

# **“Substantial social participation” of young people on the move**

## **Lessons from research with transnationally mobile youth and young separated refugees**

*Proposal for a workshop at the  
Biannual Conference of the DGfE Commission Social Pedagogy/Social Work,  
18.–20. May 2017 at the University of Vechta, Germany*

In the German context, emerging discussions on inclusion and on substantial social participation (“Teilhabe”) of people in disadvantaged living conditions have gained attention in the field of social pedagogy as well. Most notably, this is reflected in the topic of the biannual conference of the commission social pedagogy/ education and social work 2017 with its focus on “Teilhabe durch\*in\*trotz Sozialpädagogik” (roughly: substantial social participation by means of\*within\*in spite of social pedagogy). Hence, the corresponding call for papers highlights the situation of refugees and migrants as key for professional, organizational and theoretical reflections on the concept of “social participation”.

Yet, an international perspective on the situation of young separated refugees and transnationally mobile youth reveals several shortcomings of the current “German” debate as it is reflected in the call for papers. For instance, in Italy and Austria, most of the young people who are categorized as “unaccompanied minor refugees” are denied access to conventional child care institutions, i.e. group homes or foster families, instead being placed in separate units with lower standards. Moreover, in many nation states, social pedagogy is not at all considered the leading academic discipline or professional framework for out-of-home care. Further, as examples not only from the “majority world” such as from Jordan (which is more representative of the typical situation of separated children) demonstrate, the factual treatment of so called separated children and youth is far from the – partly – legally binding standards elaborated by international (non-)governmental organizations. Finally, research on “Roma” youth and their intra-urban mobilities in Spain as well as transnational mobilities between Southeastern Europe and Spain shows: Even if some sort of social work or youth work is present, professionals consider themselves unable to address young people’s most basic needs for social protection and education. Rather, they point to grassroots movements, to other “non-professional” actors or toward self-help.

Does this short overview teach us that besides the “German” discussion substantial social participation of young separated refugees and young transnationally mobile people is not an important issue at all? Quite the opposite is the case: Focusing on the above mentioned groups and living conditions, in this workshop we would like to reveal and discuss in which ways the issue of a substantial social participation is crucial in a variety of dimensions. Thus, based on empirical data from several research projects, we will outline how substantial social participation is and can be problematized in these contexts and how different actors react towards these issues in highly ambivalent ways, i.e. the addressees, professionals, as well as volunteers and activists. On a theoretical level, we would like to discuss how substantial social participation needs to be conceptualized newly, beyond the (container) framework of a welfare or social state. Such a perspective tackles the widespread assumption that social institutions within the nation state inherently bring about and guarantee social participation through social rights in a meaningful way. Offering an international perspective, we would like to consider two lead questions: 1. How can we conceptualize *Teilhabe* in social pedagogy today? 2. How can it be achieved for young people on the move (and others)?

#### Workshop coordinators:

- Dr. **Eberhard Raithelhuber**, Assistant Professor, University of Salzburg, Austria; research project on the pilot program “open.heart – guest families and godparenthoods for unaccompanied minor refugees” (among others); [Eberhard.raithelhuber@sbg.ac.at](mailto:Eberhard.raithelhuber@sbg.ac.at)
- **Laura Trott**, MA, PhD student and lecturer, Free University of Bolzano-Bozen, Italy, current research project “Agency in the everyday lives of unaccompanied refugee minors in South Tyrol”; [laura.trott@unibz.it](mailto:laura.trott@unibz.it)

#### Participants/presenters:

- **Stefano Piemontese**, MA, PhD Student at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB); researcher at the Central European University, Budapest, Hungary; member of the INTEGRIM Marie Curie Initial Training Network “Integration and International Migration: Pathways and Integration Policies”; current research project: “Educational careers and housing patterns of Roma migrant youths between Spain and Romania”; more: <https://people.ceu.edu/node/1935> ; [PiemonteseS@ceu.edu](mailto:PiemonteseS@ceu.edu)
- Dr. **Eberhard Raithelhuber** (details see above)
- Dr. **Sahar Al-Makhamreh**, Assistant Professor, Al Balqa Applied University, Princess Rahma University College, Salt, Jordan; member of an international (UK, Germany, Jordan, Sweden, Switzerland and Italy) research group currently working on the project “Former unaccompanied refugee minors’ retrospective accounts on transition and belonging – A comparative Study”; [msahar@bau.edu.jo](mailto:msahar@bau.edu.jo)
- **Laura Trott** (details see above)

#### Workshop language:

English

#### Structure:

Coordinated inputs under the umbrella topic “‘Substantial social participation’ of young people on the move” and panel discussion (individual titles for the inputs will be given later)