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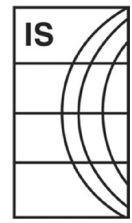

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abstract: Young people express an increasing rejection of institutional politics and its classic actors, which has led to the assertion that youth are apathetic. This article intends to show why this affirmation is partial and does not reflect the underlying complexity of what motivates political participation in young people. The hypothesis is that since young people interpret the youth condition as transitory, they do not consider youth political participation an end in itself. While the youth condition does not structure political participation or constitute actors and political projects, there are specificities of youth political participation that need to be identified. For the purpose of identifying what motivates youth to participate – and how and where do they tend to do so – three cases of political involvement are presented: ATTAC Argentina, the Klampun Community of Papua New Guinea and the World YWCA. The theoretical sections rest on a broadly based research study suggest a reformulation of the common adult perception on youth political participation.

keywords: activism ✦ NGOs ✦ political participation ✦ social movements ✦ volunteering ✦ youth

Introduction

More and more young people the world over are rejecting institutional politics and its classic actors. Many people attribute this behaviour to apathy, which – as is argued here – is only part of the story. The aim of this article is to bring into play the underlying complexity of what motivates political participation in young people today and describe the particular forms it assumes. As Heike Kahl, director of the German Children and Youth Foundation, states: 'If large classic organizations like the Scouts are not structures young people want to be organized around, the problem is not young people's' (interview), it is the problem of these organizations and the adult leaders running them.

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Since young people themselves interpret the youth condition as transitory, this article's hypothesis is that they do not consider youth political participation an end in itself. It is viewed, instead, as a means to a higher end and to a social role for the juvenile subject in the particular scenario in which he or she happens to be immersed. Consequently, the youth condition does not structure political participation or constitute actors and political projects, but rather life-worlds (or sensibilities) nearer at hand with their own codes and shared languages. *Faithful* to 'causes', not collectives, juvenile subjects have resignified the role of organizations and collective groups in their lives: they are channels kept working on the basis of the results obtained, and young people feel no need to sustain groups that do not deliver the desired results. Therefore, subjects in a youth condition do not inscribe themselves as such, introducing a new (generational) political cleavage in the public space; they seek instead to be inscribed as peers with a specificity (i.e. their unicity) while being accepted as part of a whole.

In this article, three cases are analysed in detail: the Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions to Aid Citizens (ATTAC) in Argentina, the Klampun Community in Papua New Guinea and the World Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). The three cases were chosen because they illustrate different types of participation (social movement, indigenous rural community and international organization); they take place in dissimilar contexts (Latin America, Europe and Oceania; rural and urban environments) and their political aims vary in type and scope. Finally, the article presents general conclusions that, departing from these illustrative cases, are based on the wider frame of the research project (Rossi, 2009).[1]

A Changing World: The Demise of 'Strong' Identities and Linear Biographies

The so-called classic (or national-popular) sociopolitical matrix, which articulated and shaped collective action and actors – the working-class movement, private enterprises, the state, etc. – and the way political disputes were resolved, predominated in the overwhelming majority of industrialized and industrializing countries until at least the mid-1970s (Garretón, 2002). The changes wrought by the dismantling of this matrix that favoured the articulation of social conflicts around the workers' movement have been diverse and far reaching.

As a result, individuals are suffering the dissolution of the certainty referents that characterized socio-labour, family and political relations for the last 50 years. The reduced social role of the state (Europe, the US,

Australia) and the disappearance of a certain economic-productive development pattern (Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa) are not the only products of this deinstitutionalization of the collective frames that structured social and individual identity; it has also meant 'the disintegration of the certainties of industrial society [or its local equivalents], along with the compulsion to find and invent new certainties for oneself and others' (Beck, 1994: 14).

One of the most important consequences of this process has been the demise of 'strong' social and political identities, which have become increasingly ephemeral and partial, more fragmented and less inclusive (Garretón, 2002; Svampa, 2000). In short, it is no longer possible to affirm with the same degree of certainty identities encompassing a multiplicity of actors and subjects. Equally relevant is the fact that the position occupied in the social structure and the social roles played are no longer uppermost in determining a subject's identity. The end of meta-narratives (Lyotard, 1999) and party communities (Manin, 1992), as well as the growing reflexivity/*fragilisation* of the individual (Beck, 1994; Castel, 1997), have dissolved the univocal correspondence between the social and the political dimensions of reality, understood as the basis for structuring homogeneous political groups along class and generational lines. Yet this does not mean that individuals are totally bereft of a matrix of conflictive relations.

Another significant consequence of the loss of 'strong' identities is the growing independence of biography from the unavoidable biological linearity of life (Melucci, 1996). In other words, the relationship between biography and biology/lifecycle has been weakened, diversifying consequences and possible trajectories. Except at the extremes of birth and death, an individual's biography is now less dependent on biological linearity. Until modern times, an individual's lifetime was governed by linear and circular time: a lifetime consisted of a series of clear, sequenced stages occurring in naturally determined cycles. At present, however, individual biographies are primarily reflexive, individualized constructions in which identities are no longer 'strong' (not linked centripetally to a sociopolitical matrix); life histories unfold, instead, in scenarios where inequities persist in a context of growing interdependency and 'glocality' (Robertson, 1995), within which the state has lost the exclusive pre-eminent role of defining patterns of social relationships (Svampa, 2000).

Many studies (Rudd and Evan, 1998; Smith and Rojewski, 1993; Wyn and Dwyer, 2000; Wyn and White, 1997) have indicated that patterns such as 'extended' youth, 'precocious' youth or adulthood and the 'advance and retreat' from adulthood to youth should not be viewed as 'pathological' or 'dysfunctional'. They are, in fact, signs of the new life pattern characterizing late modernity. This should not be taken to mean, however, that the former

Table 1 *Notions of Youth and Adulthood*

Youth	Adult
Not adult/ adolescent	Adult/grown up
Becoming	Arrived
Pre-social self that will emerge under the right conditions	Identity is fixed
Powerless and vulnerable	Powerful and strong
Less responsible	Responsible
Dependent	Independent
Ignorant	Knowledgeable
Risky behaviours	Considered behaviours
Rebellious	Conformist
Reliant	Autonomous

Source: Wyn and White (1997: 12).

pattern has disappeared, but rather that it coexists with many other possible biographical options. As Melucci states:

> In contemporary society, in fact, youth is no longer a mere biological condition, but rather a cultural definition. Uncertainty, mobility, transitoriness, openness to change, all traditional attributes of adolescence as a transitional phase, seem to have moved far beyond biological limits in order to become a widespread cultural connotation assumed by individuals as part of their personality at different stages in their life. (Melucci, 1996: 4–5)

Adulthood as predefined condition, characterized by qualities such as those shown in Table 1, is no longer a 'point of arrival' in life, but rather an oscillating, relative, transitory state akin to the *youth condition*. A contemporary subject lives a non-linear biography, going through stages in which characteristics generally associated with the adult condition are pre-eminent (e.g. being required to economically support his or her family), while finding him/herself at other times in a youth condition (e.g. as full-time student) or in periods when both conditions coexist (e.g. growing sociocultural independence along with economic dependency). A young Argentine clearly expresses this situation when he explains why regular, linear political participation is difficult: '[There exists] greater pressure in family and social life, owing to the need for more training, continuous training, coupled with precarious jobs, multi-employment' (quoted in Balardini, 2005: 25).

Definition of the Youth Condition

In light of the above, at present it is misleading to continue speaking in terms of a mythical, homogeneous youth according to any of the following

three, most common interpretations (in which all young people are identified with the qualities of some of them):

- *Gilded youth* (Braslavsky, 1986: 13), in which the tendency is to identify 'all young people with the "privileged" ones – either carefree or actively defending their privileges, with individuals having free time in which to enjoy leisure activities and, even broader in scope, enjoying a *social moratorium* that allows them to live without anxiety or responsibilities' (Margulis and Urresti, 1996: 14, n. 2).
- *Grey youth* (Braslavsky, 1986: 13), in which 'young people appear as the depository of all evil, the segment of the population most affected by the crisis, by authoritarian society, as accounting for the majority of the unemployed, delinquents, the poor, the apathetic' (Margulis and Urresti, 1996: 14, n. 2).
- *White youth,* 'or marvellous, pure personages that will save humanity, which will do what their parents couldn't, participative, ethical, etc.' (Braslavsky, 1986: 13).

The youth condition no longer comprises one stage in a linear biological-biographical sequence (i.e. static and dependent on some physiological-natural process); but rather in light of the transformations summarily described in the earlier section, it can be better depicted as a sociocultural, historically circumscribed, transitory construction that does not necessarily correspond to the physical phenomena experienced as a subject develops biologically (Alpízar and Bernal, 2003: 13–14; Valenzuela, 1998: 38–9). Moreover, the new matrix and growing complexity, together with the end of meta-narratives, have combined to make *homogeneous* 'Youth . . . a meaningless concept when removed from its historical, socio-cultural context' (Valenzuela, 1998: 38). Situated contextually, the youth condition becomes the product of dispute and negotiation processes involving young people's own representations and those of external sources (allies and antagonists).

Despite the fact that global transformations are converting adulthood as a culminating point of stability into an increasingly meaningless pipe dream, their impact has been far from uniform. Experiencing the growing multiplicity of identity representations coexisting within the youth condition has given rise to a subject immersed in disputes and negotiations involving gender, ethnicity, etc. And within this interplay of diverse factors, two key dimensions need to be taken into account. First, unlike ethnicity or gender, the youth condition is both transitory and recurrent (in accordance with the new, non-linear pattern). However, its transitory nature does not imply a lack of specificity.

Second, how juvenile subjects experience the dissolution of reference principles – as emancipation or as fragility and vulnerability – defines

whether or not the youth condition takes the form of a social moratorium. Many Balkan young people have suffered the 1990 wars, which, according to Alexandra Vidanovic, youth specialist of the Balkan Children and Youth Foundation in Macedonia, have marked their lives: 'specifically young people have been turned into *young-old people* . . . having grown up and matured too soon' (interview). Yet these subjects cannot be considered anything but young within the framework of the social relations they establish. This is also true for the cases presented as not *strictly* juvenile (see Table 1). One example is young people from Sub-Saharan Africa, many of whom were obliged to take on adult tasks when orphaned by HIV/AIDS. The above are only a couple of examples of the innumerable historical and sociocultural contexts that define the youth condition.

In short, since a youth condition defined by age range does not allow for a universally applied explanation due to not taking into account environment, social relations and specific particularities, *being young* should be defined as a social condition.

The Forms of Political Participation among Subjects in a Youth Condition

Unlike what occurred in the public space under the classic matrix, this multiplicity of subjects, mediated by diverse identities, some transitory and others permanent or elective, do not lend themselves to organizing around a single overriding principle. 'Being young' does not imply the presence of a political actor because public space is no longer organized in this way. As is seen in two of the cases analysed in this article, young people generally become politically active in response to particular junctures, organizations, ideas, projects and specific networks where they shape their identity and participatory models. Political participation is primarily transgenerational, although peer groups – urban tribes for example – also exist.

Particular sensibilities specific to the youth condition and based on shared experiences can be observed as a common pattern (Garretón, 1999). While no political actors or projects are formed based on a generational cleavage, shared life-worlds take shape instead, resulting in common codes and languages.

The first question posed when analysing all the cases comprising this research was: *What most frequently motivates political activation of young people?* In accordance with the broadly based research comprised by the whole set of cases (see Rossi, 2009), three dimensions must be analysed in order to provide an adequate answer. First, on an individual dimension of analysis, it can be said that young people tend to become politically active

when concrete causes are linked to them autobiographically, allowing them to satisfy both personal and social aims simultaneously. This leads to four alternative models of motivation for political participation (emerging in combination also): (1) for personal realization through helping others (Beck, 1999: 14), the model generally adopted by volunteers; (2) because of a personal problem; (3) for professional reasons; and/or (4) to put ideals and principles into practice.

There is a second dimension that should be considered, namely the contextual one. This is so because the youth condition does not exist in a vacuum, independent of milieu and the sociopolitical cleavages defining conflicts in the society at large. Indeed, young people are often impelled towards political participation at critical junctures, interpreted by subjects as defining in radical terms the basic course of humanity (or a nation) and/or their way of life – present and future – in real time. This second analytical dimension sheds light on the specific dynamics at play in the sociopolitical context occupied by the young people in question.

And finally, there is an organizational dimension. One of the patterns characterizing present-day youth is their rejection of institutional politics (parties, unions, etc.). Yet this by no means implies that they oppose social and political participation in general (Mokwena and Dunham [1999: 3], for example, found that 72 percent of the young people surveyed in the US participated in community or associative activities). In the words of the director of the German Children and Youth Foundation:

> There [in Germany] we have a contradiction. . . . it is true that young people are less and less organized into organizations. The membership is dropping in large youth organizations. In the past these organizations were seen as the guarantee of youth participation. But more and more young people go outside these large organizations, organizing themselves into informal groups. The contradiction is that . . . if you ask them, they are extremely ready to accept responsibility and get involved, but not in these old structures. They feel very strongly that these old structures are no longer . . . good structures for becoming really involved. (Heike Kahl, interview)

Dilemma or contradiction, this situation affecting political institutions that defined and structured political identities and social conflicts under the classic matrix elicits statements like the following: 'Everyone – the institutional elites as much as the young – seem to foresee that this politics of unanimous abstinence, if practised consistently, sooner or later raises the problem (at least in the European *milieu* of inclusive democracy) of the system itself'' (Beck, 1999: 13).

While this may be true in Western Europe and a few other countries, generalized abstinence is viewed with relief, not concern, by political elites in the Global South. Rather than questioning the system in regions with marked

social, economic, cultural and political exclusion, political abstinence, whether or not institutional, in combination with the regression of the state, keeps the system from collapsing under an overload of demands.

In addition to this debate, a common pattern among young people the world over is a tendency to reject institutional politics and its classic actors, which leads to the next question: *Why are the 'new' social movements more attractive than the classic actors to already active young persons?* The answer would appear to be that, more than any other kind of collective action, social movements establish a direct connection with the aforementioned individual dimension. As Melucci states:

> Movements are instruments that speak through action. It is not that words are not spoken, not that they don't use slogans or send messages. But their function as intermediaries between the dilemmas of the system and people's daily life manifests itself in what they do: their main message is the mere fact that they exist and act. (Melucci, 1996: 7).

In other words, social movements appear as actors gathering together the very qualities that politically motivate young people: the opportunity to participate socially and/or politically and see results in real time. In the words of a young man from Kenya when asked about his interest or expectation regarding his political involvement: 'I expect to see results take shape' (Mjomba, interview).

All things considered, when speaking of social movements, we are referring to a multiplicity of actors and, consequently, of ways of organizing. This is why three different cases have been selected as illustrative examples: ATTAC in Argentina, a new organization of the alter-globalization movement; the Kamplun Community, a rural, ethnically based communitarian collective; and the YWCA, a Christian organization in existence for more than a century focusing on young women.

ATTAC in Argentina

The Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions to Aid Citizens (ATTAC) was founded in France in 1998. It grew out of the broad-based response to a proposal, made by Ignacio Ramonet (editor-in-chief of *Le Monde Diplomatique*), for taxing speculative financial transactions and using the revenue collected to improve living conditions in developing countries. Quickly spreading to more than 30 countries, ATTAC soon became one of the mainstays of the alter-globalization movement. ATTAC can be defined as a transnational advocacy network, making possible the exchange of information based on shared cross-border discourses, for the purpose of broaching new themes by seeking to transform the terms and nature of debate (Keck and Sikkink, 1998).

The organization arrived in Argentina in 1999 through the initiative of ATTAC France, a group of Argentine intellectuals, the YMCA of Argentina, the Argentine Judicial Federation and the Association of Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises (APyME). According to interviewees, despite the participation of the YMCA, young people were not involved in founding ATTAC in Argentina.

At the international level, ATTAC can be defined as a lax network (lacking any formal international infrastructure) with a moderate – anti-neoliberal – wing and a radical – anti-capitalist – one. This decentralized network employs different coordinating mechanisms – an annual world assembly that takes place during the World Social Forum and regional meetings – operating under the auspices of the informal hierarchy of ATTAC France. Functioning as 'pace setter' for the transnational network, the French office is the obligatory point of reference for the other ATTAC branches. All the same, given ATTAC's global nature, different tendencies do coexist within the network, as already mentioned. For example, while identifying themselves as anti-capitalist, interviewees acknowledged occupying a minority position among ATTAC members, most of whom identified themselves as anti-neoliberal in France and Latin America, especially in Chile, one of the main Latin American branches (Rossi, 2008).

National particularities aside, ATTAC Argentina is organized following the French model, the same format adopted by most ATTACs around the world. While there are 30,000 ATTAC adherents in more than 100 cities in France (Merino, 2001: 29), in Argentina there are around 100 participants in two cities, Buenos Aires and Rosario, 30 of whom are active.

Young People in ATTAC

The young people interviewed, ex-student activists (socialists and left-wing independents), were drawn to ATTAC through involvement in some other activity. One young woman interviewed approached the organization after being invited by the Federation of Argentine Workers (CTA) to represent her student group in the 'Encounter for a New Thinking', which took place before ATTAC Argentina came into existence. She emphasized that she found ATTAC's 'concrete', or proactive approach extremely attractive. As she tells it:

> The young people that made contact, for some of them it was because they saw the idea of the tax as excellent. Like what happened to me, many saw . . . a concrete proposal. Not just 'blah-blah', not just 'no to this, no to that'. Rather there was a 'yes to this, we want this'. (Luciana, interview)

The 'concrete' or proactive factor of an organization is very important for attracting young people's participation. They are not interested in extensive platforms and slogans, preferring instead specific proposals

(a tax on financial transactions) with a clear, measurable objective (distribute the proceeds among poorer countries).

The young people interviewed – lawyers and a political scientist – also acknowledged that compatibility between professional interests and ATTAC objectives had been significant in attracting them. For example, Javier, the current coordinator of the Buenos Aires Committee, became interested in the organization in 2002, a time of great social and political ferment in Argentina. Important incentives were his familiarity with international law, and his participation in informal networks of student activists and progressive lawyers (it should be remembered that one of the founding organizations was the Argentine Judicial Federation). This same nexus between activism and professional-biographical development allowed him to link into ATTAC both through participation in public talks and debates, and by coordinating the organization in Buenos Aires.

Luciana was also influenced by the relationship between activism and professional-biographical advancement, which in her case was even stronger:

> What was very relevant to me is that I got very much involved in the issue of the FTAA [Free Trade Area of the Americas, a theme later taken up by ATTAC Argentina], and I began to specialize in the FTAA. So academically I began to specialize in the FTAA and, at the same time, I was an FTAA activist. Both sides were useful . . . like in a dual circuit feedback. (interview)

Prior participation in informal mobilization and activist networks – student networks in the case of the two interviewees – are crucial factors that promote the gradual involvement of young people in different movements. Yet it should be stressed that meta-prescriptive causes do not motivate activism (which does not rule out utopias and ideals). Instead, what appeals to young people are propositional projects offering not facile but achievable results in a foreseeable future. This complements the biographical incentive, in this case the desire for professional advancement. Activism is viewed not as demanding sacrifice and self-denial, but rather as an opportunity for mutually reinforcing development: subjects enrich organizations with their participation and are themselves enriched in turn.

Young People and Protest Cycles

Participation in ATTAC remained stable until President Fernando de la Rúa resigned in December 2001, resulting in the most severe regime crisis in Argentina since the return of democracy in 1983. The social explosion during December 2001 and January 2002 showed how various interim Peronist presidents were unable to control the situation, while the population actively participated in *cacerolazos*, mostly spontaneous protests in which people beat pots and pans in the streets (Rossi, 2005a, 2005b). As

the cycle of mobilization grew, blocking off streets by the *piquetero* movement (comprised of the unemployed and excluded) became increasingly frequent. In addition, two new social movements were born. In one, the *ahorristas* demonstrated to demand that their bank savings be returned to them in the currency deposited (US dollars) and not devalued pesos. In the other, the assemblies' movement, people – in general – met to repudiate the state of siege imposed by the de la Rúa government in the hope of 'rescuing' democracy from the Argentine elites, who had shown themselves singularly incapable of overcoming the crisis. The magnitude of this latter movement – at least in the Argentine capital – is clearly shown by the number of assemblies taking place in metropolitan Buenos Aires: a total of 113 in March 2002, each attended by between 70 and 150 people (Rossi, 2005a, 2005b: 204).

This was the critical scenario leading a large number of Argentines, especially from the urban middle classes, to feel that the political (corruption) and economic (neoliberalism) patterns in force during the prior decade (1991–2001) needed to be immediately and radically redefined. Many young people became politically active due to this juncture, participating in the assemblies' movement and joining diverse pre-existing movements, ATTAC Argentina among them. Activist Luciana describes the eruption as follows: 'there are like cycles in which you don't have a single young person, or epochs in which we were like 80 percent young people . . . it has to do, too, with the period of political participation being lived in Argentina because [youth] isn't an island' (interview).

According to the narratives of those interviewed, most of the young people getting involved with ATTAC at this time had belonged to university student groups and were studying for degrees in ATTAC-related fields such as law, international relations, economics and political science. Yet, with the exception of one person who joined on the recommendation of a relative participating in ATTAC France, the actual link with the organization came about because 'they found out through Internet' (Javier, interview). This is one of the three most common means used by young people to approach social movement organizations; the other two are student networks and family members.

During this period of intense social mobilization, young ATTAC activists worked primarily on the Coordinating Committee. At their initiative, this committee created a Mobilization Commission, whose purpose was 'to keep ATTAC in the street with the people' (Javier, interview). A predominant characteristic among young activists is the desire to participate in activities with a clear impact.

When the political system was institutionally rechannelled in Argentina by presidential elections in April 2003, young people's participation in

ATTAC began to fall off. Without minimizing the decisive role played by national political dynamics in this demobilization, certain internal circumstances must also be taken into account: (1) the initial attraction for young people had been the opportunity to work for something concrete (the Tobin Tax), and many did not accept the decision by the organization of giving priority to new issues (regional integration and the FTAA); and (2) certain activists with more years of experience did not act in a transparent way and exhibited *vertical* behaviour.

These internal factors, in combination with the decline in the protest cycle, led young people to distance themselves from routine organizational activities. They nonetheless continued participating in specific ATTAC events. As Luciana expressed it: 'You belong to the cause, but you don't participate in any concrete activity' (interview). In other words, they did not stop feeling themselves part of ATTAC; they simply distanced themselves from the 'militants' or 'hard core' inner circle to join the circle of the 'linked' or 'sympathizers'. These youngsters still consider themselves part of an epistemic community, which Javier defined as follows: 'We are connected since globalization affects each and every one of us' (interview), with some participating actively only at particular moments.

Figure 1 provides a more complex picture of participation than the one that emerges when activism is gauged exclusively on the basis of regular involvement in the organizational routine. This new schema offers a better view of the types and scales of participation necessary for the functioning of social organizations. It also sheds light on young people's access to participation in the 'hard core' inner circle (as is analysed in the other two cases later).

Not Belonging to the 'Hard Core' Inner Circle Does Not Imply a Lack of Commitment

The fact that these young people no longer belong to ATTAC's 'hard core' inner circle does not imply that they have abandoned the organization and its principles in particular, or activism in general. This became clear in 2003 when ATTAC decided to dedicate more time and effort to issues that were seen as nearer to Argentinean concerns due to the low impact of the Tobin Tax on the national agenda. As a result, ATTAC, along with 150 other social and political organizations, participated in the 'First Popular Referendum on the FTAA, Foreign Debt and Militarization'. In order to test public opinion on these three important topics, 5896 voting sites were set up around the country. The referendum was a success, with 2,552,358 persons casting a vote (Bidaseca and Rossi, 2008).

Many young people no longer active in ATTAC reappeared at this time, 'because it was something specific' (Javier, interview). In other words, the popular referendum represented a concrete objective for obtaining measurable results, which made participation truly worthwhile. In the words

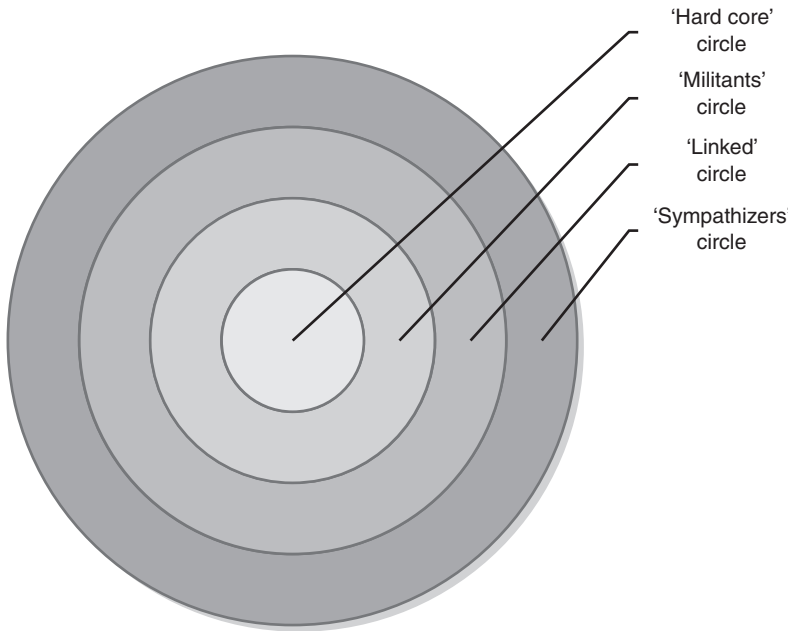


Figure 1 *Concentric Circles of Participation in Social Movement Organizations*

Key: 'Hard core' circle: The permanent militants and those who are part of the staff (paid or not). This circle comprises the persons who sustain the daily routine functioning of the organization.
'Militants' circle: The persons who participate in mobilization activities and in specific events. Sometimes they participate in routine activities, but they are not involved in the functioning of the organization on a daily basis. This circle comprises the persons who are unconditionally mobilized.
'Linked' circle: The persons who are available for participation when they are rallied for specific activities if this is for short, predetermined periods of time. This circle comprises the persons who perceive themselves as members of the organization, and who pay a membership fee where one exists.
'Sympathizers' circle: The persons who are connected to the organization in some way or another and who adhere to the cause, pay a membership fee (if such exists) and receive the material produced by the organization. These persons are never mobilized.

of Luciana, 'It was like making a common cause in order to organize something concrete like the Referendum for which all hands were needed. At that time a bunch of people that I hadn't seen for a year resurfaced. But they appeared in order to work on the Referendum' (interview).

Although once the activity ended, the majority of these young people again withdrew, they continue to consider themselves activists linked to ATTAC primarily by Internet, exchanging emails and documents and

participating in electronic debates. They no longer attend Coordinating Committee meetings but are still 'linked' and can be counted on – as was shown – when needed.

In addition to illustrating the different types and scales of participation, the above example suggests that for young people, activism is not a duty, but rather a provisional commitment in which *fidelity* is to a 'cause' and not an organization. In other words, the individual and his or her biographical realization – as an activist and in life in general – take precedence over 'blind' loyalty to an organization. The profound transformations briefly described earlier and the demise of 'strong' identities have meant that the singularity of individual subjects in a youth condition is never obliterated in favour of collective interests. As seen in Luciana and Javier, regular participation in the daily routine is maintained only when accompanied by the opportunity for personal enrichment – professional in these two cases – and the feeling of making a contribution to the organization or 'cause'. In short, participation is linked to biographical realization.

The Klampun Community in Papua New Guinea

Patrick is a young member of the Sulka tribe, a rural clan community based on subsistence agriculture living in the province of East New Britain, Papua New Guinea. The area occupied by the Sulka tribe, which is extremely rich in natural resources, has lost 40 percent of its tropical forest. Lack of opportunities and deforestation have compelled many young people to migrate to the city, which Patrick did at the age of 19. But after failing to gain admission to the university, he felt his life had lost meaning and drowned his sorrows in drink.

While suffering an erratic period in his life, his older sister, who works for a local NGO called the East New Britain Sosel Ekson Komiti (ENBSEK), presented Patrick with an opportunity that changed his life. As he describes it:

> It was through my older sister, who works in ENSBEK, that I was chosen to participate in an educational trip to the countryside. We visited communal projects being carried out by the local communities. These communities were well organized and had the capacity to do a great deal for promoting self-sustaining activities. They didn't need money to begin these projects, just readily available local materials. Their lives depended on resources based [on work] in the community. They didn't have to go to town to look for work or money. There was a lot to do at home. People lived very well; they had enough to eat and were aware of the importance of their natural environment. (Patrick, interview)

What Patrick observed in the Tiemtop Community was the first project for generating an Area of Natural Conservation, carried out by the ENBSEK NGO in cooperation with a local tribe – the Mengen, 100 persons

organized into five clans. ENBSEK is an organization seeking to conserve natural resources and restore the traditional subsistence way of life of the region's original inhabitants, who lived in harmony with nature.

Nonetheless, the experience that Patrick is seeking to replicate in his own community is social and political in nature: it involves recuperating the traditional culture of the native people that, according to him, was lost with the arrival of westerners. Living in harmony with nature is a prime tenet of the local culture. It also represents the community's struggle to salvage what remains of the virgin forest. To this end, after having fought the state and corporations to stop deforestation, the community, with technical assistance from ENBSEK, set up a self-management system for living in a sustainable fashion in accordance with traditional practices. One aspect of the struggle was to oblige the government to enforce the Conservation of Natural Areas in Papua New Guinea Act (1978), a rare achievement according to those involved. This is the experience that gave new meaning to Patrick's life, making him feel useful and equipped to play a role in his community: 'This was a turning point for me, I was challenged, I needed to help my community to help themselves. I soon realized that I had a great role to play in my community' (interview).

Despite its particularities, Patrick's case is an example of the importance of a personal experience that 'awakens' interests, stimulating political involvement and giving new meaning to life. In the words of an expert on youth from the Sri Lankan Millennium Institute for Children with Special Needs:

> I believe that young people that take the step of getting involved and becoming active politically or socially generally do so as the result of a personal experience that has obliged them to intensify their awareness of social/political issues. When I talk with young activists about their activism, the common thread is this 'awakening' experience. In themselves the experiences are very different, some had teachers or relatives that got them involved, others have travelled and become aware of the inequities in our world, and others have seen or experienced suffering or discrimination very close to home. (Jane H., interview)

Patrick experienced this 'awakening' after seeing the project put into effect by the Tiemtop Community. As the expert quoted above indicated, the family is often an important factor in promoting youth political engagement, as was the case with Patrick. He realizes that participating in his community and helping it to replicate what he saw, and to save the forest where they all live, is very important, not only because he will be helping his community, but also because he will be continuing the family tradition of subsistence agriculture. He also observes that saving the environment is something that must be undertaken now because the present and future of all their lives are at stake. As he expresses it: 'Having seen the scenario of what will be left to us in the future, I am not going to take my eye off the issue that is eating up the fabric of my society' (Patrick, interview).

Yet this macrosocial objective, inserted in the conflicts of his own community and the entire world, is not unrelated to the biographical motivation that made him want to transform his community: 'This project should allow us to create an environment in which people's needs, intentions and desires will be completely satisfied through their own effort, thus making our community more attractive than going to look for a job and favouring urban life' (interview).

This recalls his own life history when he himself migrated to the city, 'favouring urban life' and suffering the typical frustrations of rural migrants: alienation, desolation and exclusion. The marginality he managed to recover from has also defined his struggle to preserve a way of life he came to see through new eyes, and to find ways to save other young people from suffering what he did.

The particularities of the milieu in which this project takes place – a rural setting based on clan organization – will determine the means employed to bring about the 'involvement of the community . . . working to promote the environmental campaign for protecting natural resources' (*Source:* Klampun Wildlife Management Area brochure, 2003). This is why, after an arduous effort to be recognized as a young person who not only must listen to his elders, but can also express himself, Patrick has earned the right to play the role of facilitator and promoter of debates among clan representatives. This will allow him to achieve his aim of organizing the tribe communally so that its members can defend and administer the 5200 ha they have managed to save from deforestation.

When asked about the means used to put into practice this project, Patrick replied that he works with clan representatives – assembling the entire tribe at times – to resolve conflicts through debate and dramatization, reducing the distance between clan members and uniting the community around a collective project. To this end, they have even ecologically constructed a meeting hall, using reeds and tree trunks found in the area, where clan leaders come for discussion and debate. In short, the entire community, of their own accord, have become involved in a communal project – through clan representatives and general assemblies – in order to defend their culture and natural environment.

The case of the Klampun Community and Patrick's personal experience once again draw attention to the importance of the link between macrosocial considerations and personal biography. Like Luciana in ATTAC, in the present instance activism is linked to professional discovery: 'I personally want to be a professional teacher, which would imply being recognized [by the community], using this to help communities help themselves' (Patrick, interview).

Finally, again like the ATTAC example, political participation by young people is not structured by their youth condition; instead, activists

immerse themselves as much as possible in the same institutional and/or social web they wish to become part of. Thus they do not seek recognition as young people, but rather as activists, facilitators, etc. Patrick summarizes young people's most common perception of the youth condition as follows: 'I won't remain young forever. I must prepare myself for the next stage of my life. I have to take into account my leadership role when I am young in order to favour developing my skills [to help the community], which will determine the figure I cut in the future' (interview).

In summary, the youth condition is transitory and youth participation is not an end in itself; it is, instead, a means for achieving greater things, as well as the opportunity to play a social role in the sociohistorical context in which they are immersed (in a survey carried out in 1996 among persons between 15 and 24 years of age attending a youth camp in the city of Bangio in the Philippines, very similar responses were obtained; see IYF, 1996: 105).

The World YWCA

The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) was founded in Great Britain for the purpose of 'respond[ing] to the housing, recreation, and spiritual needs of young girls who had migrated to the cities during the Industrial Revolution' (World YWCA website, 2005).[2] In 1894, the World YWCA was formed by joining together the national associations from Great Britain, Norway, Sweden and the US.

More than a century old, with branches in 122 countries and 25 million female members (including all circles of participation), the YWCA is one of the most important global organizations. Its mission is described as follows:

> The World YWCA joins together national associations in a global movement of female volunteer members. Inspired by the Christian faith, the purpose of the World YWCA is to develop the leadership and collective capacity of women and girls around the world in order to achieve human rights, health, security, dignity, freedom, justice and peace for all peoples' (*Source:* 'Tools for Change' brochure, World YWCA, 2003)

On both national and global levels, the collective promotes two types of action to reach its objectives. On the one hand, it offers capacity-building and training for women and carries out social contention programmes and services, together with community empowerment programmes. On the other hand, it mobilizes the collective power of women in order to fight for their rights and world peace. In this regard it participates in United Nations activities involving women issues, and is one of the organizations participating in the peace process for the Middle East. Given this dual aim, the World YWCA must be classified as a 'hybrid' organization, not a social movement organization.

The term ' "hybrid" organization' was coined by Minkoff (2002: 381) to refer to organizations that fight for social change like social movement organizations, while offering at the same time the type of communitarian and social services typical of civil associations and NGOs (e.g. a girls' shelter). In any analysis of the YWCA, this dual purpose, which distinguishes it from the two cases studied in the earlier sections, must be taken into account because of its multiple means for participation and reasons for joining and maintaining membership, not all being political motivations. The combination of lobbying activities and political struggle with social protection programmes is acknowledged by YWCA world president Mónica Zetzsche, when speaking of rotation among the association's active volunteers:

> Volunteers are never lost, but they rotate. . . . And besides, I think that we form a protection network . . . in this period of unemployment in Argentina and Latin America; they find ways to feel really useful. . . . And when they find a job, we don't see them or we see them very little . . . or we can [just] ask them for something specific. (interview)

This social security objective takes different forms, according to the particular context in which the organization functions. In Africa, for example, 12- to 13-year-old girls come seeking a place in a YWCA home because they have been orphaned or want to escape from forced marriages.

In the words of Natasha, one of the young members of the International Executive Committee:

> Once you are a member of the YWCA (and this is very common) and you have the opportunity to travel and see other YWCAs, you will never leave it. . . . Because you understand that you will find a friend in each part of the world. And if, for example, you take a vacation in a country where you know somebody in the YWCA, you will be . . . it's like a big, big family where people you don't know and that live in different parts of the world consider each other part of the same family. (interview)

In other words, above and beyond diverse contexts and objectives, the organization is termed 'hybrid' because it brings women together to fight for their rights and also contains them during difficult times and makes them feel part of something. This creates a two-pronged bond of solidarity and sense of belonging. As Tarrow (1997: 316–17) argues, this does not rule out political motivations but is a factor favouring cohesion.

Young Women's Participation in the International Sphere

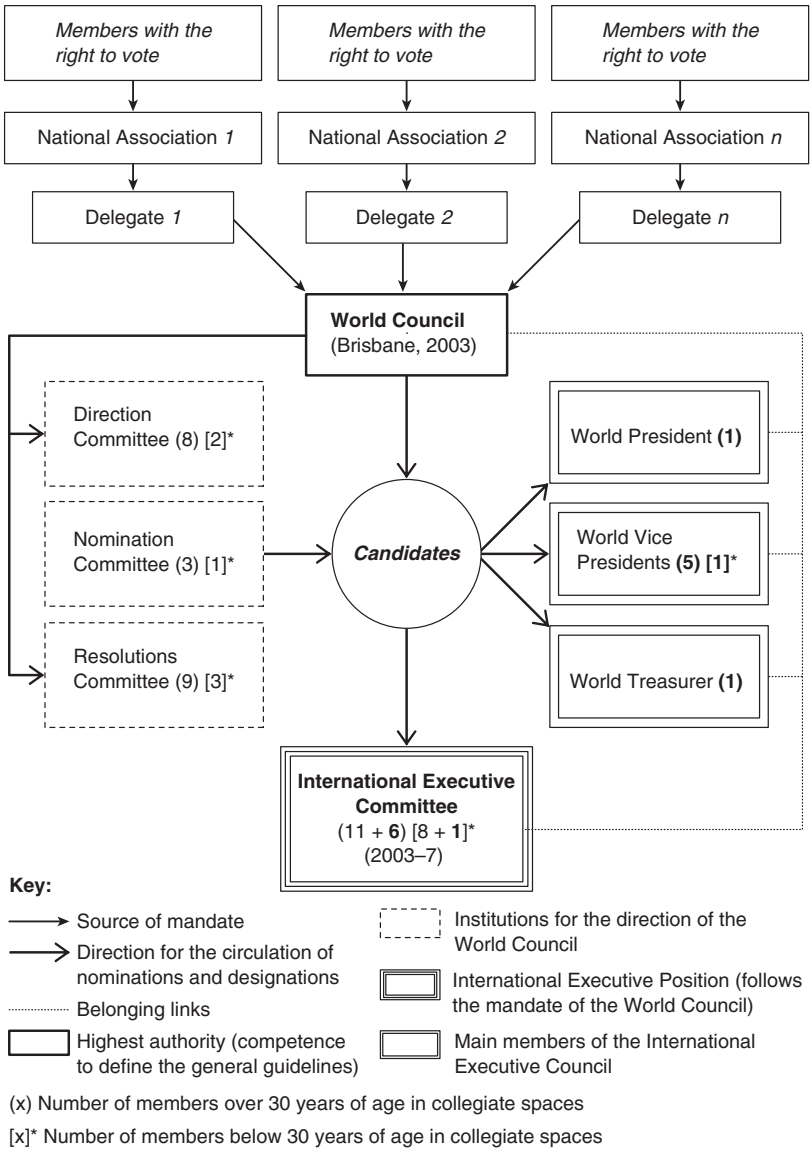
The YWCA has been in existence for more than a century, which has led to a reduction in membership among young women, resulting in a preponderance of elderly women in decision-making (primarily in Europe

and the US). In response to this common pattern of the loss of young membership among traditional organizations, the YWCA started in 1991 a general restructuring process to be completed by 2007. In the course of this global reformulation of the entire organization (involving a debate on its basic principles of Christianity, for women, and the young), the 1991 World Council (Stavanger, Norway) established a minimum quota of 25 percent of women under 30 in any decision-making (article VII of the Statute). It was not until 1999 that the process showed results, constituting for the first time the international structure based on this quota. The wider restructuring plan is organized around three main objectives (see *World YWCA Strategic Plan 2004–2008*), the second of which empowers young women for decision-making. Based on the results obtained since the 2003 World Council (Brisbane, Australia), it can be noted that the 25 percent quota has been surpassed in areas such as the International Executive Committee. Training has also been given to 4000 young members around the world since 1999, and these young women are currently occupying national and international leadership positions in the YWCA. In the Caribbean region, for example, young women under 30 years of age represent 50 percent of the women attending regional meetings (World YWCA Council, 2003: 44). Despite these efforts, however, reform objectives (to draw more young women into an institution that ages with its members) have not been met: only 2540 young women have joined the organization, representing a scant 0.09 percent increase (World YWCA Council, 2003: 47).

This significant improvement made in the promotion of young women's participation in the decision-making structure (as presented in Figure 2, which shows the quantity and location of young women in the YWCA governance structure) is analysed in the next section by exploring the trajectories of two young women currently on the International Executive Committee, and by examining how they, and the organization's world president, understand their roles.

The International Executive Committee

Katya, the Latin American representative on the International Executive Committee, came into contact with the YWCA in 1998 at the invitation of her boyfriend's mother in her native country, El Salvador. She was attracted by the recently formed national organization's Christian values and by the fact that it was run by women for women. She began volunteer work teaching English and helping out on rural projects. A short four months after joining, she was elected to the National Executive Committee, where she served as member of the council until 2002. That same year, at the age of 23, she was elected national YWCA president, a position she currently holds.



Note: Numbers in bold mean that the same person also participates in the International Executive Council (also appearing in bold in the Committee and separately counted)
Sources: http://www.worldywca.org (2005); Minutes World YWCA Council 2003; interviews (October–December 2004)

Figure 2 *Youth Participation in the International Organizational Structure of the World YWCA (Excluding Staff in Geneva Office)*

Natasha, one of the European representatives on the International Executive Committee, approached the YWCA in Belarus in 1996 at the suggestion of a sociology professor with whom she was doing research on women's rights. The link between sociology, her chosen field of study, and the newly founded national branch greatly appealed to her, and she began to participate in consciousness-raising campaigns on women's rights. Becoming increasingly involved, she was elected national vice president when she was 20 years old.

Contextual differences aside, these two national associations were both very small and new, which provided them with a flexible structure attractive to young members. According to the two interviewees, El Salvador has approximately 1500 members at present, and Belarus, around 200. In both cases, we can again appreciate the importance of family and student networks as a mean for producing the key link that will politically activate young people and connect them to organizations.

The biographical-professional tie is also evident in the case of Natasha, who approached the YWCA as a sociology student interested in women's rights. For her part, Katya joined when she was in her last year of secondary school. Not unlike the case of Luciana in ATTAC, she discovered her vocation as a result of joining the organization: Katya is currently studying law, specializing in women's rights.

Also worthy of note is the fact that the most political aspect of the organization – the fight for women's rights – attracted both young women. Although both did volunteer work, participating in communitarian projects was not the main reason for their joining and remaining in the YWCA. Research carried out in Canada (Tossutti, 2004) and the US (Metz et al., 2003) has shown that doing volunteer work does not increase participation in political organizations, although it does bring about greater non-institutional activity (i.e. protests and informal groups). In short, institutional political participation and volunteer work should be distinguished from each other because young people – like Natasha and Katya – who reach the 'hard core' inner circle had a prior political interest. This is borne out by well-documented research (Wilson, 2000: 222), which shows that organizing politically is not a priority for volunteers, nor is expressing and defending their rights and/or participating in the decision-making of an organization.

Both Katya and Natasha acknowledge that a particular experience led them to become involved in the YWCA at the international level. While serving as national vice president, Natasha came into contact with the YWCA in Sweden, which decided to nominate her as the representative of Belarus on the European Executive Committee. She feels strongly that the new world opened up to her by travel changed her life (as was already seen in the earlier quote by her).

For her part, Katya received an international scholarship granted by the World YWCA to spend three months in the UN office in Geneva working on women's issues. In her own eloquent words, 'this experience turned my life around' (interview). Indeed, she experienced an 'awakening' when working at the international level, causing her to become more involved in women's rights issues. Both young women experienced the kind of 'awakening' that changes lives, just as happened to Patrick when he came into contact with the Tiemtop Community.

Natasha currently lives in Budapest, and although still occupying two international YWCA positions, she is no longer involved in routine functions. Katya, on the other hand, is still president of the YWCA in El Salvador and expects to be re-elected.

With regard to the International Executive Committee, on the basis of the narratives of these two young women, and that of the world president as well, a pattern emerges. As expressed by world president Mónica Zetzsche, participants can be divided into three age groups:

> . . . one would be women under 30; another, women between 30 and 50, and another, over 60. The three have different ways of participating. The young women are more combative when they are there, but we are aware that they don't make a long-term commitment . . . they dare to throw out the most audacious, risky things. They close the doors to negotiation from the outside. I think it is because their commitment is not so deep and they don't think about the consequences. Perhaps because they haven't experienced the consequences of making such extreme decisions [alluding to the consequences that this kind of decisions had in Argentina during the last military dictatorship]. I see much more diplomacy in the generations between 30 and 50. It's like they take what the young women propose, 'but let's pose it in a different way and see if it implies a risk for the movement' [they think]. And in those over 60, I see something much calmer. They are very dedicated to resolving funding. (interview)

Despite these generational differences in participation style, Mónica Zetzsche thinks that 'the three [generations] are very necessary, the participation of the three age groups results in a very interesting equilibrium' (interview).

In addition, despite these divergences, neither Katya and Natasha nor Mónica Zetzsche distinguish age-related differences in political grouping on the International Executive Committee. According to Mónica Zetzsche, debate on global issues tends to reproduce the main world political divisions. If the topic under discussion is peace in the Middle East, for example, all members from the US, regardless of age, will oppose Palestine positions and support Israeli policy, while the three age groups of European and Middle Eastern women will take the opposite stand. In sum, key global issues tend to make the International Committee a closed scenario for debate where the positions of each

national YWCA will mirror national (or state) politics, thus reproducing existent world political divisions.

Yet when the topic of discussion is women-related, age divisions tend to reappear, affecting grouping and participation. Although grouping along regional lines is more frequent, 'if what we are debating has to do with advocacy on some issue affecting women, there you will see another type of grouping. There you will see a grouping by age' (Mónica Zetzsche, interview).

In this case, we can see how young people, rather than distinguishing their participation based on the issues debated (or positing political cleavages), establish their differences – their particularities – based on the kind of participation advocated: they are more radical. It can also be observed that their involvement increases – and a sort of generational differentiation appears – on women-related issues, which are biographically nearer. The interest of youngsters in forms of action rather than political cleavages was also apparent in the young people approaching ATTAC in the aftermath of the 2001 crisis in Argentina. A similar process is described by the executive director of the Foundation for Young Australians, an NGO dedicated to supporting young people's social initiatives, and which has begun restructuring along YWCA lines with the aim of having 50 percent of the NGO leadership occupied by young members:

> [When we work on the Directive Committee, unlike before young people were included] . . . I think we spend more time on topics related to the content of what we are doing, I mean, on how we work with young people. While especially the group of adults probably spends more time on budgets, government forms and statutes, and those kinds of things. (Mary Woldridge, interview)

Based on these two examples and the inclusion experiences seen in the cases of ATTAC Argentina and the Klampun Community, it can be said that young people neither aspire to participate as 'youth' nor to be treated as adults. What they do appear to seek is to be treated as peers whose specificity – being young, female, homosexual, the member of some tribe in particular, etc. – is acknowledged, while being recognized as part of a whole. As Natasha describes it, the primary value she finds in her work on the International Executive Committee is that it 'helps young women enter the society at large' (interview). She does not favour young people identifying themselves as such in contradistinction to the others – which would imply the making of the youth condition into a political category. In all cases studied, we have seen that young people aim at intermingling as much as possible in social and organizational webs, to the extent that their interests and concerns – as defined in the course of this article –are involved. In the words of a young Argentine activist:

> . . . [it is necessary] especially to abandon the preconception that young people can only do or be interested in certain things . . . that they think better, no, let them join as equal to any other member of the organisation, do the same things all members do, get involved in the same issues. (quoted in Balardini, 2005: 22)

Conclusion

As has been illustrated in these three case studies, it is impossible to point to any single type of organization that is ideal for attracting youngsters' participation. At this stage in the analysis, it is clear that determining the most effective organizational model or grouping for appealing to young people necessarily involves evaluating simultaneously the influence of various dimensions. Contrary to what is affirmed by many, young people do not necessarily prefer an informal, decentralized type of organization. This organizational format is limited to young supporters of philosophical-political principles who advocate experimentation with these types of associational models as their leitmotiv for participation. It is also the preferred organizational format of urban tribes, which are nonetheless unlikely to be hierarchy-free (Feixa, 1998; Rossi, 2009).

Yet organizations, networks and movements do exist that attract young people, and are based on: (1) their biographical-professional interests and life histories; (2) the particular juncture being traversed; (3) the desire to experience with their own bodies principles and values; and (4) the immediate antagonists and global problems that concern them.

We have also seen how student and family networks – as a transmitter of the interest in activism and politics – and the Internet are the channels most frequently stimulating young people's political participation in organizations. However, joining the 'hard core' inner circle and remaining there are not directly related to the bureaucratization of the organization (except in the case of groupings in which subjects are against this on principle). The key factors include, more often than not, motives such as the following: (1) the dual opportunity for self-realization and organizational enrichment (and/or the building of a better world); (2) the capacity to see 'concrete' results for actions undertaken in a proactive organization with specific proposals; and (3) the respect for the pre-eminence of the subject's otherness, which must not be relegated in favour of the collective.

Highly significant in attracting young people to an organization and maintaining participation is the relationship between activism and biographical-professional realization, serving at times as the mechanism for discovering a vocation. It is also the primary factor in determining participation in the 'hard core' inner circle, the duration of which will depend on the interaction of the dimensions mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

Likewise, as has been seen, the presence of diverse extents of participation, varying in importance in accordance with contextual circumstances and multiple organizational requirements, must be acknowledged.

On the one hand, autonomist groups embody the desire to form peer groups expressing common codes in special languages of their own (O'Connor, 2003; Reguillo, 1998) in a *being with others*. On the other hand, in no case do young people seek political recognition as 'youth'; and – with the exception of urban tribes – they aspire to be treated as peers, intermingling within the particular institutional and social web they inhabit and participate in. In the words of a young Philippine:

> I don't see an adult world as such opposed to a youth world. [In] my experience as executive director on the Multisectorial Council [of the city of Nagal] . . . I work with elderly people, farmers, urban poor. . . . So for me it is more a process of shared learning: I learn with them, they learn with me (I hope). (David, International Youth Foundation 14th Annual Meeting, October 2004)

In all cases, young people emphasize that the youth condition is transitory and youth participation is not viewed as an end in itself. Some consider it a means for future formation; for others, age is simply irrelevant. And in no case – including autonomist groups and urban tribes – does the youth condition structure political participation.

Also important is to identify how young people have reconceptualized the commitment implied in political participation. Activism is no longer viewed as a duty demanding fidelity to an organization. The subject should instead be faithful to a 'cause' and individual principles. Organizations and collectives are considered channels that, when they cease being efficient or lose certain attractive attributes, young people can stop supporting and/or abandon.

Notwithstanding these particularities, however, young people do not customarily construct 'new' sociopolitical cleavages that differentiate them from other age groups. Where youth do distinguish themselves in their grouping is in their ways of participating: they tend to be more radical, less diplomatic and very interested in ensuring that how things are done is explicitly detailed and in accordance with their interests and/or principles. Even though it is not the majority's view, some young people attribute this characteristic to their lack of experience – which would imply accepting certain prior limitations:

> Being young guarantees you nothing, on the contrary, being young makes you want to forge ahead stopping at nothing and not see that, before you arrived, there were other prior realities in place, there are other prior constructions. I believe that a young person at times enters with head held very high, enters ready to take the world by storm saying 'I have arrived and the world begins today'. No, the world began a long time ago, you have to learn first . . . there are

> people that have been working for many, many years, doing great things . . . and they are very useful. (Luciana, interview)

The different types of organizations (*of*, *with* and *for* young people) integrate youth in different ways: some 'sectorially' (like the Oxfam International Youth Parliament in Australia); others by positive discrimination (YWCA), while the majority do not make age distinctions (ATTAC, Amnesty International, etc.). Although 'sectorial' participation keeps young people at the greatest distance from the 'hard core' inner circle, in no case does the type of participation necessarily oblige young people to conform to the role adults often wish on them: *to be catalysts for change and innovation.* Many young people even find themselves involved in decision-making precisely because they do not question the status quo. For example, when asked what young people needed to change in order to exercise more influence and increase participation levels, a young Russian woman answered: 'In my opinion, they must be less radical and more diplomatic, and try not to confront the views of adults with their own. This way there will be more adult support, and more useful results will be possible' (Masha, interview).

This is yet another of the myriad possible points of view on alternatives for social transformation. But what is truly significant – and seldom touched upon by youth experts – is the *what for* of youth participation. However improbable any affirmation regarding which type of participation favours which type of social change, in political terms it is important, nevertheless, to formulate the questions posed by the president of the Argentine YMCA:

> Which young people achieve positions of responsibility, leadership, protagonism? Rebellious young people or those that best adapt themselves to the status quo of adult leadership? This is a question that must always be asked. . . . It can't be ruled out that the young people that rise to leadership or headship roles are those that least disturb the status quo. (Norberto Rodríguez, interview)

When taking into account the new scenario in which subjects in the youth condition unfold, the need to reformulate many preconceptions on youth and their political participation becomes crucial. The attempt at promoting self-organized groups of young people functioning as representatives of 'juvenile interests' seems misguided. What the detailed study carried out has indicated as the road to take involves resignifying the implications of young people's political involvement in light of the complexity it currently entails. This would mean focusing on inserting the subject in organizational and social webs of relations *not* as a young person, but rather as a human being with particularities that must be acknowledged. As a young Philippine said: 'Let's begin all over again. Let's stop seeing young people as young, let's begin to see young people as members of the society as a whole' (David, International Youth

Foundation 14th Annual Meeting, October 2004). This social recognition appears as the challenge for youth in the contemporary world.

Appendix

The selection criteria for choosing the persons to be interviewed was: (1) the relevance for the research questions based on the effective and relatively extensive political participation in pre-eminent roles and/or in decision-making positions; and (2) the diversity of national contexts, organizational spaces and types of political participation.

While 39.5 percent (17) of the interviews were done personally, 9.3 percent (4) of them were done by telephone, both in Spanish and English. In addition, 51.1 percent (22) of the interviews were done via the Internet using two types of questionnaires (one model for adults and another for youngsters) including open and closed questions, and distributed in Spanish, English and French. The persons selected for the Internet interviews were chosen based on the same criteria used for those interviewed personally and by telephone.

The questionnaires used on the Internet interviews and the full list of the persons interviewed are not included here due to space limitations and ethical reasons, but can be requested from the author.

Table A1 *Sample Distribution by Age and Gender*

Age		Gender	
Youth	55.8% (24)	Female	58.1% (25)
Adults	44.2% (19)	Male	41.9% (18)
Total	100% (43)	Total	100% (43)

Table A2 *Combined Sample Distribution*

	Youth	Adults	Totals
Female	52% (13)	48% (12)	100% (25)
Male	61.1% (11)	38.9% (7)	100% (18)

Notes

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1. This article is based on research carried out from March 2004 to February 2005 on the following organizations: ATTAC in Argentina; Amnesty International; the World YWCA; the Oxfam Australia International Youth Parliament; the Klampun Community in Papua New Guinea; the participation of autonomist groups in the 5th Intercontinental Youth Camp at the World Social Forum and, less extensively, on urban tribes of graffiti writers, punks, hip-hoppers and okupas. The investigation entailed 43 semi-structured interviews with young activists (who had broad international and/or national experience, representing 55.8 percent of the sample), and with adults occupying managerial positions in leading organizations working *for* and *with* young people around the world such as Oxfam, YWCA, Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), International Youth Foundation (IYF), among others (see Appendix for sample composition and selection criteria). Interviews were conducted in person, by telephone or via the Internet – in the latter case employing open and closed questions – with people from the following countries: Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Belarus, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Germany, India, Iran, Kenya, Lebanon, Macedonia, Mozambique, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, the Philippines, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, the US, Uruguay and Zimbabwe. One personal interviews took place, in part, during the 13th Annual IYF Partner Network Meeting (Washington, DC, October 2003), and in part, at the YouthActionNet Meeting (Baltimore, October 2003). All interviews, with these two exceptions, were conducted in Paris, Buenos Aires and Porto Alegre (Brazil). Research results are also supported by observations made during the 2005 World Social Forum (WSF), the 5th Intercontinental Youth Camp (Porto Alegre, January–February 2005), the Annual World Assembly of ATTAC (Porto Alegre, January 2005) and the IYF 14th Annual Partner Network Meeting (Buenos Aires, October 2004). Material provided by interviewees and pertinent web pages have also been used, together with information collected during the International Youth Parliament (Sydney, October 2000), the Students' Forum 2000 (Prague, July 2001), the IYF Annual Partner Network Meetings held in 2003 and 2004 and the 2005 WSF, as well as materials generously provided by a participant in the Alliance of Youth CEOs–UNICEF Experts Workshops on Child and Youth Participation (Geneva, November 2003).
2. At: www.worldywca.org/world_ywca/about_us/our_history

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