

Youth Participation and Civic Engagement: Future Directions

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Future Directions

1. Mainstreaming youth participation - remembering the everyday spaces as well as strategic opportunities.
2. Creating spaces to move to youth-led civic action.
3. Six key messages to take forward – the enabling conditions.



Understanding the Past

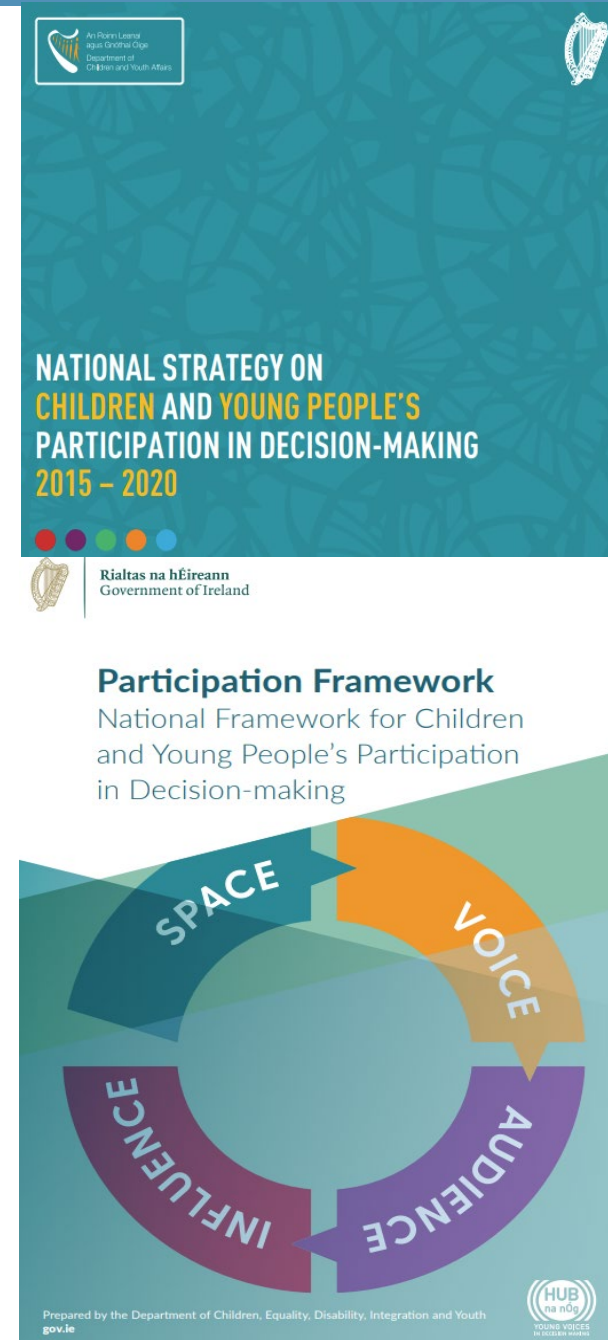
- Historically, the voice of children and youth was silenced.
 - From the 1990's onwards, increasing value placed on their views.
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- Adoption of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in 1989 - a watershed moment.
 - In the 1980's momentum was building behind the service user involvement agenda in social care.
 - In the 1970s the principle of participation was becoming a central focus of community development work.

- Early focus was on consultations and feedback.
- More recently the predominance of youth advisory groups.



Policy Framework

- Currently, child and youth participatory practice in Ireland is mediated by the National Strategy and National Framework on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making.
- **Focus on:**
 - Rights based participatory practice (aligned to Article 12 of the UNCRC and underpinned by the Lundy model)
 - Participation with purpose
 - Engaging in dialogue with youth

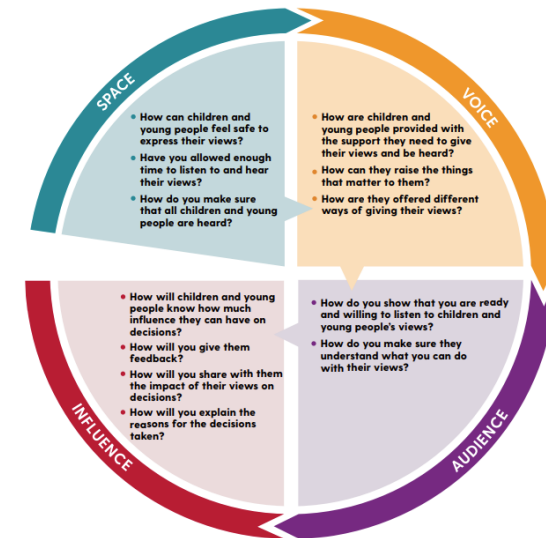


Mainstreaming Youth Participation: **Everyday Spaces**

Youth participation should be mainstreamed across all activities from **the every day spaces** to **strategic developments** (such as policy and legislative developments, service design, evaluation and research).

When working with youth in every day spaces:

- Are we creating a space that they feel safe to share their views?
- Have we made time to ask them their views?
- Are they offered different ways of speaking up?
- Are you open to be influenced by their views?



Mainstreaming Youth Participation: **Strategic Matters**

- Formal advisory structures have a very important role.
- But need to be:
 - Inclusive of those with lived experience and a diversity of lived experiences.
 - Open to innovations in practice.



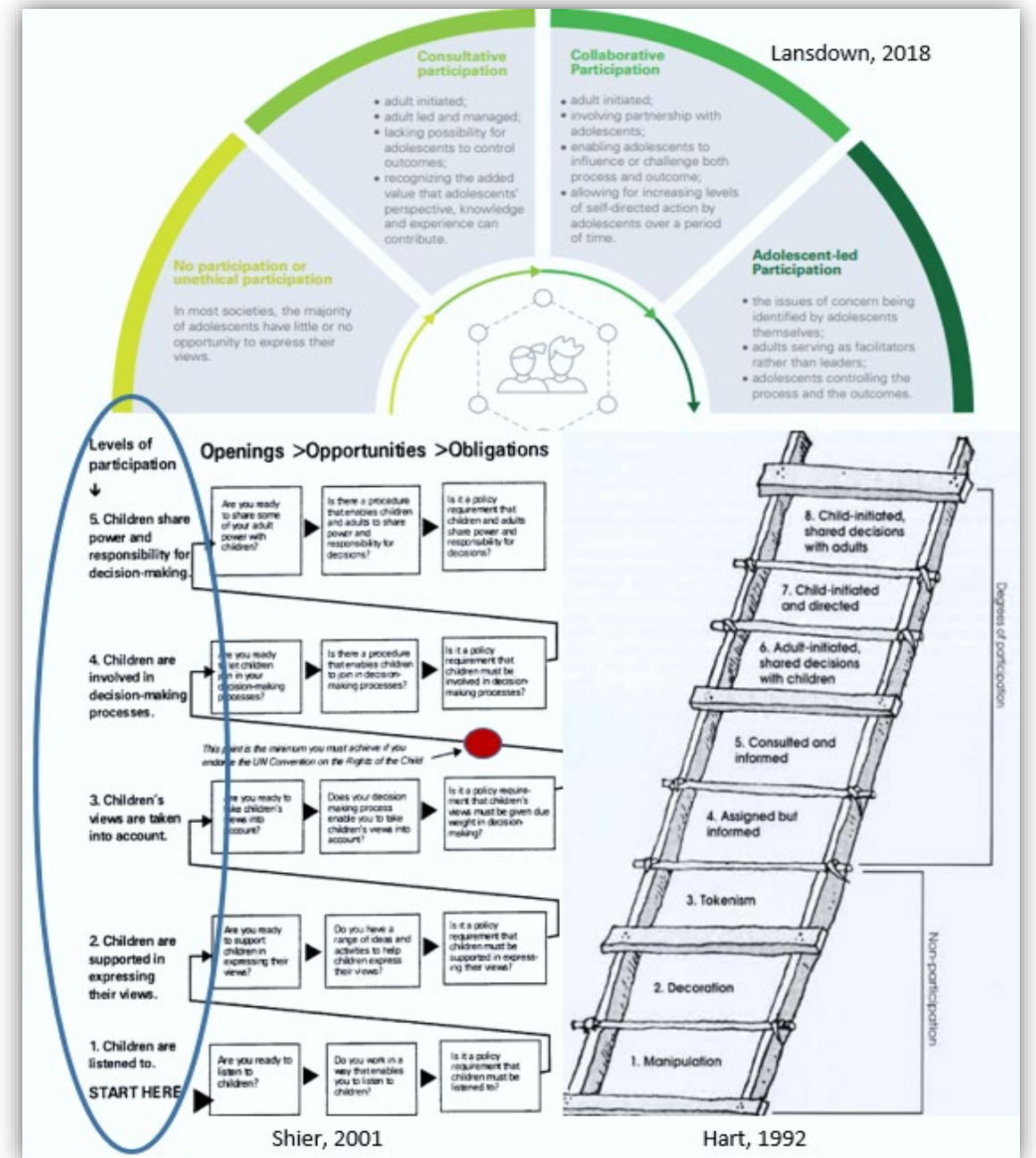
- In mainstreaming youth participation, it is crucially important to understand the level of participation one is operating at.

- Wealth of models to understand different levels of participation
- Participation can permeate across levels.

The appropriate level is dependant on:

1. Purpose
2. Preferences of children and youth
3. Available time and resources

(Shaw et al., 2011; Kennan and Dolan, 2017)

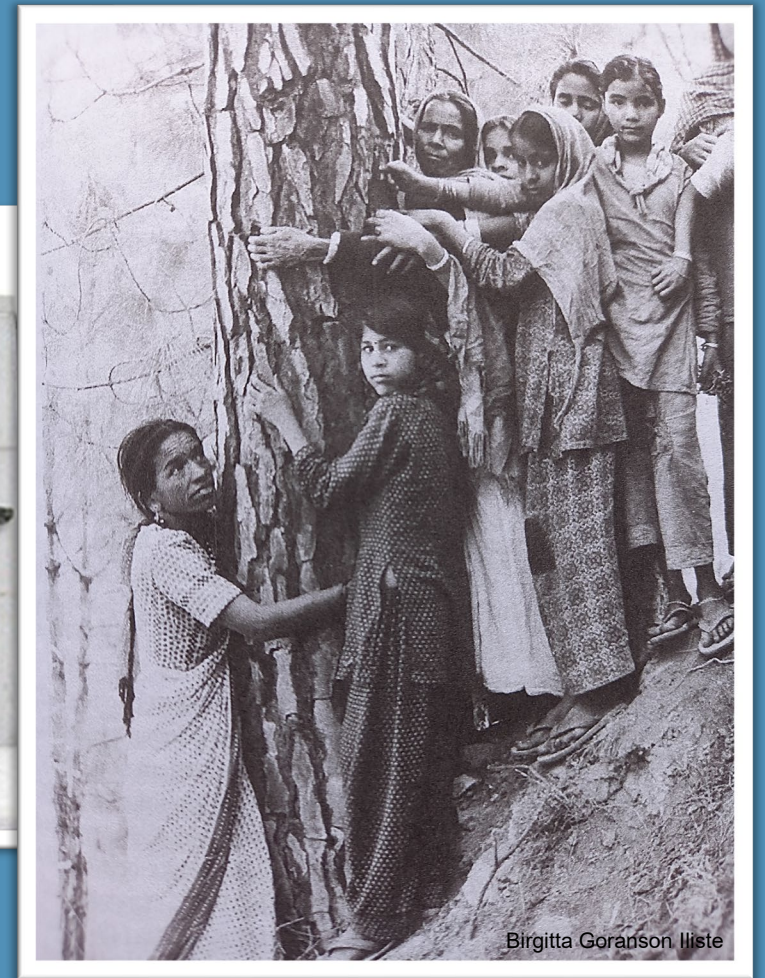
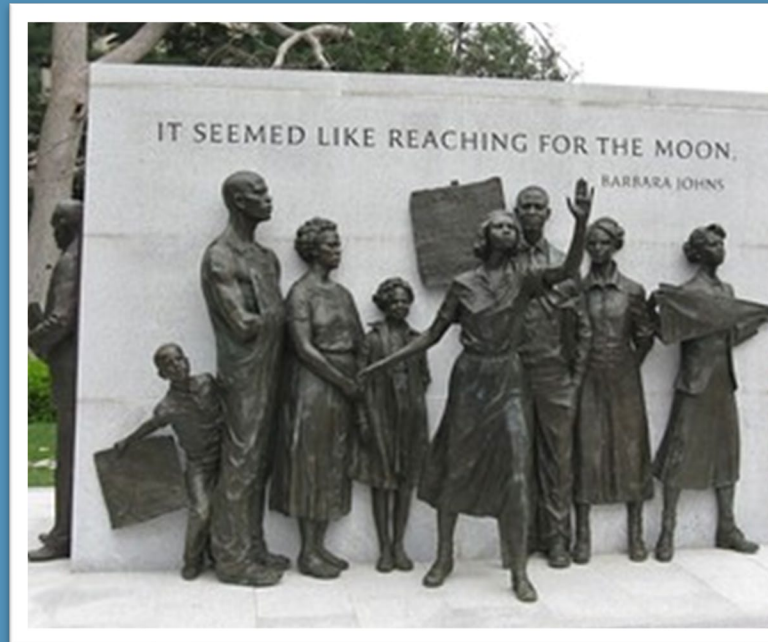


Move to Youth-Led Civic Action / Engagement

The role of the youth worker in supporting youth participation has evolved from consulting with young people to improve service delivery to “facilitating (and resourcing) processes where young people themselves take action to defend rights, tackle injustice and inspire social change” (Corney et al., 2021).

- This moves beyond the right of youth to have their voices heard, to their right to be involved in public affairs (Article 25 of the ICCPR).
- The voluntary nature of young people’s engagement in universal youth work and the informal nature of the relationship with a youth worker, tips the balance of power in favour of youth (de st Croix, 2018).

Historically, young people have been actively involved in social movements and social and political change.



Source: Rodgers, 2020



Youth As Researchers

The Youth as Researchers Programme (YaR)



**THE YAR PROGRAMME
BUILDS THE CAPACITY
OF YOUTH TO CARRY
OUT RESEARCH ON
ISSUES OF CONCERN TO
THEIR LIVES AND THEIR
WIDER COMMUNITY.**



**IT SUPPORTS THE
DISSEMINATION OF
THEIR RESEARCH WITH A
VIEW TO INFLUENCING
CHANGE.**



YOUTH AS
RESEARCHERS (18-35)
UNESCO COVID-19
RESPONSE
PROGRAMME



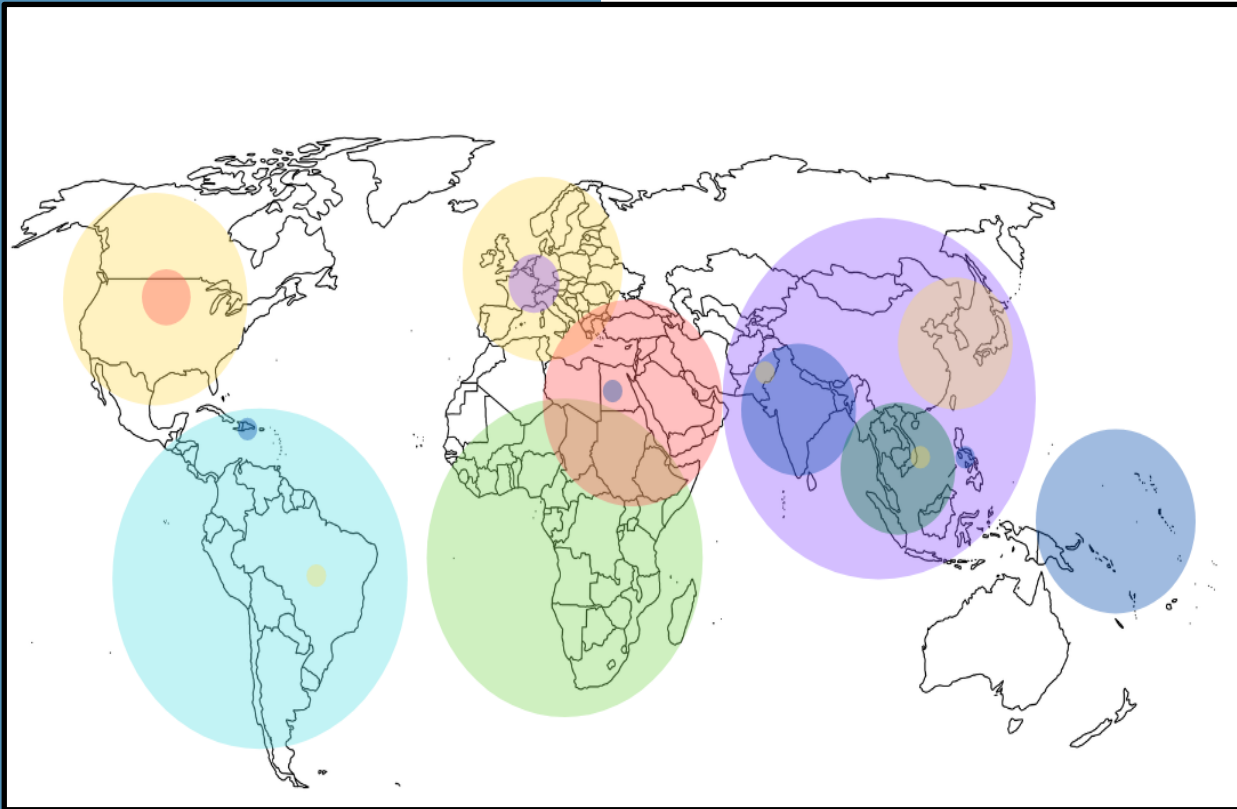
Global teams focused on youth derived themes of Covid-19 and

- **Technology**
- **Learning,**
- **Human rights,**
- **Well-being,**
- **Youth action,**
- **Gender and evaluation.**



With the support of





- **6000+ applicants** (300 selected)
- **6+ regional teams** focused on Africa, Arab States, Asia Pacific, Europe/North America, Latin America/Caribbean, and Small Island Developing Nations (SIDS).
- **9 subregional teams** focused on South and Southeast Asia, Europe, and North America
- **14 national teams** (Pakistan, Vietnam, Brazil, Nigeria Haiti and others).



Research Dissemination

International Knowledge Sharing and Policy Dialogue Conference (October 2021)

- Youth researchers presented /debated the results of their research
- Priority Policy Recommendations
- Youth organisations, Academia, Development Sector & Public Authorities.

High Level Policy Conference (Mar 2022)

- Created a space for dialogue among YaR members and high level policy officials as direct responders



THE BALANCING ACT





6 Key Learnings : The Balancing Act

1. Youth Participation is now not about whether but about 'how best'
2. Engaging with Existing Agendas Vs Blue Sky Thinking/Youth Interests
3. Youth-led with Adult V Youth Saviourism Risks

Adult allies – operating from the side not as central – youth workers supported fully to support youth



6 Key Learnings : The Balancing Act

4. **Relationships matter – ‘Presence Model’
(Andreas Baart 2002)**
5. **Transparency and managing expectations?
With internal and external ethics covered**
6. **Healthy Relationships operating within a
fairly contested dialogue**



MICHELANGELO
'ANCORA IMPARO'
