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## "All About Doing Democracy"?

### Participation and Citizenship in EU Projects

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**Abstract:** Participation, citizenship and democracy form a triad consisting of multiple conceptual and practical links in political life and theory. The popularity of the concept of participation and various participatory practices is growing, and in the administration of the European Union, one way of increasing participation is the EU programmes through which funding is distributed for citizens' co-operation across the member states in different fields. The chapter investigates conceptualisations of participation at the level of individual projects funded by two EU programmes, Europe for Citizens and Culture, in the programme period 2007-2013. Union citizenship as a conceptual change and a political innovation embodies the complexity of citizenship, and EU projects like these can be seen as attempts to give practical contents for the concept of Union citizenship.

The chapter seeks to analyse the conceptions of citizenship produced through the conceptual choices related to participation made in the textual material of the selected EU projects. Particular attention is paid to the links built between participation, citizenship and democracy. Such an analysis provides a practical level contribution to the debate on the quantity and quality of democracy in the context of the emerging EU polity. Analysing EU projects is useful for exploring the extent to which the participatory practices organized by the EU administration may create spaces for new forms of democracy.

The conceptual reading of the project texts shows that participation is primarily conceptualised as networking, cooperation and exchanging information. Such activities can be seen as prerequisites for democratic action, but this understanding of participation does not seem to meet the ideas of republican, radical, participatory or input types of democracy. It also lacks many of the forms of participation that are generally viewed as central for democracy. This represents a depoliticised conception of both participation and citizenship and a conceptual discontinuity from understanding them as instruments of change and sources of democracy. EU projects thus exemplify the complex relations to democracy and politics typical for participatory governance: they may offer opportunities for more direct democracy, but they may also mean participation under the conditions defined by the administration.

**Keywords:** Citizenship, Union Citizenship, Participation, Democracy, Participatory

Participation, citizenship and democracy form a triad that consists of multiple conceptual and practical links in political life and theory. Citizenship is an essential element for democracy (Dahl 2000, 83-99; Tilly 1995), and citizens' participation in decision-making is required if democracy means that people rule. The popularity of the concept of participation and various

participatory practices and experiments is growing so strongly that a term "participatory turn" (Saurugger 2010) has been coined to describe the situation. In the administration of the European Union, one way of increasing participation is the EU programmes through which funding is distributed for citizens' co-operation across the member states in different fields. This chapter seeks to investigate conceptualisations of participation at the level of individual projects funded by two EU programmes, Europe for Citizens and Culture, in the programme period 2007-2013. The aim is to analyse the conceptions of citizenship produced through the conceptual choices related to participation. Particular attention will be paid to the links built between participation, citizenship and democracy.

The type of participation examined in this chapter are participatory practices organised by administration. Participatory projects discussed here are funded by EU programmes and organised typically by civil servants of municipalities or third sector organizations. These projects do not primarily involve decision-making, but the aim is rather networking, developing expertise or organizing events and activities. Participatory practices may include elements from grass root activities, and civil society actors may be involved in them either as organizers or participants. In that sense, despite their position at the borderline between administration and citizens, such practices can be seen as civil society activity and thus central components of a democratic polity.

Administrative participatory projects can and must, I argue, be examined from the perspective of political participation and democratic citizenship. In spite of their complex relation with democracy, such projects can be expected to meet some of the criteria of republican, participatory or input types of democracy. Indeed, promotion of democracy and active citizenship are mentioned in the Europe for Citizens and Culture programmes (Commission 2005, 27; Decision 2006a, 32; Decision 2006b, 1) and many of the projects funded by them.

Both programmes give funding for activities by civil society, which has been seen as one of the key elements of democracy (Dahl 2000; Westholm et al. 2007). It is thus necessary to examine how these goals are interpreted in the projects funded by these programmes: how citizenship—a cornerstone of democracy—and participation—a dimension of citizenship through which citizens’ activity contributes to democracy—are discussed in the projects and how they are, in turn, connected to democracy.

Such an analysis provides a practical level contribution to the vivid debate on the quantity and quality of democracy in the context of the emerging EU polity (Bellamy and Warleigh 1998; Blondel et al. 1998; Kohler-Koch and Rittberger 2007; Magnette 2003; Schmitter 2000).

Often discussions on democracy at the European level focus on democratising the EU institutions, but transferring the old models of democracy from the nation states to the EU context is not always supported (e.g. Rosanvallon 2006a). Instead, it has been argued that Europe should develop its own original forms of democratic practice and become “one of the laboratories of contemporary democracy – allowing itself to give new forms to deliberation, to representation, to regulation, to authority, to publicity” (Rosanvallon 2006a, 232-233).

Analysing EU projects is useful for exploring the extent to which the participatory practices organized by the EU administration may create spaces for new forms of democracy.

I have chosen to analyse six such projects in which participation, citizenship and democracy are explicitly present in their texts. The selected projects are: *Brick – Building Our Community* (2012-2013; hereinafter: *Brick*), *Young Flow – Network on Dialogue Between Young People and Public Institutions (Flow4YU)* (2011-2013; *Flow4YU*), *I am Europe* (2013); *Celebrating European Cultural Intangible Heritage for Social Inclusion and Active Citizenship* (2013-2015; *Celebrating*), *Eclectis – European Citizens' Laboratory for Empowerment: CiTies Shared* (2013; *Eclectis*), and *European Citizen Campus* (2014-2015).<sup>2</sup>

EU projects like these can be seen as attempts to give practical contents for the concept of Union citizenship. Union citizenship as a conceptual change and a political innovation embodies the complexity of citizenship. Perceiving political innovation as conceptual and conceptual change as political (Ball et al. 1989; Wiesner in this volume) is based on a conception that understands politics as linguistic activity (see the introduction to the volume). Struggle over concepts is an essential part of politics (Connolly 1983, 30), and analysing concepts is thus central in political research (Farr 1989, 29). This chapter therefore departs from the idea that in the project texts citizenship is created by discussing citizenship and participation and by explicitly using these concepts. This starting point is based on the view that language is not an instrument of description but that states of affairs are produced with language in various texts and speech acts. Hence the texts produced in the EU projects analysed here also contribute to producing and re-interpreting citizenship and citizens through their discursive practices regarding participation. The variety of meanings given to participation in the projects analysed in this chapter demonstrates how contested the concept of participation is which, in turn, reflects the complexity of citizenship.

In what follows, I will first sketch some theoretical points of departure relevant for my reading of participation discussions. After that, I will introduce the research material and the conceptual approach to it. In the empirical section of the chapter, I will discuss how participation is used and interpreted in the projects. The aim is not to define participation, but to explore what kind of activity participation is and what kind of actors the participants are in the project texts. These findings will be mirrored against the ideas of participation, citizenship and democracy suggested by Pierre Rosanvallon (2006b). Finally, I will sum up what implications these conceptualisations of participation have for citizenship and democracy.

## Participation, Citizenship and Democracy: Theoretical Points of Departure

During the long history of the concept citizenship (Heater 1990; Pocock 1995; Riedel 1972; Walzer 1989; Ilyin in this volume) conceptions regarding to whom citizenship belongs and what it includes have been changing. Because of the competing interpretations about equality and liberty—the main principles of democracy—there will always be competing interpretations about citizenship (Mouffe 2005, 7, 65-66). Conceptual change and struggle is thus constantly present in both democracy and citizenship.

Common to different forms of participation is that they bring citizens' voices into the public sphere and place new issues on the agenda. This is the relevance of participation for democracy because in democratic systems difference and equal opportunities to use power must be secured (Bauböck 2008). How much and what type of participation is sufficient and suitable for realising democracy in practice is an old question and relates to ideals of citizenship and to understandings of politics (e.g. Martín and van Deth 2007, 305-311; Rosanvallon 2006b, 26). Answers vary from representative democracy to direct democracy and from bottom-up civic activity to participatory practices organised by administration, as well as different combinations of all of these. Participation is understood as a central dimension of citizenship especially in the republican theories of democracy, as well as in the ideas of radical or participatory democracy (Arendt 1998; Aristoteles 1991; Barber 1984; Mouffe 1992; Pateman 1972; Pocock 1975; Rousseau 1988; see also García-Gutián in this volume). Participation can be seen as a necessary element of so called input democracy, whereas in the conceptions of output type democracy, the role of citizens may be less active (about input and output democracy, see Scharpf 1999).

Participation as a dimension of citizenship underlines that citizens' membership in and

relationship to a polity is not only a legal status. Participation is a chance to be involved in the public sphere in one way or another and to influence the polity of which citizens are members and the institutions and issues that have effects on the lives of citizens. As such, participation in the public sphere and in decision-making is that dimension of citizenship which makes it active and political. In addition, participation is relevant for the legitimacy of the political system: through their own participation, citizens may feel that the decision-making in the political system is legitimate and give their consent to the use of power in the system (see e.g. Macedo 2005, 4; Michels 2011, 277-279).

In any type of participation, participation itself inevitably formulates the processes of participation from the beginning to the end: who participates, how and in what they participate, and with what results. Moreover, participation has effects on the participants themselves: participation is "not merely representing citizens, but making them" (Turnhout et al. 2010, 2). Conceptually, participation and citizenship intertwine with each other, as "[p]articipation in the practice of public power seems [...] to be the heart of this status [i.e. citizenship]" (Magnette 2005, 7) across times. Therefore, "[c]onceptions of what citizens are and how they are supposed to behave are deeply implicated in how participation is organized and put into practice" (Turnhout et al. 2010, 3). All this applies also to the participatory practices organised by administration, such as the EU projects discussed here.

Participation has been classified in various ways (Arnstein 1969; Verba and Nie 1972; Westholm et al. 2007). Participatory practices organised by administration, such as the EU programmes, can be recognised as a distinct category of participation, which may share aspects of other forms of participation. In this type of participation the question is not directly about grass roots engagement or civic activism. Instead, these practices include the involvement of citizens in auditions, projects, partnerships or other activities organized by the

administration at different levels. Participatory practices are anything but new, but they have been generated increasingly within so called new governance or multilevel governance. In some of them, citizens are involved in decision-making, for instance through participatory budgeting. In others, the main aim is rather to ‘hear’ citizens’ views. The relationship of participatory practices with democracy is contested: participatory practices may offer opportunities for more direct democracy, but they may also mean participation under the conditions defined by the administration (Cruikshank 1999; Lindgren and Persson 2011; Michels 2011; Moini 2011; Newman 2005; Newman and Clarke 2009; Nousiainen and Mäkinen 2015; Papadopoulos and Warn 2007).

In order to address the links between participation, citizenship and democracy in the participatory practices in the EU projects, I refer to the multifaceted idea of democracy discussed by Pierre Rosanvallon (2006b), according to which democracy is not only a system but includes various types of acts that vary from one context to another. The ideas of Rosanvallon (ibid.) intertwine participation, democracy, citizenship and politics, which helps to examine how conceptualisations of participation produce various understandings of citizenship in EU projects. Rosanvallon (2006b, 26) sees participation as an instance through which citizens interact with politics, and differentiates expression, involvement and intervention as three ways of participation. For him, these are simultaneously forms of citizenship, and also democracy is articulated around them. In the empirical section, it will be investigated to what extent the EU projects as participatory practices include aspects of expression, involvement or intervention.

## Research Material and Method

The material analysed in this chapter is produced in six projects funded by Europe for



Citizens and Culture programmes. The citizenship programmes of the EU have a central role in implementing Union citizenship. Through the Europe for Citizens programme, funding can be given to town twinning, citizens' projects and support measures, civil society organisations, European public policy research organisations, events, information and dissemination tools as well as preservation of the main sites and archives associated with the deportations and the commemoration of the victims (Decision 2006a, 34-35). In the subsequent programme period of Europe for Citizens, 2014-2020, similar kinds of activities are funded (Council Regulation 2014).

For their part, the programmes regarding culture are central actors in implementing the common cultural policy of the EU. The Culture programme aims at supporting cooperation projects, bodies active at European level in the field of culture, analyses, and the collection and dissemination of information (Decision 2006b, 4). In the programme period 2014-2020, funding is continued under the programme title Creative Europe (Regulation 2013). A close link between participation and citizenship is made in the proposal for the Culture programme: "encouraging direct participation by European citizens in the integration process" is seen as a way "to make European citizenship a tangible reality". Fostering cultural cooperation and diversity contributes to this end, according to the proposal (Commission 2004, 10.) In the course of European integration, culture has indeed been seen as a central field of the production of citizenship, and both citizenship and culture were made official fields of European governance in the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992. They are both crucial for democracy: citizenship is one criterion for democracy and cultural diversity can contribute to the plurality and equality required by democracy.

The material includes websites, project descriptions and reports of the projects or events included. Most of the material analysed here has been found at the websites of the projects or

at the websites of institutions involved in the projects, organising the project or one part of it—such as art organisations, cultural institutions or non-governmental organisations. The authors of the texts are not often mentioned but they can be expected to be the coordinators of the projects or the members of the advisory boards. Some texts have been written collectively by the participants in the workshops or other meetings of the projects. I see these texts as representations of the projects: they show what the projects wish to look like in these public arenas.

In all these texts, concepts such as participation, citizenship and democracy are frequently used but not often defined. From the viewpoint of conceptual history, it can be seen that a concept and its usage is significant even when the meaning and function of the concept are not explicated. In order to investigate the understandings of participation and citizenship, I take a conceptual look at the project texts and examine the vocabulary referring to participation: the terms that are used, meanings given to them, and the relations built between terms. Rather than mapping the entire variety of meanings and uses related to participation, the focus will be on how participation, citizenship and democracy are conceptualised together.

"Actively Involved in the Democratic Life"—

Conceptualising Participation in the EU Projects

Common to the texts produced in the projects is that participation means acting in the framework of the projects themselves. Other arenas of participation are local politics (*Flow4YU*), European politics (*I am Europe*, *European Citizen Campus*), community development (*Brick*, *Celebrating*) and urban environment (*Eclectis*). In the projects funded by the Culture programme, participation is connected with concrete ways of acting within the projects, such as practising skills of conservation and restoration (*Celebrating*), making art

(*European Citizen Campus*) and investigating one's living environment with practical equipment (*Eclectis*). Also in the projects funded by the Europe for Citizens programme, participation takes concrete forms such as visiting local decision-makers (*Flow4YU*), writing a blog (*I am Europe*) or designing a game on community development (*Brick*).

*Flow4YU* is a project aiming at promoting dialogue between young people and public authorities and institutions. The objective is to promote "active involvement and participation of young people in the life of the community" and "active participation in the civil society and public life". Participation of young people is seen as part of "active citizenship". The main instruments for improving the dialogue are increasing knowledge and developing communication channels. Young people need more knowledge about "public life and institutions [...], as well as the democratic principles which are the basis of our civic society" and about "administrative systems and organisation at local and European level". Also, the authorities' knowledge about young people must be increased. (About *Flow4YU*.) Such conceptualisations refer to ideals of active citizenship. The field of participation is the public arena of local administration and decision-making.

Also in *I am Europe*, a political aspect of participation and agency are present, the field of participation here being EU policies. Participation is tightly linked with citizenship and with attempts to concretise the conceptual innovation of the Union citizenship:

"I am Europe (iEU) is an exploratory expedition into the heart of the European Citizenship concept. Through this project, we want to learn what citizens' participation can mean in a European context, and find out what is needed so that European citizens get more involved in EU policymaking" (About.).

Participation is understood as involvement in decision-making and policymaking. Citizens and their participation are seen as having an influence, as the objective is "to exchange,

explore, evaluate and (re-)invent participation tools to enlarge the influence the citizens can have on EU policies" and to "maximize their [i.e. citizens'] impact on European policy and in the public domain" (about).

Concrete examples of this kind of participation are citizens' assembly and citizens' president—two innovations developed in a fictional report about the future of Europe (I am Europe blog 2013) to institutionalize the role of citizens in the European Union—as well as European Citizens' Initiative addressed in the I am Europe magazine (2013, 3). In addition, lobbying is discussed as the citizens' way of participation at the EU level in the I am Europe blog (2013). Lobbying representing different fields of industry is seen in the blog as a threat to democracy. Citizens' potential, in contrast, is yet unexploited, even though citizens would have legitimacy and credibility, according to the text. From the viewpoint of democracy, lobbying can be seen as a controversial form of participation, which is neither representative democracy nor direct democracy, requiring plenty of resources that not all citizens can have.

Another project explicitly focusing on the concept of citizenship at the European level is *European Citizen Campus*, aiming at "a creative process on different vision(s) of the European citizenship concept" (Detailed Description, p. 3) among students. In it, participants are invited to "actively engage in social and political life" and to "contribute to the promotion of active European citizenship and the creation of an ever-closer Europe" (ibid., p. 1). These ideas refer to political participation in which participants have a chance to become part of political debates and influence issues.

Political dimensions of participation are mentioned also in *Brick*, in which community planning and community development are the fields of participation. Participation has an explicit role in the project, as citizens' participation in community planning is used as a

defining label of the project.

"Brick - building our community was a European project about citizens' active participation in community planning. [...] The aim of Brick was that citizens would get wider understanding of community planning and become a more active part of the community development processes. [...] Brick's main theme was Active participation in community development" (Project Description).

The scope of the action is mainly participants' own living environment. Under the sub theme "Ethnic inclusion in democracy", participation is linked with democracy and decision-making. The aim is "to encourage citizens, and especially people from ethnic minorities, to get more actively involved in the democratic life, and by this, achieve more equal opportunities in decision-making". The "urban planning process" is seen as part of "the democratic process", and the participants should become aware of this process and their own channels of impact on it (Project Description.).

Political aspects of participation are emphasised in *Eclectis*, which concentrates on the urban environment and its development through different fields, such as art, architecture and new technologies. Participation is one of the stated goals of the project. The aim of *Eclectis* is "to facilitate citizens' knowledge and action potential on urban environment" and "to empower citizens to drive local change" (Eclectis). As a central aim of *Eclectis*, participation also means "creating a direct link between citizens and political stakeholders" (a Contribution).

In addition, *Celebrating* focuses on participants' living environment, which is attached to citizenship. Activities regarding cultural environment and built heritage are seen as a way "to enhance a sense of European citizenship" and to promote social inclusion (Celebrating). This kind of participation can be categorized as small-scale democracy meaning action in specific roles mainly regarding citizens' own lives (Westholm et al. 2007). Also in *Brick* and *Eclectis*

participants are expected to act in the role of residents who aim at influencing their own living environment. This type of involvement is not only "an important aspect of citizenship in its own right", but it also "may have important implications for other, more directly political realms of citizenship, e.g. by having a spill-over effect on political participation" (Andersen and Rossteutscher 2007, 221, 225-227). On the other hand, if participation focuses only on private interests, there is a risk that participants develop particularistic orientations and become too individual, narrow-minded consumers (ibid., 227).

### Information, Networks and Proximity as Keywords of Participatory Projects

Common to many projects is an emphasis on the dissemination of information about public issues and other themes. In them, as well as in the programme documents, it is even seen as a solution to problems of democracy. Related to information, communication between citizens and decision-makers was in focus in *Flow4YU*, *I am Europe* and *Eclectis*, and briefly in *Brick* and *European Citizen Campus*. Opening communication channels and connections between citizens and decision-makers offers potential for those activities, which Rosanvallon (2006b, 26) includes in "democracy of expression": in the projects, participants may improve their ability to express opinions, make judgements about decision-makers and their actions, as well as to make claims. In some of the projects, it is explicated that policy recommendations will be given as a result of the project (Antwerp Declaration; A Contribution; Project Description), which may imply articulating collective sentiments, also included in the democracy of expression by Rosanvallon (ibid.). On the other hand, the flood of information and conflicting messages at the EU website are mentioned as hindrances to citizen participation at the EU level (I am Europe blog 2013).

Cooperation, networks, dialogue and exchange are keywords in both projects and programme

documents. Following the programme documents, all the projects share the conception of participation as a way of generating vertical proximity between the EU and citizens as well as horizontal proximity among citizens from different member states. Cooperation within projects—together with information—is seen as an instrument for creating the proximity in practice. In the projects, the EU seems to come close to citizens, and networks are built between the project participants. As such, these EU projects could be seen as contribution to the “democracy of involvement”, which, defined by Pierre Rosanvallon (2006b, 26), includes the ways citizens gather together and create mutual relations in order to produce a common world. The EU projects analysed here are indeed about coming together and creating common bonds, as exemplified by *Brick*.

- ” The objectives were that the citizens would: (---)
- Share good practice of community development and work on common challenges with the European partners, to together build a better Europe in relation to our themes. (---)
  - Create networks both among different target groups in their society and between the European partners.
  - By the experience of cooperating with a diverse European group, get a sense of European identity and feeling ownership of the common European work we are doing” (Project Description).

Rosanvallon (2006b) emphasises the public dimension of the common world—issues must be brought to the public space to be seen and discussed by anyone—whereas in the projects, activities sometimes seem to remain in the private sphere. Moreover, participants in the projects are often people who are already active in the fields of the projects, such as professionals, students or members of NGOs. Hence, it can be asked what kind of common world do participatory practices create and whose world is it.

The third type of participation and democracy defined by Rosanvallon (2006b, 26) is “intervention” and consists of modes of collective action to achieve the desired outcome. The project texts do not reveal, how the goals are formulated and by whom. Intervention,

according to Rosanvallon (ibid.), includes forms of political activity, but in the EU projects it is not quite clear to what extent the goal is to intervene in politics and decision-making and what kind of intervention is targeted through participation. Political participation with an attempt to influence broader outcomes, which Westholm et al. (2007) see as characteristic of large-scale democracy, is clearest in *Flow4YU* and *I am Europe*. The editorial of the *I am Europe* magazine (2013, 2) declares that *I am Europe* is "all about doing democracy", investigating "how citizens may truly participate in the process of EU decision-making". According to the editorial (ibid.), "[I]iving democracy is a way of life, a civic culture in which citizens participate creatively in public life". This implies a democratic conception of citizenship. Democratic ideas of participation and citizenship were also present to varying degrees in other projects discussed here, but it is not always explicated in the projects how these ideas will be realised. In some projects, moreover, it is not the highest priority to frame participation as democratic influencing or enhance it as public activity aiming at change. Instead, the main focus may lie in networking or developing participants' expertise and capacities in the subject area of the project.

## Conclusions

If citizens' participation is one of the cornerstones of democracy, then participatory practices may also contribute to the development of democracy. In the programme documents regarding Europe for Citizens and Culture programmes, however, democracy is merely mentioned as a principle and a goal rather than discussed explicitly. Democratic aspects of participation are nevertheless included in some of the EU projects funded by those programmes, and this chapter has focused specifically on them.

In the texts produced in the EU projects, conceptions of participants vary from active agents



to a more passive audience. Participants are seen as team workers and their participation is mainly located in the framework of the projects themselves, but also in municipalities and the participants' own living environments, and in some cases at the European level. The agency of the participants is thus mostly seen as local but also European. To some extent, participants are seen as political agents and democratic citizens acting, deliberating and using power in the public sphere. In *Brick*, *Flow4YU*, *I am Europe* and *European Citizen Campus*, underlining public activity which aims at change refers to republican and participatory conceptions of citizenship. In some projects, however, citizenship is conceptually linked with identity and the notion of 'European identity' (see Wiesner in this volume). It is connected to the abstract idea of being involved in the construction of the EU as a community and thus means membership in the European Union. When the term 'European citizenship' is used in the project texts it is understood as a 'European identity' and as transnational co-operation between member states rather than a membership or agency in a political community.

The conceptual reading of the project texts shows that participation is primarily conceptualised as networking, cooperation and exchanging information. All of them can be seen as prerequisites for democratic action, but this understanding of participation does not seem to meet the ideas of republican, radical, participatory or input types of democracy. It also lacks many of the forms of participation which are typically viewed as central for democracy. For instance, a list of democracy indicators (Borg 2013) based on European Social Survey, World Values Survey and various statistical data includes a wide range of activities from voting and party attachment to public demonstrations and writing to newspapers, and from strikes and work place democracy to consumption choices and civil disobedience, but such types of participation are not discussed in the EU projects. This represents a depoliticised conception of both participation and citizenship and a conceptual discontinuity from understanding them as instruments of change and sources of democracy.

Rather, participation in EU projects can be interpreted as social participation. As such, EU projects can "indirectly [promote] the quantity as well as quality of [citizens'] participation in small and large scale democracy" (Westholm et al. 2007, 8-9.). This kind of participation is important for citizenship, as "[t]he realisation of citizenship is not merely a matter of how democracy operates on a larger scale but also of how individuals or small groups of citizens are able to influence in their situation within various social roles and domains" (ibid., 13.).

Because the participatory practices in the EU projects discussed in this chapter are funded by the EU and organised and coordinated by administration at different levels, there is a risk that participation in these practices may become a de-politicised instrument for legitimizing the goals of the authorities. Simultaneously, however, they can be seen as political participation to the extent that they offer the potential for the participants to use power and change power structures. In the discussions on participation in the texts produced by the projects, both risks and potentials can be found. As such, they exemplify the complex relations to democracy and politics typical for participatory governance (see Nousiainen and Mäkinen 2015).

A similar dualism characterises participation in a more general way, according to Rosanvallon (2006b, 28-30, 257-268): the greatest problem of our time, for him, is that the strengthening of the indirect democracy has led into weakening of politics. Rosanvallon (2006b, 260) calls this unpolitical democracy. The increase of modes of participation means that citizens have more ways to be involved in politics, but simultaneously, together with the fuzziness of governance, it may mean that the political field becomes weaker. Paradoxically, the more active, better informed and more interventionist civil society has been accompanied by the unpolitical (ibid., 312). It is striking that the idea about the possibility of an alternative has been eroding, even though the civil society is increasingly active and participatory (ibid.,

258).

In principle, then, administrative participatory practices such as the projects examined here may aim at democratization of the European Union but if they encourage consensus rather than controversies and do not bring their discussions into the public debate, the result may be “unpolitical democracy” (Rosanvallon 2006b), at best. If the projects do not create space for contestation and struggle over power and rather turn political questions into practical problems to be solved, participation does not become political.

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