

Participation and Citizenship of Children and Youth at risk

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Fuck you!

Identities as discriminated outsiders

- ▶ “You can’t trust the municipality (local authority) at all. They write down every thing you say, and they twist it, so it fits into their fucked up ideas. Then they make a mistake (they think that) it is your mistake, because they can’t make mistakes!!! (..) One really doesn’t have any adults that one trust and from whom one can seek help, because every one has to report to those higher in the system!!! And the adults always think that what you do and say is because of the problems you faced as a baby”.

Adda, 19 years old

- ▶ “Children like us really don’t trust adult”

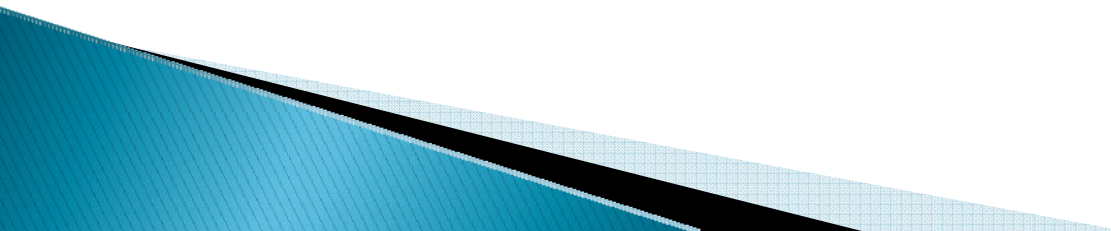
Kasper, 15 years old

Citizenship as an identity learningproces

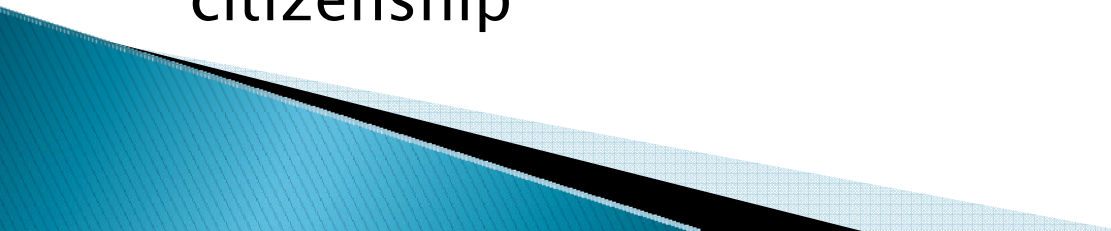
“Research has documented how citizens learn citizenship, which mostly takes place in the informal context of everyday life and is also heavily influenced by critical and formative events in people's lives. Citizenship is not entirely about rights or membership of a polity, but is a matter of participation in the political community and begins early in life. It concerns the learning of a capacity for action and for responsibility but, essentially, it is about the learning of the self and of the relationship of self and other. It is a learning process in that it is articulated in perceptions of the self as an active agency and a social actor shaped by relations with others. In this view, citizenship concerns identity and action; it entails both personal and cognitive dimensions that extend beyond the personal to the wider cultural level of society “

(Delanty, 2003: 602).

A paradox

- ▶ Negative learning of citizenship: Children's experiences of distrust in form of a distanced "know-all attitude" among social workers and of being categorized, diagnosed, controlled and blamed, rather than involved, listened to, understood and supported.
 - ▶ A 'participatory climate': adults' dedication to facilitation of children's participation and citizenship
 - ▶ This paradox constitutes the starting point for a research project: "Mutual trust in social work with children at risk", funded by the Danish National Research Council
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Why trust?

- ▶ Trust can be regarded as crucial to agency and smooth cooperation in globalized high complex societies characterized by risk and unpredictability
 - ▶ Trust as a scarce resource in social work
 - ▶ The children and youth talk about trust themselves, albeit also about recognition and power
 - ▶ Thus, we focus on interrelated dynamics of (dis)trust, (mis)recognition and power in social work: How does these interrelated dynamics frame children's citizenship
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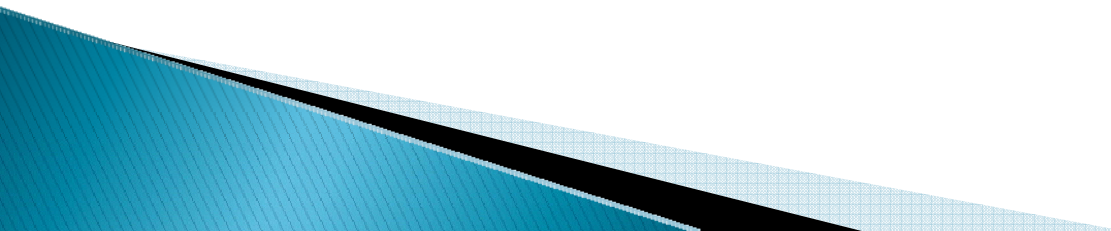
Definition of trust

- ▶ Trust is distinctive from confidence and rational choice:
 - Trust address a reflexive attitude towards the other, acknowledging risk and unpredictability
 - Confidence address "the natural attitude of everyday life"
 - Trust is only possible in a situation where the possible damage may be greater than the advantage you seek
- ▶ Distinction between system trust and social (personal) trust
 - ▶ Social trust is built up, when actors expect and experience the good actions of the other.

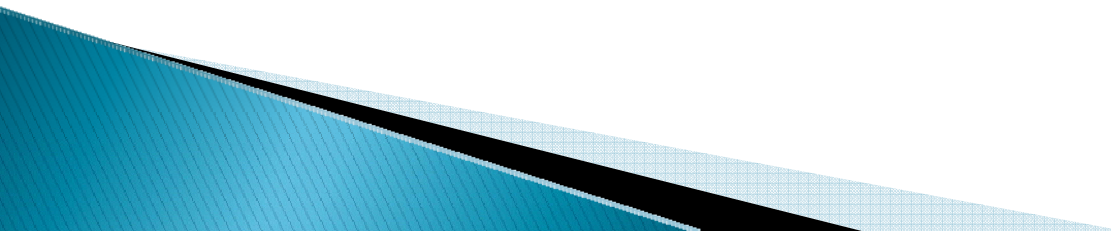
Why social workers don't trust children: Preliminary findings

- ▶ The intersection between the generational order and other social (constructed) orders
 - ▶ Economy and system trust (regarding the expert system: trust in truth)
 - ▶ Legitimation: Replacement of trust with institutionalized mistrust
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Why children don't trust professional adults?

- ▶ Children at risk are often neglected children
 - ▶ Governmentalisation of childhood/childrens participation and citizenship
 - ▶ Disappointed trust
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A negative spiral of learning citizenship identity?

- ▶ The risk of negative spirals of learning citizenship identity
 - ▶ Counteracts
 - Children's trust attitude despite bad experiences
 - Social workers trust attitude and solidarity with children's perspectives – empower though their managers trust in them
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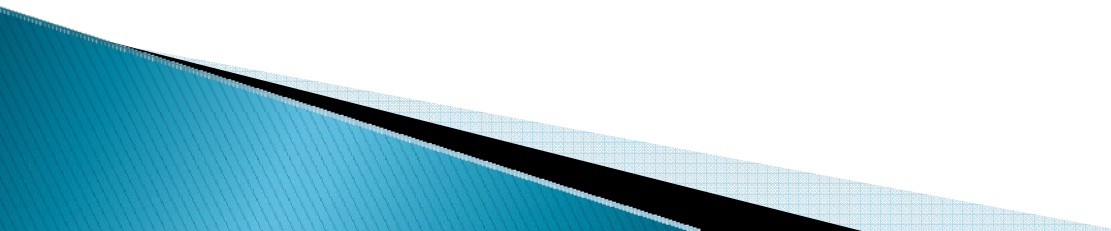
Understanding the paradox:

Global, national, local and personal dimensions

- ▶ The global level:
 - Ambiguity regarding children's citizenship
 - Children as a key to meet global challenges of coherence, integration and global economic competition

 - ▶ The national level
 - Governmentalization of children's citizenship (response to meet challenges of globalisation)
 - Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in national legislation
 - Institutionalized mistrust and system trust (response to the need for trust)
 - Economic cut back (tax stop – response to meet challenges of globalisation)

 - ▶ The local level
 - Interpretive and negotiated implementation of national legislation, governmentalization, economic cut back, and demands for documentation, standardization and evidence based practice in different arenas (schools, day care, social work etc)
 - Local response to the need for trust

 - ▶ Subjective
 - Internalisation of logics (discourses and power relations) of the fields: Ambiguity within fields and differences between fields and change of the logics over time
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Conclusion

- ▶ Mutual trust between children at risk and social workers is essential to childrens positive learning of citizenship identity
 - ▶ The building of this mutual trust takes place in face to face interations, but is framed by power structures and social constructions (of problems and solutions) on many different and interwoven subjective and societal levels and social arenas.
 - ▶ This framing is characterized by ambiguity and conflicting positions – however for the time being, the practices of control and governmentalization seems to make progress at the expence of trust, especially regarding some groups of children.
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