

PARTICIPATORY CONTACT ZONES AND CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION: THE PARTICIPATORY INTENSITIES OF THE CYPRUS FRIENDSHIP PROGRAM

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PARTICIPATION; POWER; EMPOWERMENT; PEACE-BUILDING; CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION; PARTICIPATORY CONTACT ZONE; PARTICIPATORY INTENSITIES; YOUTH PARTICIPATION; ADULTISM

ABSTRACT

DESPITE THE CELEBRATORY APPROACH TOWARDS COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN PEACE-BUILDING, LESS ATTENTION HAS BEEN PLACED ON THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS ITSELF, LEAVING AMBIGUOUS HOW, AND TO WHAT DEGREE, POWER IS ACTUALLY REDISTRIBUTED IN THESE PROCESSES. THIS ARTICLE AIMS TO ADDRESS THIS GAP BY FURTHER DEVELOPING TORRE'S CONCEPT OF THE PARTICIPATORY CONTACT ZONE. THIS NOTION FIRST STRUCTURES A MAPPING OF CYPRIOT BI-COMMUNAL EDUCATION-RELATED PROJECTS (2010-2015) AND THEN SUPPORTS AN IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF ONE PROJECT, THE CYPRUS FRIENDSHIP PROGRAM (CFP). THIS CASE STUDY USES CARPENTIER'S FOUR-LEVEL, TWELVE-STEP MODEL FOR PARTICIPATORY ANALYSIS TO SCRUTINIZE THE PARTICIPATORY INTENSITY OF THE CFP'S ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESSES, FOCUSING ON THE POWER POSITION OF THE INVOLVED YOUNGSTERS. IT SHOWS THAT TEENAGERS PARTICIPATE IN THE CFP AT VARYING DEGREES: WHILE THEIR POWER POSITION ON A MORE STRUCTURAL LEVEL IS LIMITED, THERE ARE THREE AREAS WHERE THESE YOUNGSTERS BECOME MORE EMPOWERED: CO-ORGANIZATION (AT LOWER LEVELS), THE TEAMWORK DURING ACTIVITIES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW INITIATIVES.

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Introduction

Theoretical frameworks on peace-building and conflict transformation have sometimes made use of the notion of the contact zone (Pratt, 1991, see also Allport, 1954) to answer strategic questions about the practical operationalization of their principles. At the same time, critics (Ahmed, 2000; Matejskova & Leitner, 2011; Psaltis, 2011, 2016; Zembylas, 2010) have pointed to the limitations of contact in overcoming constructions of the enemy. Recently, the concept of the participatory contact zone (Torre, 2005; 2010) has been proposed in order to strengthen the theoretical background of participatory action research, which can also be applied more broadly in the field of (violent) conflict transformation.

When bringing the concept of the participatory contact zone into conflict studies, we want to argue that an extended reflection on participation becomes necessary to strengthen this still fairly new concept. Secondly, we want to argue that, given the complexity of participation, and the power dynamics that lie behind it, there is a need for the confrontation of these theoretical reflections with social practice. For this reason, we have organized an indicative mapping of 14 Cypriot education-related conflict transformation projects on the island, in combination with an in-depth case study of one of these 14 projects, namely the Cyprus Friendship Program (CFP).

The article consists of two main parts. The first part provides an overview of the theoretical backbone of the study, starting with the transformative approach to peace-building, before moving on to discuss the role of contact zones in conflict transformation. Next, the article zooms in on more recent theoretical work on participatory contact zones and its promises for articulating participation with peace-building. The second part of the article analyzes the participatory intensities of the CFP case study, structured through Carpentier's (2016) 4-level and 12-step analytical model for participatory analysis.

Conflict transformation and the role of contact zones

For some decades, the attention in conflict studies has shifted towards a relational view that underscores the patterns of conflictual relationships extending beyond the particular site of conflict, and the systems and structures in which these relationships are embedded (Lederach, 2003: 33; see also in Dugan, 1996). This shift has been enshrined particularly in the works of the conflict transformation school (Galtung, 2000; Lederach, 1996, 2003; Rupesinghe, 1995), which defines conflict transformation as “a process of engaging with and transforming the relationships, interests, discourses and, if necessary, the very constitution of society that supports the continuation of violent conflict” (Miall, 2004: 4), including the structures and cultures that give rise to violence and social injustices (Austin et al., 2012: 23).

The conflict transformation approach views both conflict and change occurring at personal, interpersonal, structural and cultural levels. For interventions to be successful, they should initiate change processes on all these levels: 1) Maximizing the potential for self-growth and well-being; 2) maximizing dialogue and understanding; 3) understanding root causes and fostering “the development of structures to meet basic human needs [...] and to maximize participation of people in decisions that affect their lives”; and 4) identifying cultural resources that support these processes (Lederach, 2003: 27). As opposed to the elite-centered approach of conventional peace-building, the focus is on society and non-violent relationships, recognizing the agency of ordinary people in conflict and in the processes of change, and seeing the potential for peace in achieving equality and justice in all relationships. Some later works (Francis, 2011; Reich, 2006) emphasize this point in particular, noting that transformation requires moving from a culture of domination to a culture of collaboration, changing competitive relationships into egalitarian and cooperative relationships. The emphasis on inclusiveness and efficacy calls for “participation at every level of society”, to build a peace process “grounded in shared power” (Francis, 2011: 508).

This brings us to the questions on how to create an environment where non-violent forms of relating are articulated between parties affected by violent conflict, and how to address power asymmetries in a manner that enables us to instigate a change that benefits all? Focusing on the study of prejudice and intergroup biases, Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis, which later developed into intergroup contact theory, has been an influential way to answer this question. The contact hypothesis argues that relations between social groups that face conflict or discrimination can be improved through increased everyday contact. Although research on intergroup contact can be dated back to the early 1930s (Zeligs & Hendrickson, 1933; Smith, 1943; Williams, 1947), Allport's work has been key in its theorization, as it specifies the optimal conditions for contact to reduce prej-

udice. Accordingly, the existence of equal group status, a common goal, intergroup cooperation and the support of institutional authorities and customs are considered among the conditions for the desired changes to take place, while the existence of continuous structural inequalities may impede this process.

Throughout its widespread deployment by academics and practitioners for more than half of a century, the contact hypothesis has been tested, developed and criticized in various ways. While reviews of this extensive literature provide general support for the hypothesis, particularly when contact situation meets its optimal conditions (Bratt, 2002; Cook, 1984; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), some of these authors have also pointed to its limitations in terms of the difficulty of moving from the individual to the group level and the theory's lack of attention for the process, in combination with other factors restricting its impact, such as individual differences and societal norms (Pettigrew, 1998: 65). Research further showed that contact occurring under unfavorable conditions, such as competitive situations and situations with unequal status, may produce adverse effects and may even increase intergroup tensions (Amir, 1976: 308).

The more critical voices question the basic assumptions of the hypothesis. Given the focus of our study, the most noteworthy ones come firstly from social representation theory (Moscovici, 1984). These authors emphasize the role of social representations, such as official master narratives in shaping prejudice and point at the individualistic focus of contact theory (Psaltis, 2011; 2016). Another group of critical voices write from post-colonial and urban studies perspectives (Ahmed, 2000; Matejskova & Leitner, 2011) and draw the attention to the role of societal power relationships that establish the boundaries of real-life contact between different groups. They argue that this hardly renders an equal group status possible in practice. In addition, they also point to the risk of contact interventions reifying the structural inequalities in society, which lower the transformational capacity of minority groups and strengthen in-group cohesion (Dixon et al., 2012; Stephan et al., 2009; also see in Psaltis et al., 2017).

The work of Pratt (1991) bridges these critical perspectives by highlighting the power dynamics embedded in a contact situation with an interactional approach, through the notion of "contact zones". In Pratt's (1991: 34) words: Contact zones are "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination like colonialism, slavery or their aftermaths." They are spaces of cross-cultural encounters, where the interaction allows people to learn more about each other, and produces first-hand perspectives about a diversity of peoples. In this regard, contact zones focus not specifically on the actors and their attitudes, but on the interactions between them, and act as a space for non-violent argumentation of conflicting narratives, beliefs, points of view, as well as for learning (about the others).

Participatory contact zones

Some later works on contact zones delve more deeply into the power paradigm, pointing at the elements of difference, power and privilege that come into play in these zones. They examine how new meanings and imaginaries are articulated and how differences and power asymmetries are experienced and reconfigured in these micro-zones of conflict (Torre, 2005; Torre et al., 2008; Torre, 2010, Torre et al., 2017; Askins & Pain, 2011).

Out of this comes the concept of the participatory contact zone, which has mainly been developed by Torre (2005, 2010), driven by a combination of contact theory with Participatory Action Research (PAR) (see, e.g., Kindon et al., 2007). This synergy results in a definition of participatory contact zones as "sites where people representing radically different standpoints come together as research colleagues around a common inquiry" (Torre et al., 2017: 496). The relational dimension remains important, as Torre et al. (2008: 25) write: "Theorizing PAR as a contact zone, thereby underscores the ways subjects are constituted 'in and by their relations to each other,' and also the multi(ple/peopled) constructions of knowledge and research (Torre, 2006)". Simultaneously, the focus on power in participatory contact zones becomes more explicit, as PAR – with its activation and validation of research subjects – brings in a focus on the power relationships between different types of researchers (Torre et al., 2017: 494-495; 504): "[W]e create a politically and intellectually charged space where very differently positioned youth and adults are able to experience and analyze power inequities" (Torre et al., 2008: 24). Torre's work, through its reference to the hyphen (Fine, 1994), thus presents us with a non-dichotomous model of power, which – as Torre et al. (2008: 24) write citing an earlier manuscript by Torre – "'push our psychological theorizing beyond simplified binaries such as oppressor/oppressed or colonizer/colonized and understand relations between'" (Torre, 2006: 2)".

Nevertheless, we believe that there are still opportunities to broaden the concept of the participatory contact zone, moving it beyond the more psychological-methodological version that Torre uses, and bringing it closer to theories on (violent) conflict. The strategy used here is to infuse the notion of the participatory contact zone with a more expanded reflection on participation, particularly in relation to conflict transformation. This requires taking a step back and considering the black box that participation often still is.

There is no generally accepted conceptual or analytical framework in participation studies, despite the long history of participatory approaches, for instance, in development studies and development communication (Cornwall, 2008; Freire, 2002; Servaes et al., 1996; Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009; White, 1996) and in media studies (Carpentier, 2011; Carpentier, Dahlgren & Pasquali, 2014). Moreover, only in rare cases (Carpentier & Doudaki, 2013; Carpentier, 2017; Rodriguez, 2000; 2011) are the contexts of (violent) conflict integrated into the analysis of participation.

Our starting point is aligned with what Carpentier (2016) has labelled the political studies approach to participation. This approach defines participation as power-sharing, in contrast to the sociological approach, which defines participation as taking-part. A closer reading of participation, in this political studies approach, points to its intimate connection with power and its redistribution in society (Carpentier, 2012: 174; Servaes, 1999:198). As Arnstein (1969: 217) notes, participation becomes an “empty ritual”, a “frustrating process for the powerless”, if it does not provide for “real power needed to affect the outcome of the process”. In a parallel vein, Pateman (1970) distinguishes between partial and full participation, where partial participation refers to “a process, in which two or more parties influence each other in the making of decisions but the final power to decide rests with one party only”. Full participation then is seen as “a process, where each individual member of a decision-making body has equal power to determine the outcome of decisions” (Pateman, 1970: 70-71).

Following the political studies approach also allows us to make a distinction between the concepts of access, interaction and participation (Carpentier, 2011), thereby avoiding using them interchangeably. Accordingly, access is associated with presence and interaction with the construction of socio-communicative relationships, whereas participation is associated with power-sharing and co-decision-making (Carpentier, 2011: 130-131; Carpentier, Dahlgren & Pasquali, 2014). As such, the concept of participation applies to situations where actors have different (societal) power positions and where the participatory process redresses this imbalance. Participation then becomes a situation “where the actors involved in (formal or informal) decision-making processes are positioned towards each other through power relationships that are (to some extent) egalitarian” (Carpentier, Dahlgren & Pasquali, 2014: 124). At the same time, we should acknowledge that there are different participatory intensities: Participation itself oscillates between minimalist and maximalist intensities depending on the degree of equality between privileged and non-privileged actors. While minimalist participatory intensities still tend to protect (to some extent) the power positions of privileged actors, to the detriment of the less powerful, maximalist ones continuously strive for equality among all actors involved in the participatory process.

Connecting these insights with our earlier discussion on contact theory and contact zones, we can see that (participatory) contact zones are creating spaces that minimize exclusion and maximize participation, by fostering symmetrical, equitable power relationships between the actors involved. For Torre (2010), enabling participation in the contact zones requires a critical reconsideration of contact, questioning the power relations (in her case in the construction of knowledge) as well as the excluded meanings, “shifting equal group status to an explicit engagement of history, power, and privilege; common goals to shared collectively determined goals; cooperation to participation with negotiated conditions of collaboration; and support of authorities to collectively determined solidarity” (Torre, 2010: v). At the level of access, this means fostering radical inclusion with a focus on non-privileged actors; at the level of interaction, it stresses the need for critical exchanges that can challenge dominant discourses; and at the level of participation, it points to the need for turning the procedural equality into power-sharing by collaborating on collectively decided course of actions.

Thus, one highly relevant analytical question is how participatory particular participatory contact zones are, and whether they are participatory at all? As Arnstein (1969) argued, “participatory” processes can be participatory in name only and can be used as instruments for domination and control. Moreover, participatory processes can be very different in how power is (re) distributed, participatory intensities can be different for different sub-processes, and participatory intensities can change over time, e.g. because of internal struggles between actors over these participatory intensities. This complexity also necessitates in-depth analyses of participatory processes, which legitimate our choice to turn to a particular case study, which relates to conflict transformation within the educational field in Cyprus.

The case study context – the Cyprus Problem

The empirical focus on participatory contact zones in Cyprus necessitates a brief historical overview of the Cyprus conflict (which is also known as the Cyprus Problem) in order to contextualize the mapping and the CFP case study.

The conflict can be traced back to the 1950s, when the armed struggle against the British rule co-existed with inter-communal violence among the two largest communities living on the island, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, amid rising waves of nationalism. Greek Cypriots strove for *enosis* – the union of Cyprus with Greece – and Turkish Cypriots, who initially opted for the continuation of British rule and later demanded *taksim* – the partition of the island (Papadakis et al., 2006: 2-4). During the independence war of 1955-1959, the Greek Cypriot armed resistance, organized by the right-wing Greek nationalist EOKA (National Organization of Cypriot Fighters), increasingly targeted Turkish Cypriots, who, in turn, mobilized under the Turkish nationalist TMT (Turkish Resistance Organization) for retaliation. The independence of Cyprus from the United Kingdom in 1960 only brought a temporary end to the violence. The federal Republic of Cyprus, established in the same year and based on a bi-communal power-sharing structure, with Greece, Turkey and the UK acting as guarantor states, only functioned briefly, and the re-emergence of inter-communal violence towards the end of 1963 resulted in the withdrawal of the Turkish Cypriots from the Cypriot state apparatus and in the creation of a cease-fire line, also known as the Green Line, running through the capital city of Nicosia (Broome, 2005).

Despite the arrival of United Nations peacekeeping forces (UNFICYP) in 1964, violent confrontations continued, peaking in the summer of 1964 and in late 1967. This was followed by a relatively stable period, marked by the start of the first inter-communal talks in 1968 under the auspices of the UN. However, it was not to last long. In July 1974, the Greek junta, supported by Greek Cypriot radical nationalists, initiated a coup d'état against the president and government of the Republic of Cyprus, which triggered the military intervention of Turkey and eventually led to an ethno-political division of the island. Since then, the two communities have been living in two different territories, separated by a United Nations Buffer Zone, which extended the Green Line throughout the entire island: The Republic of Cyprus and the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, recognized only by Turkey. Cyprus came close to its reunification with the "Annan Plan", proposed by the UN in 2004, but the plan was rejected by the Greek Cypriot community in a referendum. The last UN-mediated peace talks started in 2015 but recently came to a halt, and the island remains divided until today.

In addition to other human consequences, such as the casualties of the violent conflict and island-wide population displacements following the division, the political stalemate – lasting more than four decades – resulted in a physical segregation of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities until the opening of several checkpoints from 2003 onwards, which partially lifted some of the movement restrictions and provided opportunities for contact with the "other side". Still, the geopolitical divide continues to exist, resulting in largely segregated social structures, including two separate formal educational systems, along with "political, cultural and psychological" barriers that prevent integration (Zembylas, 2010: 439).

The Cypriot educational field has been very much part of the Cyprus conflict. In Cyprus, schools have traditionally been used for nationalistic and ethnocentric propaganda, with the educational field on both sides functioning as signifying machines to produce and distribute a nationalist ideology that demonizes the other (Kanol, 2010: 32), thus preparing young people for a segregated life by promoting negative narratives on, and imaginaries of, the other community (Bryant, 2004; see also in Zembylas, 2011). This troubling situation led peace-builders, including teachers, to develop projects to promote contact and interaction among Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot youngsters outside the school setting. Following the 2003 opening of checkpoints, these projects, which were initially in the form of summer camps held abroad, started to be organized on the island's territory as well, with their scope diversified to involve various educational and cultural activities.¹ Their focus, however, has remained at the micro-personal level, on enabling attitude change through positive contact experiences, without giving sufficient attention to the larger structural and cultural contexts of the schools and the Cypriot society, and the power relationships embedded in them.

Although the environment in which these projects work is more enabling now than in the past, structural obstacles such as recognition issues, coupled with the influence of politics over the conventionally hierarchical structure of schools, continue to marginalize them and often make it impossible to directly involve schools and their students (İdris, A., Interview, September 2015²), undermining access to these initiatives. Moreover, at the level of schools, "mere" contact is not a guarantee of change

in the identification with particular ideological projects, as research on a private mixed-community school in Cyprus also confirmed (Zembylas, 2010). At the macro level, the discursive hegemony of antagonisms in the educational field continues to create a participatory deficit in the ongoing peace process, as the institutionalized politics of division and the elite-led nature of peace talks are counted among the main factors that prevented the Cypriot youth on both sides from “taking an active interest in local politics” and taking an active role in reconciliation processes, despite their “great stake in the outcome of the current negotiations” (UNDP, 2009: 16-18).

A case study on the Cyprus Friendship Program (CFP)

Within this setting, our focus is on the participatory intensities within one of these projects, the Cyprus Friendship Program. To select and contextualize this case study, we first organized an island-wide mapping of education-related, inter-communal conflict transformation³ projects, which then resulted in the selection of our one particular case study.

Methodology

Our first methodological step was to identify and locate all inter-communal education-related projects in Cyprus, which were defined, for the purposes of this study, as projects implemented across Cyprus, within or with links to the school setting, with a pedagogical objective, explicitly involving Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot teenagers. This was done through an island-wide mapping (Spadacini, 2013; Vogt, 2010) carried out in the period between August-November 2015. The data was collected through desk research, brief interviews with 36 key resource people and organizers of 23 projects that potentially matched our definition, followed by 18 in-depth interviews with the representatives of the initially mapped projects and the collection of project documentation.

The analysis of this data, registered through field notes and mapping index cards, provided a contextual overview of these projects, including their history, the environment they work in, their aims, activities, the actors involved, and their decision-making areas and mechanisms. These data were then analyzed to provide a rough indication of each project’s participatory intensities, initially coded using a 0-to-3 point scale. This indicative scale reflected the degrees of power-sharing among actors, ranging from non-participation, where a group of actors retain full power in an area of decision-making, up to a high level of participation, where the power relations between the actors were equal. Based on this indicative analysis, one case study was selected among the projects with medium-to-high participatory intensities. The other criteria employed in the case study selection were the projects’ connection to the school system, the locational diversity of project participants, as well as feasibility, accessibility and the willingness (of the project representatives) to cooperate.

Once the CFP case study⁴ was selected, we used Carpentier’s (2016) 4-level, 12-step analytical framework (see Appendix 1) to analyze the participatory intensity of this particular project, as this framework allowed us to focus on the main components of a participatory process, namely fields and processes (level 1), actors (level 2), decisions (level 3) and power relationships (level 4). The data for the selected CFP case was collected during February-May 2016, through participant observations of five project activities, mainly assuming the role of observer-as-participant (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011; Gold, 1958), in-depth interviews with six project participants and various informal interviews with other actors involved in the project, including the project team and parents. The data was then analyzed using qualitative analysis techniques (Saldaña, 2009; Silverman, 1994).

The mapping: A brief overview of 14 inter-communal projects

The mapping of education-related, inter-communal conflict transformation projects, active during the years 2010-2015, yielded a total of 14 projects. At the end of the analysis, 11 were still ongoing and three had already been completed. The projects vary in terms of the nature of their activities, which include summer camps, art projects, youth exchanges, anti-violence and peace education programs, sports projects, projects on media including one youth-run online newspaper, and a youth activism project.

The majority of the projects were organized by local NGOs, including youth clubs (nine projects), with some projects directly implemented by international organizations (two projects), one by the youth branch of a political party (one project), and the rest being individual or group initiatives (two projects). None of the projects were organized by, or had the direct involvement of, official educational bodies or schools, except for the peace education program that involved mono-communal school trainings.

All projects did include participatory elements, although there were quite a few differences, also when it came to the fields in which the participatory process was located. Some projects enabled participation predominantly in social and cultural fields (ten projects); while education (three projects) and politics (one project) were the two other main fields of participation. In many cases, participation was stimulated in other fields than the field where the project itself was located, which has been labelled trans-field participation (Carpentier, 2016: 10). In addition to their main field, all projects mentioned the social and the cultural as other fields where participation is enabled (although for four projects, this is not the main locus), followed by the political field in eight (8) projects, and the field of communication in two (2) projects. One project is exclusively focused on peace-building and one project on emotional development.

The indicative evaluation of the participatory intensities, based on the 0-3 point scale, also confirmed that there were considerable differences between the projects, even though a more in-depth analysis of all 14 projects is required to properly evaluate their participatory intensities. Nevertheless, there are good indications that all projects enabled at least some degree of participation, yet the participatory intensity stands at low for seven (7) of the projects, low-to-medium for three (3) projects, and medium-to-high for three (3) projects.⁵ As an in-depth analysis of all projects would be too time-consuming, one of the 14 projects has been selected (based on the criteria outlined above) for a more detailed case study analysis, which is rendered below.

The Cyprus Friendship Program

On its website⁶, the Cyprus Friendship Program (CFP) introduces itself as a “peace-building and leadership training program” that “brings together teenagers from both Cypriot communities to promote peaceful interaction and understanding between the two groups” by encouraging cross-cultural friendships and extending these to friend and family circles, with the aim of fostering trust, breaking down stereotypes and promoting mutual respect.⁷ Each year, among applications received island-wide, an equal number of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot teenagers between the age of 15-17 are selected to join the CFP, which offers year-round activities, including a four-week residency in the USA and a summer camp organized in Cyprus. To apply for the project, at least one of the teenagers’ parents must be a Cypriot and they should have at least one more year in school after the completion of the program. At the time of the research, the project had reached around 600 teenagers⁸, with 32 pairs attending the USA residency and 52 teenagers joining the summer camp in 2016.

The CFP is modelled on the Children’s Friendship Project for Northern Ireland (CFPNI) that brought together more than 2.000 Protestant and Catholic teenagers at the backdrop of over three decades of violent conflict. After the project’s successful completion in 2007, the same model was considered for Cyprus. The Cyprus program started in 2009 under the initiative of US-based NGO, HasNa⁹ and in cooperation with a bi-communal group of Cypriot teachers. In 2012, it evolved into an independent NGO.

Project activities are run by a bi-communal team of Cypriot coordinators, who work in collaboration with the US team, organized under the US non-profit Cyprus Friendship Program Inc., which is responsible for making arrangements with host families and training activities in the US. The CFP is an all-volunteer initiative, which means that everyone working for the project, including the coordinators and US team, are involved on a completely voluntary basis. The project has no fixed donor or sponsor and is financed through contributions of families, donations by individuals and NGOs (i.e. Rotary Club), and the voluntary involvement of project staff. In promoting and implementing the project, collaborations have been established with teachers’ unions, schools and youth clubs across Cyprus, as well as other projects working on similar grounds (Anastasiou, N., Kahvecioglu, S., Interview, October 2015).

The year-round activity cycle of the CFP starts in November with the groundwork for the upcoming year’s program, including presentations at schools and youth organizations across Cyprus to announce the new call for applications. In February, teenagers gather for the first time at the Interview Day, organized to select that year’s participants in line for a US residency. Following

a month of interactions, the selected teenagers meet at the two pairing events, where they attend facilitated workshops and pair up with someone from the other community, with whom they will spend a month in the US as roommates. US residencies start in July and involve, in addition to continuous casual interactions between pairs, weekly group sessions such as team building and conflict transformation workshops, and civic engagement activities.

During the summer, the CFP also organizes a one-week youth camp in the Troodos mountains in Cyprus, bringing together a bi-communal group of around 50 teenagers to do various educational, cultural, artistic and sports activities. In addition to this fixed schedule, teenagers are informed about and encouraged to join other bi-communal initiatives organized by Cypriot and international NGOs, such as summer camps and cultural exchanges. The graduation ceremony, organized in October, brings together teenagers, their families, friends and supporters of the program, and officially ends the annual activity cycle.

The CFP as participatory contact zone and its participatory intensities

As mentioned before, Carpentier's (2016) 4-level analytical framework is used to analyze the participatory intensity of the CFP project. These four levels are discussed one by one, sometimes integrating the 12 steps (or subcomponents) to save space.

Field & process (level 1)

The first level sets the stage for the participatory analysis, delineating the process that will be analyzed and describing in which field participation is enabled. In this case study, we are particularly interested in the organizational processes of the CFP and the power position of the youngsters in these processes. This focus on the CFP's organizational life resonates with the fields where the CFP is enabling participation, with main emphasis on the field of peace-building itself, as the CFP creates a participatory contact zone with the aim of contributing to conflict transformation. Of course, there are spill-overs into other fields, given the project's connections with the school system, through the teacher and student involvement in the project and its non-formal educational remit. Moreover, the CFP's interventions also create structures that work with families and cultivate and extend cross-cultural friendships, which also impacts on private (affective) spheres of the social.

Actors (level 2)

The second level analyzes the actors involved in the participatory process, asking the basic question, "who is who" in the participatory process. This level combines a mapping of relevant actors with the analysis of their identities and their status (in relation to privilege). With its motto, "People United in a Country Divided", the CFP brings together different groups of people in its bi-communal network, including current and past participants, their families, school managers, teachers, teacher unions, peace activists, community leaders and other supporters. When year-round activities are concerned, though, three main groups of actors are actively involved in the project: Coordinators, teenagers and parents. At the same time, all actors are involved in the CFP on a voluntary basis and work without compensation, which generates their identifications with the subject position of the volunteer (and not the professional). This also has an impact on the entire organization, rendering it less hierarchical. Still, the three actor groups remain distinct.

Project coordinators: The bi-communal team of the project coordinators includes three Greek Cypriots and three Turkish Cypriots, the majority of whom are teachers at public schools. This team is responsible for the general management and coordination of the project, as well as organization and implementation of project activities carried out in Cyprus, including workshop facilitation. Amongst them, one Greek Cypriot and one Turkish Cypriot are chief coordinators, who have the overall responsibility in all phases of the project. On various occasions, the coordinators have described themselves as volunteers for peace-building, who take this work seriously, and their ultimate aim is to develop a new generation of peace-builders. In doing so, they intend to empower teenagers by giving them the opportunity to show their own skills, while providing the necessary

support (Anastasiou, N., Kahvecioglu, S., Interview, October 2015). While their speech and behavior often supports this position, the “seriousness of the work” may at times imply strict behavioral expectations, particularly towards the newcomers (Field Notes, March, 2016).

Teenagers: Teenagers taking part in the program for the first time are referred to as “CFP teens”. They join the project activities, and, following their return from the USA or the camp, they contribute to the organization of the Graduation Day, where the end of term is celebrated with a large-scale network gathering. After the graduation, all interested teenagers may volunteer in the upcoming years’ activities by responding to the calls regularly made by the coordinators. Referred to as helpers/volunteers, these teenagers assume tasks during the summer camp or in the organization of other project activities. There is also a bi-communal youth committee comprised of ten former participants, who work in consultation with the chief coordinators and the parent committee. Their main role is to allocate tasks among volunteers and develop proposals for new initiatives, yet they also take part in the activities, at times as volunteers themselves. The teenagers we interviewed describe the Cyprus context, both in the north and south, often as disempowering for young people, as they are under strong adult influence, receiving no recognition as private individuals, “whose opinions would be taken seriously” (Interview, Participant 1, March 2016). They mention how their parents continuously impose ideas and make decisions on their behalf, which is “many times oppressing” and hinders their creative potential (Field Notes, February 2016). At the same time, many interviewees counted the CFP as an opportunity (and experience) to increase their social influence and skills.

Parents: Parents of former participants constitute the third main group of actors. Some of them volunteer in the organization of activities and certain financial aspects of the program, forming a bi-communal parent committee for each activity. These parents work together with the coordinators, the youth committee and helpers during project activities, mainly helping with logistics and fundraising, and organizing other events such as school presentations, picnics and dinners. Generally, the parents view the nationalistic and conservative mind-sets surrounding the education system in Cyprus as very problematic. Being conscious of the hardships of the situation, they define themselves as persons who feel responsible for the future of their children, and who want to “work for a better future” (Field Notes, March 2016). While their work often involves close collaboration with teenagers and coordinators, they have certain control functions over teenagers in relation to financial issues; i.e. in the sale of promo materials.

When focusing on participatory processes, the question of privilege comes up. Arguably, participatory processes aim to redress societal power imbalances, which raises the question regarding which actors are empowered in the CFP’s organizational structure, while disempowered in society at large. As all CFP actors are volunteers, one could argue that the CFP as a whole encourages civil society empowerment and the activation and validation of ordinary citizens. But as our focus is on the organizational life *within* the CFP, it is the youngsters, the least privileged group in the CFP, who are of interest to our analysis. Youth participation redresses power imbalances caused by what is labelled adult privilege and sometimes connected to ageism – where “processes of age [function] as a constructed inequality” (Gordon, 2007: 634, see also Gordon & Taft, 2011: 1521) – and more in particular to adultism, defined by Checkoway (1996: 13; see also Flasher, 1978) as “all the behaviours and attitudes that flow from the assumption that adults are better than young people and are entitled to act upon young people without their agreements.” Adult privilege, and adultism, are often institutionalized, for instance in the educational system, which has in turn provoked resistance, as Delgado (2015: 67) remarks:

“Youth political organizing, particularly that related to schools, can be viewed as a contested response to adultism in a system that is youth-focused but does not value their inputs or seek to empower them [...].”

Even if privilege has intersectional dimensions (McIntosh, 2012: 198), in this case we need to keep in mind that all actors have a quite homogeneous socio-economic status, as the majority of teenagers come from private high schools. Still, coordinators and parent committee members have certain adult privileges as compared to the teenagers; i.e. financial and logistical tasks are exclusively performed by them. Most coordinators are teachers, which also strengthens their power position in relation to

the teenagers, who are students.

Though, on various occasions, coordinators underline their status as facilitators, not teachers, whose role is not to teach, but to “coordinate, provide workshops, supply transportation” (Field Notes, March 2016). Moreover, power differentials between the teenagers also exist (if only in the minds of some teenagers) between CFP teens and those who are active contributors, such as helpers and youth committee members.

Decisions (level 3)

On the third level of the analytical model, the attention is turned to the many decisions that characterize participatory processes, which will (on level 4) allow for identifying the power relations of the actors (identified on level 2) in relation to this multitude of decisions, conveniently grouped in decision-making clusters. With its format adapted from an established peace initiative in Northern Ireland, the strategic aspects of the CFP, including its aims and vision, and the activity program have more or less been established prior to the foundation of the CFP. Decisions made by the CFP actors are thus mainly related to the organization and the implementation of the project, which our analysis allows to group into three main clusters, as detailed below.

Decisions on Design and Planning: These decisions concern the preparation phases of the general project and the activities. Decisions on the design and planning of the general project involve setting of the ground rules, selection of participants and definition of the tasks to be carried out within the scope of the project; whereas decisions on the activities include the selection of helpers and their task allocation, as well as scheduling and content of the related activity. Design and planning decisions are instrumental for the implementation of the project, while those related to the general project have a higher level of significance than the decisions related to the activities, since they form the framework of operations within which the latter operate.

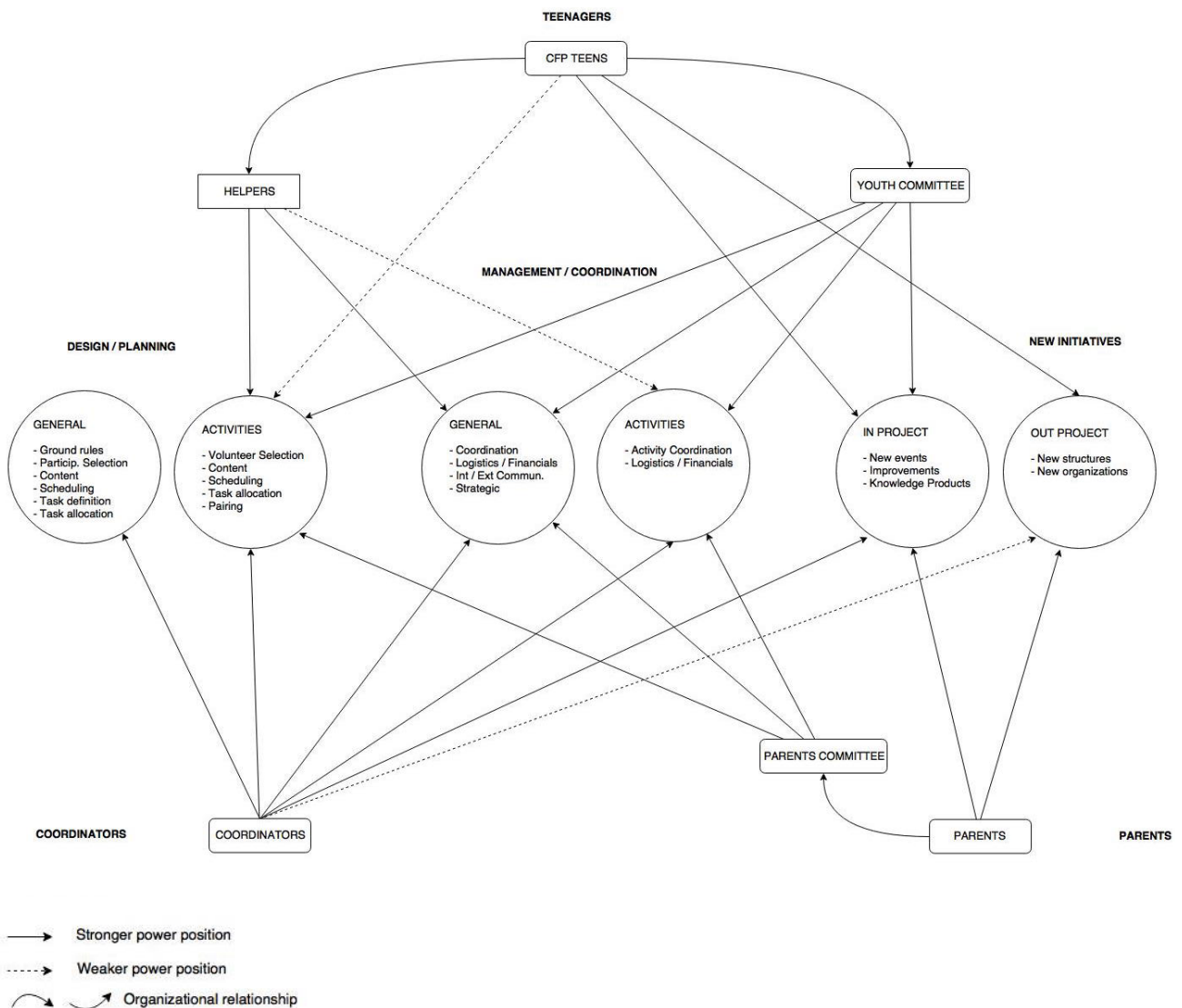
Decisions on Management and Coordination: These decisions are related to the management and coordination of the general project and the activities. Decisions related to the general project include strategic decisions concerning overall project resources, logistic and financial decisions, along with internal and external communication; while decisions on project activities cover the logistics and financial issues specific to each activity, and various informal decisions related to activity coordination. Overall, these decisions are also instrumental to the implementation of the project. General project-related decisions are mostly formal with a higher level of significance, while those related to the activities are less significant, but still important to ensure a smooth operation.

Decisions on New Initiatives: These decisions are related to the new initiatives developed by teenagers, parents or coordinators, which may take the form of organizing additional events and activities within the scope of the project, development of proposals and agendas for decision-making, as well as creating structures and other initiatives within or outside the project. Some of these initiatives are integrated into the structure of the CFP, such as the Alumni Association established by a 2009 CFP pair. Others involve initiatives by CFP teens that are formed outside the project, such as the peace camp C.E.L.T. for Peace, the bi-communal youth newspaper KY[[RIS, bi-communal dance groups, among others. Decisions on new initiatives do not directly concern the implementation of the project itself, therefore they have less significance than the other two clusters mentioned above.

Power relations (level 4)

When these decision-making clusters are examined in terms of the actors involved in the decisions and in terms of the power relations that structure them, we see that almost all clusters involve multiple groups of actors in the decision-making (for an overview, see Figure 1), except for the design and planning decisions, which are related to the general project. The decisions of the latter are made exclusively by the coordinators. Decisions related to the project activities (whether related to design/planning or management/coordination) have a higher diversity of actors involved in the decision-making, but the diversity is lower when it comes to decisions related to general management and new initiatives. This at least confirms the presence of a certain degree of participation. Still, a higher diversity of actors does not necessarily bring about a higher participatory intensity for the teenagers, when the individual tasks are concerned, and vice versa, as a closer look at the tasks in each cluster shows. When analyzing the three decision-making clusters in detail, a more complex set of power relations manifests itself.

Figure 1: Decisions / Actors (Authorship: Derya Yüksek and Nico Carpentier)



Design and planning decisions: In the design and planning of project activities, decision-making involves, on the surface, all groups of actors: Coordinators, teenagers and parents. However, the degree of such involvement largely depends on the type, scope and significance of the activity in question. For instance, decisions related to the selection of helpers for the summer camp and allocation of their tasks are made exclusively by the coordinators. Whereas for other activities, such as the Interview Day, the tasks to be carried out have less significance within the overall program, and here the volunteers are selected and tasks are allocated by the youth committee, in coordination with and according to the task definitions already established by the coordinators. As a youth committee member explains:

“They (coordinators) tell us ‘There are the roles, you may distribute them among volunteers’ [...] And then an email is sent to the people ‘If you want to assume a task, please contact with these names’. We talk with those, who contact us [...] Then we make the distribution” (Interview, Participant 6, April 2016).

Similarly, decisions related to the content and scheduling of the two pairing events are made by the coordinators only; while the content and schedule of the Graduation Day is prepared to a large extent by the volunteers and CFP teens, in consultation with the coordinators. A teenager, who volunteered in the Graduation Day in 2015, describes this process as follows:

“CFP sent us an email, telling us, ‘Graduation is close. Let’s do something [...] to sing, to organize other activities, maybe a talk’ [...] First, we came together as the volunteers and made a plan of the ceremony, and there were the coordinators telling us the official talks they need to do, like how the program will be [...] We gave the list of all the things we will be doing to the coordinators, and they did the timing.” (Interview, Participant 3, March 2016)

Decisions on Management and Coordination: When it comes to the management and coordination of the general project, the strategic decisions are made by the coordinators only, while decisions on logistics and financial matters are made together by the coordinators and the parent committee, without the involvement of teenagers. Most decisions on internal communication, including those related to general announcements and tasks, are made at the coordinator level, with a certain level of involvement of the youth committee and helpers concerning communication with volunteers and campers.

On the other hand, the coordination of activities involves more collaborative work, as the related decisions are made collectively by the coordinators, youth committee, parent committee and helpers, depending on the roles assumed in the given activity. In activities other than the summer camp, the role of helpers is less significant, such as starting games, preparing participant lists, doing attendance checks. In the camp organization, however, the complexity of roles (and related decisions) increases. As one of the helpers of the 2015 summer camp explains:

“Last year, I assisted with the organization of the camp and scheduling the activities [...] to determine how we can sequence the activities, which activity to do on which day, how we can help people that are coming from outside”. (Interview, Participant 1, March 2016)

Decisions on New Initiatives: New initiatives may be undertaken by any group of actors, and any related decisions may be made by the actors involved. The level of the coordinators’ involvement in such decisions depends on the nature and significance of the initiative. For instance, when organizing an additional event like a fundraising dinner, the planning and organization decisions are made by the teenagers and parents, with minimal involvement of the coordinators, who define their scope of involvement as providing necessary support, “combining the experience of older people with the enthusiasm, energy and new ideas of the younger people” (Anastasiou, N., Kahvecioglu, S., Interview, October 2015).

When these initiatives are related to the general aspects of the program, such as adjustments in the format of activities or knowledge products, decisions are made collectively by the youth committee, who develops ideas and pools proposals from teenagers, and the chief coordinators, who co-decide with the committee whether to implement such action.

“As the youth committee, we work on different things. For example, we want to organize a cycling tour [...] We have the aim to increase the effectiveness of the (CFP) internet site (...) There are also proposals coming from participants”. (Interview, Participant 6, April 2016)

When it comes to new structures developed outside the project, the decision-making power rests on the teenagers and parents, who often act independently, such as in the establishment of Alumni Association and Parent Association. Here, the role of the coordinators is limited to facilitation and to agreeing on whether to integrate this new structure in the project organization.

In sum, in the organizational process, “the initiative mostly comes from the top”, with coordinators deciding on the general frame and content of activities and making the task definitions, while volunteers assist in the organization by assuming the pre-defined tasks and contribute to the content of an activity within the frame provided by the coordinators (Interview, Participant 5, April 2016). Despite these power imbalances, caused by the strong role of the coordinators, there are still three different ways/levels through which teenagers participate in the CFP, resulting in an incremental change in relation to their power positions, as is detailed below.

Co-organization at lower levels: The co-organization of activities still offers a degree of control in the project, particularly concerning CFP teens and volunteers. The collaborative work of teenagers, volunteers and coordinators in the organization of the Graduation Day is one example of this level of participation. In this activity, the coordinators provide the general framework, i.e. what must be (official talks) and could be (songs, talks by teenagers) included in the program, while the specifics of the program content are, to a large extent, established by the teenagers:

“In total, we were 120 people as the CFP’ers of 2015. Around 60-70 people contributed to the organizing part [...] We gathered all we can do [...] They (coordinators) didn’t really intervene in our ideas, it was all our ideas, except the coordinator talks.” (Interview, Participant 3, March 2016)

These decisions are mostly informal and do not appear significant in themselves; however, their absence would disrupt the implementation of the activity. As the same teenager explains:

“Even though the part I did was really small, we still organized something. And I think that’s a big thing. I mean, hundreds of people came to that organization, our families were there...” (Interview, Participant 3, March 2016)

From the perspective of teenagers, the space given to them to decide on what to do is motivating by itself, and contributes to skills development, creating an environment, where they feel empowered both as individuals and as a group:

“We were like ‘Yes, we did this! We organized this talk and it had a huge applause!’ [...] It gave us the power that we can make decisions and it can work.” (Interview, Participant 3, March 2016)

Teamwork during activities: For helpers and youth committee members, participation takes the form of teamwork, and power relationships between the actors can be defined as power-sharing, with an increased number of co-decision making areas. The general framework is still provided by the coordinators, while teenagers take on more elaborate roles within the organizational structure, co-deciding with the coordinators on planning and coordination issues, and acting as a liaison between participants and other groups of actors.

The teamwork between helpers and coordinators during the summer camp is one example of this level of participation. Working in bi-communal pairs, who are responsible for a group of ten participants, helpers have a certain level of autonomy in making various informal decisions on practical issues, such as what is to be done in case of a problem, or how to respond to feedback. These decisions are made during the daily meetings, where the role of coordinators is limited to providing advice; a situation which the teenagers view as desirable:

“As all helpers, we were having a meeting each night. Sharing feedbacks that we receive from our group [...] Then we were meeting with the coordinators to discuss the same issues. Since everyone’s aim is the same, to solve that problem [...] coordinators most of the time say ‘yes, it can be done like this’, still add, ‘this is also possible.’ This is a supportive suggestion, like a life advice [...] I never felt as [someone] having authority (over me).” (Interview, Participant 1, March 2016)

The teamwork between the youth committee and chief coordinators is another example of power sharing, where each group of actors is responsible for certain tasks and makes the related decisions in coordination with each other. According to a youth committee member, this shifts the emphasis from individual capabilities to the “ability of working together”, which in turn feeds the collaborative potential:

“The hierarchical order on our minds created by age differences disappears [...] You go beyond this structuring, such as you went beyond Turkish Cypriot-Greek Cypriot distinction [...] Therefore, the teamwork gets easier and we have the opportunity to work together more”. (Interview, Participant 6, April 2016)

Self-organization of new initiatives: CFP participants are considered as new generation peace activists and are constantly encouraged to launch their own initiatives. This motivation directs some participants to think and act beyond the existing framework of the project, developing new ideas, proposals and structures within and outside the CFP. When it comes to these new initiatives, actors design and engage in an autonomous, collaborative work that builds on individual or collective ideas; and participation takes the form of self-organization. The participatory intensity is quite strong here. For instance, in organizing an additional social activity, teenagers (or parents) take the lead and deal with the organizational aspects, often in collaboration with each other, and the coordinators’ role is often limited to being consulted, informed or present.

“We organized a trip to the Tulip festival. My five friends, who attended the camp this year, took the initiative and organized a bi-communal bus taking off from Ledra Palace.” (Interview, Participant 1, March 2016)

The organization of a dinner, supported by the youth committee and the parents committee, also provides an example of self-organization:

“A dinner was organized for the support of CFP. At that dinner, we [the youth committee and the parents committee] worked together to contribute to the organization. There is a system organized, like ... we go and support, as well as parents go and contribute.” (Interview, Participant 6, April 2016)

Some other initiatives are situated completely outside the project in the form of separate structures, such as the summer camp C.E.L.T. for Peace and the bi-communal youth newspaper KY[R]IS, established by former CFP participants. Here, the high participatory intensities manifest themselves in the creation of other (participatory) organizations. These organizations are “inspired by”, collaborate with and are supported by the CFP; however, they maintain their independent decision-making mechanisms (Interview, Participant 5, April 2016).

Conclusion

Participatory contact zones do more than offer interaction to the actors that are involved in these processes. These zones place the participants in a setting of co-decision-making, which collectively empowers them by allowing them to play a significant role in the processes that they are engaged in. This notion of collective empowerment, which shifts beyond the self-enemy divide, also has the potential of contributing to conflict transformation, because of the affective and identificatory opportunities these experiences of co-decision-making offer. At the same time, we should not forget that interaction remains a necessary condition for participation, even if it is not a sufficient condition. Participatory contact zones also enable intense forms of interaction, which further strengthen their potential contribution to conflict transformation, more than ‘regular’ contact zones can do, because they run the risk of remaining limited to more casual forms of interactions. Co-decision-making, with all its complexities and contingencies, negotiations and turbulences, accomplishments and set-backs, offers the advantage of creating (and even requiring) more intense interactions. If these always-difficult processes do not result in break-ups, but can be handled agonistically (Mouffe, 2013), they can offer opportunities for the deconstruction of the ideological frameworks that define the other as enemy.

Of course, these theoretical considerations about the conflict transformative capacity of participatory contact zones are

dependent upon the participatory intensities of these types of contact zones. For this reason, there is a need to further unpack the notion of participation, as has been done in this article, something which the literature on conflict transformation has not sufficiently engaged in. Work from other academic fields needs to be included. For instance, quite a lot of authors (e.g., Arnstein, 1969) have pointed to the limited levels of participation (or its absence) in processes that are labelled participatory. Moreover, as this case study analysis of the CFP also shows, power dynamics are not straightforward and stable, but complex and contingent. One of the main advantages of the 12-step analytical model is that it brings out this complexity by heightening the sensitivities of researchers and, in the context of the participatory process, placing under scrutiny the multiplicity of (sub) processes, fields, actors, identities, decisions and power relations, and the contradictions that are an integral part of these constitutive components of participatory processes.

If we turn to our own case study, some modesty is required. Even if participatory analyses (in particular those using the 12-step model) require researchers to design research that is more focused and in-depth, we should acknowledge the limitations of this project and argue for more case studies, which also study (and compare) processes with different participatory intensities, which use different methodologies, and which also actively intervene in creating and supporting more maximalist participatory processes. Nevertheless, the very focused nature of this research project brings out relevant conclusions on demonstrating the complex nature of participatory processes and the workings of participatory contact zones.

The CFP case study shows us that the youngsters who are involved in the CFP do have a considerable power position, supported by particular internal structures (such as the youth committee), which effectively corrects the dynamics of adultism and collectively empowers the participants. Still, in a number of key realms of organizational decision-making, these youngsters remain excluded – or only have limited influence – which argues against labelling the CFP's internal structures as maximalist participatory. This nuanced outcome at the level of participatory intensities does not discredit the role that participatory projects and organizations such as the CFP can play in conflict transformation. Even though we should be careful not to exaggerate the peace-building capacity of one particular organization and take the many organizational vulnerabilities of these types of organizations into account, the analysis of the CFP as a participatory contact zone also demonstrates that these kinds of organizations, even if they 'only' have medium levels of participatory intensities, have clear benefits to offer towards peace-building activities in Cyprus – and in other countries in need of peace-building, conflict transformation or reconciliation.

Notes

- 1 <http://mahallae.org/civic-mapping/story/#38>.
- 2 This is a reference to one of our interviews. More information can be found below in the methodology part of this article.
- 3 The projects often use conflict resolution to describe themselves, but for reasons of consistency with the theoretical framework we use the term conflict transformation here.
- 4 The work of Treadwell (2014) and Yin (2014) was used as methodological support for the case study development.
- 5 We could not obtain sufficient information for our analysis from the representative of one (1) mapped project due to data confidentiality.
- 6 http://cyprusfriendship.org/?page_id=3861 Retrieved on 10 April, 2016.
- 7 http://cyprusfriendship.org/?page_id=3046 Retrieved on 10 April, 2016.
- 8 <http://cyprusfriendship.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/2016-Annual-Report-1.pdf>.
- 9 <http://hasna.org/program-areas/youth/cfp/> Retrieved on 10 April, 2016.

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Appendix 1: The 4-level & 12-step analytical model (Carpentier, 2016)

