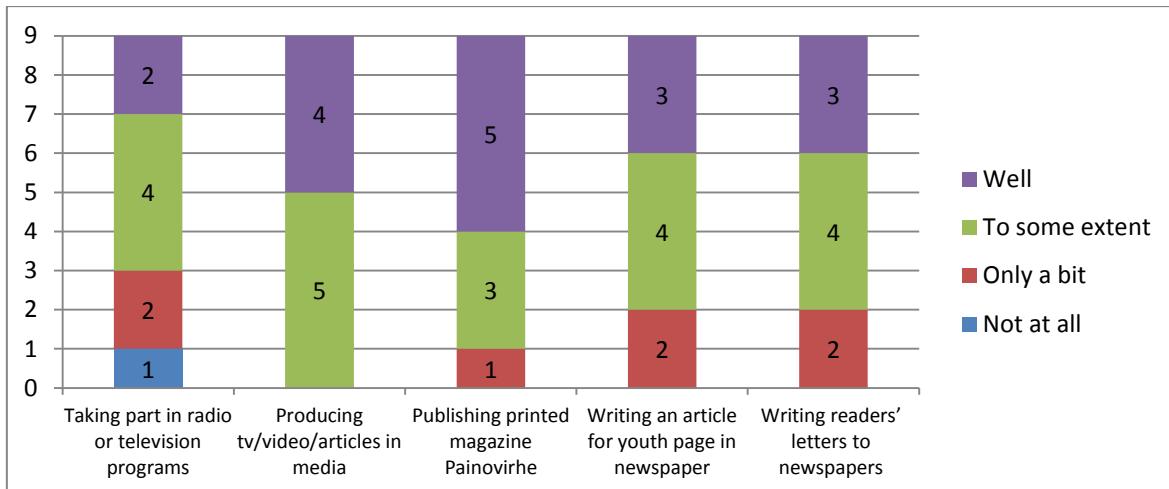


Figure 14. Do you think that a young people of your age can get his/her opinions heard to wider public by using following [offline] media methods/channels?

What is generally quite striking is that among the editors of Painovirhe, printed media is considered more powerful tool for expressing opinions than participatory

tools online. It is indeed interesting that traditional media is clearly emphasised in the answers of the respondents:

*"I'm conservative enough to argue that if young person gets his writing published on the youth opinion page of Helsingin Sanomat [the biggest newspaper in Finland] it is an effective act and when you write a proper column [which is published on Helsingin Sanomat], the audience is rather large and the column will be noticed and if it [the article] does not facilitate action, people have at least noticed it. (Respondent 6)*

*"Somehow when you [express opinions or publish something] on Facebook, it is suddenly labelled as "Facebook-issue" and even if big corporations and actors acknowledge that Facebook is important, in my opinion writing in a newspaper is always more formal and valuable [than writings on Facebook.]"*  
 (Respondent 8)

*"Well, in my opinion a printed magazine has a bigger and stronger impact [on people]. When it is printed, it is like that and no one can change it afterwards. On the Internet [the editor] can control [and change] everything.*  
 (Respondent 7)

These notions are quite interesting when reflecting them to the prior discussion about digitally skilled and active "media citizens". Based on this study, it seems that young people – even if they are active online and want to produce media – are not as positive towards the opportunities of media as a civic tool. In the next subchapter I will continue this discussion and highlight the reasons why participating online is such a challenge for the editors.

## 5.6. Challenges in participation

Most of the editors told that they have not even tried to write about civic issues. Only one of them reported that she has done articles about civic issues on Painovirhe. There seems to be a lot of challenges, which decrease the willingness

to participate online by producing content with civic orientation. First of all, many of the Painovirhe editors seem to be suspicious because of the unpredictability of the consequences of publishing civic content online:

*"The net is too effective, because both negative and positive issues happen with a big volume. When it is used properly, you can achieve good things but [negative issues] like racism and all kinds of intolerant attitudes spread very easily and it is very easy to start discussions about negative issues and begin to insult people. Publicity comes in many forms, but [on the Internet] it is mostly fairly bad"* (Respondent 9)

I find particularly interesting the uncertainty of expressing own opinions in media. While the editors have skills and ability to produce civic articles, they are afraid of expressing opinions online. They seem to be fairly timid in this respect. The fear of criticism and unwanted reactions of the unknown online audience is holding them back from expressing opinions in the Internet:

*"It has been easy that one or two teachers read my essays at school but writing opinions online...I don't [do that.]"* (Respondent 3)

*"Well, I feel that there is a big audience [online] and people speak critically of issues and it makes me maybe scared that my opinions are not good enough or so. It's funny because I'm trying to make other people exert influence and express their opinions as much as possible, but on the other hand I know that it takes guts to express opinions in a place in which people send nasty comments about your opinions and might criticise you for being wrong."* (Respondent 4)

What is important to notice is that the editors of Painovirhe seem to keep the quality of articles published on Painovirhe as a matter of honour, as the following citation denotes:

*"For me it is very important that if I write about civic issues whether it is an essay for school or article for Painovirhe, I need to be aware of the facts and no*

*way I don't want to make mistakes and I have to be able to justify my opinions infinitely well.*" (Respondent 6)

Editors also mentioned that the Internet is too fast for them. Three of them argued that they need a lot of time to gather detailed knowledge about an issue at stake and write a proper article about it. Because the writing process takes a lot of time, it needs to be considered properly. As the nature of publicity online is short-term, editors are not willing to invest time on writing something that is published online and read few times. These notions follow Mervi Leinonen's study, in which the editors thought that Painovirhe could be more valuable and powerful tool for peer counselling and sharing information, if it had more readers. Leinonen also points out that the editors are not willing to write about civic issues, because it feels like a waste of time and energy (Leinonen 2011, p. 66-67). If people do not even find the article, the investment, which was made to write the content, seems wasted.

From the perspective of media participation, these comments reflect uncertainty of being able to participate in media as a plenipotentiary citizen. The fear of negative reactions from an audience, making mistakes, feeling ashamed and becoming a laughing stock of the group are issues which appear to impede the willingness to exert influence online. It is common in such a young age, but it is also a matter of unconscious social structures between young people and adults. The participatory culture, which offers great opportunities for voicing out opinions, works maybe for adults but the editors of Painovirhe seem to have a critical attitude towards the cultural opportunities. The editors do not feel quite ready to participate in civic discussions online that might be related to the phenomenon which Kotilainen and Rantala refer by using the term *citizens waiting* (Kotilainen & Rantala, 2008, p. 41). It means that young people are in fact not yet real citizens, but children who are growing to become ones later. (ibid. p. 41.)

A sense of not being able to exert influence in the society was pointed out also among the respondents of Maiju Haltia (2012) in her study of young people. She argues that young people perceive opportunities to have their say as apparent once: a society might offer tools for youth participation but young people feel that

the tools are not functioning very well. She was also wondering if the general political discussion about the "*lazy youth who do not want to participate in the society*" could affect the youth in a way that they ignore their opportunities and wait while they turn 18 and then evolve from communicators to activists (Haltia, 2012, p. 97, 107.) A sense of a lack of power is related to their position in the society, in which they are considered as under-aged, for example they are not allowed to vote. A real citizenship and willingness to participate seems to be far away, somewhere in the adulthood as the next citation suggests:

*"At the moment I don't have much of a passion to express my opinions, but it might be that by ten years from now I have much more of it [passion] and it feels that I have more power when I'm adult"* (Respondent 2)

One of the challenges in Painovirhe is that the activity seems to be based on the rules of journalism rather than rules of the participatory culture. This is quite common in the youth editorial boards because the boards are also training opportunities for young people who want to work in media industry in the future. Researchers Linda Duits, Liesbet van Zoonen and Fadi Hirzalla have reported about same challenges in the Spunk-magazine in Netherlands and argue that the magazine is characterised as a successful training ground for mainstream journalism, even if it tries to be a magazine that changes the journalistic landscape and promotes young citizen journalism. (Duits, Zoonen & Hirzalla, 2010, p. 100-101). The journalistic approach might bring along participants who are willing to write decorous and correct articles and wants to improve their skills as media professionals. However, it might also bring along unnecessary fears and doubts about individual's skills as a writer and a producer. Duits et al. (ibid.) also found out that the strict journalistic procedures with editorial meetings, deadlines and whatnots may complicate a participation of minorities and those who are not sure about their writing skills.

In addition, the editorial board meeting practices in Painovirhe seem not support the editors to write about civic issues. For example, the topics for articles are given to them in the editorial board meetings, and if the editor gets a task to write an

article about a band or a review about movie, they are not particularly interested in changing the topic to a challenging one.

To sum up, the editors of Painovirhe take mostly a positive stand at the opportunities to voice out their opinions in media. They think that the best ways to express opinions online is to write articles on Painovirhe and publishing videos, whereas blogging and joining in a support group online were considered the least effective. Many of the editors perceives printed media more credible tool for youths' opinions than the websites on the Internet. The Internet is considered as a very challenging environment for young people. These findings suggest that the opportunities of the participatory culture online are widely acknowledged and some of the online tools are found worth of using. However, editors appear to be sceptical towards the overall effectiveness of media participation online. It might be that gained journalistic and civic experiences through Painovirhe activity and developed critical skills have influenced their negative perceptions of online participation.

## 5.7 Re-thinking the characteristics of civic identity

This final subchapter aggregates the analysis of the editors of Painovirhe as participants in media culture. This subchapter will focus on close examination of the characteristics of youth civic identities in relation to media by Kotilainen and Rantala (2008, p. 55-58). The objective is to find out if the editors of Painovirhe could be reflected on the typology and if the results of my study could add on to the typology or bring in new perspectives on youth media participation.

According to the typology the members of youth editorial boards have – at least in theory – either *communicators* or *activists*, as they both have found the editorial board as a public media platform for their ideas, opinions and productions. The communicators are "*more culturally oriented young who are connected via media to multiple communities, but do not often see this interaction in political terms*" (Kotilainen

& Rantala, 2009, p. 671-672). The difference between communicators and activists is that communicators do not perceive themselves as active in civic issues (having a thin civic self-image) and they are using media mainly for entertainment and communication while activists have the willingness to promote civic issues they find important by using media. Activists have "*the knowledge and skills, means and courage to act in public*", as Kotilainen and Rantala put it (2008, p. 58).

When researchers Sirkku Kotilainen and Leena Rantala (2008, 2009) studied the editors of NuortenÄäni youth editorial board, they found out various issues, which motivated young people into activity in the youth editorial board. The public and private motivations were mixed. A motivator, which was mentioned the most, was "*to increase the visibility of young people and civic issues important to them in the mainstream media*". Motivation elements related to politics and being able to produce and create culture were also mentioned. They ended up calling most of the young people as activists. The minority of the group could be classified as communicators, as according to the researchers they were more interested in producing media culture than using media as a participatory tool (Kotilainen & Rantala 2008, p. 58; 2009, p. 669-671.) It is interesting that the Painovirhe editors seem to differ from the Nuorten ääni editors quite a bit. For most of the Painovirhe editors, public and political perspectives were not particularly emphasised as a factor of motivation. None of the editors mentioned publicity or being able to discuss with adults about the issues young people find important as the first and foremost reason to get involved and stay involved in Painovirhe activity. Compared to the NuortenÄäni editors, the Painovirhe editors are not oriented to civic and political discussions via Painovirhe, but they value the opportunities of getting publicity for their writings.

*"[Painovirhe provides] a place for own thoughts, own articles, and it is a place which enables the publishing of own opinions and of course, you get publicity by doing that but it is not particularly important."* (Respondent 6)

*"It is particularly the issue that it is possible to write articles and publish them [in webzine] because it would be rather lame to publish them in your own blog and then no one would read them there. " (Respondent 9)*

When Maiju Haltia (2012) reflected the characteristics of the typology among her focus group she found out that the young who have a high school background, had more positive civic connectedness and also stronger civic self-image than those who had their backgrounds in basic education or in vocational schooling (Haltia, 2012, p. 109.). Haltia assumed that the school culture and also support from families might have an effect on the activity level. It is worth of mentioning that in Haltia´s focus group´s youth was an average youth, not specifically active in any youth editorial board.

The figure 15 introduces more precisely the differences between individuals in Painovirhe from the perspective of activity online and political orientation. The figure points out the multiple perspectives and orientations which may strengthen the willingness to participate in media.

	<b>Background</b> VOC= Vocational school USS= Upper Secondary School DD= Studying a double Degree	<b>Active in online environments</b> (blogging, entering in civic discussions etc.)	<b>Active in offline media environments</b> (for example writing articles and opinions on newspapers)	<b>Politically oriented</b> (willing to participate in politics, interested in municipal and national politics)
R1	VOC	-	-	-
R2	VOC	+	-	-
R3	USS	-	-	-
R4	USS	+	+	+
R5	DD	+	+	+
R6	USS	+	+	+
R7	VOC	-	-	-
R8	USS	-	-	-
R9	DD	+	+	+

Figure 15. Perspectives on media participation among the Painovirhe editors.

As the figure shows, following the notions of Haltia (2012), the editors with upper secondary school background but also with a background of studying double degree seem to have more experiences in media participation and they may be more willing to even participate in politics. However, as Haltia also notices, the upper secondary school background is not any kind of guarantee to becoming

more active in media or in civic sense. There needs to be willingness to act in society, knowledge and also trust in that their opinions will and can be heard in public. (see Haltia 2012, p. 109.)

It is important to notice that the editors of Painovirhe do not consider themselves particularly active in media, even if they are producing media content not only for Painovirhe, but in other media's as well. It appears that the editors find it hard to identify with the activist identity. Maiju Haltia made same kind of observation about one of the girls in her study. The girl did not perceive herself as active in society even if she could be described as one (Haltia, 2012, 105). When the Painovirhe editors were asked how active they felt themselves as citizens participating in media, the answers were disparaging and even harsh towards themselves. Six out of nine editors said that they are not particularly active. They described themselves as "*semi-active*", "*active in theory but not in practice*", and "*active when it is necessary*". It seems that writing articles and publishing videos on Painovirhe is not perceived as participatory activity from their perspective. One of the editors seemed even to have a guilty conscience for not participating enough in civic activities online:

*"Well, [I'm] semi-active, but not active enough. I don't know, maybe I would like to be more active and invite reflections [on important issues] among people and... Well, maybe it is the lack of time and I don't bother to do it while I really want to do it, but then..." (Respondent 9)*

In my study, four of the editors could be described as media activists who have knowledge, willingness and tools to exert influence in their own terms by using media as a tool. The rest of the group use Painovirhe for creative purposes and were not considering it as a tool for civic activities. They could be for example labelled as communicators by the typology of Kotilainen and Rantala. These communicators did, however, argue that Painovirhe might function as a civic tool. Similarly, in the interview situation they also mentioned civic issues they are worried about - they do not just want to or do not have the ability to express their thoughts through Painovirhe or in any other media.

Even if the editors are not considering themselves as particularly active in civic sense, they have gained knowledge and understanding of creating effective and participatory contents in media. The new insights in the media have broadened their understanding of participation in general:

*"I have gained broadened understanding of active media citizenship, like if you had said me two years ago "active media citizen", I have had thought people who write dreadful amounts of opinion writings and publish comments on the websites of tabloid magazines and such. In my opinion, a person can be active even if he never publish stuff anywhere, but if he just talks and another one refers to him, like "he has said stuff like that", then he is the one with ideas and the other one is the active one" (Respondent 5)*

The typology does not work properly when we discuss about young people who are advanced networkers and active in media participation. These notions demonstrate quite well how hard it is to classify young people when talking about digital culture and media participation. They are able to tell what they do online and what they think about media participation, but it can be hard to identify as a participant in media culture. There is a need to specify even more what kind of media participation modes there are, what kind of media literacy skills is needed to participate in media and how the young people identify themselves as active media participants.

The editors of Painovirhe seem to be well aware of the opportunities they have in their hand: they appreciate Painovirhe as a tool for discussions and they believe that Painovirhe is a rather good tool for expressing opinions as a young person. Therefore, they seem to be capable of becoming more active in the civic sense if they choose to do so. It is probably an exaggerated thought that the youth editorial boards would turn young people into activists and encourage them on taking their civic agency in the full use. Nevertheless, these observations suggest that it is possible that the support the editors gain in the youth editorial board and the experiences they gain while working with media may facilitate subsequent civic involvement and activity in media in their own terms.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

This thesis discusses about young people's agency in media culture and draws a picture of media participation practices of youth, especially the nine editors of the Painovirhe webzine. Based on my research, the questionnaire and the interviews of the Painovirhe editors, the editors are active media citizens. I analysed the data by using the statistics of the average 16-18 years old youth from the *Global Comparative Research on Youth Media Participation 2009 – 2011* (YMP) project as a support to confirm the findings. In this chapter I will not only conclude but also give ideas for further development of the activity in the youth editorial boards. These recommendations are directed especially for those, who work as adult coordinators and instructors in the youth editorial boards. Recommendations and some parts of this thesis are also published in Finnish by Koordinaatti, the Development Centre of Youth Information and Councilling Work. Koordinaatti published *Me tehdään mediaa!* -guidebook in autumn 2013 and it is found online<sup>10</sup>.

One of the objectives of this thesis was to determine the concept of media participation and put the youth editorial boards in an academic frame. It was a quite challenging task, because media participation was not easy to define as it appears in many forms and levels. It can be a conscious civic activity or a social behaviour without any specific political goal. This thesis tried to shed some light over the concept by asking about it from the ones, who are active in media – young editors of the Painovirhe webzine.

This thesis brought out many interesting notions about media participation as a concept and how young people themselves see it. Even if this study does not provide generalised knowledge on young people it does give a lot to think about. First of all, the active young people such as the Painovirhe editors seem not to differ from youth in general: the editors use media very similarly with their peers.

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<sup>10</sup> Linna, E. & Lundvall, A. 2013. Me tehdään mediaa. Ideoita ja käytänteitä nuorten toimituksiin nuorten tieto- ja neuvontatyössä. Retrieved from <http://www.koordinaatti.fi/fi/me-tehdaan-mediaa>

Editors have also very similar experiences about school as a media literacy learning environment as the YMP respondents. Based on these notions it can be concluded that young people seem to have equal opportunities to be active in media. It is not a privilege for those who are especially active as media users or who have gained special support at school. To strengthen the ability and willingness to participate in media, there seems to be a need for support from adults and developing the environment that stresses the importance of youth's opinions as well as public debate that involves young people as citizens. I must agree with Kotilainen and Rantala (2008, p. 134) that even the actively involved youngsters need support and counselling for their needs.

Secondly, the notion, I find particularly interesting, is that the participatory culture with the endless opportunities seems to be something that the editors of Painovirhe appreciate but it also have emerged doubts against the use of online media for civic purposes. While the editors are using the Internet a lot, the overall attitudes towards it are quite critical. The Internet is not considered as very potential tool for civic activity. Youth's attitude against the online cultures and opportunities needs further studying.

Thirdly, the results of this study support previous research that the youth editorial boards can provide support for young people's media literacy development and youth participation in a society in their own terms (see Kotilainen & Rantala 2008; Leinonen, 2011; Ijäs, 2007). However, instead of a political or civic activity, media participation among the editors seems to be linked more with the social interaction, getting opportunities for creative content production and experience on working with media. The editors use Painovirhe for voicing out their opinions about bands, trends and movies, but not for trying to initiate civic discussion or voice out their opinions about civic issues. There are challenges, which the editors face and which may prevent them of using Painovirhe for voicing out their opinions. Nevertheless, the editors are aware of the opportunities of using Painovirhe as a tool for civic purposes. There is a need for further discussion on

the youth editorial boards in general: what is their role, how the young people, decision makers and also youth workers perceive it.

This study is one of the few studies that try to reveal the individual reasons behind media use, motivations and perspectives on media participation. For me, it was very interesting but also challenging process as I did not have much of support from the previous studies. However, it seems that by comparing both statistical data and material from interviews it is possible to deepen the understanding about young people's perceptions about the participatory culture. I must say that choosing this mixed approach was very labour intensive and maybe too much for a thesis project. Despite the fact that the process was heavy, I got a lot of experience on different aspects of research and gained knowledge about the strengths and weaknesses of different methodological choices. In the future, this knowledge is very valuable for me.

In addition, this study also shows how difficult it is to conduct a study on this complex field of youth media culture. I started to work with the thesis during the spring 2011 and when completing it after two years, some of the research results were already out of date and have been replaced by new information. For example the latest statistics on youth and civic issues reveal that the attitude towards politics and political activity has been growing among young people<sup>11</sup>. Media participation in the participatory culture is a concept that needs to be updated regularly. This is a real challenge for the researchers in this area. For me it was difficult to let go of the idea that this thesis would stay up-to-date even for one year.

The field of media participation produces constantly new perspectives to explore. Based on this study in the future it could be interesting to explore youth workers who work for the editorial boards and take a look at their abilities and challenges as media educators. It would be also very interesting

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<sup>11</sup> see current statistics at Myllymäki, S. (2013). Monipolvinen hyvinvointi. Youth Research Network / Finnish Youth Research Society. Ministry of Education and Culture; Myllymäki, S. (2014). Vaikuttava osa. Youth Research Network / Finnish Youth Research Society Ministry of Education and Culture.

to make a follow-up study of the young people who participate in the youth editorial boards: where do they end, what kind of an effect did the time at the editorial board have in their lives and what kind of purposes they use their gained media skills for. In addition, it is important to compare the youth editorial board activities abroad and see if there is something we could learn about in Finland. Especially from the perspective of cultural and language diversity there is a lot to do in the field of youth work.

## **6.1 Recommendations for further development**

For making the recommendations for the future, I was carefully examining general challenges of the youth editorial boards. These recommendations are based on the notions I made during the study process and could be used for developing the youth media editorial board activity in general.

At the moment the editorial boards seem to attract only the attention of certain types of young people. For example, most of the editors are girls. This seems to be the case in every youth editorial board under the investigation. Traditional journalistic nature of the activity such as writing articles might be one of the reasons why especially boys remain as a minority in the editorial boards. The editorial boards should take more advantage of a digital culture and create opportunities to publish other than written content. Supporting the production of video and audio content, and developing other ways to express opinions than writing articles could address the challenge. For example, production of comics and illustrations, quizzes and games – the innovative use of computer and the Internet technology in general - could help the boys and also girls, who are not into journalism to take part into the activity. Also, what should be taken into consideration is that Painovirhe activity seems to meet young people's occupational and societal needs and provide support in many ways. The youth editorial boards could help for example young people with immigrant background to understand how the society and media work in Finland. They

could also gain occupational skills and get support for their professional growth, which might help them to find career opportunities later.

Another challenge is related to the diversity issues. For example the Painovirhe group consists of young people with a Finnish background, even if they come from very different family and represent both city and rural backgrounds. The youth editorial boards could be developed to become more diverse “inside” in order to attract also the attention of more diverse audience. This could be addressed by enabling cross-cultural dialogue between young people from different cultures. It means not only publishing the immigrant perspectives but also writings and contents from other groups, for example disabled youth, native speakers of other than Finnish language, unemployed youth and many others. The objective is wider the range of editors but also to invite different audiences and readers to the content. Also, taking into consideration the use of social media could help the readers to find the webzine. For example, the editors of Painovirhe use social media to get readers to the published articles – from the perspective of the participatory culture, social media could (and should) be used to facilitate and encourage discussion, collecting ideas and collaborating with the readers.

The third challenge in youth editorial boards is related to the perspectives of impressiveness. Finding the balance between producing an impressive civic media content and creative media content for fun and learning should probably be addressed more. At the moment, the editors of Painovirhe have the knowledge and also media skills to produce civic-oriented content online. They just do not have the time, energy and willingness to produce them. It is true, that gaining confidence as a young person who will voice out his opinion in media is not necessarily being achieved by participating in the youth editorial board. However, the results of this study indicate that the support for producing civic-oriented content to Painovirhe could be offered for those who want it. The editors should get more training and knowledge on media participation and get more support on producing impressive content online. This support could be offered by weekend courses or in other

voluntary events. Furthermore, in the rural areas there are challenges to get the young people into the editorial board meetings, which could be addressed by offering more opportunities for “remote participation” by using the Internet.

Furthermore, the youth editorial boards could get more attention by the audience if the local media are integrated and linked better to the youth editorial board activity. Maybe some of the contents could be published on a local newspaper as well? Or maybe the editors could help journalists to find proper ideas for making articles about issues that interests the youth?

Nevertheless, it is undoubtedly important to offer also opportunities for non-civic content production as it seems to be also an important part of the youth editorial boards and motivate the editors a lot. The activities in the youth editorial boards should not be focusing only in citizen activism or politically driven content production. As said, finding the balance and taking into account different needs is important.

Painovirhe appears to be a tool for a low-threshold participation in society in many ways. For example, few of the editors were interested in the local politics but had not experience on political activity. Especially with those young people who do not have a politically or culturally discursive family, may find a peer group in Painovirhe activity for entering into the civic discussions and get a few experiences on making their voices heard in public. The editors of Painovirhe and the local youth council are already working together, as the youth council members can write articles on Painovirhe. The relationship between the activities could be emphasised more, for example by organising common meetings about certain topics that interest both groups. However, special caution is needed because excessive political approach may turn away potential new editors.

In addition, the challenge related to the Internet as a tool for media participation should be addressed. The editors considered online environments as challenging platforms for voicing out opinions whereas printed magazines are perceived as useful and truly impressive tools for serious discussions. The Internet is

considered powerful tool for informing people about important issues, but the online environments are also seen as unpredictable. The unexpected consequences of civic actions done online seem to arise uncertainty among the editors. The editors had many doubts about going public with their ideas and opinions. This observation should be taken seriously among the planners who develop services and platforms for young people. Even if setting up a blog or even a webzine is an easy and affordable from the perspective of youth department, young people should be asked what they really want to do and what kind of media they would like to use in the editorial board. Especially if the activity is focusing on civic issues and promoting youth voice in public, a website is not the only or even the most interesting tool for young people. Instead of setting up the website for youth without asking the opinions of the future users, young people should be involved already in the planning process.

The editorial boards work mostly alone even if they face similar challenges. My final developmental recommendation is to increase interaction between the editors of youth editorial boards. Online-based peer-to-peer activities could be endorsed by offering opportunities for feedback and discussion about the topics. The editorial boards could exchange ideas and even articles with each other in order to gain new perspectives and ideas. Editorial boards could also have common theme volumes about certain issues, for example applying to school, summer job special, bullying and so forth. By doing so, certain themes would get special attention all over Finland and have more opportunities to get readers. The network of the youth editorial boards could also help out the youth workers. Inside this network, new ways of working within the group of editors and new innovations of youth information and counselling processes could be shared. Common media camps, websites and databases could be developed as well.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. Youth Editorial Boards in Finland

<b>Curly</b> www.curly.fi	<b>JiiPee reporterikerho</b> (Reporter club of JiiPee) www.jiipee.fi	<b>KooÄnVee</b> www.kooanvee.net	<b>Nuorten Tampere-toimitusryhmä (Young people's Tampere – editorial board)</b> <a href="http://www.nuortentampere.fi/index.php/nuoret/toimitusryhma/">http://www.nuortentampere.fi/index.php/nuoret/toimitusryhma/</a>
<b>Administrator</b> Curly ry (NGO)	PTK - Christian Association for Boys and Girls in Finland	The leisure office of Pori	Youth Department / City of Tampere
<b>Operational area</b> National	National	Pori Region	Tampere
<b>Year of establishment</b> 1997	1968 (since 2012 in online environment)	2012	2008
<b>Amount of active editors</b> 5-10 editors in meetings, 20 remote editors, about 20 occasional editors. 80 % girls.	53. 44 girls, 9 boys.	15. 10 girls, 5 boys	About 20, of which 2 boys
<b>Funding</b> Permanent funding from Ministry of Culture and Education. 2 permanent workers.	Permanent activity. Some project funding will be applied in the near future for developing the website. Editor in chief, subeditor and IT-consultant = 1 man-year.	1 fulltime worker and 1 assistant worker. Project based funding until 2013 from Ministry of Culture and Education. Follow-up project is being planned at the moment.	1 worker who works with project funding (non-permanent)
<b>Activities</b> Meetings, media camps. 4 printed magazines, more than 100 000 copies /year. Articles are published in a website as well.	10-18-year old editors produce media content to the website and to magazine which is published once a year. Trainings are held occasionally and media workshops are held in camps.	12-20 year old editors produce media content to the website and produce a separate webzine. Group meetings are arranged if necessary.	Board meetings every week.
<b>Co-operation with other media</b> Professionals from media industry execute trainings with youngsters.	Co-operation with publishing houses, which send books for review reasons to editors.	No co-operation with local media.	Recently started co-operation with local newspaper Aamulehti and tv-channel Wave100.

	<b>Nuorten Ääni-toimitus (Youth Voice Editorial Board)</b> nuortenaani.blogspot.com/	<b>Mediaskooppi</b> www.mediaskooppi.net/	<b>Painovirhe</b> www.painovirhe.fi /epeli/	<b>Youth Media</b> www.nuortenakaa.fi	Raanu.net	<a href="http://raanu.net/">http://raanu.net/</a>
<b>Administrator</b>	Youth Department / City of Helsinki	Not any specific organisation, functions as a local network	Youth Department / City of Jyväskylä	Youth Services of Akaa	Youth Department / City of Raasepori	
<b>Operational area</b>	Metropolitan area (Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa)	Tampere	Central Finland	Akaa	Raasepori	
<b>Year of establishment</b>	2005	2007	2000	2006	2007	
<b>Amount of active editors</b>	48 (35 girls / 13 boys)	10 especially active youth, but the network involves around 100 youngsters. 60 % of girls, 40 % of boys	15 (12 girls/ 3 boys)	Around 10. 70 % girls.	40. 60 % girls.	
<b>Funding</b>	2 permanent workers	Project based funding, 1 coordinator who works part time when needed.	1 permanent worker	Permanent activity.	Permanent activity.	
<b>Activities</b>	Group meetings, board meetings every week.	Young people function as experts in projects which are related to their lives. Young people organize meetings and trainings for different focus groups.	Meetings, media-related trainings and video courses at schools. Occasional printed magazines; mostly the work is published in a website.	Media clubs weekly, media groups (producing e.g. short films)	No regular meetings. Editors send the articles via email and some of them write the articles in youth café.	
<b>Co-operation with other media</b>	Stable co-operation with media. Main partners: the biggest newspaper Helsingin Sanomat, Finnish Broadcasting Compan YLE and national magazine Suomen Kuvalehti.	No co-operation with local media.	Occasionally productions are published in local newspaper Keskiuomalainen or in YLE Central Finland media (television, radio, online)	No co-operation with local media.	No co-operation with local media.	

<b>Salonkitoimitus -editorial board</b> www.nettinappli.fi/ monimediatointius/	<b>Youth Channel Hertzilä</b> http://www.hertzila.com/	<b>Webzine Kantti</b> www.kanttia.fi/toimitus.html
Youth Department / City of Oulu	Youth Department / City of Tornio	Youth Department / City of Seinäjoki
Oulu	Tornio	Seinäjoki
2009 (will be on a break 2012)	1990	2010
18. 70 % girls	20. 50 % of girls, 50 % of boys.	20. 90 % of girls, 10 % of boys.
Permanent activity.	Permanent activity. 1 worker and 1 assistant club leader.	<p><b>Funding</b></p> <p>Project based funding from Ministry of Culture and Education. 1 part time worker (20h/week).</p>
Group meetings, trainings and visits to media companies 1-2 a week.	Radioclub meetings every week. Live radio show every Thursday.	<p><b>Activities</b></p> <p>Editors email articles to the coordinator who publish them online. Within every 2-3 weeks articles are printed as a paper and distributed to youth centers. Occasional meetings.</p>
Random co-operation with newspaper Kaleva, Forum24, Rauhan Tervehdys, YLE, Oulu-magazine, Radio Pooki, Radio Dei.	No co-operation with local media.	<p><b>Co-operation with other media</b></p> <p>Co-operation with regional newspapers Ilkka and Pohjalainen and with local newspapers.</p>

## Appendix 2. Questionnaire form

### QUESTIONNAIRE OF MEDIA USES AND MEDIA PARTICIPATION

This questionnaire is part of thesis called "Active media participation" by Anniina Lundvall, who is studying digital culture at the University of Jyväskylä. The final thesis will be published in 2012.

Please, fill in the questionnaire and try to answer to all questions. There are no correct and incorrect answers to the questions – it is important that you let us know what you personally think and do! All questionnaires will be considered confidential and only the researcher will see your answers. All results will be reported in a way that no individual respondent can be identified.

Thank you for your contribution for the project!

<b>Q1</b>	Your name is:	

<b>Q2</b>	Are you..?	
	<input type="checkbox"/> female	<input type="checkbox"/> male

<b>Q3</b>	How old are you?							
	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
	<input type="checkbox"/>							
	Some other age, what?							

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**Q4** What type or area do you live in?

City / town center	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outskirts of city/town	<input type="checkbox"/>
Suburban area	<input type="checkbox"/>
Smaller town/village	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural area	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other, what?	<input type="checkbox"/>

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**Q5** With whom do you live with most of the time? (Choose only one)

My parent(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alone	<input type="checkbox"/>
With roommate(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
With girl-/boyfriend or spouse	<input type="checkbox"/>
With someone else, who?	<input type="checkbox"/>

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**Q6** Executed education

Basic level education	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Matriculation examination (upper secondary level)

Vocational upper secondary qualification

Some other education (what?)

**Q7 Educational and work situation at the moment ( fill in all alternatives that concerns you)**

I'm completing basic level education

I'm completing upper secondary level education in high school

I'm completing vocational upper secondary qualification in vocational school

I'm completing higher vocational diploma in university of applied sciences

I'm completing master's degree in university

I'm studying in folk high school

I'm studying in open university

I'm unemployed and I don't work at all

I have a part time job and I work every week

I have a full time job

**Q8 Do you have access to following media /media equipment) either at your home or somewhere else?**

		I have a personal one	There is one at my home (which I share with others)	I can use it somewhere else (school, work, friend's house, library, cyber café)	This is not available for me anywhere (unless very seldomly)
a)	Desktop or laptop computer with the Internet connection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b)	Mobile phone with internet access	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c)	Tablet computer (iPad or suchlike)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d)	Other equipment used for internet surfing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q9 How often do you use Internet from following places?**

	On 5–7 days a week	On 1–4 days a week	At least once a month	Less seldomly	Never
a)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
b)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
c)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
d)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
e)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
f)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
g)	<input type="checkbox"/>				

**Q10 Place the following uses of the internet in an order of importance by marking each one with a number  
(1=this is the most important for me, 8=this is the least important for me)**

Keeping yourself up-to-date for example by following news sites and feeds

Searching information about different topics

Participating in discussions in discussion forums

Playing online games, watching videos/photos and other type of entertainment

Keeping up social relations and getting new friends

Publishing photos and videos

Updating a blog or other column of your own

Publishing stories, poems and other fiction online

**Q11 Have you yourself published your opinions in the media by following means?**

	No never.	Yes, 1-2 times	Yes, several times
a) Signed up Internet petitions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Written articles to a school paper	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Done radio or television programs for school channel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Written articles that are published on web pages of school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Done radio or television programs that are published on web pages of school or some organization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Written to discussion sites of a newspaper, radio or television channel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Published letters to the "letters to the editor" section	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Written articles to a local newspaper	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) Written articles to a areal county newspaper like Keskisuomalainen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j) Written articles to other public Internet magazines than Painovirhe	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k) Done programs for a net radio channel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l) Done videos that are published in the Internet (e.g. in Youtube)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m) Written a public blog in the Internet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n) Sent an initiative in Aloitekanava.fi or other forum for initiatives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
o) Creating a group in social networking services (e.g Facebook) to inform and discuss about important topics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
p) Utilize Twitter as a channel for informing people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
q) Forwarded electric messages/circular letters, which concern themes that are relevant and important for you	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q12 Are you interested in following issues?**

		Yes, and I have participated this activity	Yes, but I haven't been participating this activity	No, I'm not interested	I'm not familiar with this activity at all
a)	Participating in demonstrations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b)	Participating in direct dialogue campaigns in the streets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c)	Municipal politics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d)	Participating in youth council	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e)	Being a peer student or a tutor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f)	Electric reader's panel of a newspaper	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g)	Donate money monthly for some civic organization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d)	Voting in elections	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e)	Working as a politician	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f)	Working as a journalist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g)	Working in film or televisio industry as a professional (cinematographer, editor, director)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q13 Do you think that a young people of your age can get his/her opinions heard to wider public by using following media methods/channels**

		Ei lainkaan	Vain vähän	Jonkin verran	Hyvin
a)	Writing readers' letters to newspapers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b)	Taking part in internet discussions groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c)	Signing up Internet petitions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d)	Writing a blog	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e)	Taking part in radio or television programs that are open to public (by calling in, by text messages or by e-mail etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f)	Making radio/television programs or writing newspaper articles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g)	Publishing online magazine Painovirhe	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h)	Publishing printed magazine Painovirhe	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i)	Publishing material in the Internet on public sites (e.g. Youtube)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j)	By sending emails to decision-makers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k)	By sending initiatives to Aloitekanava.fi or other forum for initiatives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l)	Writing an article for youth page in newspaper	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m)	Joining a support group in social networking services like Facebook.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**THANKS FOR YOUR ANSWERS!**

### Appendix 3. Questions for the interview (in English and in Finnish)

1. When did you become involved in Painovirhe activity?  
*Milloin tulit mukaan Painovirheen toimintaan?*
2. What motivated you to get involved in the Painovirhe activity?  
*Mikä sai sinut lähtemään Painovirhe-toimintaan mukaan?*
3. What is important for you in Painovirhe? Has the importance changed when you look back?  
*Mikä on sinulle nykyään tärkeää Painovirhe-toiminnassa? Onko tämä muuttunut alusta katsottuna?*
4. Has the Painovirhe activity affected to your future objectives? (work, studying and such)?  
*Onko Painovirhe-toiminnassa mukana olemisen vaikuttanut tulevaisuuden tavoitteisiisi, esim. ammattihaaveisiin?*
5. If you think about school, work, other hobbies and interests, can you compare what kind of role Painovirhe has in your life?  
*Jos mietit koulua, töitä, muita harrastuksia ja kiinnostuksen kohteita, niin osaatko verrata millainen rooli Painovirheellä on sinun elämässä?*
6. How participating in Painovirhe has changed your perceptions of media and the meaning of media?  
*Miten Painovirheessä toimiminen on muuttanut sinun käsitystä mediasta ja sen merkityksestä?*
7. What are the social issues that interest you? What do you think, can you influence them via Painovirhe?  
*Millaiset yhteiskunnalliset asiat sinua kiinnostavat? Voiko niihin vaikuttaa sinun mielestä Painovirheen kautta?*
8. How else civil issues can be affected by using a media? Have you tried to exert influence over online media? Tell me about your experiences.  
*Miten muuten yhteiskunnallisiinasioihin voisi vaikuttaa medioissa? Oletko pyrkinyt vaikuttamaan yhteiskunnallisiinasioihin netin kautta? Kerro nettivaikuttamiskokemuksistasi.*
9. How would you describe yourself as an active media citizen? Has Painovirhe affected the perception of how a young person can exert influence in the society?  
*Miten kuvalisit itseäsi aktiivisena mediakansalaisena? Onko Painovirhe vaikuttanut käsitystiisi kansalaistaikuttamisesta nuorena kansalaisena?*
10. What kind of role your family has if you consider your willingness to participate and exert influence via media? What about your friends? What else do you think might have affected your willingness to act in the media?  
*Millainen rooli perheelläsi on, jos ajatellaan haluasi vaikuttaa medioiden kautta? Entä kaveripiirilläsi? Mitkä muut asiat vaikuttaa haluusi toimia mediassa?*
11. Is there something you would like to add? Or is there some issues that you think that are important and relevant to this study?  
*Onko vielä jotakin, mitä haluaisit lisätä tai mikä vaikuttaa mielestäsi tärkeälle ja asiaan liittyvälle?*