

# **PARTIBRIDGES**

## **PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH**

### METHODOLOGICAL GUIDE



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# Contents

Introduction.....	2
Executive Summary .....	3
Report One: Rennes, French Team .....	9
Description of Group .....	9
Description of focus of PAR project .....	10
Process of PAR project.....	13
Learning from PAR project.....	23
Ethical Considerations .....	28
Learning from making video/web documentary .....	29
Concluding remarks.....	30
Report Two: Manchester, UK Team .....	33
Description of Group .....	33
Description of focus of PAR project .....	34
Process of PAR project.....	35
Learning from PAR project.....	37
Ethical considerations.....	40
Learning from making video/web documentary .....	41
Concluding remarks.....	42
Report Three: Lisbon, Portuguese team.....	45
Description of Group .....	45
Description of focus of PAR project .....	46
Process of PAR project.....	48
Learning from PAR project.....	53
Ethical considerations.....	55
Learning from making video/web documentary .....	57
Concluding remarks.....	59
Report Four: Eskişehir, Turkish Team .....	62
Description of Group .....	62
Description of focus of PAR project .....	64
Process of PAR project.....	65
Learning from PAR project.....	68
Ethical considerations.....	69
Learning from making video/web documentary .....	69
Concluding remarks.....	73
References .....	74

# Introduction

[Partibridges](#) (2019-21 Erasmus+) brought together universities and youth associations in four cities: Rennes (France), Manchester (UK) Lisbon (Portugal) and Eskisehir (Turkey). The project was a direct outcome of [PARTISPACE](#) (2015-18 H2020) and aimed to put the findings on youth participation in Europe into practice whilst developing closer connections between higher education, youth workers and young people. With the exception of the Portuguese team, the same universities and some of the youth associations were involved in PARTISPACE. Thus enabling six years of sustained cooperation between these partners to build on prior knowledge creation and develop practice.

PARTISPACE explored spaces and styles of youth participation across eight European cities. Through extensive qualitative and quantitative research, it called into question narrow conceptions of youth participation, finding that young people do participate, it is just not recognised as such. Young people were found to be making implicit and explicit claims to be part of society and take part in society. These acts of appropriation in where and how young people participate, struggle for recognition and therefore are frequently delegitimised (Walther, Batsleer, Loncle and Pohl, 2019). In the final chapter of the book produced from PARTISPACE, Batsleer et al (2019; 215) ask 'If young people do participate, is there any need to support them learning to participate?' They affirmed that it was but such attempts require pedagogical action without paternalism and pedagogisation.

Partibridges provided the opportunity for partners to experiment and rethink the lived experience of youth participation through innovative partnerships between higher education, youth workers and young people. By using PARTISPACE as the starting point for the [e-training module on youth participation in Europe](#) (output one), partners were able to question what counts as valid knowledge within the field of youth participation whilst experimenting in where and how it is taught. For the second output of the project, country teams carried out Participatory Action Research (PAR) projects in each country and produced an [online web documentary](#).

The co-construction of the module and PAR projects, at the European level and within each country team, meant that relations between academics, youth workers and young people were disrupted; liberating and making visible new knowledge and practices. The 'action' involved in the participatory research projects meant that those involved experienced the recognition of being able to learn and act which are both central to participation and learning. As recognised in PARTISPACE, participation is a social process that is relational and necessarily agonistic, it is experienced by doing, rather than something that can be predefined and learnt through instruction (Walther, Batsleer, Loncle and Pohl, 2019).

This methodological guide aims to capture the experiences of this relational learning process during the PAR projects from the perspective of each country team in Partibridges. The reflective accounts show how learning to participate involves transformation of the relationship between self and others as an ongoing process. In this sense, it is not a 'guide' which can tell others how to do PAR or make a web-documentary. Instead, it captures the experiences of the team in all their flora and fauna whilst detailing the highs and lows of the process to help support the learning of others wishing to engage in similar activities.

The structure of the methodological guide proceeds as follows. Firstly, the Executive Summary details the partnership arrangements in each country team and summarises the focus of each PAR project. An overview of the main points of learning from across the European consortium team is also provided. The UK team were responsible for the coordination of output two and wrote this section. The main body of the guide comprises of a report describing each country team's PAR project together with their reflections on the production of the web documentary. Each report was written and compiled by each country team. It is worth noting that output two took place during the COVID-19 Pandemic and as such was impacted by these particular conditions. We dedicate this guide to young people across Europe and those supporting them to have their voices heard in these difficult times.

## **Executive Summary**

Partibridges created partnerships between higher education, youth workers and young people in four cities: Rennes (France), Manchester (UK) Lisbon (Portugal) and Eskisehir (Turkey). The local arrangements of each of the partnerships, together with the focus of each PAR project and the commonalities across the European consortium team are detailed in the following section.

In Rennes, France, the Participatory Action Research (PAR) was developed in partnership with children, young adults and professionals from two associations - the Brittany Pedagogy and Social Animation Group/Groupe de Pédagogie et d'Animation Sociale Bretagne (GPAS) and Keur Eskemm together with the Department of Human and Social Sciences of the EHESP, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Santé Publique/Public Health School. Both GPAS and Keur Eskemm are located in the Maurepas district, in Rennes where the PAR project took place.

The PAR project focused on the occupation of public space. In France, public space is not considered as a common space, it is a space of passage where the main point is not to disturb other users. The PAR explored children's rights to play and young adult's rights to occupy space. Using the framework of creating a public fresco, the PAR project brought together the reflections of academics, professionals, children and young people who use the space. Opinions from the community were also collected and fed into discussion and reflection on the right to use public space.

The pandemic meant the project had to pause and put activities on hold. This made it difficult to keep the young people fully engaged. In their report, the French team reflect on the balance of power between partners, the extent of involvement of children in decision-making and how to involve external partners such as the artist and video maker. Furthermore, they recognise how the production of the fresco changed the way the street was used but a lack of real engagement from decision makers meant the Municipality is still making decisions on public space without full consultation of the community.

The second report describes the partnership arrangements and focus of the PAR project in Manchester, UK. The UK team consisted of a partnership between Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) and Youth Focus North West (YFNW), which is a youth participation strategic hub operating across the regional district. Partnership work between academics specialising in Youth and Community work at MMU and practitioners involved in YFNW, has been ongoing for decades but was



also developed within PARTISPACE. The PAR project involved youth workers and young people in two formal youth representation groups and academics from MMU.

The focus of the PAR project had to change because of the pandemic whilst the project took place entirely online since social distancing measures prevented the team from meeting in person. The team met with young people and youth workers from two youth councils weekly and through a series of discussions decided to focus on how the pandemic was impacting the lives of young people. The representation of young people in the media during this time was largely negative whilst the restrictions on the movement of young people and repeated lockdowns were particularly severe in Greater Manchester.

The young people involved in PAR project were keen to make the videos depicting their experiences of the pandemic themselves using their own mobile devices. The team were also keen to explore how their section of web documentary could be used to promote awareness of their views and experiences. Members contributed experts in different forms and responded to different questions and stimuli. They worked with a technician to put the footage together and supported the editing the process.

The collaboration between MMU and YFNW adapted well to the challenges of the pandemic. The PAR project was difficult at first and it was difficult to build relationships online and at a distance. However, the circumstances meant that there was scope for the young people involved to take more a lead role in the creation of the video and film their own content. However, it was difficult to maintain momentum and coordinate all the separate elements whilst ensuring that all members felt they had ownership over the final product. The team tried to create various opportunities to check back with participants but sometimes this process felt hindered by not being able to meet in person whilst many were facing other pressures in their lives due to the pandemic.

The third report details the Portuguese PAR project which was developed in co-operation between the Ocean Literacy Observatory (OLO), at the Faculty of Science and Technologies, in Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, and the Artisanal, Local, and Coastal Fishing Association (ALA-ALA). ALA-ALA is an association of fishermen and fisherwomen that supports the fishing community with social, legal and bureaucratic-administrative advice and facilitates training events.

The PAR project emerged from a commitment of both institutions in promoting young fishermen/women's participation, and addressing the continuous marginalisation of the fishing working class and artisanal fishing in Portugal. There was a close relationship between the first output of Partibridges – the production of the training module and the PAR project meaning that unlike the other teams, the methodological approach and the aims of each were not altogether separate. More broadly, the team aimed to support the empowerment of fishermen/women so that their way of life is sustained and supported within local and national decision-making processes.

Developed through a Critical Ethnographic approach, the PAR project was co-constructed with and within three fishing communities – Costa da Caparica, Trafaria and Fonte da Telha. The planned action was to facilitate a community assembly in each of the fishing communities to debate issues and decide future activities. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only one of the assembly was held.

The pandemic had a marked impact on the project overall, as the fishing communities do not have access to or use communication technologies. This ended up reinforcing the marginalisation the project was trying to address. However, when restrictions were eased in Portugal, the PAR team went to the beaches where the fishermen and women work to collect information on their experiences and how the project, and the organisations involved, might support them to address these.

The Portuguese section of the web documentary showcases the different encounters between the team members and planning of the community assembly, as well as, the engagement of the project members with the different communities on their local beaches.

The collaboration between the university and ALA-ALA was productive, although not without conflict. As it was the case with other projects, the tension between theoretical and practical knowledge was at the core of the relations between the members of the team. Overall, the Portuguese PAR project allowed for the creation of a space for the encounter of different knowledges and the experience of different spaces (e.g. university/ beaches) and roles (e.g. fishermen/women taking on the researcher role and interviewing the fellow fishermen/women as part of the project).

The final report contained within the methodological guide details the Turkish PAR project. The Turkish team comprised of three partners from two different cities: Yeditepe University Department of Sociology in Istanbul, Eksi 25 Association and Tepebaşı Municipality Youth Centres in Eskişehir. Initially, the Turkish team planned to do their PAR project with young participants involved in a K-Pop dance class organized by the Tepebaşı Municipality Youth Centre. The PAR project aimed to depict how the young people were using K-Pop dancing as an art form and a means of self-expression. The audio-visual material for their section of the web documentary was going to document the weekly exercises of the dancers, their interactions with each other and their views on self-expression and social participation.

However, due to pandemic, the Turkish team were forced to change their plans. They instead worked with a youth group that was involved in the module on youth participation (output one). They began by running an online workshop which included some training which had been developed for the module. The workshop was attended by a group of 25 (22 female and 3 male) university students from various faculties and departments at Anadolu University and Osmangazi University in Eskişehir who were also connected with Eksi 25 Association.

For the PAR project, the Turkish team organised an open-air weekend event where the students engaged in different activities to explore the impact of the pandemic on their everyday lives. Similar to the focus of the UK team, it was recognised that young people were one of the “victims” of the pandemic, and that their life experiences were heavily impacted. The team also conducted a survey to capture their experiences, the results of which are detailed in their report. The web documentary created by the Turkish team depicts some short interviews conducted with students as well as the activities they took part in during the open-air weekend.

The PAR project created an important and safe space for participants to explore their experiences after being confined to their homes for months. It also provided a space of hope for the future. The team realised they had come full circle; they started their module on youth participation with Ernst Bloch’s (1986) concept of hope and ended with the same concept at the end of their PAR project.

However, the team regrets that they were not able to spend more time on the co-construction of the project in order to shift the balance from 'adult-led' to 'youth-led'. For their part of the web documentary, they centred on the experiences of young people to keep that as their focus but largely used the video as a form of documentation rather than as part of the PAR methodological approach.

There are a number of commonalities between the PAR projects across the European consortium Partibridges team. Firstly, the focus of each of the PAR projects was rooted in an issue connected to young people's lifeworlds whilst the methodological approach provided participatory social learning opportunities for team members. Such instances show the importance of participation and opportunities for academics, youth workers and young people to explore and discuss issues impacting their lives in everyday settings. In this sense, the PAR projects provided a space for those with different skills, knowledge and experience to learn and initiate action together whilst also recognising and validating young people's lifeworlds. It is significant that the Partibridges project provided the opportunity for those located in formal, informal and non-formal spaces and modes of participation to experiment and learn how, and in what ways, they can experience social participation together. In this sense, the PAR projects are the actualisation of the importance of learning and participation as social practice so that those involved in youth participation can advocate and experience what it means to engage in rethinking democratic processes.

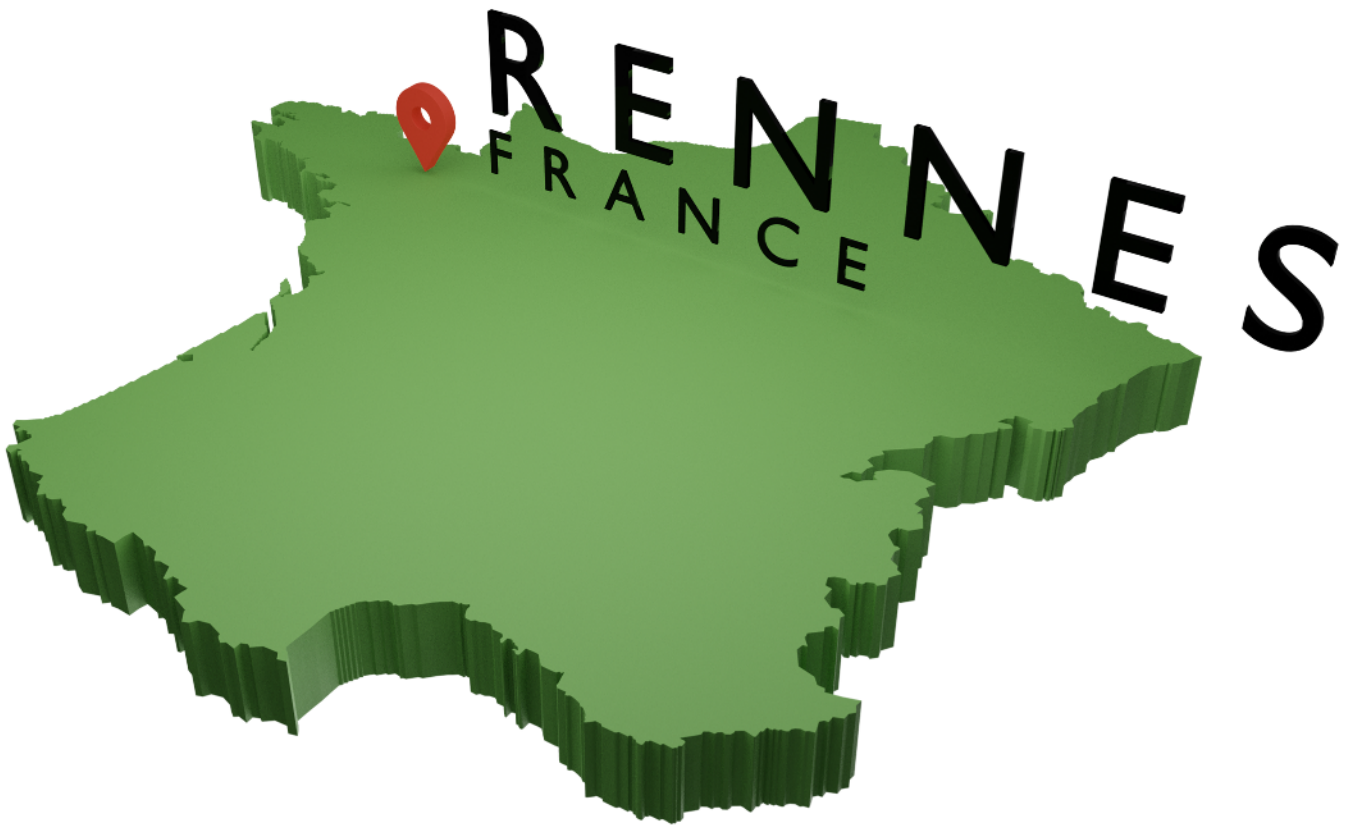
The second main theme which can be ascertained from reflecting on the PAR projects is the importance of co-construction and valuing different kinds of knowledge. One of the main aims of Partibridges was for those located in universities, youth work and marginalised communities to exchange knowledge and practice. The PAR projects provided an opportunity for different actors to co-construct, challenge and rethink youth participation both within their own local contexts and across the European consortium. Furthermore, the PAR methodological approach aimed to disrupt traditional hierarchies between academic and experiential knowledge enabling those located at different points of the spectrum to contribute and learn from one another. This meant that boundaries were blurred in roles assigned to group members whilst there was no clear designation in who was a 'researcher', 'facilitator/pedagogue' or 'participant'. The opportunities created by doing the PAR projects thus reaffirms the importance of pedagogical approaches that place the emphasis on co-construction of knowledge and experiential learning rather than more formalised or instructive approaches.

The third main commonality across the PAR projects for Partibridges was how the use of video to create the web-documentary diversified who was able to be part of the creation of the project outputs. By not using the standard written approach to document project outcomes, the teams were able to democratise this process by not just valuing different sorts of knowledge in their approach but also the output. For the French, Portuguese and Turkish teams, the video was able to document the participatory approach of their project by showing how academics, youth workers and young people were involved in the action research projects. Due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, these teams also utilised creative uses of outdoor public space together with other art forms such as painting, role-playing, rap and interactive games. Such opportunities to spend time together face-to-face were important after long periods of isolation. In the case of the UK team, the

entire project took place online, this meant that the young people themselves created the video content and participated in the creation of the output. This enabled the young people to have ownership in the content and production of the video whilst enable experimentation with how to utilise digital platforms to facilitate PAR.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that in all cases participation in the PAR projects was affirming and empowering particularly for those in marginalised positions. It is common in youth participation projects to demand that young people are given a voice, like PARTISPACE, Partibridges started from the premise that they have a voice, it is just often silenced or not listened too. Therefore, there was emphasis placed on the importance of building trusting relationships, validating different perspectives and being open to contestation both at a local level and across the European consortium. This enabled team members to experience what real participation looks and feels like whilst also how they can make more explicit claims for how and where they take part in society in the future. Such experiences can contribute to the actualisation of rethinking democratic processes and how we can learn to build democratic societies that are equitable, sustainable and representative of all those who live in them.





REPORT ONE:

# RENNES, FRENCH TEAM

## Report One: Rennes, French Team



**JUDICAEL**

**ZOE**

**CELINE**

**MARIE-SOPHIE**

**MANON**

### Description of Group

In Rennes, our Participatory Action Research (PAR) was carried out with children, young adults and professionals from associations (GPAS and Keur Eskemm) and the EHESP (Ecole des hautes études en santé publique)

The Brittany Pedagogy and Social Animation Group / Groupe de Pédagogie et d'Animation Sociale Bretagne (GPAS) is a network of associations working on social pedagogy. These associations are youth work providers but without any activity premises. The GPAS uses only public spaces: every day, 3 or 4 children, accompanied by a street pedagogue, go out to discover places and meet people. You can learn more about social pedagogy and GPAS work in our [e-training](#) (FR Seq2&3).

Keur Eskemm is an association of young adults for young adults, and is responsible for a project called the Popular Artistic Laboratory / Laboratoire Artistique Populaire (LAP). This is a six-month project that brings together a group of about twenty young people around artistic activities to gradually lead the project framework, towards collective autonomy. You can learn more about KeurEskemm activities in our [e-training](#) (FR Seq2&3).

Both associations are located in the Maurepas district, in Rennes. This working-class neighbourhood, made up of mostly high-rise buildings and home to many families of different origins and cultures.

The Department of Human and Social Sciences of the EHESP, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Santé Publique/Public Health School, has been working for several years on youth issues, and coordinates the Partibridges project with the aim of creating bridges between formal knowledge (from the academic and university field) and non-formal, practical knowledge.

Our PAR started in October 2019. Our group was born out of the partnership between these three organisations. In a second phase, it included children and young people who participate in the associations' activities. For each association, activities are based on voluntary participation.

The children involved in the project are between 8 and 10 years old and attend the Trégain school, the central school in the Maurepas district. Over the time, a small but consistent group formed, with between 6 and 8 children regularly involved in the project activities.

The group of young adults from the LAP is less identifiable, as none of the 15 participants followed all the parts of the process. The participants have varied profiles, having lived in working class areas or not. Some are not very academic, to quote a participant during a collective time, some have a food job, others are retraining.

None of the professionals from the associations involved live in or come from Maurepas, but both have been working there for several years. Through their daily presence in the neighbourhood, the professionals are in close contact with the families. The members of the EHESP had no previous connection with the neighbourhood.

The professionals involved are all sensitive to the world of research (the Keur Eskemm member even has a PhD) and particularly to the idea of actor-researchers. This is a facilitating factor for cooperation in our group. By actor-researcher, we mean people who create knowledge through their daily experiences and actions, but not necessarily in a university framework. It means a person that accepts, through reflection, to question and transform her or his practices. An academic researcher contributes to this collective reflection by bringing their own perspective and knowledge, and recognising the knowledge of others.

This group is intergenerational but also diverse in their knowledge of the neighbourhood and in their life stories. Indeed, while the children all live in the Maurepas neighbourhood, the young adults and professionals tend to live in other neighbourhoods of Rennes or even in the outlying countryside.

The video technician is also part of the group: He films but also takes part in the activities, expresses his opinions and his vision of the project. He's also from outside the neighbourhood.

In spite of this fluctuating group, links between the children, young people and professionals have been created thanks to times of conviviality (shared meals, games all together, etc.). This social time is important in PAR, as in our pedagogy in general, based on human relationships, to allow dialogue. The Portuguese team elaborated on this in one part of our [e-training](#) (PT Seq2).

In March 2020 the group dynamic was weakened by the suspension of activities during the first lockdown. Luckily, in August 2020, we were able to spend a whole week outdoors to create our fresco and finish our PAR.

## Description of focus of PAR project

### Our starting point

A PAR project usually starts from the theory of Paulo Freire about problem-situation, i.e. an identified situation that becomes the object of a dialogue and is therefore a shared problem, leading to a collective questioning (Freire, 1970).

As the group was very heterogeneous, the first challenge was to find a common problem situation. Then, the start of the participatory action research came from the observations made by the inhabitants and the associations.

### Extracts from the field notes of the GPAS street pedagogues

(from feedback from children and families):

The street is used by families to pick up their children but no one really lingers there.  
They express a feeling of insecurity.

The communal play areas around the neighbourhood school are used more by teenagers/young adults, mostly boys, whether on Wednesday afternoons, evenings or weekends. We can therefore observe a privatisation of spaces by groups, to the detriment of the other inhabitants (children and families).

The response of the public authorities is essentially security, with an increased police presence in recent months. The climate of tension and mutual surveillance between young people and the police can create a particular atmosphere, particularly at the end of the afternoon (school leaving) and in the evening.

One solution envisaged by the town hall is to block certain accesses to the street so that  
« undesirable groups » change location.

**These observations raise questions about the use of public space, its sharing, and the place of children in the urban landscape.**

In 2020, we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. You can find out more about the International Convention on the Rights of the Child in our [e-training](#) (UK Seq 4).

This directly echoes our shared problem, and leads us to question the "right to live one's life as a child" (reformulated by Janusz Korczak).

Playing outside came up many times in the discussions between GPAS pedagogues, children and families. Indeed, the inhabitants occupy very small houses. Outside space is therefore important as a possible place for playing and meeting people. In Maurepas, there are small playgrounds but they are limited in their use.

**This subject is recurrent because it reveals a wider problem, which is the occupation of public space. In France, public space is not considered as a common space, it is a space of passage, neutral, where the main point is not to disturb other users.**



**This issue is even more sensitive in the working-class neighbourhoods, as the appropriation of public space can be based on illegal activities and therefore unsafe for other inhabitants.**

**Playing is part of a child's right, of his or her identity construction and empowerment. So the question is, in terms of equality and access to rights: does a child in a priority neighbourhood have the same opportunities to live his or her life as a child as elsewhere?**

To come back to the main theme of Partibridges, the fact of being present and visible in the public space is linked to the more general question of social participation. We discuss the relation between space and social participation in our [e-training](#) (FR Seq3).

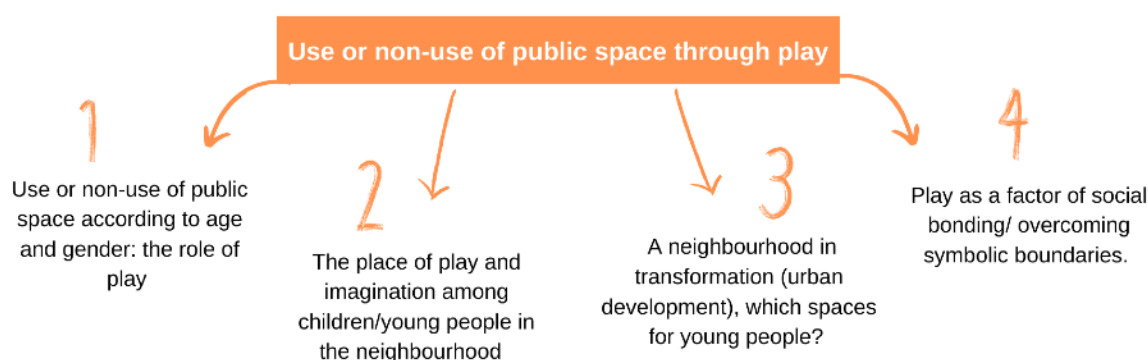
Furthermore, the occupation of public space by young adults in France is generally considered a problem (you can refer to our [e-training](#) on that point, UK Seq1). This topic was brought up by Keur Eskemm which questions the place and image of young adults in our society. The composition of our group made it possible to cross the views of children and young adults, who can be considered as monopolising public space.

The work of the associations enabled us to identify a starting point for the PAR. In a second phase, the children and young adults participated in the project according to their interest in this issue.

### Our questioning

This question of the right to live one's life as a child or young person in a working-class neighbourhood echoed the question of the participation of children and young people in the public space through the medium of open-air play. Thus, our initial questioning was about the use or non-use of public space through play. Our reflection focused on a central street in the Maurepas district, located in front of the primary school.

We defined a 4 axis of reflection and observation to answer this question.



We also reflected about how the image of the neighbourhood was frequently popularised through stigma, imagination and myth. The Maurepas district is regularly represented (in the local and even national press) using overtones of delinquency and insecurity. This generates the effects of stigmatisation and identity assignment that are at the heart of the lives of the inhabitants and the

social workers. This negative image contributes to the formation of a kind of myth of the neighbourhood, which the inhabitants conform to (adopt the codes) or from which they suffer.

This is a very live issue for adults, but the children of the neighbourhood do not express it directly. They have their own stories about the district they are living in from their imagination or their own culture.

### Our aim

The aim of the project was to enable children to use public space more for play, and thus to encourage the enjoyable and collective use of public space. But, above all, it was to encourage reflection with children and young adults about their use of these public spaces.

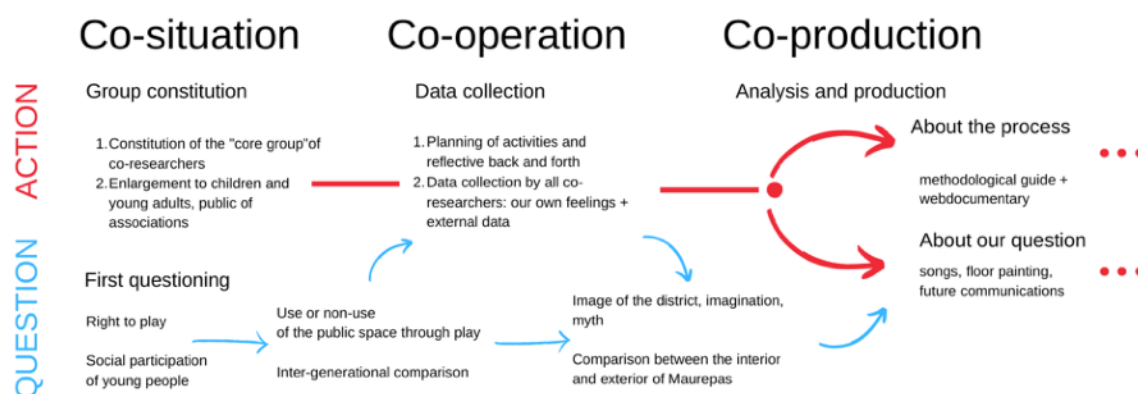


## Process of PAR project

### Process mapping

Desgagné has established a model for action research methodology based on three general steps: co-situation (specification of roles and expectations), cooperation (joint data collection), co-production (analysis and editing of results) (Desgagné, 1997).

In this diagram, we tried to explain our process through these three steps.



However, in the actual process, the phases are not as clear and distinct.

Stringer has highlighted a model applicable to PAR in the form of a spiral of planning cycles, which is more complex than that of Desgagné. There would then be an initial plan, followed by other plans resulting from reflections on the first actions to take into account the evolution of the understanding of the situation (Stringer, 1996).

In our case, the analysis was done as the activities went on, they were not two distinct phases. We experimented with the cycles described by Stringer. The limitations of this experiment will be discussed in a later section.

### Our starting point

According to Kurt Lewin, description and observation alone is not enough to understand social reality. This understanding necessarily requires modification and therefore action (Jouisson- Laffite, 2009; Lewin 1952).

With this in mind, we defined an action that could serve to support our thinking, as a focus for our reflections: the creation of a playful work painted in this street, fed by the reflections of the GPAS children and the young adult from the LAP.

The creation of a highly visible fresco, located in a strategic area of the district, was intended to question, collectively, the use of public space.

This street mural was not thought of as a solution to the problem but as a way of reflecting on it by asking questions such as: Do we have the right to paint in the public space? What does this entail? Who is currently in the public space? Why are they there? Who should be interviewed in the neighbourhood before putting up this work? Who is playing what? With whom? What would I rather be playing?

It was, therefore, the professionals who had the idea of the fresco and proposed to the children and participants of the LAP to take it over.

### Description of the activities of our experiment

The first step in our data collection was to carry out exploratory activities. We met professionals, visited places, and gathered information for the collaboration with the painter. This represented more than thirty activities between September 2019 and March 2020 with the GPAS children.

We alternated times between professionals, times only with the children, with the young adults of the LAP, and times together.

Our activities for this participatory action research can be summarised in three categories:

- Biographies (everything that comes out of each participant's own life experience)
- Exploration (what is experienced through the PAR activities together)
- Encounters (collection of words from outside the co-researchers, interviews).







Exploration of playgrounds - Observation of school grounds at lunchtime





Meetings with professionals - Discussion with the district management in order to understand the rules regarding the materialization of a work in the public space.

Other example: Meeting with a sociologist on observation in research, and a student on gender issues. Following this meeting, they were able to compare her discourse with what they observed in a skate park (are there more boys? What do the girls do?).

Reporters - The children and participants of the LAP conducted a «spokesperson»

The « spokesperson/speech carrier » is a technique to collect testimony of people in the street: the question is written on a big paper hung on a piece of string, and the co-researcher then asks the people passing by and to write down their opinion on other pieces of paper. Therefore, everybody can see the other answers and react to them.



Before starting, we explained the technique to the young people from the LAP and chose the main question together: "Is it possible to play in the street in Maurepas?" Then, each person asked this question the way she/he wants. The children came after school and asked the questions as well.



The opinions collected were very varied, ranging from "of course!" to "not without the parents" to "never, it's not safe enough, it smells bad...". The words of two young people sitting on a bench surprised the LAP participants: they were in favour of closing the porch because they were fed up with being seen as a threat by parents.

For the "Reporters" category, we are referring to the collection of words from the inhabitants of the district, which was done throughout all the activities but more so during common activities with the LAP.

This collection of information was largely carried out by the young people of the LAP, because they were located in a tower block in the neighbourhood, which allowed many exchanges with the inhabitants. They were able to talk to various people, including young people who spoke very strongly about their place in the neighbourhood and in society.

The hypothesis supported by the PAR is that young people have relevant, unknown and very rich knowledge on topics that affect them. Indeed, as Hadfield and Haw (2001) suggest, we may think that young people are in the best position to talk about being young or to identify what directly concerns them.

In addition to these four categories initially identified, time was taken to explore our own feelings and our own assumptions about public space, about play, and about both together. This also allowed us as a group to identify the context of our points of view, to situate them in a contextualized reality (rooted in a specific place at a given time), and also discuss the social - (issues) that influence each of our opinions.



Exploration of our feelings - Speech carrier collected our reflections and representations on the game and its influence on the public space, during a day with Guillaumit (Designer/ Artist).

Exploration of our feelings - Moving debate on two points: "Being a child in a district or elsewhere, it's the same", and "for or against urban renewal in Maurepas".



En quarantaine, t'as beaucoup plus d'amour.

## ça peut n'éviter pas le danger

ça va être comment le quartier  
ça va être quadrillé? On met  
des barrières on va mettre des  
frontières aussi bientôt?  
Moi j'ai pas envie que mon gosse  
il voit ça tous les jours et que  
ça devienne normal. jusqu'à  
ce qu'on lui propose...

poté de ZUP mint dit  
vas à Maurepas? attention  
t'as chaud le bas!

c'est pas grave du coup les  
gamins ici ils jouent à fortnite

Sous un porche y'avait tous  
les dealers du quartier qui  
jouaient au palut avec nous  
et c'était simple on jouait c'est  
tout

"Il faut pas demander  
à la police pour  
faire un dessin  
sur la rue?"  
À la ville qui s'efface

"Les grands arrivent  
et puis tata-tata ils  
font comme ils  
veulent et ça fait  
un peu avec plus  
pu... moi c'est une  
manière de dire: On  
est aussi là!"

La bas  
On prenait  
que de l'air!  
Toujours

Comme si on  
était au moyen-âge  
ou au temps  
moderne!

ici  
Les enfants qui peuvent  
pas jouer dehors  
c'est trop risqué.  
un enfant

"Moi je regarde Nanao  
même si je suis une fille."

These activities allowed many reflections on the way people feel in public space, and on the conceptions they have of working-class neighbourhoods. For example, one participant admitted that as a girl she felt better and safer in Maurepas than in the city centre. We are therefore led to question our identities and our feelings.

Many materials were produced and collected throughout these activities e.g. drawings, recordings, videos, photographs. They helped to design the playful street mural on the ground but also to write two rap songs on this subject.

The LAP participants wrote lyrics using the various materials as a basis (e.g. debate, speech carrier, video testimonies of children). In the songs there are testimonies of people we met, e.g. the idea of "no future".

Vous jeunes vous n'avez  
courses de pneus

à Mayotte?

Wahou?

Bah oui!

y'a quelque chose  
que je déteste.

Une maison sur la rue  
la rue  
"Oh j'avais trop envie  
d'aller à l'école  
mais mon père m'a dit  
qu'il fallait rester à la maison"

Chut trop la honte!

C'est comme ça que tout  
se passe parfois pour les...

C'est sûr quand on traverse  
le boulevard on est dans un  
autre monde ici ça se voit et  
en même temps qu'on soit au  
Congo ou ici on est tous des  
gamins avant tout

The instrumental of these songs was composed from sounds captured in the neighbourhood during a "sound rally". This was a kind of race that involved children and young people with the aim of capturing the sounds of the neighbourhood, the soundscapes. You can hear the song in the [web-documentary](#).

The design of the fresco was driven by the children (the LAP participants tended to support the children) and the young people from the LAP composed the songs. When making the fresco, we were altogether for 5 full days, with the artist



Guillaumit (Designer/Artist) and his painter. This was a strong, collective, meditative moment of concentration over time. It also allowed us to provoke discussions with passers-by.

**Extracts from Zoé's diary (EHESP) on the exchanges during the week:**

An old lady who lives across the street: "It will change, put some colour!"

The young people sitting on the steps next to us as we leave:  
"We'll miss you!"

Two young men, in a tone of irony: "It's true that there's not enough activity in Maurepas!"

A man passing by: "I've been here since I was three years old and everything is always damaged, the dealers will ruin everything!"

Another: "While you're doing this, there are people dying of hunger..."

The young people who used to squat in the street used to play cards on our table: they also play in the public space! Is this still a right even as a young adult?

Several people who want to come with us to paint (including adults who jokingly suggest it), the daily passers-by come to tell us that it is going well, one man comes several times just to look at the fresco.

Creating something in the public space mobilised other persons to join in the discussion and provided a further 'extension' to the level of participation of the community, of the neighbourhood inhabitants in the project.

Throughout our activities, we took time for discussion at the end, during bus journeys for example, or by making dedicated time. Therefore, we did a mix of data collection and collective analysis as we went along.



### The results, outcomes, of our experimentation

Our collective reflections fed our productions, for example concerning the rap songs, the texts are the result of our prior reflections. Starting the writing with this base allowed many questions and



reflections to emerge. The songs were created by the LAP participants, who practiced at home even during the confinement to be able to record them afterwards.

The fresco, a sports course and playful work, is also the fruit of our collective reflection:

- the desire and need to exercise in the open air, the idea of a course that goes up and down to go to and from school; the need for parents to be able to sit next to them to allow them to use this space;
- the desire not to chase away those who wish to sit down, even young adults;
- the children's imagination and the stories they tell themselves about the neighbourhood.

**We decided to create a playground without any rules, so that everyone can explore each part of the playful art work in their own way.**

### Impact of the pandemic

The group reflection and all the discussions we had were also a result/production in itself. This reflection on open-air games, public space, had greater resonance in this period of the pandemic when public space and encounters were synonymous with danger and prohibition.

At the beginning of the pandemic, we didn't know anything about the virus so most people were afraid to go in the open air, sometimes even on balconies. Social interactions were forbidden, and seen as a potential danger.

"Society makes you stay at home, even more so at the moment, in this corona period" (Barbara, LAP participant)

And we realized after the lockdown that those with gardens had a really different experience of it, they experienced it much better. This confirmed the importance of a convivial public space in the absence of a garden. Especially since, after the lockdown, the only interactions allowed were outdoors and in small groups.

Moreover, this social distance makes us all stay in our own social bubble, which can cause a division of ideas. Indeed, we are always discussing with people we know and watching online content suggested for us. Getting involved in a project with such a heterogeneous group, questioning the idea of public space, is a way of getting out of our closed bubbles of interactions and ideas.

### Broader impact

Finally, several months later, we can see from the association's offices that children are playing on the fresco regularly, and that people are taking more time to sit in the street.

Moreover, our request to place benches in this street to take into account the request of parents who wish to stay close to their children was accepted by the town hall, which was initially reluctant to the idea of encouraging groupings. Since then, we see families sitting and talking in this street,

unlike before. Our reflections and actions have enabled us to modify the situation of the street, to make it more convivial, but we have less influence on the problems of traffic and insecurity.

In March 2021, the municipality implemented its project to block certain parts of the street with fences and restricted access. Municipal decisions were taken to limit the passage of scooters, which will probably be closed on one side, but we do not know exactly how this will be done, as there is little information on this subject.

This raises questions about the transformational capacity of our project. We have acted in a way to modify the situation but this has not changed the vision and decisions of the public authorities. Our scale of influence remains limited to an individual scale and on a timetable over which we have no control.

In this sense, we are forced to “live with” the classic adult/youth opposition whilst the public authority/youth worker opposition remains. We have a dialogue with the neighbourhood technicians but not with the decision-makers. Even if we try to position ourselves as an intermediary between young people, children, families and the public authorities, we are not involved in decision-making processes.

## Learning from PAR project

We learned from this experimentation that the results of research do not necessarily have to be academic articles or reports but that, on the contrary, it is very interesting to have an accumulation of different forms of production. This allows us not to ignore the knowledge of ‘outsiders’, while at the same time enhancing the different aspects of the project, and supporting different types of knowledge.

This questions the place and role of expression and art in sociological observation and calls into question more traditional social science.

## Limits, difficulties encountered: maintaining the common thread

### Explaining the research dimension?

One of the biggest difficulties we had to face during our experimentation was to keep a common thread that was coherent and that everyone could grasp. Indeed, as the professionals suggested the subject and activities, the links between all the different actions were not necessarily clear for the young people of the LAP. Although the children were a fixed group of six so they could see all the stages, the LAP participants joined most of the activities but nobody was able to do everything from start to finish. Some had not done the beginning and therefore did not have an understanding of the project as a whole.

During a final storytelling workshop (debriefing time on the fresco), some of the LAP participants expressed that they had understood the overall aspect of an investigation but, for example, for them,

the songs and the fresco were two separate things, and not two productions resulting from the same reflections. To maintain the common thread we posted an explanation of the Partibridges project in the LAP room. We wanted to leave the threads stretched with the « bits of talk » all the time in the room to arouse curiosity. However, with the disruption of the activities due to the pandemic this did not really work.

We made the methodological choice to make the university less visible by a more distant presence of the coordinator, who was at all times among professionals but spent little time in the field. The presence of the EHESP trainee at all the related activities could have helped continuity, but in an attempt to lessen unequal power relations in the group, we did not insist that she represent the "academic" part, therefore she did not identify as such. Many of the young people involved were distant from the educational system whilst because universities tend to be seen as 'above', we did not want this element to influence their participation. However, a key element in the PAR project was to break this invisible wall between academic knowledge, and practice or lived experience. Therefore, it was important to explain to the participants that some of us were coming from an academic field, and that everything we had done was an investigation, within the framework of the PAR methodology.

In our group, boundaries between academic knowledge and practice started to blur from the beginning, and that led us to real cooperation. However, we thought that it was important to explain the whole process and people's backgrounds at the end so that the academic knowledge was not seen as superior or overbearing.

### Participatory Action Research at the time of a pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic and the March-April 2020 lockdown cut our process in half, just as activities were starting to become regular and LAP participants could really start to take ownership of the project. The professionals tended to think ahead about how to move forward with the project, this became even more necessary in order to maintain a link and prepare for a possible restart of activities. The link with the group was maintained by the associations' professionals via calls from the pedagogues to the families for the GPAS and online sharing platforms for the LAP. This link was more of a support, to avoid isolation and ensure continuity, but we did not continue the reflection on public space and play. We took the lockdown as a break, we did not try to keep questioning on this theme online but hoped we would be able to resume as soon as possible. Keeping a link was possible because of the long previous work of the associations with the children, young people and parents, their involvement on a daily basis in the life of the neighbourhood. We discuss this in a video about time and social participation of the [e-training](#) (Fr Sq3).

The re-mobilisation of the group at the end of the first lockdown was facilitated by the prospect of the recording of the songs and the production of the mural. These actions were postponed several times but we were still able to carry them out while respecting the public health measures in force at the time.

Our reflections for the next time: One idea could be to create a smaller group that is able to complete the process from beginning to end. This could help make the process less disjointed and enable the group to have more autonomy.

Of course, this made the experimentation less fluid and we were not able to do everything we had hoped for, especially in terms of producing reflection, where we felt the group could have gone further. For example, one LAP participant would have found it interesting to dig into the history of games in the public space. We would also have liked to compare the use of public spaces, and playgrounds, with other countries. Such difficulties highlight the hard work which goes into supporting participants to take ownership but also how the process can be disrupted by outside events which makes the momentum difficult to maintain.

### What about the participation?

#### Individual roles, group dynamics and reflexivity

We learnt a lot about cooperation and the complementarity of tasks between universities and associations. When thinking about the activities, how to support the reflection and designing some tools to support the PAR process, our roles were very blurred, there was no distinction among university or association. We made the decisions all together. The associations' professionals were more in charge of the practical organisation of the activities and maintaining the link with the artist, and of course with the young people and children. The EHESP intern was more in charge of the creation of the monitoring tools (map, chart...) and keeping records of the activities. The EHESP coordinator helped the group to take a step back and reflect on what we were doing, because she was a bit outside the activities, by explaining to her what happened, we were able to reflect on it.

Throughout the process, we took time between professionals to take a step back from what we were doing and debrief on the progress of the activities. This allowed us to question constantly ourselves, to ask ourselves how we could encourage discussion, to stimulate the group reflection without directing it too much. For example, together we questioned the observation of schoolyards, to keep in mind that these games are often already much standardised.

This cooperation and inter-knowledge was facilitated by the partnership links between Keur Eskemm and EHESP created during previous projects (PARTISPACE) and by the creation of a six-month internship specifically to facilitate daily links.

One of our main goals was to avoid a hierarchy between different types of knowledge, so that the academic knowledge was not overbearing or considered as more important. We feel that it was not the case; our process was more a valorization of the experiential knowledge. The investigation methodology is now a shared practice. This idea of building artistic projects based on fieldwork will be kept for future LAPs. During the activities, the children and young people were able to decide how to proceed during the activity, and suggest things for the next one.

The back and forth between the inside and outside of the neighbourhood was the driving force behind our reflections, much more than the age factor. This composition of the group of co-researchers and the methodologies of our PAR led to a situation of "expert in his field" for each of the co-researchers.

The children were the only ones who knew the neighbourhood, as they were the only ones who lived there. Therefore, they could show the young adults from the LAP the games present in the neighbourhood. They became a sort of guide to the neighbourhood, knowing the places but also being able to talk about their daily use, experiences and feelings.

The young adults brought an outside view, perhaps with preconceived ideas about the neighbourhood, but most of all their visions as young people of the public space. For example, this space was seen by the group as a space "for everyone" that should be used rather than as a space to be emptied of all presence. There was a strong desire to understand the position of young people occupying the public space and not to drive them out of it. The children realised that their words could be taken into account. They understood that some games were more limited in terms of imagination than others were.

The young adults, like the youth workers, did not grow up in Maurepas, in a priority district, in the current context. We have all taken the measure of the reality of being a child in a priority neighbourhood, of the need to allow a common and convivial use of the public space.

Everyone had their own and complementary place in the group, so this approach enabled us to learn together, from each other. However, we were not able to take time for a final analysis all together, after the fresco was completed. Similarly, we would have liked to take time with the LAP participants to look at everything again, to compare it with theory, concepts and videos, to create another production in addition to the fresco and the songs, like a revue article for example. In the end the young people had little power in the decisions, they would have liked to be able to be more of a force of proposal for the fresco, in addition to the artist.

### **Tension between process and production: risk of invisibility or separation:**

In our project there was at the same time the desire to mix the ages, a new partnership between associations, the research dimension, the web-documentary, the desire to make a large-scale work with an artist. There were many dimensions to balance at the same time and many interests to combine.

We realised that wanting to combine a PAR project with a public art project, to combine process and production, can be very rewarding but requires 'safeguards' from an ethical point of view. As we have already pointed out, our project had many dimensions and therefore many people with their own interests. For example, the artist was the guarantor of the aesthetic aspect of the work; we were the guarantors of the participative aspect and of the reflection. The same goes for the video documentary. A challenge for us was to ensure that the different issues were reconciled.



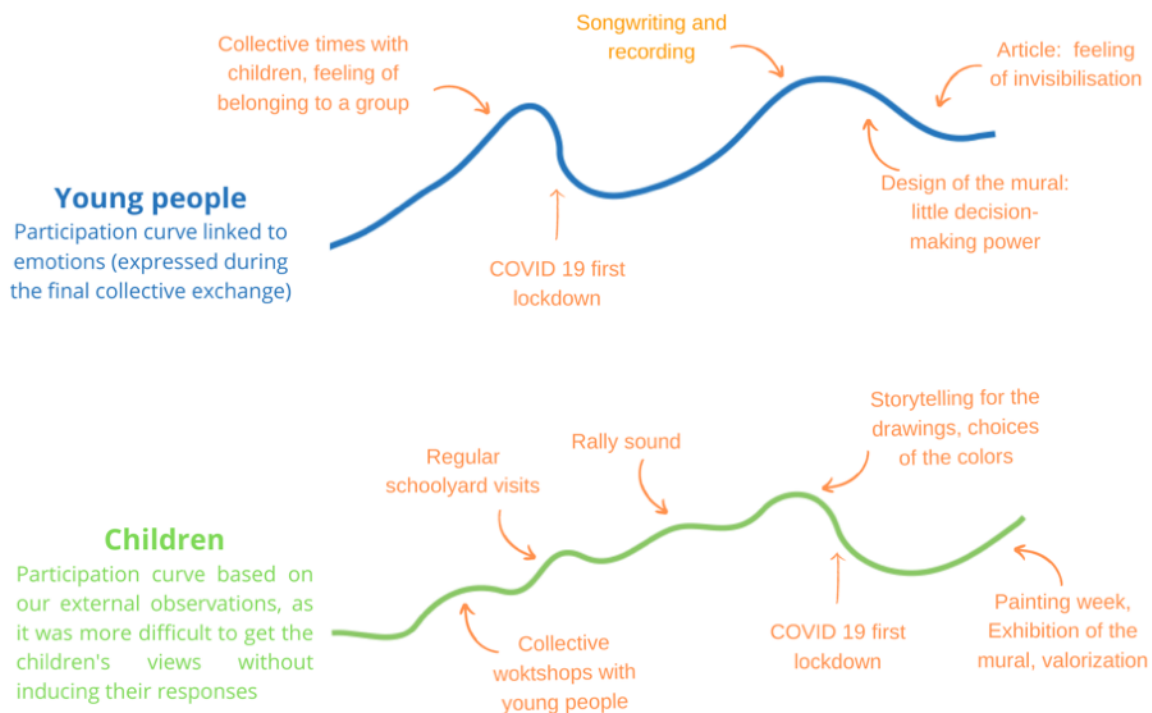
The artistic aspect is very rich and can allow free expression, moving away from the omnipresence of the written word, which is not the preferred mode of communication for everyone. However, it can also restrict it when the aesthetic dimension outweighs the rest.

Vigilance on this point must be maintained until the very end of the experiment, the communication/valuation. In our case for example, at the end, the young people from the LAP were not mentioned in a press article that talked about the fresco, and we had not asked the journalists to give us their article before publishing it in order to check it. This created a feeling of invisibility, they felt removed from the process and all of the work they had done.

In PAR projects where there is an artistic dimension, we learnt that there is risk of losing the collective process. This may be because the image of young people is controversial. In the media, young people are often portrayed as dangerous or as angels. Children are easier to engage with, most initiatives with children are positively represented. The UK team explore this idea further in the [e-training](#) (UK Seq2).

Learning Idea for next time: The artist who was contacted for the fresco was outside the research group, because when he came, he concentrated above all on the design of the fresco and not on all the reflections on the use of the public space. One possibility to explore would be to involve the artist/technician as an integral part of the group: his vision of the issues of play in public space would have enriched the collective reflection and we could perhaps have avoided certain points of frustration.

Another idea would be to agree from the outset that the technician or artist's skills would be available to the group to support their own creations. The group could then ask them for some help to express themselves artistically, to achieve the desired result, but the production is authored by the group and not the artist/technician. In other words, the artist does not design the work, the group does. This could blur the boundaries between the different roles of the project members.



These two curves represent the participation of young people and children over time in the project. For the young people, it is a curve based on the emotions expressed during the final collective assessment. For children, the curve is based on the observation of the children's involvement. To refer to Arnstein's scale (detailed in our [e-training](#), FR Seq1), the participation of children and young people is similar to consultation at the beginning of the project, and placation as the activities progress, and goes as far as partnership at certain points (on the choice of visuals for the children, for example), and as far as delegation for the young adults, in relation to the writing of the PAR songs. As we said before, creating something in the public space provides a further extension to the participation, by provoking discussions with a wider audience.

## Ethical Considerations

### A risk of instrumentalisation

From an ethical point of view, an essential point for us was the free participation throughout the project, with the possibility of coming to a single activity, arriving along the way, stopping and starting again. Everyone could get involved at the level they wanted. This free participation allows us, among other things, to avoid the risk of instrumentalisation, which can occur when we mobilise people because we want to hear them, because they interest us but not because they are interested. For example, we would have found it interesting to have young adults in the group who are part of those occupying the public space in the district. However, even if they do not want to get involved at first but then later encouraging full participation at all costs would be a kind of manipulation. By

doing so, we also risk sticking a label on them, saying “Young people squatting” and instrumentalising their words on our behalf.

Finally, we questioned ourselves about working in a neighbourhood where only the children actually live. Both the professionals and the young people of the LAP were "temporary" inhabitants, only during the day, or only for a given time. Then, the group asked itself the question of the legitimacy of carrying out an action in this neighbourhood. The whole reflection that surrounds the action then allows us to work on this question, by being rooted in the neighbourhood but also by taking a step back collectively.

In our case, the question arose even more because, to enhance the value of the project, we had called on an artist who was used to large-scale works in the public space, who was well known and recognised but who lived in Bordeaux. Some of the LAP participants then pointed out that it might have been fairer, from an ethical and legitimacy point of view, to work with an artist from Maurepas. Here again, it is a question of the different interests that clash (valorisation and legitimacy of the action). It is then a question of being aware as a group that our actions can potentially recreate symbolic violence and that, even if part of the project can lead to changes, it is not a magic answer to an initial complex problem.

The same symbolic violence appears about the closure of the street by the public authorities: in a power struggle, the world of cultural animation remains minor in relation to public decisions. The latter allow us to carry out projects but without having any impact on the decisions and the perception of insecurity in this neighbourhood, even though the "problematic" groups in question have moved away. We discuss this symbolic violence in a video of our [e-training](#) (Space and social participation, FR Seq3)

## Learning from making video/web documentary

Before starting the project, it seemed essential to us that the video should not be an outsider's view, which could completely break the spontaneity and trust in the group.

We therefore asked the video technician to come to the group first without his filming equipment so that he could be identified by everyone and obtain their consent to be filmed. This worked well, he was integrated into the group throughout. He also came regularly, introduced himself each time and even took part in parts of the activities. He also chose not to have a lot of equipment so that it would not be intimidating.

Nevertheless, our methodological approach was not self-evident for the video technician, for whom this was the first experience of this type of documentary. In his words, it was difficult at first to understand why he had to come and film meeting times or things that were not visual, that he did not see himself using in a final version.

On reflection, we did not have the same idea in mind about video. For us, the main thing was to transcribe the process; we had no artistic or visual criteria. For example, we thought that we could

take live discussions and keep our words as spontaneous interviews. However, for our video technician, live sound is not of sufficient quality to use it. He preferred planned interviews, so that he could use them as a voiceover over the live footage. Without the interviews, he found it difficult to condense all the video footage, as there was not an obvious common thread.



These misunderstandings on both sides created gaps and apprehension. We therefore decided to take some time together to re-situate our expectations, to re-express our pedagogical principles, and for him to explain his technical needs.

Learning idea for next time: take time to consider the purpose of the video from the start - Is it a research tool or an outside eye that visually relates the process? Is it a video to support thinking or a final production?

In our case, we did not really use the video as a tool of the PAR, but more as a shadow that followed us. Indeed, during the activities and cross-interviews, during which each one interviewed the other, the technician showed the group the equipment and explained how it worked. However, we never managed to set up a joint viewing of the previous videos to feed the reflection, notably because of pausing activities due to the pandemic. Only the professionals watched the videos again and selected phrases that could be used, especially the writing of the rap songs.

## Concluding remarks

To conclude, one advice we could give at the end of our experiment is to take the time to co-situate, to make explicit the expectations of each person involved, and the levels of transformation expected. Expressing our expectations and hearing those of others can both help to give direction to the group and avoid misunderstandings later on. However, even if we take the time at the beginning of the process to situate the roles, it needs to be worked out continually as part of the process. We found out that expectations change over time depending on the context and dynamics of the group. The challenge is to keep open and to listen and continue to collaborate and question what is possible together.

To help the PAR process, we also advise to use a concrete action as a support for your thinking. This creation was the street fresco for us. This allowed us to give a framework and a guide to our

collective thinking, but also to do a concrete modification of our environment at the end of the process. We questioned ourselves about public space and play and we transformed our environment at the end of the process. We questioned ourselves about public space and play and we transformed our living/working space, in a way that is rather permanent in time. In our case, it also allows a more situated understanding and presence in the neighbourhood, creating more exchanges and an extension of who is typically involved in (youth) participation projects. However, the more concrete things that are planned, the more risk there is that the project starts to be adult-led. It is therefore necessary to be vigilant and to involve young people in all decisions.



REPORT TWO:

## MANCHESTER, UK TEAM



## Report Two: Manchester, UK Team



**LIZ**

**EVAN**

**MARTA**

**HARRIET**

### Description of Group

In Manchester, Partibridges supported a partnership between Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) and Youth Focus North West (YFNW). There has been a long-standing relationship between Youth Focus NW and MMU. Many of the youth workers associated with YFNW initially did their degrees in youth and community work at MMU, and since then have continuously been involved with the institution as invited speakers, collaborators and as participants in research projects. This was the case for the predecessor project, which laid the foundations for Partibridges - 'PARTISPACE'.

The Partibridges UK team consisted of Dr Harriet Rowley (Co-PI, MMU), Dr Alexandre Pais (Co-PI, MMU), Marta da Costa (MMU), Evan Wilson (MMU) and Elizabeth Harding (YFNW). Both Harriet and Alexandre were researchers on PARTISPACE whilst Elizabeth was interviewed as part of the data collection activities. As a key provider of Youth Participation in Manchester, YFNW was actively involved in PARTISPACE, including supporting an ethnographic case study of the 'Youth Representation Forum' in Manchester. This research was particularly important in understanding practices in formal youth participation spaces (cf Lüküslü et al., 2019).

However, the involvement of YFNW within PARTISPACE was essentially as a participant and thus conformed to a more traditional relationship where research is conducted 'on' rather than 'with'. Partibridges thus sought to disrupt the power dynamics in the relationship between those involved in research and practice by providing an opportunity for a partnership to be created. In this sense, rather than being silent beneficiaries of the research, YFNW would be recognised as knowledge creators with an equal stake in the production and outputs from Partibridges.

With the exception of Evan who is a technician and located in Manchester School of Art, Harriet, Alexandre and Marta are members of the Youth and Community Research Group within the Education and Social Research Institute (ESRI).

ESRI is an inclusive and radical research space producing world-leading research in both local and global contexts. Academics utilise methods that challenge understandings of what research and education could, and should, be. This creates a forward-thinking, collaborative and unconventional environment in which to co-produce quality research. Those working at ESRI actively aim to lead the debate on the nature and future of education, contributing to the development of applied social research and supporting our community partners, practitioners and professionals in researching their own practice. They work in innovative ways to support young people and to develop ways of working in schools and communities to create transformational change.

Youth Focus NW is a strategic hub with youth work values at the heart of every piece of work. They work across the North West of England and beyond to improve the lives of young people. Working in partnership with young people, local youth services and organisations they have a belief in young people, listen to their voices and the move from voice to power underpins everything. You can find out more about what they do in our [e-training](#) (UK Seq 4&5)

One of their projects, Youthforia is the North West Youth Forum. Youthforia involves young people aged 11 - 25 who are part of democratic representation structures from all 23 North West local authorities and all Members of the UK Youth Parliament.

An elected Steering Group of 12 young people plan and run meetings that bring members together to represent young people and the issues they are passionate about. They share practice, plan and run campaigns and develop their skills with each event focusing on a theme/issue such as gender, disability, votes @16 and Curriculum 4 Life. Focused on issues of social justice and improving the lives of their peers, Youthforia members take their messages and campaigns to decision makers and politicians locally, regionally and nationally.

## Description of focus of PAR project

We recruited participants for the PAR project from Youthforia. As the majority of young people were under 18 and a significant number, under 16, we had to consider travel and safeguarding. The three local groups who are part of Youthforia, (Wigan, Rochdale and Bury) had participated in creating the module on youth participation (output one - see [e-training](#)) whilst as part of the face-to-face teaching sessions, MMU students had visited the youth cabinets and met the young people. These groups were keen to be involved in the PAR project. After the disruption and the temporary halt to the project caused by the first lockdown in the UK we approached all three groups again. We understood that the lockdown would have affected them differently. We were able to pick up again with Rochdale and Bury Youth Cabinets.

As explained in the section below, the focus of the PAR project was difficult to establish because the circumstances of the pandemic meant that we had a number of 'false' starts. Successive lockdowns and social distancing restrictions meant that establishing and maintaining a focus that was coproduced through dialogue, respecting equally all participants' voices whilst trying to centre young people's everyday lives was difficult to keep in motion. The dramatic change that the pandemic

brought to all our lives means that the focus changed to be that which was most immediate and present in our lives. There was also increasing recognition that providing a space for young people to reflect upon their experiences of the pandemic and their involvement in youth participation was an important affirming process of recognition within a broader context where they were being silenced and misrepresented.

### INITIAL AIMS

Explore the extent to which youth participation impacts on young people's mental health

### AIMS AFTER THE PANDEMIC

Express the different ways in which young people were affected by and responded to the pandemic

Centre youth experiences of the pandemic

Provide a space to reflect about how youth participation had adapted and responded to changing conditions due to the pandemic

## Process of PAR project

The focus of the project was initially grounded on [Make Your Mark Campaign](#) a UK-wide ballot for young people aged 11-18 to vote on the most pressing issues facing young people in the UK. These are then campaigned on by the Members of the Youth parliament, in order to prompt action by the UK government. In 2019, the top issues voted by young people were the environment, mental health, and knife crime. Using the results from the Make Your Mark Campaign as a starting point for discussion, most of the young people involved expressed how they wanted to focus on mental health for the PAR project.

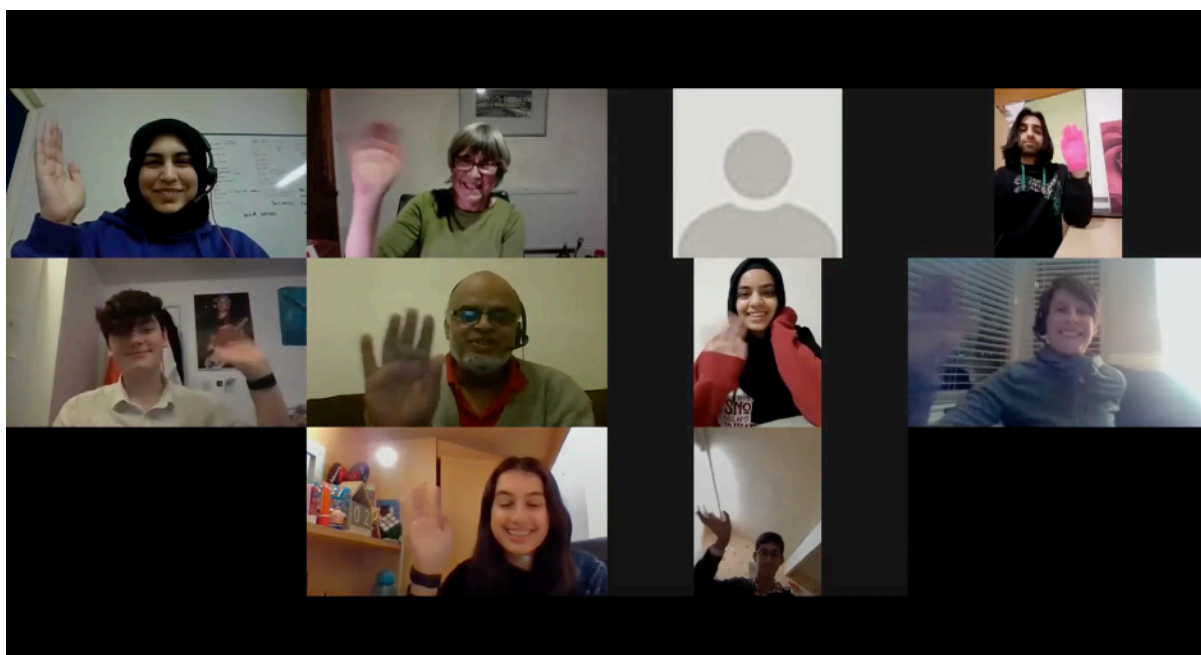


As we were having initial meetings with the young people and attending Youth Council sessions to start planning the project, the UK was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, which meant we could no longer meet in person. The pandemic also brought extra pressure to youth organisations, who were working with fewer staff, as people were ill or self-isolating, whilst still supporting young people in their local areas. There were different responses and some areas were more risk adverse than others. Our initial response was to pause the project for six months until September, so that we



could respond to the immediate needs of both youth organisations and university. When we returned in September, we decided we needed to both respond to the way the pandemic was impacting young people and adapt the methodology to meet the new constraints we were working with. The first step was to re-establish contact with the youth workers and try and work out the safest way to proceed. Initially we hoped we would be able to meet in person but it soon became clear that that was not very likely so we looked to move online.

We re-started joining the youth council meetings, now on Zoom, and the initial meetings focused on catching up with each other, sharing how the pandemic had affected our lives. At the time, young people were featured heavily on the media in very negative terms (see [e-training](#) UK Seg 1&2). For example, they were accused of being 'super-spreaders' and not upholding the restrictions imposed



by the government. Hence, it was important to them that the focus of the project centred on young people's experiences of the pandemic, and how youth participation became an important part of dealing with 'the new normal', both at a personal and community level. As such, the project was also conceived as a way for young people to express their feelings and share their experiences:

*"It was really important to give space to how those young people were experiencing the pandemic because what we saw was very much an editing out of young people's experiences and also quite a dehumanising process, where young people were seen as superspreaders (...) in the media, they were representing as not following social distancing (...) actually what was the case was that young people's lives were totally turned upside down."*

- (Harriet Rowley, Researcher, MMU)

*"I remember young people being stressed out and there was this big feeling of anxiety, because they didn't know what was going on and I don't think anybody realised that until after they left school"*

- (YP)

*"The government doesn't appear to know what's going on, school's don't appear to know what's going on and that uncertainty progresses into anxiety (...) where do you go from here?"*

- (YP)

After attending a number of youth council meetings and sharing experiences of how the pandemic was impacting young people's lives we started to turn our attention to the output - the need to produce a video documenting the PAR project. The young people involved quickly recognised that the video itself would be a good tool for them to raise awareness of their experiences of the pandemic. They also wanted to create the footage for the video themselves, using their mobile phones which meant they could take more of a lead in both the form and content of the video. Therefore, it was decided that the video would be the 'action' resulting from the participatory research, rather than merely documenting the process, it would become the focus of the project and would itself be a participatory process.



Liz Harding  
@LizHarding

...

Working with @RochdaleYouthie #youthcabinet @MNaiaCosta @RysSaima on @partibridges #participatoryactionresearch under lockdown has shown the challenges faced by young people and how #youthvoice has helped meet them with creativity and resilience. @YouthFocusNW

## Learning from PAR project

The Partibridges project was based on an equality of partnership between the university and the youth organisation, setting up a relationship of collaboration and co-construction, as opposed to the traditional university-led research projects. However, despite our best intentions, patterns of structural inequality and reproduction of power relations between knowledge bearers and users



cannot be erased by intentions but need to be continuously worked with and against. As Liz Harding (YFNW) explained, MMU or (the university) was seen as a place “where you go and do your training and then you move on and you don’t really necessarily engage with again.”

Long-standing tensions between theory and practice were also visible throughout the project, and provided an important opportunity for growth together. Importantly, rather than attempting to overcome this tension, we instead held it and addressed it in our collaboration, talking through the issues we experienced and using these as a way to explore and challenge our own assumptions. Dialogue was, therefore, key, even when it is difficult and uncomfortable, allowing us to “break down barriers in building our partnership and fostering collaboration” (Liz Harding, YFNW).

Reflexivity was also important in keeping our own assumptions in check, whilst learning to appreciate and value the different experiences, knowledges and contributions brought to the table.

*“Working with universities can be really helpful for Youth organisations as it can help them think about how they organise their work, it can help them think about “what are the good things to look at and research and explore?” [and] has challenged our practice and makes us think about how we make sure that what we do is accessible to as many young people as possible.”*

- (Liz Harding, YFNW)

*“equally, practice can be ahead of universities (...) and for universities to collaborate with Youth organisations can be very much opening up different ideas about what is out there (...) it helps break down assumptions about who is involved in youth work.”*

- (Liz Harding, YFNW)

The project also made visible the importance of organisational culture in enabling collaborative processes, and the value of relationships. Particularly when the pandemic hit and youth organisations were under much pressure and constraint, it was the strong relationship between the different members of the organisation and their commitment and willingness to support the organisation that allowed the project to continue. This is particularly important because youth workers were themselves struggling with maintaining the relationships with young people in an online environment (where informal moments of rapport building became much less likely), and sustaining their engagement. There were also concerns about the ability of young people speaking freely from their home environment, and issues of online safety.

*“It was really amazing to be able to work with such skilled youth workers (...) and to be able to come into a space (...) and be made to feel so welcomed (...) it became one of my highlights of the week.”*

- (Harriet Rowley, Researcher, MMU)

The shift to an online environment also caused anxieties around our ability to connect and build relationships with the young people, particularly because we had just started working together when the pandemic reached the UK. Having prior experience of working with young people, we were used to forging these relations in person and through time. We were also concerned that due the



constraints of only being able to meet online, the project might have become instrumental and extractive to get the output delivered. However, once we started re-engaging with young people, we found that many of the grounding principles of youth work are still applicable to an online environment. As a researcher on the project explained;

*“you can question yourself because you don’t have your normal things that you would go to (...) you can’t be in a space together, you have to do things online, you can’t go and hang about with young people (...) but actually, you still can and many of the soft skills you rely on are still the same.”*

- (Harriet Rowley, Researcher, MMU)

We also realised that the uncertainty brought about by the pandemic, and the ‘lockdown’ condition helped place us on a common ground, which promoted an open form of dialogue, where information was not assumed or taken for granted, and different perspectives were included. On reflection, the instability and disruption to usual patterns of working and positions of power typically enjoyed by some rather than others created feasible conditions for us to truly engage with the principles of PAR. For example, we had to demonstrate that we trusted each other and were willing to put ourselves in vulnerable positions so that the outcome of our collaboration was not predetermined but felt coproduced by all members of the group. Members had been involved in many PAR projects before but the new conditions meant that we were reminded of the importance of “keeping an open mind” (Liz Harding, YFNW) and “stepping back” (Harriet Rowley, Researcher, MMU), and almost “giving up what you want the project to be (...) that then gave more space for other people to occupy that” (Harriet Rowley, Researcher, MMU). In this way, as the project progressed it became possible for the young people to take more of a lead position in what the project became.

In the first few weeks of the online meetings, conversation and collaboration sometimes felt strained and not fluid. However, keeping the consistency of the meetings, every week showed that “you can start to build a relationship online, even though at the beginning it feels like you won’t” (Liz Harding, YFNW). This was illustrated by one of the youth workers: “I think we just got very comfortable and sort of warmed up to this project”, and one young person “it helped seeing familiar faces every week” (YP). Such patterns of consistency were also important during times of social isolation as members of the group were mostly confined to their homes.

In addition to this, the Partibridges project also appeared to support youth workers with re-engaging young people with the sessions, as one youth worker explained, the project is

*“more interesting for them and it’s with their own voices (...) so they are up for it... it’s a brilliant idea to get the young peoples’ voices across (...) and what they thought of the lockdown, the covid, the hardships...”*

This was advantageous because the Partibridges team relied on the youth workers to support the engagement of the young people because of their consistent and established relationships with one another. The team were cautious not to burden them further as the pandemic had already placed many extra pressures on our lives so it was a relief to know that they also felt that the project was beneficial for those involved.

The greatest challenge was keeping the momentum going during the project. The successive and quick changes in public health measures together with the pressures imposed on home and work life meant that there was a careful balance to be reached in terms of level of input from the team and meeting the aims of the project. To achieve this balance, we aimed to adopt a pace that was comfortable and took into consideration other demands whilst keeping space for dialogue and flexibility.

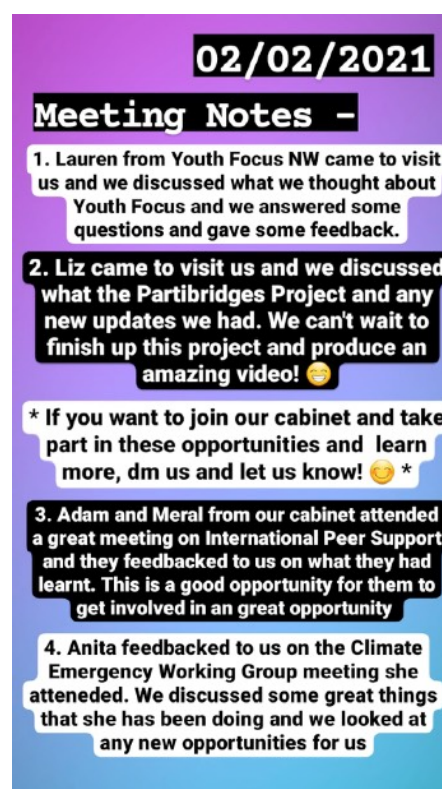
## Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations of how we worked together comprised of the whole methodological approach, for example, in how we aimed to disrupt power imbalances, provide space for a range of ways to participate whilst keeping dialogue and reflexivity at the core of our practice.

In terms of formal consent, we ensured that written consent from the young people involved was given including for visual outputs available online. These processes tend to protect institutional power rather than centralising community involvement whilst are also at odds with the messy, fluid and iterative process of PAR projects. Therefore, rather than just obtaining written consent at the beginning of the project, we continually negotiated consent about what we did and how we did it with those involved throughout the project.

We also tried to create varied opportunities for young people to be involved in the project, for example, depending on whether they wanted to participate in sharing their experiences of the pandemic or contributing material for the video or just taking part in the meetings on a flexible basis. The level of participants' involvement was also flexible and there was scope for this to change throughout the project depending on other pressures on their time.

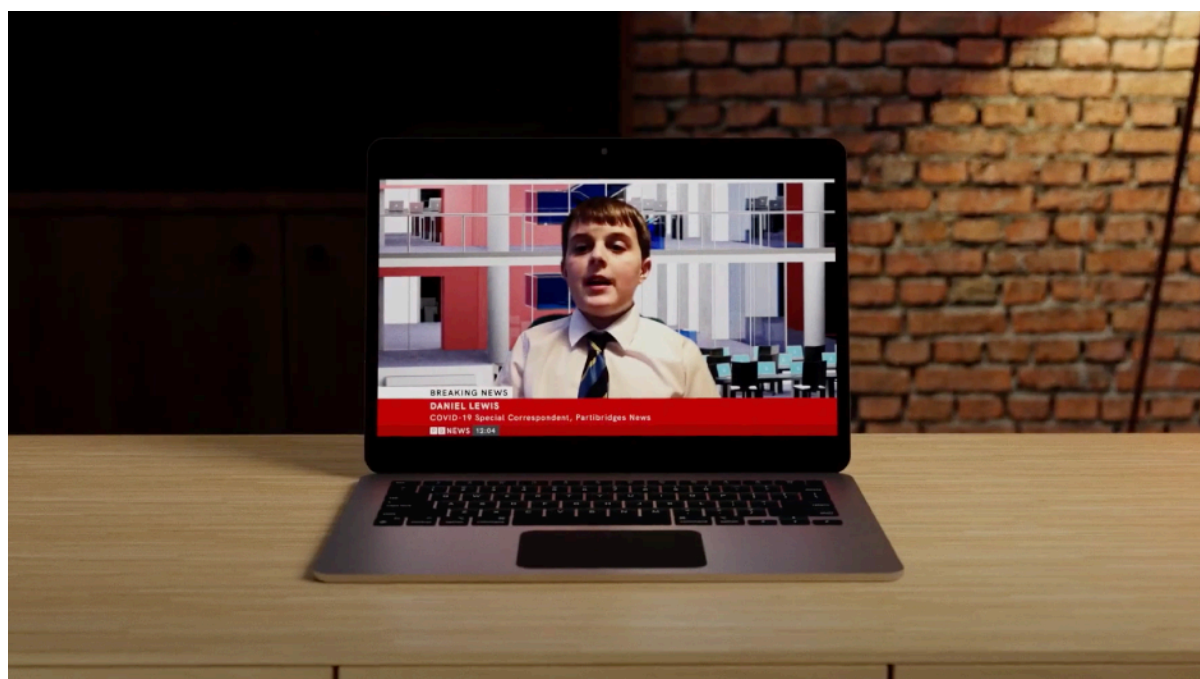
To ensure the young people consented to the editing and final version of the video, we revisited the groups during various stages of the production and provided opportunities for them to feedback about the contents. We made it clear that they could withdraw material they had contributed or ask for changes to be made in how the material had been edited together. These opportunities were negotiated both during meetings when we were present and not so if the young people wanted to feedback via a youth worker instead then that was possible. Above all, as the video would be freely available online we ensured that all the young people involved were happy with the content and knew how and where the outputs would be available.



## Learning from making video/web documentary

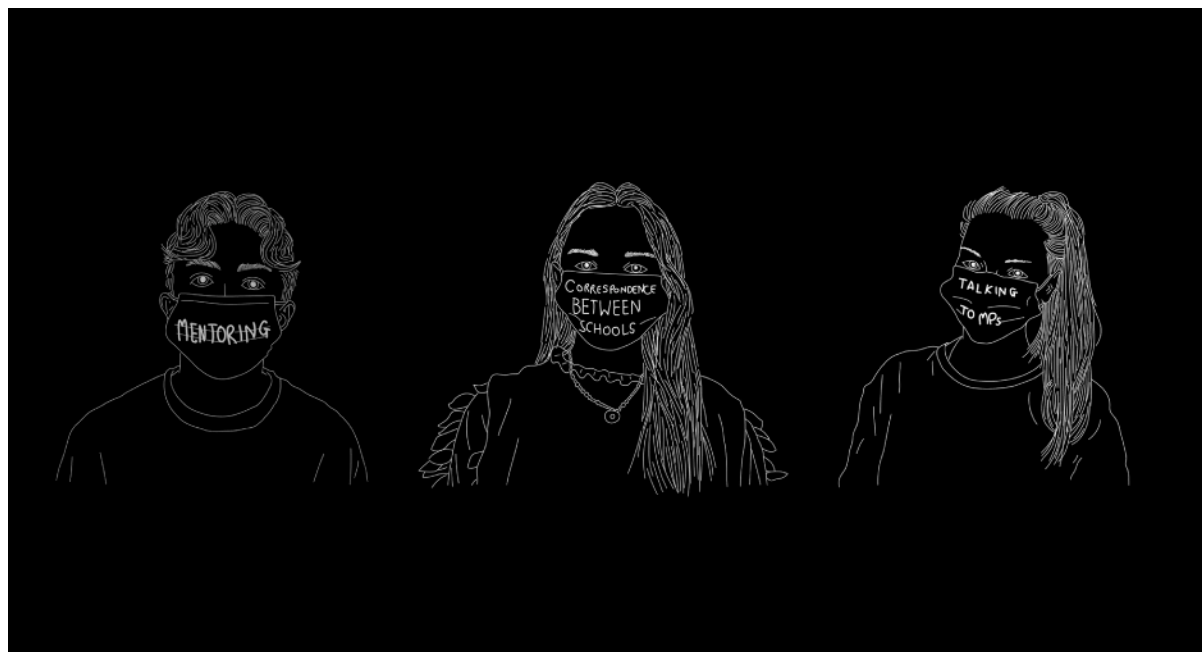
The design and creation of the video provided a focus for us all and guided our collaboration. We discussed together what we wanted the video to be about, and how it would be best to express it. Having decided we want to continue with a focus on mental health, we decided to explore how the pandemic impacted young people and how they responded to it.

Young people in the different Youth Councils decided to take different approaches to the video. For some members, there was a stronger emphasis on making a political statement. For example, they wanted to explore how different institutions responded to the pandemic such as the government or schools and how this had impacted their lives. One young person organised for members of his school council to record themselves with medical masks that had on them messages describing their experience (e.g. 'ruined futures') but also what they had done to try to improve their conditions (e.g. 'talk to MP's'). Some of the other young people decided to provide a more personal account, by recording 'a day in the pandemic' video of their day to day routine, and share how the pandemic impacted them and what they have been doing to overcome the uncertainties and challenges it has brought. There was also scope for participants to experiment with the form of their contributions e.g. poems, music or pretending to be a newsreader.



The contents of the video evolved organically and responded to the ideas and contributions from the young people. To try to fulfil the aims of Partibridges, we did not want the video to just document the PAR project but be as participatory as possible. We also wanted the young people to take the lead and be able to drive the focus and the content of the video. Since there was a great deal of enthusiasm to film themselves using their mobile phones and such practices are common in their everyday lives we quickly decided on this approach together. We made a folder available on google drive where participants could submit their contributions. Evan Wilson, the technician then edited

the footage together and kept checking during the weekly meeting to get feedback on draft versions of the video.



## Concluding remarks

Overall, despite the setbacks which beset the project because of the pandemic the PAR went well and fulfilled the aims of Partibridges. Particular strengths included the level of collaboration between those located in the university and the youth sector (YFNW), the extent of participation and leadership from the young people particularly in making the video and the innovative approach to producing the video as the action of the PAR project to raise awareness of youth experiences of the pandemic.

The focus was arguably risky; the unprecedented impact of COVID-19 on people's lives meant there was a possibility that it may have extenuated the difficulties that participants were facing. However, on reflection we realised that the project became an important and affirmative space especially during a time where youth voice was largely ignored and misrepresented within the mainstream media.

Furthermore, the established structure of the youth councils and relationships which existed between youth workers and young people supported a collaborative and supportive approach which the Partibridges UK team could then build upon. It was difficult at times to find space for the project during the busy youth council meetings whilst also maintaining momentum due to successive restrictions imposed by the government to try to limit the spread of the virus. A year on we have still been unable to meet those involved in the PAR face-to-face whilst the dissemination of the web documentary will also take place online.



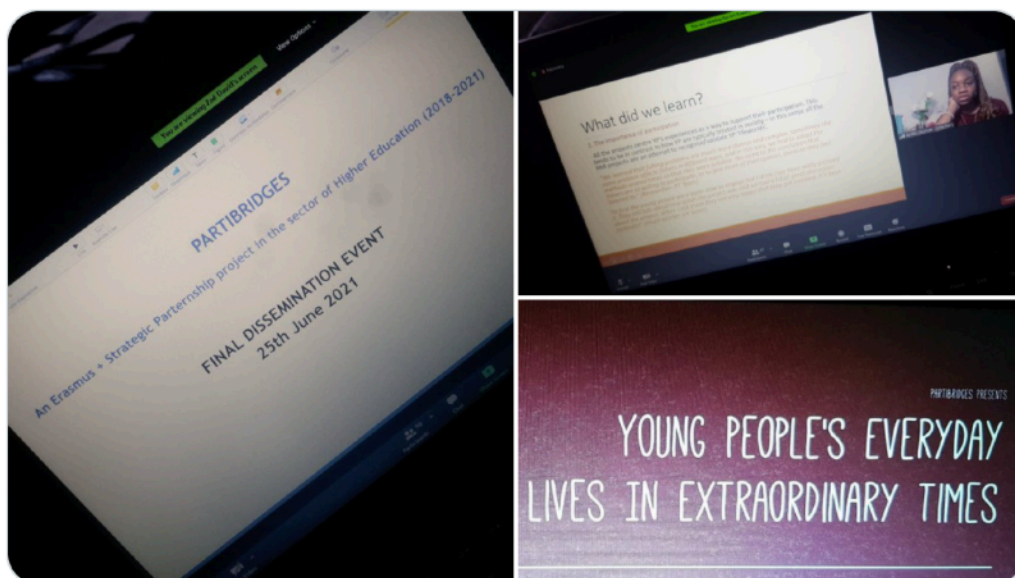
At the beginning of the project it seemed hard to believe that we would be able to build such strong relationships and achieve the level of collaboration and participation that is required to maintain the principles of PAR. However, it is testament to the dedication, expertise and willingness of the participants that we achieved what we did.



**Saima Butt RYS** @RysSaima · 25 Jun

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Exciting to have our Partibridges Video premiered [@partibridges](#) Final Dissemination Event this morning. [@AnitaOkunde](#) spoke about the impact of the pandemic [#COVID](#) and what the YP achieved in this extraordinary time during the project [@LizHarding](#) [@YouthFocusNW](#) [@RochdaleYouthie](#)



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REPORT THREE:

## LISBON, PORTUGUESE TEAM

## Report Three: Lisbon, Portuguese team



DANIEL

PATRICIA

MARIA

MONICA

RICARDO

LIDIO

LIA

### Description of Group

The development of the PAR for the Partibridges project in Portugal has been carried out with the close involvement of members of the Ocean Literacy Observatory (OLO - MARE Centre), from the Faculdade de Ciências e Tecnologias da Universidade NOVA de Lisboa (FCT / NOVA) and ALA-ALA - Artisanal, Local, and Coastal Fishing Association, created in 2013. OLO and ALA-ALA, although some of their members, already had close relationships, due to previous experiences in other projects. Thus, and in order to continue the process of making visible the continuous marginalisation that local artisanal fishermen/women have been suffering over the years, both organizations joined Partibridges looking to strengthen the participation of the fishing class within decision-making spheres, promoting the “resurgence of young people in fishing” (Patrícia Gonçalves, 2021).

ALA-ALA works with fishermen/women and their families, seeking to provide social, legal, bureaucratic-administrative and cultural support, through the creation of a supportive space for fishing activity and the facilitation of professional organisations and training events, involving various local social actors. The ALA-ALA also encourages young fishermen/women to participate in the life of the community through holistic formations (technical, historical, and legislative) and encourages their participation in local political decision-making.

The young adults of the fishing communities (ages between 15 and 30 years old), with which ALA-ALA works, have a limited knowledge of the local participatory processes. Various structural barriers also compound difficulties of involving these young adults in educational institutions and in decision-making. These issues affect not only their professional life, but also their capacity to affect the development of civil life and where they live. The participation of some of these young people in this project has contributed to an opening in their social environment, and an individual and collective empowerment. In this sense, and according to the members of ALA-ALA that are part of Partibridges, the participation in the project provides an important opportunity for the meeting between traditional, local, technical, and academic knowledge, which can contribute to reaching "recognition", "visibility", "support", "continuity", "favourable laws", "sustainability", and "change of thinking" (for example, see [e-training](#) PT Seq)

The Portuguese PAR team comprises of four members of FCT / NOVA and another four members of ALA-ALA. However, all members are part of OLO, which assumes itself as a transcultural and plural learning space, hence the team members were well acquainted. The project took a Critical Ethnography methodological approach, and the team collectively constructed a common ground for what the Partibridges research project was and how it could be approached through a Critical Ethnography perspective.

## Description of focus of PAR project

The PAR process of the Portuguese team has been, since the beginning of the Partibridges project, a process of affective and intellectual encounters, through Critical Ethnography methodology (for more information see [e-training](#) PT Seq 2). As part of this project, ALA-ALA members of our team have been able to put into practice actions that seek to strengthen the participation of youth fishermen/women in their socio-political reality.

The PAR project continued the process of co-construction of the module on youth participation (output one), with greater intellectual emancipation and autonomy for members of ALA-ALA, to propose ideas based on their wishes, possibilities, and necessities.

The ALA-ALA members created ideas and actions that could contribute to what they understood to be their greatest goal - strengthening the participation of youth fishermen/women in the discussions that surround their reality. We believe that, based on the mobilization and engagement of youth fishermen/women, the prospects of fighting for greater visibility of the problems of local artisanal fishing and the continuity of this type of fishing are strengthened, in a more just manner.

Three local fishing communities were defined to carry out actions: Costa de Caparica, Fonte da Telha, and Trafaria. In each of these communities, conversations and interviews were conducted with local stakeholders – fishermen/women, residents, and traders. All the preparation for conducting the conversations and interviews was carried out in previous and interim meetings based in each community. It is important to mention that each of these communities has different characteristics, even if they are small-scale local fishing communities. For this reason, three community assemblies were proposed, one in each community. In these assemblies, the whole community was supposed to meet in the same space, where collaborative activities would take place to discuss the issues of local fishing and to materialize a document with the hierarchy of their needs. From the analysis and structuring of these documents, it would be possible to continue the process of claims for rights and justice to local fishing communities. Finally, it was proposed to try a general community assembly, with the three communities present, in an attempt to co-construct a single document.

The involvement of the youth fishermen/fisherwomen, for the Partibridges project, in Portugal, have distinct characteristics. At first, as mentioned earlier, there was already a previous relation between the OLO researchers and the ALA-ALA association, which made it easier for the first moments of a socialization process. Second, through the “pedagogy of encounters”. Those many encounters, with the other knowledge, with the other body, in plural spaces, that helped to create a unity in our diversity, with the most respect for the distinct voices and positions.



Our encounters were also carefully planned to promote an open and safe space for all the participants. To accomplish this, we drew on different participatory strategies, such as cards, drawings, pictures, critical cartographies, movies, etc. We also prepared theoretical-methodological presentations, analysing the important concepts and topics. For each encounter, we aimed to mix presentations and activities, including the various participants and knowledges, to establish trust, horizontal relations and sense of belonging towards the group, whilst also acknowledging the importance and richness of being with the other, and difference as a strength.



It is important to mention that the ALA-ALA association had a budget for this project, which encouraged the involvement of its members. For the other fishermen/women that participated somehow in the PAR, but did not have any budget for the project, we aimed to promote participation by going directly to them, in their communities and workplace – beaches, and engage with the fisherman/women individually or in pairs, and discuss the issues of the project and vote for the actions and activities that we had co-constructed.

After the pandemic started, we could only hold one Community Assembly out of three that we had previously planned for, to target the three communities initially selected. It was impossible to involve the fishermen/women through online meetings and dynamics, except those within our inner group that had the budget to be a part of the project. Most fishermen/women do not have cellphones, computers, and tablets, and if they have them, some of the fishermen/women do not have the skills



to engage in communication online. The issue of lack of technology became a process of exclusion from the project, and a source of demotivation of us all, including the ALA-ALA members, because of the lack of physical encounters and the discontinuation of our PAR work.

The audience we had on the face-to-face Community Assembly was a reflection of the class struggle, and the will and some hope of change, but it was also due to the commitment of the researchers – ALA-ALA and University, in proposing the actions and trying to go to every one of the fishermen/women, when possible. The Partibridges ALA-ALA members already knew all other fishermen/women, who could make the approach softer, since they are not strangers, but also brought some difficulties, since some do not like each other and avoided conversations. Either way, we had at least one encounter with the members of the audience, in which we made the invitation to the Community Assembly, and then, before the Assembly, we called and talked to them again asking them to come, once more.

## Process of PAR project

At first, we held some organizational meetings, clarifying what was proposed by the project and what was expected of our team. After understanding the objectives of output two, we held some theoretical and formative meetings at the university: on PAR, data collection, methods, ethics, and other relevant topics. After that, as mentioned in the point 2 above, the members of ALA-ALA began to define their main objective and how to achieve it.

Knowing that our PAR process was intertwined with the co-construction of the module on youth participation, (output one) we have identified three important moments designed specifically for the PAR in Portugal: Constructing our notion of PAR; Co-construction in the Field; Communitarian Assembly and Analysis.

### Moment 1- Constructing our notion of PAR

In December 2019, the discussions on the [implementation](#) of PAR in Portugal began, starting construction of our collective notion of PAR. The objectives of the Partibridges project for this activity were reviewed and the ALA-ALA association's wishes for the application of this methodology were discussed. Topics at the core of the first meetings included “what methodology is” and “why we need to study it”. By using the Culture Circles’ method by Paulo Freire, we were able to appreciate the importance of debating the key questions with all involved. The method also promoted a systematic approach, which enabled us to establish common ground for the basis of our PAR project. After some intensive meetings, a first draft was co-constructed for the application of the PAR, consisting of general objectives, structure, methods, target audience and agenda. We also agreed the general steps to be followed, and some topics related to meetings with other fishermen/women in the Almada area were discussed at length. The role of each member became clearer as the local priorities were established, for example, trying to join children's schools in order to disseminate the

valorisation of the local artisanal fishing and encourage the participation of youth fishermen/woman in diverse ways and spaces.

At the beginning of 2020, we discussed the structure of the international Partibridges meeting, which would be held in Lisbon. We also decided the definition of the scope of our participation and co-constructed an initial agenda for the meeting. At the same time, the collective analysis of a document prepared by the fisherwomen members, in relation to their ideas for the development of the PAR, brought further clarification about the process of this methodology, feeding the construction of our understanding of the project.

We decided it would be advantageous to study the theoretical foundations of PAR. Daniel Oliveira from Universidade NOVA de Lisboa proposed some readings, individual and collective, and some meetings were spent discussing our reading. Key points of discussion included the importance of youth participation in the fishing sector, how it is lacking, and how the youth fishermen/women, directly involved on Partibridges, could get more actively engaged. The young fishermen/women expressed their feelings towards the academic world and the importance of this approach. At the beginning of the process, almost none of them understood why they needed to read or discuss something that is far from their reality of fishing, and they were restless, anxious and bored. However, over time they started to feel belonging within the proposed method. This was reflected in their deep commitment to the whole process, especially in the fieldwork.

During this first stage, we also launched an analysis of the other fishing communities of Almada in addition to those on the Atlantic Coast, to ensure there was synergy in collaboration with the other activities to be developed as part of the PAR project. For example, the work was shared, and collective and individual tasks were designed, such as creating a storyboard or reading at home.

In the third week of February, before the fieldwork began, the last meeting took place. The youth fishermen/women actively discussed the importance of adequately defining questions for interviewing other fishermen/women, and subsequently, to let the fishermen/women collectively discuss their ideas – first in their community and after in a collective meeting among the fishermen/women from all fishing communities of Almada. At the end of this meeting, a collective agenda was established to begin visits to the fishing communities of Almada. This stage was important in enabling youth fishermen/women to apply their knowledge of PAR but also to connect to their motivations in terms of improving the conditions for their community. Opportunities such as these are rare within the fishing community.

## Moment 2 – Co-construction in the field

The fieldwork was initiated in the first weeks of March. Three communities were visited by the young fishermen/women of ALA-ALA with the objective of talking in loco with the fishermen/women about topics related to local fishing of Almada and ways to improve their working conditions. The subject structure was decided by the youth fishermen/women from ALA-ALA to start the PAR process. The visited communities were in Fonte da Telha, Trafaria, and Costa da Caparica.

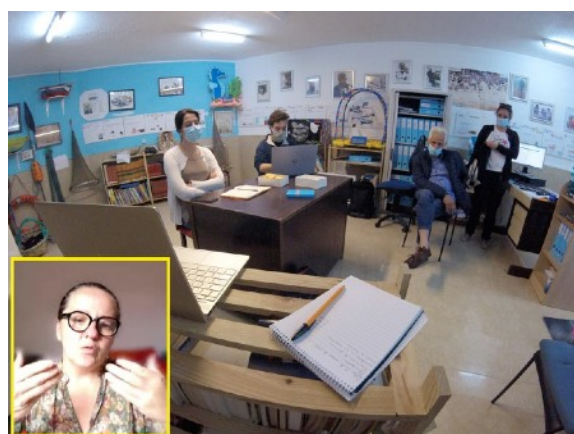
It was a great frustration for all of us, at the height of the PAR experiment, to feel our activities were suspended because of COVID-19, in mid-March. To keep our work alive, we organised our first online sessions to talk about the current situation of the project, to organize future scenarios and plan how we could respond to the restrictions caused by the pandemic.



Still in March, the discussion about how we would adapt to the current situation of the pandemic and how, in an autonomous way, we could start synthesising ideas for this project was still alive. Some important points were discussed, such as the assignment of tasks to be carried out independently or even the creation of channels to accompany intra and inter community communication. It is necessary to remember that the fishing community is highly excluded from mainstream forms of communication, which restricted the scope for action.

In April, an intensive exchange about the progress of individual tasks was completed and, consequently, it was planned as a possible online meeting, with the whole team Portuguese team, to talk about our situation and current results in the Partibridges project. Much emphasis was placed on documenting the extraordinary work of fishing groups that carried out during the pandemic, as it is their only form of income, and therefore, survival. They have no support from the Government, as other working classes.

In May, moving past the peak of the spread of the virus, it was possible to promote mixed (physical and virtual) meetings, and resume the discussion with the young fishermen/women about the planning of activities. A thorough analysis of the legal and local conditions supported to continue the fieldwork was carried out. The desire to promote community assemblies was discussed at our formal and informal meetings. It was decided that returning to fieldwork was needed as soon as possible but also the need to hold collective inter and intra-community fishing meetings in Almada - as previously planned. In this sense, the possible dates for holding Community Assemblies in local fishing communities were defined, in continuity with the action research process (PAR). We continued to structure the activities and format of the Meetings, to enable the best dynamics and activities to be realised.



At the beginning of June, the organization of the assemblies and the communities continued to be discussed and designed - Costa de Caparica, Fonte da Telha and Trafaria. Costa de Caparica was chosen for the first meeting, given the intrinsic proximity of the members of this community to our

team. We continued with the discussion around training and preparation of activities and participation strategies, in addition to trying to organise schedules, tidying up the place, publicising the Assembly, guests, necessary materials, coffee breaks among other logistical aspects.

The preparation of the activities for the first community assembly in Costa de Caparica was resumed, at the mid-June meeting. The return to the agenda of the guests and forms of invitation was necessary. We chose, then, to invite only those who are fishermen/women or are directly related to them, in an attempt to create a discussion among the class that can strengthen the union of fishermen/women, for future discussion with other actors involved in the territory. We also defined the specific roles of each one in this preparation process and for the day of the meeting. We talked about having to be resilient during the pandemic, to continue our process of intra-community involvement, but to adopt the necessary security measures in relation to COVID-19.

Still in mid-June, in another meeting, we continued with the organization and logistics of the community assembly in Costa de Caparica. We co-constructed the presentation to be shown at the meeting and proceeded to formative conversations about positions, speech, clarity, ethics, and other topics related to a transparent and fair realization of the assembly.

The last meeting before the Costa de Caparica Fishing Community Assembly, happened on 19th June. Final adjustments on the presentation and on the roles of each one in the assembly was collectively designed.

### Moment 3 - Communitarian Assembly and Analysis

The Costa de Caparica Fishing Community Assembly was held on the 20th of June of 2020, and in total 18 people were present, of which 4 were women and 14 were men. The event took place in the building where the ALA-ALA and OLO have their administrative workspace and community meetings - respectively. The discussion was led by Patricia e Ricardo, both youth fisherman/woman. The agenda consisted of

The socialisation phase (reception - individual introductions - informal conversations between members of the communities and the members of the Partibridges);

- A presentation phase (clarifying the Partibridges project main objectives of assembly, open discussion about the local manifestation of the global problems of artisanal fishing;
- A contestation phase (participants sharing convergence and divergence on the list of shared symptoms;
- And finally a collective phase (each member ranked their issues in order of importance which generated a collective map of prioritisation).
- The collective identification of their local difficulties was particularly important. Not only did this enable participants to share their individual perspective, but also developed a powerful tool to claim, in a collective voice, the governing authorities and institutions needed to have fair fishing.

After this, some meetings were held to promote the viability of another Community Assembly for the Fonte da Telha Fishing Community. The same method was implemented to develop these meetings, whilst we also evaluated our prior experiences of the first assembly. The national and global context due to COVID-19 was always present, so that we could be clearer in expressing our opinion about the best time for the international meeting of the project, taking place in Portugal. We set an initial date for the Fonte da Telha Fishing Community Assembly and actions/activities to be carried out by each of us.

In mid-July, the UNL team and together with ALA-ALA, visited Fonte da Telha to invite the fishing community to participate in the second fishing community assembly. Pamphlets were distributed at strategic points in the area and conversations were made with some groups of fishermen/women. Unfortunately, this assembly had to be cancelled due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic.

The whole process of the Partibridges project allowed the youth fishermen/women to develop their confidence on their own knowledge and voice. These opportunities to listen and to talk, to learn from each other were essential for the constitution of the field work. Furthermore, as their confidence grew as the main actors of the PAR project, the youth fishermen/women started to adopt leadership positions.

At the end of November, we did a visit to Fonte da Telha to continue the PAR process with the local fishing communities. The purpose of this visit was to carry out the activities proposed for the Community Fisheries Assemblies, according to the first assembly, in Costa de Caparica. However, here, there was a need to adapt these activities, due to the restrictions of the pandemic - through small groups of people and activities carried out in open spaces. The young fishermen/women of ALA-ALA talked to several fishermen/women in the community, to show some results of the first assembly so that they could then add and vote on the main problems - related to fishing, which are present in their community.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were only able to implement the Assembly of the Fishing Community of Costa de Caparica in the design of the group. It happened very positively and with very fruitful results. Immediately after the aforementioned meeting at Fonte da Telha, it was no longer possible for us to proceed with the rest of the group's meetings, due to public health conditions and the consequent circulation and grouping restrictions imposed.

Due to these conditions and informed by the coordination of the project, we restricted our process to online meetings, between university and association, so that we could keep in touch and talk about possible ways to move forward. After a few months and the continuity and increase of those infected by the second wave of COVID-19, we restructured our action plan with the communities and were able to develop the Fonte da Telha Fishing Community Assembly, individually - restructuring the initial Project.



## Learning from PAR project

The PAR project co-created knowledge and understanding between academics and that of youth fishermen/women that would have otherwise not been possible. The academics had the opportunity to open a space not only to listen and learn about other types of knowledge, but also to actively participate together with the fishermen/women. In the case of youth fishermen/women, an individual and collective empowerment gradually grew throughout the project, in which it was appreciated how significant it was to be included in the making of the project.

The dynamics of multiple meetings are essential for this type of methodological approach, since it allowed the establishment of a common thinking body and brought the opportunity to learn and understand contexts from informal and personal conversations.

The use of different spaces - members' houses, university, association installations, beach, bars, restaurants, gives the process dynamism and uniqueness to the meetings, allowing the emergence of new perceptions and ideas. In addition, this exercise collaborated to reduce monotony to places commonly used in academic and research activities, which can represent barriers to the exchange of ideas or inhibit the participation of those who do not frequent these types of places (For more information see [e-training](#) FR Seq 3).

The time scale is also essential because the co-constructive process takes time. Time for acceptance between the different parts, time for the joining of plural bodies and the practical time for developing praxis. If the time factor is not taken into account, it is impossible to talk about PAR or social change ( see [e-training](#) FR Seq 3). There has been a growing discussion in political and academic spaces on the need of participatory approaches. Few of them have genuinely engaged in the notion of justice and create real possibilities for communities to participate effectively. "Public participation" is nowadays pretty much mandatory in tons of actions and projects, be it from public or private spheres, as a way of (re)producing equitable territories. The question here is "who participates?" and "how is this participation structured?" From our experience, this fallacy of participation is built strongly on discourses but not with the whole citizens and communities. Be it an academic project or others, it is hard to see movements of organic participation, in which spaces and possibilities are created for the effective participation. To establish participation is not carry out a case study of a community and call them to one day or another to have a 5-minute saying, or to ask them to be a "citizen scientist" and collect data to "help" the academic researcher. Participation is about having the chance to be a part of the social change one craves and desires. That is to say, that it demands effort and time.

The process of emancipation - individual and collective, and of co-creation, is slow and tortuous, with nuances of hierarchy and power, which can only be resolved in the time of living together. Otherwise, we will be reproducing impositions and palliatives, as has been the habit in academic activities. Emancipation here is understood as the process of critically positioning ourselves within our life spectrum. It is about becoming more aware of the issues that surround us and becoming able to move away from some of the oppression, invisibility, and marginalization that specific citizens and communities suffer. It is about the individual and the collective having the knowledge and the tools

to act for themselves and not have to rely on others to try to make a change. Since this is an educational process, counter to the cultural feedback looping the human societies have been building – a looping of colonization and of hierarchization of knowledges, cultures and territories, it takes a “slow pedagogy” to promote effective emancipation and social change.

#### What did we learn from the process?

##### ALA-ALA MEMBERS

We had to disrupt the traditional conception of research - in which the researcher does not participate in the research process. The change of the paradigm starts with the slow exercise of the position of the academic researcher, decolonising their own knowledge, shaking their conviction as the only valid, and listening to the other (knowledge). By listening to Paulo Freire's sense - a *escuta* we learnt how this exercise claims a non-hierarchisation posture, not only of the knowledge, but of the identity, for example, with the academic prefixes, with the non-interactive classrooms, with the department lobbies, and, specially, with the epistemological cages developed to maintain the academic elitism and mysticism, as Ubiratan D'Ambrosio and Sal Restivo have claimed along their works - transdisciplinary and transcultural paths are emergent.

#### Important features of praxis – reflections from ALA-ALA members

The participants are the researchers of their own practices

The results of the investigation process are palpable for the investigated by the fact that they are part of the process

A change in the mentalities of both parties could be felt, which can be translated into a social change in the future

It is possible to promote a common ground within diversity

Reinforced importance of small-scale (artisanal) fishing

Sharing problems and knowledge, established a link between academic institutions, NGOs and associations.

At first, we were afraid to share, for fear that the legislation would change unfavourably and consequently increase fishing restrictions.

One more step was achieved in the process of decolonization of knowledge.

There was recognition of fishermen/women as similar to the academics who were part of the project.

Personal connections were created between the group and mutual assistance.

The attention and care the academics took when our concerns and problems were exposed was important, which in turn, helped the visibility and self-confidence of the fisherman/women.

The attention and care the academics took when our concerns and problems were exposed was important, which in turn, helped the visibility and self-confidence of the fisherman/women.

The association gains visibility and credibility with legislators for participating in an international project, thus giving fishermen/women more confidence in the work that was carried out.

Fishermen/women were more open to acquiring more theoretical knowledge and recognized the opportunities that arose with participation in this project.

.Some participant quotes that exemplify our process:

*"A faculdade deu-nos a paz de espírito que precisávamos."*

*"The college gave us the peace of mind that we needed."*

- (Fishermen Lídio Galinho, in saying about the local fishing struggle. January 10th, 2020).

*"Quem fez essa rede? Não pode ter sido alguém relacionado à pesca!"*

*"Who made this fishing net? It can't have been someone related to fishing!"*

- (Fishermen Ricardo Pinto, in saying about some of the fishing nets that fishermen/women are required to use by the regulations. February 4th, 2020).

*"Mulher nenhuma quer pescador. Já ninguém ama os pescadores. Todos estão perdendo as mulheres."*

*"No woman wants a fisherman. Nobody loves fishermen anymore. All fishermen are losing women."*

- (Fishermen Lídio Galinho, in saying of how he feels that society sees the artisanal fishermen nowadays. May 15th, 2020).

## Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations have been a strong feature of this process.

From the start, the methodological approaches proposed – Critical Ethnography and PAR, are concerned with power relations and the problems resulting from these relations in the social, educational, and political spectrum (May and Fitzpatrick, 2019). Furthermore, one of the main

aspects of the methodological approach is to apply social theories in the scope and analysis of the investigation. This means that researchers must pay attention to not only ethics, reflexivity and positioning, but to issues of social class, place, ethnicity, culture, gender and sexuality.

As Clifford and Marcus (1986), Mattos (2011) and Mesquita (2014) point out, the inherent concern of such approaches are with the holistic and dialectical analysis of culture, which “is not seen as a mere reflection of the structural forces of society, but as a system mediating meaning between social structures and human actions and interactions” (Mattos, 2011; 50). Another important feature is to reflect on the introduction of social actors in the investigative process, in which there is interactivity between the group, and communities are also “agents of data collection” (Mesquita, 2014) with “active and dynamic participation in the process of modifying social structures.” (Mattos, 2011; 50).

In practice, from the beginning we were critical on how the best ethical way would be to establish a common group and how to design the meetings. The concerns in the design of the meetings started even before we outlined, together with the Ala-Ala, the agenda of activities, but in 1) Who should we invite to integrate this co-construction process; and 2) What is the best way - ethical and inclusive, to invite members. The guests were chosen due to their close relationship with OLO members, considering their different knowledge about the local coastal zone – traditional, local, scientific, and technical, and the contribution they – in their plurality, could make to the project.

The invitations were made in two main ways: by individual phone calls and by sending individual and collective emails. At first, we tried to get in touch with each one of the guests so that they could understand what the project and the co-construction process was about. For this initial phase, to involve the largest number of participants, it was important that the team thought about ways of communication and mobilization that were able to simultaneously reach multiple scales of local knowledge. Due to technological and generational limitations amongst the community, the best way to reach the guests was through the aforementioned modes, this presented particular difficulties during the pandemic.



In complex processes, which involve and/or must involve different knowledge and perceptions, the use of a language that can be understood by everyone gives greater possibility of engagement and collaboration. It is important not to make relevant speeches and documents understandable to just one cluster of knowledge. The language, whether written or spoken, must be clear to the different citizens or communities, with understandable vocabulary and sentences, and not just directed to technical and academic bodies, with refined

and exclusive language. Supported by Freire (1968), it can be said that the search for this process took place in an anti-verbalism movement.

For this type of project – which presupposes public meetings and participation, there are also some elementary activities. That is the signature on the attendance sheet – in case of public meetings and the distribution of authorization to use sound and images. Those represent regulatory bureaucratic situations, which must be carried out by European investigative rules for that project. As the project foresees the dissemination of images and videos, free and open to all, there is a need to follow ethical guidelines relevant to the organisations involved.

## Learning from making video/web documentary

The filming of the takes that were used in the video/web documentary were part of a long and complex process that focused mainly on the development of the PAR output. However, some moments of filming for output one were carried out in parallel. This process was based on recording the greatest amount of audio-visual material during meetings between the UNL and



ALA-ALA, most of them in Costa de Caparica. These encounters are represented by a wide variety of events, for example, collective studies of PAR, training in methods and data collection in the field and ethics, interviews with local fishing communities, community fishing assemblies or analysis of preliminary results.

The exchange of knowledge between the UNL and the ALA-ALA during the PAR process was palpable and continuous. The recording and subsequent collective and chronological analysis of the audio-visual material allowed us to appreciate how through this process, there was not only a greater dynamism with the passing of each meeting, but a change in the physical and intellectual positioning between both teams, mainly with the Ala-Ala team, which immensely enriched the PAR process of this project.

The recording of audio-visual material did not represent a completely collaborative process, because it was a specific task of the technicians, who often acquired a more observant position during the meetings, though, this dynamic changed when analysing said material for the editing of the video/web documentary, because on this occasion, the activity was collaborative. During the analysis of this material, it was possible to appreciate and remember situations, which had not been contemplated, such as moments of discussions and discrepancies between the members of the project. This contributed to an appreciation of the level of emotions and feelings that occurred



during the encounters, which was evident from the involvement and commitment of the teams during the process.

A core point for the development of the video/web documentary were the constant meetings between both teams, as this helped to create an interest and a feeling of identity in the members regarding the project. Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic represented the greatest difficulty, not only for preparing video/web documentary, but for the project in general. During the first months of the pandemic, the meetings were held online, and only visual recording was possible through computer photos, so that the collection of audio-visual material did not resemble in quality or in circumstances the face-to-face meetings.

Shortly after the first wave of the pandemic passed, some takes were carried out in the open spaces. However, the close contact and the limitation of the number of people in the groups was a factor that represented a challenge. Another difficulty that delayed and prevented some takes was the fact that some of the instruments and filming locations were inside the university facilities, which was closed for some months of the pandemic, so it was necessary to change the filming dates and location.



Another limitation for the filming of the video/web documentary was the type of cameras that our team had. During the pandemic, it made it impossible for us to have the support of volunteer technicians from other projects with more sophisticated cameras and microphones. To overcome this difficulty, we began to record our encounters with cell phones and action cameras.

Similarly, due to the small budget there was limited access to high quality computer software, we depended on several occasions on the external collaboration with others outside of the project. When this was not possible, we had to use our own computers and some free access software, and although the result was not the best, we could satisfy our basic work needs.

Another difficulty caused by the pandemic was the limitation in the number of people to work in groups in some project activities, due to the strict adherence to various (and very changing) laws imposed by the government of Portugal. The above caused a lack of interaction and physical contact (which is very distinctive of our activities and team) coupled with the sudden cut in work inertia, which were situations that delayed and demotivated the spirit built during the process. After the first wave of the pandemic, various activities were resumed, such as fieldwork, which resulted in the holding of an assembly, which had very representative results for the PAR process. However, when the cases of infected people increased once more, activities had to be cancelled again.

The translation and proofreading of the subtitles for both the video/web documentary, represented a challenge for our team, not only because we did not have someone "professionally" qualified to carry out this work, much less a budget to pay for the service (which is expensive and rare in Portugal). Furthermore, the international diversity of our team meant that the process was slower and more complex.

In terms of what we would do differently or change - the issue that most affected our work was the pandemic but we could not control for this. With regard to technical aspects, the acquisition of higher quality instruments and better training of the team's technicians would be a component that would enrich and provide greater autonomy.

We consider that a better planning of the budget for the project in general, particularly for the Portuguese team, is an aspect to improve in the future. As a consequence of the "organicity" and unpredictability of some of our activities, many of them based on the schedule of young fishermen (which is very unpredictable), planning and unpaid work for some participants and outside the deadlines was a constant feature in the last months of work, particularly in the PAR.

To finalise, the production and realization of the web documentary and consistent media data in the research process was very productive for the team. The process contributed to the success of the Partibridges project and, at the same time, caused a positive impact on the Portuguese team, enabling them collective learning to reconstruct actions around the production and critical reflection of conversations caught on camera.

## Concluding remarks

The process of methodological implementation in Portugal was lived in a deep and committed way. The work between the OLO (university) and the Ala-Ala (association) began a long time ago and the socialisation process was not necessary - ties of struggle and affection are strong. However, the Partibridges project brought the possibility to awaken the youth fishermen/women to key issues in their community such as gender, intellectual and social inequalities, governmental structural violence and cultural injustices.

In the same way, the Partibridges project brought the danger of reifying feelings and experiences of some OLO's researchers towards the academic community, such as the desire for maintenance of knowledge hierarchy, strong resistance attempt to decolonise knowledge, academic structural violence, and maintenance of non-solidarity practices.

In that sense, the evolution of the Portuguese team has continually evolved and required constant attention and maintenance. We have to work hard to fortify our ties and generating spaces where the groups (university and association) could know each other better, because the inner knowledge about each one was reconstructed.

Although OLO has had prior experience in research and media as a tool to collect and analyse data, it was the first time where the outputs are totally linked with media. From this experience, the

Portuguese team, and not only OLO, could learn different methods and techniques to improve the research that is media-based. A lot of support was available during the whole research-action process. In fact, this experience was a great way to test such methods and experiment with the possibilities in loco.

The collaborative approach of all Partibridges' members, starting with the coordinators of the outputs, was the trademark of the project. This collaborative space not only facilitated the practice of the collective construction of knowledge but also the courage to overcome all obstacles - a courage embedded in our social glue: our amorosidade. As Paulo Freire always had suggested - it is essential to promote knowledge actions with amorosidade.

"We learned that fishing problems are much more diverse and complex, sometimes the same problem affects fishers in different ways, and in this way, we had to adapt the methods to be used with the community several times. We came to the conclusion that fishers are so willing to participate, or to give more of their opinion, because they feel listened to."

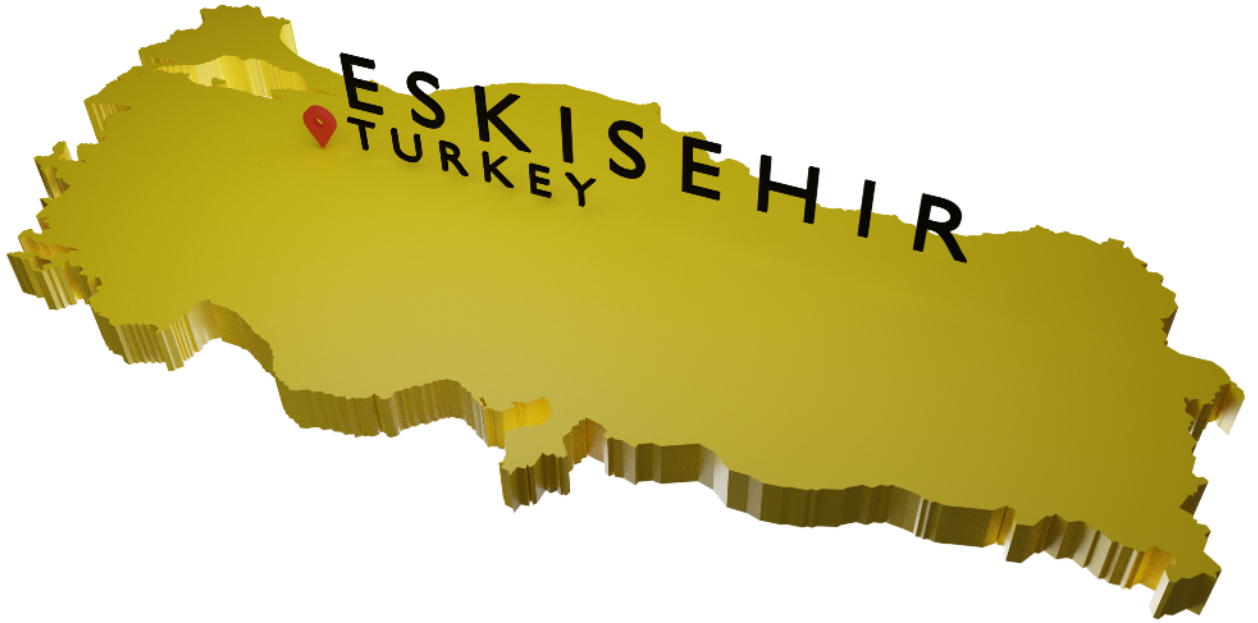
Throughout the process, the methods were different, due to the characteristics of each community, as they have different specificities depending on the place where they operate.

We were having some difficulties, as to the unpredictability of schedules and the various external influences that the fishing activity suffers.

With the beginning of the pandemic, we had to adapt the forms of approach, and it was impossible to continue using the digital form, which in part limited us to reach as many fishers as we would like. It also became a challenge to our creativity, bringing us closer and closer to members of the fishing community.

For the near future, we hope that we will be able to engage more and more fishers to participate."

ALA-ALA collective reflection



REPORT FOUR:

## ESKİŞEHİR, TURKISH TEAM

## Report Four: Eskişehir, Turkish Team



YİĞİT	ESRA	DOĞUŞ	NAUR	BÜŞRA
BURAK	YASEMIN	FEYZA	BÜŞRA	DEMET
	DUYGU		BANU	

## Description of Group

For the Partibridges project, the Turkish team comprised of three partners from two different cities: Yeditepe University Department of Sociology in Istanbul, Eksi 25 Association and Tepebaşı Municipality Youth Centres in Eskişehir.

Yeditepe University is a private, foundation university established in 1996. Being one of the largest of the 73 foundation universities in Turkey, Yeditepe has a total of 21,755 students and offers 77 undergraduate- and 4 associate degree programs, organized under 13 Faculties. The university also offers graduate-level education in 83 Master's Degree programs and 43 Doctoral Degree programs.

Established in 2007, the Department of Sociology at Yeditepe University currently offers undergraduate level of education to 160 students with five full- time faculty members, comprising two full professors, and three assistant professors; four professors from other related departments at the university; and five part-time lecturers. In addition to the undergraduate degree program, the department also offers graduate education at the Master's level since 2019.



Eksi 25 Association was established in Eskişehir in April 2015 to ensure the survival, development, participation, protection of every individual up to the age of 25 from negligence and abuse and all kinds of violence. The association continues its activities with 35 members, 6 professional employees and 70 active volunteers who want to work in the field of children.

The association, in cooperation with relevant institutions and organizations, aims:

- to create a life where children and young people are happy and safe, adopting a holistic and rights-based approach; to conduct situation assessment studies; to raise awareness for all segments of the society;
- to inform and empower children and young people about their rights; to ensure the active participation of children and young people in matters affecting their life;
- to support children, young people and relevant persons who are exposed to violence;
- to develop policies in an attempt to strengthen relevant legislation and practices.

The association carries out its activities locally, nationally, and internationally within the scope of these aims and principles.

Tepebaşı Municipality Youth Centre comprises one of the units operating within the confines of the Tepebaşı Municipality in Eskişehir. Hosting three universities, the Tepebaşı district is inhabited by a young population. The Municipality has been working with young people in its three youth centres (19 May Youth Centre, 29 October Youth Centre, 2 September Youth Centre) and Social Incubation Centre. 19 May Youth Centre was established in 2010; 29 October Youth Centre, in 2014; Social Incubation Centre, in 2018 ; and 2 September Youth Centre, in 2019.

With a team of full-time workers and volunteers, the Youth Centres and the Social Incubation Centre plan and conduct business development courses, most of which are led by volunteer peers, to support the employability of young people. Through its youth centres the Municipality aims to support the international mobility of young people with European Union Projects; to



urge young people to work on social responsibility projects, which are based on local problems and disadvantaged groups; and to encourage young people to work with different establishments from all around the city as partners. Overall, Tepebaşı Municipality Youth Centres' activities and services are geared towards contributing to the development of young people's out-of-school competencies, such as organizational abilities, self-confidence, teamwork, development of foreign language and decision-making skills, and towards supporting their self-realization as happy and free individuals.

Since we carried out our PAR project in Eskişehir some background information about the geographic and social context of the city is useful to include at this point. Eskişehir is a city in central Anatolia, connecting Istanbul and Ankara. It is situated 240 km to the west of the capital Ankara and 315 kilometers east of the metropolis of Istanbul. Eskişehir is located on the banks of the Porsuk river, which is actively used for touristic purposes. The city lies 792 meters high above sea level, and overlooks the fertile Phrygian Valley. Although Eskişehir literally means “old city” in Turkish it is a predominantly young city with respect to its demographic characteristics. Roughly 30% of the city’s 890 000 inhabitants are between the ages of 15 and 35. Eskişehir also has a reputation as a “student city,” as it is home to three public universities: Anadolu University, founded in 1982, Eskişehir Osmangazi University, founded in 1993 and Eskişehir Technical University founded recently in 2018. Anadolu University has one of the highest student enrollments in the world since it offers a wide-ranging open and distance education program in addition to formal education.

### Description of focus of PAR project

As the Turkish team, we had a different plan for our PAR project but due to the conditions related with the pandemic, we ended up with a plan B.

Our initial plan was to conduct research with and on the young participants of a K-Pop dance class organized by the Tepebaşı Municipality Youth Centre. The PAR project would aim to depict how the young K-Pop dancers were using an art form as a means of self-expression. We planned to create an audio-visual material, documenting the weekly exercises of the dancers, their interactions with each other and their views on self-expression and social participation. Before the first restrictions due to the pandemic were enforced, we were still hoping that we might have a chance to continue with our original plan. However, in October 2020, in one of our zoom meetings, we came to realize that we needed to switch to an alternative plan.

Due to the limited time we were left with and the many restrictions imposed in response to the pandemic, we aimed to reach a youth group that we already knew and worked with in Eskişehir during module on youth participation (output one). For output one we, as the three Turkish partners of the Partibridges project, had prepared a face-to-face training module composed of three sequences, each prepared by one partner.

At Yeditepe University, this training was offered in full covering all the three sequences. At the end of the training, the participating students obtained a certificate of participation. The two other partners, Tepebaşı Municipality Youth Centre and Eksi 25 Association applied the training module in part, each covering the respective sequence they prepared. Eksi 25 used this opportunity not only to call for participants for this training (organized in the form of a workshop) but also to form a youth working group. The workshop started on February 5, 2020 but, due the pandemic, it had to be carried to an online platform (starting on March 5, 2020). The workshop was attended by a group of 25 (22 female and 3 male) university students from various faculties and departments at Anadolu University and Osmangazi University in Eskişehir.

For our PAR project, we aimed to organize an open-air weekend event where we would gather some of these students and discuss with them the impact of the pandemic on their everyday lives. Our objective was to understand and analyze young people's experiences and feelings during the pandemic.

The starting point of our PAR project, titled "Being young in times of the pandemic", was that young people were one of the "victims" of the pandemic, and that their life experiences were heavily impacted by the pandemic. Our motivation to open space for young people to express their experiences, views, and feelings during the pandemic was greatly driven by our desire to alleviate the constraints on youth perpetrated by two contextual conditions: one pertaining to Turkish culture in general, and the other related with the age-specific nature of pandemic restrictions imposed by the Turkish government.

In the family- and authority-oriented cultural context of Turkey, respect is commonly accorded by age. Age hierarchy prescribes the young members of society to respect adults and the elderly. If broadly interpreted, this prescription of respect may also include an implied proscription (sanctioned by moral norms) levied on youngsters that keeps them from expressing themselves freely in front of adults, and arguing with, disagreeing or answering back to the latter.

Partially affected by the adults' stereotypical view of youngsters as having a tendency towards irresponsible behaviour (in the case of the pandemic this typically translated into not wearing masks, wearing them incorrectly, or not keeping social distance) and by the concomitant lack of trust in youth, the pandemic constraints enforced by the government brought extra measures of restriction to the freedom of movement of young people in particular (for similar themes see [e-training](#) UK Seq 1, 2 & 3). In November 2020, for example, the government decreed that young people aged 20 and below were permitted to leave their homes only for three hours on weekdays between 13:00 and 16:00. Evaluated within this context of heavy restrictions, the weekend event that we organized for our PAR project gained in importance.

The event was organized on the weekend of November 28-29, 2020 at the Children Village of the Eksi25 Association and gathered 12 young people (9 female and 3 male) together. We encouraged the young participants to reflect upon their experiences and feelings during the pandemic in various ways. They shared their ideas in video interviews, acted out their feelings by way of games and role playing, and expressed themselves during informal chats with friends.

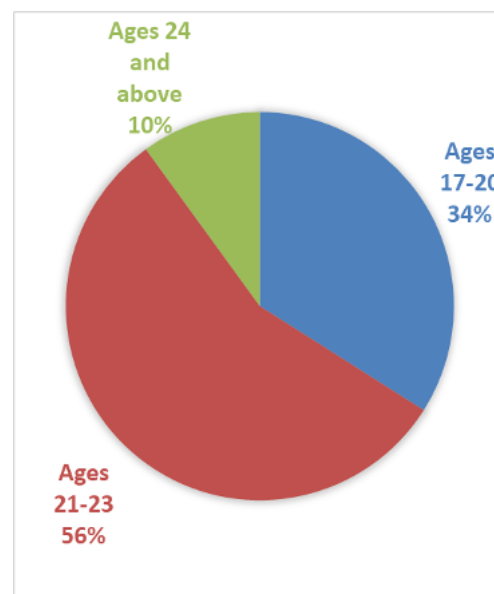
## Process of PAR project

The idea to focus on the pandemic and combine output one and output two activities organized during the Partibridges project came up during a Zoom meeting between three Turkish teams. At that meeting in October 2020, we decided to organize an event at the Children Village of the Eksi 25 Association, and bring together the youth working group and discuss with them their experiences and feelings during the pandemic.

After this starting point, Eksi 25 contacted its youth working group and decided on a date suitable for everyone. An important weakness at this initial stage was that some young people studying in Eskişehir had returned to their families' homes in various cities. That is why we had to conduct the activity only with the ones that stayed in Eskişehir during the pandemic.

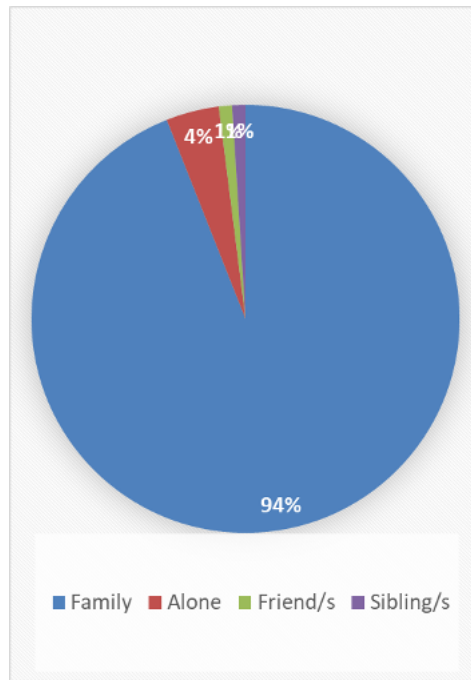
The event started with icebreaking activities, followed by the discussion of a survey conducted by Eksi25 in which young people were asked about their perceptions on the pandemic. The group then continued with drama and game activities during which the young participants went on reflecting upon the pandemic. During the event, the participants were also individually interviewed and asked about their experiences of the pandemic.

Even though all the themes and main ideas were discussed in Partibridges zoom meetings (to be discussed later on as one of the weaknesses of our PAR), in the organization of the event, young volunteers of the Eksi 25 Association played an important role. However, it was the youth workers/ professionals of the Association who led the part where the data of the survey were shared. This survey was conducted with 100 young (potential and actual) members/volunteers of the association to find out what kinds of activities and services are demanded from the association during the pandemic. The results of the survey were shared in order to open up the discussion and facilitate the expression of the emotions during the pandemic. Here is some information on the profile of the participants of the survey and the main results:



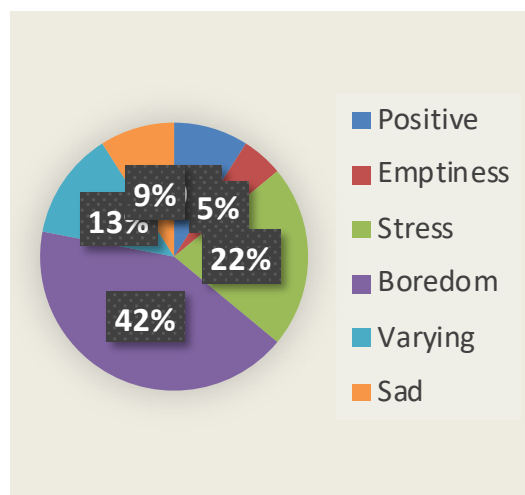
**Figure 1: Age distribution of survey participants**

The participants of the survey comprised a young group (the members of the Eksi25 association), only 10% were 24 years and older.



**Figure 2: Social environment during the pandemic**

94% of the participants stated that they spent the pandemic with their families, which demonstrates that family is an important institution to focus on if we want to understand the impact of the pandemic on young people's lives.



**Figure 3: Emotional states during the pandemic**

When their feelings were asked, 42% stated "boredom" and 22% stated "stress" which seems to be related with the first shock caused by the pandemic.



When their main activities during the pandemic were asked, 74% stated that they watched movies and television series, followed by reading books, studying for the courses, cleaning the house, and playing online games.

**When the participants of the survey were asked what they would like to do after the pandemic, the following answers were the most popular ones:**

I would like to spend time with friends	I would like to travel and wander around	I would like to go back to school/university
I would like to spend some time in nature	I would like to participate in social activities	I would like to do walks by the seaside

These answers to the survey of the Eski25 demonstrated once again how much young people missed spending time with friends and that the schools and campuses in fact offer public spaces where young people come and spend time together. The answers also reflected an overall appreciation of open, outdoor areas, such as public parks and the seaside.

## Learning from PAR project

One of the important problems we had to face was that we needed to change our initial plans for the PAR project. We waited until September 2020, hoping that we can still carry out our initial project. As time went on, however, and there was no sign of relief from pandemic restrictions any time soon, we came to realize that we had to change our plans, and in a Zoom meeting attended by all Turkish partners in October 2020 we decided to organize a week-end event at the Children Village of the Eksi25 Association. Thus, when we ask ourselves now what we would have done differently if we were to start the whole process over again, our first answer would probably be not to wait for as long as we did for the pandemic to end or to hope the situation would get better.

Another important weakness is that our PAR started as an “adult-led” project. Even though it was imagined as a project involving the participation of young people (participants and young volunteers), due to situational conditions beyond our control it ended up falling short of our ideal of a much more inclusive youth project. Under normal circumstances, we would have liked to spend more time for the co-construction or co-design of the project, and thus, include young people much more actively in the PAR. In that sense, we have to underline that an opportunity has been lost on our part since the co-construction process, as stated in the guides on PAR prepared for the Partibridges, allows us to enter into a reflexive process, and enables us to question ourselves and reconsider our own projects (Bednarz and Desgagné, 2005). This, for sure, tells something about the nature of PAR projects and how the pandemic made the ideal of co-construction and/or co-design difficult.

## Ethical considerations

As the youth working group was composed of a group of young people over 18, we did not ask the consent of their parents. There was an open call for the module on youth participation (output one). Young volunteers applied to participate in the training, and also signed up for the youth working group. Before starting the training module, all participants were informed about the Partibridges project and they were asked to sign a paper stating that they voluntarily accept to participate in the training module, and consent to their photos being taken and used for the project. The same procedure was repeated for the video recording of the meeting. We repeated this permission process during the weekend of November 28-29, 2020, as well. Thus, we can say that we did not experience any ethical problems or challenges in that sense. Our main concern was to create a safe environment for the participants during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Learning from making video/web documentary

In the PAR video, we tried to capture and present the experiences and emotions of young people during the pandemic. We chose not to conduct any interviews with adults/academics/youth workers, etc. to keep our focus on the young participants of the PAR. We hope that enabled us to make young people and their expressions more visible.



As we had long hours of video recordings on the feelings of young people pertaining to the pandemic, it was difficult to decide about which parts of the interviews to use in the final video. However, interviews proved highly effective in getting a clear sense of the young participants' positive and negative experiences, as well as their emotional states, during the pandemic.

***"E-graduates: Waiting so long for graduation ceremony, and ending up not having it"***

Tuğçe, for example, told us how she experienced being a fourth-year student during the pandemic and how she felt about not having a graduation ceremony:

***"I was a fourth-year student when the pandemic began and I was neither able to enjoy my last year at school nor do most of the things I wanted to do. Besides, I couldn't graduate, or rather I couldn't fully experience my graduation. I call myself "e-graduate". I graduated with an online diploma. I couldn't wear a cap and gown, and that was my biggest dream. I couldn't have my high school graduation either. So, I can say this made me sad a bit. "***

***"Plans and dreams put on hold"***

Tuğba, on the other hand, expressed that she had to put on hold some of her plans and dreams during the pandemic.

***"I couldn't spare time for my hobbies. I was interested in music. I gave up on it completely because I couldn't go to the studio. I wasn't allowed to play at home because of the many elderly people living in our apartment building. Long story short, the pandemic disrupted my life. All my work, my plans and my dreams were put on hold for almost two years."***

In a similar manner, Sultan told us that she could not do her internship, so important for her future career and plans:

***"I was in my senior year and the pandemic affected me a lot because it was my internship semester. Since I was majoring in a human-oriented department, I was supposed to do an internship. I don't have access to the field now. I don't know what to do. I can't observe cases. Because of that, I feel inadequate in the field right now. I hope everything will get back to normal next semester, I can go back to school and do my internship. I would like that a lot."***

***"Feeling terrified and lonely"***

For Kutay, a student who stayed in Eskişehir during the pandemic, the days were filled with loneliness and a deep sense of isolation.

***"I was all alone. I had no one. I couldn't go outside. Fortunately, I was able to go to the groceries because I was old enough to be permitted. I devoted myself to doing things I was interested in. I started having trouble even introducing myself to people because I had stayed away from people for so long. I was having a hard time talking about any topic because I lived a solitary life with no social contact for too long. And I had kind of forgotten what other people can do - not in a bad way, of course - and what they can talk about."***

Transcribing the interviews also helped us put into perspective young people's life during the pandemic. Paying close attention to what they expressed we realized that as they struggled to deal with the unexpected consequences of the pandemic that directly or indirectly affected their lives they also started to reflect on and analyze their experiences. Some statements given below seem to highlight this observation.

Elif, for example, was terrified at the outset of the pandemic. But she also expressed that this experience later gave her an opportunity of self-reflection.

*"I was terrified at first when the pandemic started. I felt I was getting lonely. But actually, I had opportunity to get to know myself better."*

*"My freedom was taken away from me"*

Tuğçe, who lived with his family during the pandemic, complained that she felt restricted during the pandemic. She came to realize how valuable the sense of freedom that she enjoyed before the pandemic was to her:

*"When I think about what the hardest thing was for me during the pandemic, I realize that it was the fact that I truly didn't have my own space and I felt like I was back in high school. Every time my mom came into my room, she was like 'we thought you were studying but you are watching movies'. That made me feel really terrible. I mean, I felt like my freedom was taken away from me."*

Young participants' sense of loss of freedom was also expressed in the role-playing games during the weekend when they acted out some scenes reflecting the familial conflicts and discussions they experienced during the pandemic. It can however be argued that it is still too early to have developed a reflective state of consciousness as we are still experiencing consecutive shocks of the pandemic. This is why in the interviews conducted in our PAR project, it is much easier to detect much more vividly the initial shock rather than the awakenings.

In the end, when we were pondering on the future implications of the experiences, thoughts and feelings expressed by the young participants of our PAR we came to the exciting realization that we actually came full circle. We started with Ernst Bloch's (1986) concept of "hope" in our e-training module for output one, and ending with the same concept at the end of PAR.



Bloch sees the world as a laboratory of possibilities. The world, he argues, holds unlimited possibilities which have not yet been actualized. Hope and utopia comprise an inseparable part of human consciousness. They represent the will to liberate oneself from one's immediate, factual surroundings, in order to create possibilities with which the present reality is pregnant. By nurturing these possibilities, people change the reality in which they live. This is the "principle of hope", as



Bloch puts it. Hope has to derive from something given, and at the same time imply an active attitude to it (Levy 1990: 9) (for more information see [e-training](#) TR all Seq).

It is at this point that we are led to revisit Walter Benjamin's (1999: 117) theory of experience because our interest was not only in understanding the first "shock" of the pandemic as it was experienced by the youth but also how that "shock" was (or could be) translated into more solid experiences and awakenings. Benjamin's elaboration of two different kinds of experience - "Erlebnis" and "Erfahrung" - was of particular importance for us.

ERLEBNIS	ERFAHRUNG
Outer, <b>sensory experience</b>	Inner, <b>lived experience</b>
Grounded in the discrete stimuli of mere sensation	Involves cognitive processes beyond sheer sensation; <b>experience that you gain something from/get something out of</b>
<b>Intuitive responses to the world</b>	Integration of sensations into a meaningful whole through <b>critical reflection</b>

**Table 1: Walter Benjamin's distinction between two kinds of experience: Erlebnis and Erfahrung**

Whereas Erlebnis is an immediate or shock experience, Erfahrung is a fuller and more reflective state of consciousness. After hearing the accounts of PAR's young participants with respect to the immediate effects of the pandemic on their lives we were interested in reflecting on whether and to what extent these moments of shock (Erlebnis) could be translated into a fuller and more reflective

state of consciousness (Erfahrung), and as it was the case in output one, we are very much interested in cultivating hope during these difficult and exceptional times.



Another important "lesson" we have learned from making video/documentary is in fact related with the role of the videomaker/director. Even though one of the outputs of the PAR project is to create a video/documentary, we have to underline that we concentrated on the PAR project and neglected the importance

of creating a creative and attractive documentary/video. We only used the video for documenting our PAR project/weekend event. The person videotaping the PAR project as well as editing the video is a volunteer of the Eksi25 association and our technician for the project but it should be stated that for future projects, it is important to remember to form a team for creating this video/documentary and include video-making in the co-construction and co-design of the PAR project.



## Concluding remarks

Our experience with PAR projects is very valuable for thinking about how to conduct PAR projects during the pandemic and the impact of the pandemic on young people's lives.

At a time when many restrictions were imposed in all aspects of social life, and the universities and schools had to go on to online education, it was a challenge to conduct any face-to-face project but we insisted on not transferring our PAR project online, and organizing a face-to-face event instead. As it was safer to meet outdoors with the participants (with social distancing and masks), we realized once again the importance of physical "space". In that sense, the Children Village of the Eksi25 association provided us with that space in the form of their spacious yard. We also realized how much the young people missed face-to-face meetings and being together with friends. Plays and games also proved to be useful tools of bringing to surface our everyday life problems.

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