Section overview
Policies and programming for voice, agency and civic participation

Patricio Cuevas-Parra

THE SHIFTING LANDSCAPE OF PARTICIPATION

For centuries, young people have been subordinated to adults' power, and their participation in decision-making on matters that affect them has been restricted by cultural and social contexts (Corsaro, 2011). Globally, most countries set the age of majority at 18 years, thus restricting formal citizenship rights to adults. However, in 1989, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) set a historic precedent by establishing a set of rights to participation and elevating these rights to the position of a central principle (Verhellen, 2015). This prominent international human rights framework upholds the rights of all individuals under the age of 18 to be consulted and to have their voices heard on policy areas that affect them (Setty and Dobson, 2022). The UNCRC uses the term 'children' to refer to persons under the age of 18 years and to whom full citizenship status is generally denied. In terms of participation, Article 12 includes the right to express a view and the right to have that view given due weight, which means that children, adolescents and young people have the right to express relevant perspectives and experiences in order to influence decision-making.[1]

However, despite this significant milestone, Tisdall (2021) argues that Article 12 has not had the desired impacts, as children and young people

continue to have limited opportunities to express their views and influence decision-making. Moreover, adults remain the guardians of this right, ultimately weighing and judging children and young people's abilities to participate based on their age, maturity or perceived best interests. Similarly, Lundy and McEvoy (2012) point out that implementing Article 12 is problematic because it requires adults' cooperation, yet some adults may oppose children and young people's right to participate, potentially limiting the extent to which children and young people understand their rights and are able to claim them. The right to participation has also not yet provided children and young people under the age of 18 with spaces for political power, voting or the ability to stand in public elections (McMellon and Tisdall, 2020).

This does not mean that children and young people cannot participate in political and democratic life, and influence and shape policy, legislation and practice at the municipal, regional, national and global levels (e.g. Janta et al., 2021). Childhood studies scholars indeed promote the notion of children and young people as competent social actors capable of transforming the social worlds in which they live (James and James, 2012; Prout, 2002). However, around the world, this participation is expected to take different forms from how adults participate. For instance, children and young people's engagement in the public domain have traditionally been carried out by participating in meetings and consultations, filling out surveys or polls and signing petitions (among other activities) as opposed to voting in elections.

Since the early 2000s, there has been extensive attention to how children, adolescents and young people have engaged in explicitly political action to bring about institutional change, often outside of formal channels. Not being able to vote or stand for election does not preclude young people from being at the forefront of political change. Clear examples are the youth-led Arab Spring, the ousting of Abdoulaye Wade in Senegal, the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States, Los Indignados in Spain and the large-scale secondary students strike (the 'Penguin Revolution') in Chile (Buire and Staeheli, 2017; Chovanec and Benitez, 2008; Fisher, 2012; Honwana, 2019). Moreover, these cases offer new perspectives on representational rights and challenge traditional political representation frameworks that inadequately account for such efforts by young people under the age of 18 (Wall and Dar, 2011). Yet at the same time, across the Global South, civil society space has also been shrinking in many countries due to government crackdowns. This shifting landscape seriously affects the implementation of participation mechanisms and thus limits the ways that young people can participate at both the societal and political levels (Chaney, 2022).

With these dynamics in mind, this section introduction seeks to answer three key questions:

1 How do global policies, government efforts and non-governmental organisation (NGO) programming seek to foster adolescent and youth civic engagement and political participation?
2 Have NGO efforts to support adolescents' and young people's voice and agency succeeded in expanding their participation in political processes?
3 What are the implications for future policy and programming to support the civic engagement of adolescents and young people?

MULTILATERAL ORGANISATIONS AND THE OPERATIONALISATION OF POLICIES TO SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICE AND AGENCY

It is important that participation across different local, national and global spaces be inclusive and impactful for children, adolescents and young people, particularly those from more marginalised groups. There has been significantly more proactive work to engage with young people at the level of multilateral governance than at the state level. However, this is largely confined to the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU); the latter which has worked to contextually contextualise and adapt UN commitments so that they have a collective rather than individual focus.

The UN

The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, incorporating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is a global plan of action that seeks to transform the world. To operationalise the SDGs, the UN has developed the 'leave no one behind' agenda as a transformative promise to eradicate poverty, end discrimination and reduce inequalities (United Nations, 2017). Throughout this agenda, member states seek to address not only economic inequalities, but also social inequalities, whereby different groups are discriminated against and excluded based on age, gender, ethnicity or socio-economic status. In order to support the voice and participation of the most marginalised and disadvantaged groups, including children and youth, Agenda 2030 seeks to explicitly increase their empowerment, reduce inequality and discrimination and improve accountability mechanisms for progress (United Nations, 2015).

Within this approach, the Office of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children, the World Programme of Action for Youth under the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (among others) have developed strategies to enhance full and effective participation of children and

youth in decision-making, and encourage member states to strengthen the involvement of young people in international forums, and in their national delegations to UN meetings. Key spaces for this include the Economic and Social Council Youth Forum, which provides an annual platform for young people to engage in dialogue with UN member states. The 1.8 Billion Young People for Change movement, initiated by the World Health Organization's Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, has drawn attention to adolescents' agency and community connectedness. In a major milestone, the 2023 Global Forum for Adolescents will foster dialogue between young people and stakeholders and pursue financial and political commitments to young people's well-being. The Generation Equality Forum, which seeks to accelerate gender equality, includes an Adolescent Girls Steering Group, as well as leadership groups that explicitly foster intergenerational dialogue and girls' participation.

However, there are no specific indicators for children and young people's participation in the SDG framework. Indeed, despite advances, evidence has shown that international forums are a challenging arena in which to implement the meaningful participation of children and young people in developing policy (Templeton et al., 2022). This is mainly the result of hierarchical differences between children and adult decision-makers, and the widespread belief that meaningful participation is considered unattainable (Lundy, 2018). For Templeton et al. (2022), a critical component of this problem is the way in which adult-centric perception of the legitimacy of children and young people's representation is examined on adult representative structures for participation. Despite this, children and young people's participation is an obligation under the UNCRC. Rather than question these spaces, adult decision-makers are mandated to develop child-friendly provisions that encourage meaningful engagement.

The AU

From a multilateral regional perspective, the AU, a continental body consisting of 55 member states, has outlined several mechanisms to operationalise the UNCRC's articles and principles in the organisation's strategies and in respective territories. Inspired by the adoption of the UNCRC in 1989, the AU adopted the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in 1990 (also known as the African Children's Charter), which entered into force in 1999 when it had received 15 ratifications (Mezmur, 2020). As of 2023, the Charter had been ratified by 50 countries, and only five member states were yet to ratify it.[2] To support implementation of the Charter, the AU's Agenda 2063 has incorporated Africa's Agenda for Children 2040 to highlight the role of children and young people within the aspiration to pursue

a people-centred continent in which all citizens will be actively involved in decision-making (African Union, 2016). Incorporating the Agenda for Children aims to ensure that children and young people are taken seriously and can participate meaningfully in matters that affect their lives, including law-making, policy adoption and school management. However, Mezmur (2020) points out that despite these efforts, it is still rare that domestic courts reference the African Children's Charter or make their decisions based on the Charter's provisions.[3]

Although the rights to participation set out in the UNCRC and African Children's Charter are similar in nature, Adu-Gyamfi and Keating (2013) highlight some differences around which type of matters children and young people can express their views on, suggesting that the African Children's Charter provisions are less restrictive than the UNCRC. Another difference highlighted by Ekundayo (2015) is that the African Children's Charter recognises the right to participation but connects this to the notion that children and young people have responsibilities in the community, which in part can limit their participation choices. This particular legal provision is framed in Article 31, which indicates that children and young people – based on their age and ability – have duties and responsibilities, including to work for family cohesion, to respect elders and assist them in case of need and to preserve the integrity of their country. However, for Ekundayo (2015), the phrase 'duty to respect… at all times' has been controversial and has generated debate, as this obligation is absolute, general and vague. For instance, the duty to respect parents could undermine a young person's rights to freedom of expression, privacy and participation in decision-making. Another criticism of rights to participation is that this provision only partially echoes African cultures in which children and young people are rarely given the opportunity to express their views, even in matters that affect them (Adu-Gyamfi and Keating, 2013). Chibwana (2021) argues to the contrary, suggesting that the role of the African Children's Charter has been to challenge traditional African views that conflict with the rights of children and young people, including the right to freedom of expression. However, in order to restate parents' authority, the Charter includes the concept of children and young people having duties and responsibilities.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES TO FOSTER ADOLESCENT VOICE AND AGENCY

Although the UNCRC and African Children's Charter have not explicitly secured children and young people's direct political representation, the UN in particular expects member states to develop policies that protect the right to participation. It outlines several provisions that can enable new avenues

for political participation at the national level through support for voice, mobilisation and activism (Wall and Dar, 2011). A multitude of interpretations of this obligation have unfolded, especially in light of the various cultural practices surrounding child-raising globally. As noted, the UNCRC was mainly built around Western notions highlighting individual norms and values, and this could conflict with other perceptions of children and young people's political voice and agency (Duramy and Gal, 2020; Faulkner and Nyamutata, 2020). The Committee on the Rights of the Child, in General Comment 12, supports collective participation in decision-making in which children and young people interact with other parties in order to achieve joint outcomes (Lundy, 2018; McMellon and Tisdall, 2020). This can be done through local governance, children's councils and children's parliaments, and this collective strength could facilitate children and young people to influence their communities, as well as services or policies.

Most government efforts have focused on establishing enabling environments to facilitate children and young people's participation and to express their agency, but not necessarily giving political influence (Josefsson et al., 2023). Many governments have established institutional structures to secure spaces, opportunities and accountability mechanisms to strengthen children and young people's voices and demands. Some of the most common forms of such structures are children's and youth parliaments, councils and parent – teacher associations (see Newlands, 2014; Walker et al., 2019). However, the case studies in this section by Mesfin on school parliaments in Ethiopia (Chapter 34), and by Corcoran et al. on the civic participation of street-connected young people (Chapter 32), underline the narrow outreach and partial representation that such spaces afford. In these kinds of groups, some children and young people (such as those who are in school, and who exhibit certain kinds of adult-sanctioned behaviour) are always invited, whereas others (such as street-connected young people) are permanently excluded. After-school children's clubs have become increasingly popular and are often the main avenue for girls to participate in decision-making. However, they are often also unable to bridge gaps between young people's priorities and those of decision-makers. Some such initiatives may be tokenistic and even perpetuate marginalisation or may be unsustainable (Janta et al., 2021; Lundy, 2018; Shier et al., 2014; Tisdall, 2015).

Furthermore, efforts by governments to promote participation by young people overlook embedded forms of inequality and injustice that may be intensified by other policies enacted by states. This does not escape the attention of young people – despite widespread global perceptions of their disengagement from politics – whose everyday lived experiences of the effects of policies can be deeply galvanising. For example, during the Penguin

Revolution in Chile in 2006, more than 10,000 secondary school students took streets to protest the neoliberalisation of education in the country (Domedel and Peña y Lillo, 2008). Although education had been massively expanded in Chile during the previous two decades, students were acutely aware that the increasing privatisation and commodification of their schooling had intensified social inequalities at every level. Key moments of political transition – in this case, the election of Chile's first female president, a socialist – can create opportunities for young people to act directly in relation to the state through protests such as these. Effective approaches to participation must thus recognise the ways that 'everyday' experiences of injustice shape young people's civic engagement and political identities.

One answer to siloed approaches to civic engagement is for governments to ensure that adolescent and youth issues are mainstreamed across all areas of work. However, in contrast to work on gender mainstreaming, which emphasises the democratising effects of considering how gender permeates all aspects of public life, there has been little analysis of how age (as a consideration) is incorporated into institutional strategies and policies outside of the Global North. Where there has been more work in the Global South is around the concept of 'child-friendly cities' and in the area of 'child rights budget monitoring' initiatives. A child-friendly city is defined as one in which children's rights under the UNCRC are fully translated into action in regard to city-level governance, service provision and design (Riggio, 2002). This includes resource mobilisation to support these developments, with child rights budget monitoring emphasised as a way to improve transparency around decision-making about how and where money allocated for children is spent. Sometimes responsibility for budget allocations has itself been assigned to children and young people – in part as a way not only to improve accountability but also to promote civic engagement through the process of involvement (Guerra, 2002; Lundy et al., 2020). However, given power dynamics, it is essential that efforts to support young people's civic engagement include clearly demarcated roles and responsibilities that are grounded in young people's own experiences of broader social and political dynamics (Lundy et al., 2020).

FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE: NGO PROGRAMMING TO FOSTER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION

Although there remain challenges in realising children and young people's right to participate, over the past three decades international civil society has developed a wave of typologies, programmes and methodologies with which to understand, unpack and support the implementation of UNCRC Article

12 (see, for example, Lansdown and O'Kane, 2014). These models, summarised in Table 30.1, seek to clarify the meaning of participation, to interpret how the right to participate is translated into practice and to understand how children and young people effectively engage in public decision-making (Thomas, 2007). Table 30.1 also shows how their limitations have given rise to the development of new models.

The legal recognition of children and young people as rights-holders by the UNCRC and other multilateral and national bodies, plus the emergence of participation typologies to operationalise those rights, has significantly expanded activities to support children and young people's participation carried out by global, regional and local NGOs. Further facilitating this expansion is the increasing understanding of agency and political participation as core components that enable children and young people to engage collaboratively with NGOs. The case study in this section on young people's participation in public policy spaces in Peru illustrates this type of programming, which addresses the absence of youth voices in political dialogues.

Various international NGOs have sought to strengthen children and young people's participation in line with the UNCRC by supporting children and young people's voices in creating and implementing laws, policies and budgets. For instance, Save the Children has worked to establish the global National Children's Commission as a structure that can facilitate the participation of children and young people in discussions around their rights. World Vision has established the Young Leaders project, a network-based platform that promotes dynamic learning and collaboration among its members in order to empower them and provide opportunities to engage in global policy debate to foster social change (Templeton et al., 2022). This global network of young advocates equips children and young people with the tools and skills they need to mobilise and to make their voices heard in local, national and global policy debates.

In order to influence policy and practice, NGOs and UN agencies have also established a range of mechanisms to engage with children and young people to include their views in the work the organisations do. For instance, World Vision consulted 100 children from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to ask how conflict affects them and what would make their lives better (Ridout, 2014). Their voices were included in the design of a roadmap for peace in DRC, which was led by the UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, and this effort recognised the importance of involving children to address the root causes of the conflict and to foster trust between people. In another example, Terre des Hommes and Queen's University Belfast led a large consultation with thousands of children and young people worldwide to capture their views and experiences about the Covid-19 pandemic (Terre

TABLE 30.1

Models of participation and their implications for conceptualising young people's citizenship

Typologies	Key features	Implications for civic and political voice and agency	Limitations and criticisms
Hart's Ladder	Created by Roger Hart (1992), the 'Ladder' has eight rungs that contain several elements, practices and attitudes that define different levels of participation for people under the age of 18. These rungs, from bottom to top, include manipulation, decoration, tokenism, assigned but informed, consulted and informed, adult-initiated shared decision-making with children, child-initiated and directed actions and child-initiated shared decision-making with adults. Despite Hart's Ladder not being intended as a model of practice, it became an influential typology of children and young people's participation as it helps practitioners recognise and try to eliminate degrees of non-participation from their own programmes.	At the bottom rungs of the ladder (manipulation, decoration, tokenism), children and young people may be brought into political forums to participate but are not listened to or their ideas may be co-opted and changed to suit the priorities of adult gatekeepers. At the top rungs, children and young people may come together in their own self-directed and initiated groups and engage in activism and advocacy on matters that they themselves have identified as important based on their own political consciousness.	Reddy and Ratna (2002) argue that the model focuses more on the varying levels of adults' roles in relation to children's participation rather than children and young people's specific roles at the different levels. It also implies a linearity of progression from non-participation to full participation (Malone and Hartung, 2010) – yet 'lower' forms of participation may be the most effective or appropriate in a given context, where 'higher' forms may not be possible (Mathur et al., 2004).

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TABLE 30.1 (Continued)

Typologies	Key features	Implications for civic and political voice and agency	Limitations and criticisms
Treseder model	Based on Hart's Ladder, Phil Treseder (1997) designed a non-hierarchical typology eliminating the three rungs related to non-participation: manipulation, decoration and tokenism. He keeps the remaining five participation degrees that correspond to the rungs on Hart's Ladder, yet he arranges them in a circular pattern to highlight that participation is not a vertical process and that no one participation type is superior to another. One of the significant contributions of the Treseder model was the inclusion of institutional contexts as crucial components, as children and young people may need support from an organisation in order to move from being consulted and informed to a more meaningful form of participation (Tisdall, 2015).	The cultural institutional context for participation and the choices of young people themselves as to how they want to participate are key. Young people may need different types of support and input from adults and different types of participation may be appropriate across a variety of settings. For example, given that adults have better knowledge of navigating institutional settings, it may be more appropriate for children to be consulted rather than expected to initiate action on an issue requiring engagement with formal political actors.	The neutrality with which Treseder views the five participation types in the model has been criticised. Hart (2008) has maintained that child-initiated participation should be valued as the most meaningful form of participation. Wong et al. (2010) have argued that equitably shared decision-making with adults should be the goal of participatory approaches because a high level of support from adults has been found to be important for the success of initiatives aimed at empowering children and youth.
Shier model	Developed in response to Hart's Ladder, Harry Shier's (2001) model emphasises the relationship between participation and empowering outcomes, and the obligations of adult gatekeepers in creating opportunities and openings for participation. At the bottom level, children and young people are listened to, and at the top level, children share power and responsibility for decision-making. Shier's model pays attention to the dynamic nature of participation and how it is affected by multiple influences and factors (Cahill and Dadvand, 2018).	This approach recognises that the modes of political participation open to children and young people are designed and controlled by adult gatekeepers, and it is thus adults' responsibility to address power inequalities that prevent young people from being able to participate equitably in decision-making. This kind of collaboration can help young people to build their own capacities and skills (Shier, 2001).	Like Hart's original model, Shier's typology is hierarchical and, in focusing on the role of adults, includes no recognition of the value of youth-initiated activities (Malone and Hartung, 2010). In reality, activities also cannot be assigned to just one level of participation, because participation is dynamic over time (Kirby and Gibbs, 2006).

Typologies	Key features	Implications for civic and political voice and agency	Limitations and criticisms
Lundy model	Laura Lundy (2007) developed a model of participation built around the legal interpretation of the UNCRC's right to participation. This model connects the critical components of Article 12 to children and young people's involvement in decision-making processes. This is done by including four interrelated elements: space, voice, audience and influence. 'Space' refers to giving children and young people the opportunity to express a view, 'voice' means that they must be facilitated to express their views, 'audience' reflects the obligation to listen to their views and 'influence' means that these views must be acted upon, as appropriate (Lundy, 2007: 933).	The Lundy model raises questions for policy-makers, stakeholders and practitioners as to how children's views have been sought actively (space), whether children have the information they need in an appropriate format to enable them to form an opinion (voice), what the processes are for communicating children's views (audience) and how children's ideas are considered by those with the power to effect change (influence) (Lundy and McEvoy, 2012).	As with most participation typologies, the Lundy model does not include analysis of children and young people's social categories and how these intersect with inequalities and exclusion.
Andersson model	Erik Andersson (2017) proposed the Pedagogical Political Participation Model (3P-M) as a way to categorise children and young people's participation in formal political structures. Similar to Hart's Ladder, the optimum form of participation is activities initiated by children themselves, independent of adult direction and input. However, Andersson emphasises contextual understanding and does not 'rank' participation in stages.	The emphasis on pedagogy draws from Andersson's observations that the approaches, motivations and attitudes of adult stakeholders – who maintain a gatekeeping role in institutional politics – shape children and young people's opportunities for and means of participation.	The focus of this model on children and young people's engagement with institutional political processes downplays their informal and everyday political activities. Like many of the models discussed here, it draws on observations of children's participation in established Northern democracies.

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TABLE 30.1 (Continued)

Typologies	Key features	Implications for civic and political voice and agency	Limitations and criticisms
Cuevas-Parra model	Building on the Lundy model, the Multi-Dimensional Lens to Article 12 model interrogates social identities, power relations, exclusion and inequalities. Cuevas-Parra (2022) adapts Lundy's model by proposing an analysis lens that connects social identities, inequalities and participation rights based on the complexity of children and young people's participation rights. Social identities and contexts affect children and young people's participation at all levels of dialogue, engagement and decision-making. This typology is informed by empirical research with children and young people in Brazil, which supports the view that participation is intrinsically impacted by complex forms of exclusion and marginalisation that are the result of a range of intersecting categories, including race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual identities and different abilities (Cuevas-Parra, 2022).	This model emerges from a theoretical perspective and methodological proposal that seeks to identify and address practices that prevent children and young people from participating in public decision-making. For example, in Brazil, when children's social identities intersect with existing inequalities, it is more challenging to realise their right to participation as race, ethnicity, gender and socioeconomic status (among other identities) determine their opportunities to participate equally. Efforts to ensure and protect children's right to participation under Article 12 must engage with and address these structural inequalities.	This model was built on data collected in Brazil where the participating children identified a number of categories of exclusion and inequalities. However, the impact of social identities needs to be analysed and contextualised taking into account how social categories intersect with the local culture and values. For instance, in some contexts, gender disparity would be more relevant than racial inequalities.

des Hommes, 2023). Using this information, leading child-focused agencies influenced major decision-makers and stakeholders to prioritise children's issues in pandemic response strategies.

The various ways that NGOs have operationalised children and young people's participation have, however, not been exempt from criticism. Some scholars highlight that such work by NGOs may reinforce colonial politics of representation, underpin logics of domination and even import alien concepts of childhood and youth to impoverished countries (Balagopalan, 2018). Work on civic engagement and political activism by young people also tends to overlook how material factors constrain opportunities for participation, instead often focusing on social and cultural barriers. Other studies suggest that NGOs and international organisations develop these strategies and programmes on the premise that they represent children and young people, but they are often actually importing global models (see, for example, Josefsson et al., 2023). In a similar vein, Hanson (2023) argues that the goal of speaking up on behalf of social groups who are marginalised is both valid and relevant, but this approach becomes problematic when the distinction between the NGO's interests and those of the community they claim to represent is blurred. Moreover, scholars have also questioned the tensions between the powerful and powerless when it comes to constructing discursive practices and narratives around the political participation of children and young people (Josefsson et al., 2023). For instance, is this form of participation something that children, young people and their communities aspire to or is it based on the self-interest of NGOs and international organisations to carry out an agenda that is perhaps alien to children, young people and their communities (Ofosu-Kusi, 2023)?

A growing body of evidence has, nonetheless, showcased a number of illuminating and promising practices that address consistent challenges that impede children and young people's participation, and which enable them to construct and deconstruct their lives and shape their environments (Cuevas-Parra and Tisdall, 2019; Le Borgne, 2014; McMellon and Tisdall, 2020; Shier, 2017). In Bangladesh and Ghana, research shows that social infrastructure (especially concerning adults) and protective institutions have a vital role in enabling young people to have their voices heard and ensure that action is taken on issues that affect them (Cuevas-Parra and Tisdall, 2022). The case studies in this section by Corcoran et al. on street-connected young people civic participation, and by Jones et al. on life skills programming in Jordan, each explore these dynamics in relation to different groups of marginalised young people. Corcoran et al. emphasise that supporting the participation of young people requires 'scaffolding' in the form of long term, trusting relationships that centre their perspectives and priorities – an

even more challenging but vital task when working with young people who have been repeatedly let down by adults. Meanwhile, Jones et al. observe the significance for young Syrian refugees living in Jordan of being mentored and taught by adults from their own communities. The relationality of children and young people's voice and agency is thus an essential component to address in the context of interventions to promote their civic engagement and participation.

Applying a gender and age lens allows further insights into how differences in opportunities and areas for participation across groups of children and young people are socially constructed and mediated by relationships, as well as the programming adaptations that are required to address the implications of these norms and dynamics for civic engagement in the Global South. Although younger adolescents' participation in decision-making may be encouraged in certain sanctioned spaces, once they are older, leave school and encounter unemployment and precarity, the voices of boys and young men in particular may be seen as threatening and dangerous, further exacerbating their political marginalisation. Meanwhile, as evidenced in the pieces by Jones et al. (Chapter 31) and Corcoran et al. (Chapter 32), girls encounter other limitations in exercising voice and agency in relation to public life as they mature through adolescence, including mobility and time constraints, as well as direct hostility and danger in certain spaces. In the case study on ANALIT (see Chapter 33) in Peru, youth leaders also describe the stigma that young people in deprived areas face around their participation in political life as a result of social norms that are reinforced by poverty and lack of opportunities, which can result in youth delinquency. Recognising that civic engagement does not begin and end in the public sphere, programming that addresses how gender and age intersect with socioeconomic inequalities is key to supporting girls to express their voice and agency in all spaces.

Budgeting for children and young people's sustained participation in all elements of programming is also vital to uphold commitments to support their voice and agency. The piece by the Khuluma Mentors (a digital psychosocial intervention in South Africa led by young people to support other adolescents and youth living with HIV or AIDS); (see Chapter 35) sees young people not only designing and implementing the programme but also being paid for their work through a stipend. While many interventions speak to the skills obtained by adolescents and young people through participating, in the context of extreme levels of unemployment and inequality across the Global South, co-design that values these skills financially can support young people's self-esteem, empowerment and sense of inclusion – all of which are key to their civic participation across the life course.

CONCLUSION

Adolescents and young people, like any other citizens, are competent social actors with their own political voices. Yet largely due to a restricted understanding of citizenship that rests on age-related social norms about capacity, their voices are often perceived as limited and less representative. However, adolescents and young people have been able to exercise their voice and agency in broader political contexts and have fought to address their struggles for recognition as political actors. This chapter underscores the importance of rethinking citizenship, political participation and representation informed by generational and power differentials. The right to participate is not context-free and, as evidenced in this introduction, cultures, values and beliefs have a crucial role in confining or expanding this right. These subjectivities operate at institutional and interpersonal levels, shaping opportunities for participation. Furthermore, when social identities intersect with inequalities, children and young people find it more challenging to realise their right to participate due to oppression, power disparities and implicit bias (Cuevas-Parra, 2022; Konstantoni and Emejulu, 2017; Kustatscher, 2017).

Increasing the opportunities and spaces in which children and young people can exercise their right to participate requires us to apply lenses of analysis that reflect the diversity of individuals and relationships within uneven social structures (Alanen, 2016; Konstantoni and Emejulu, 2017). By ignoring different representations of childhood within the same societies, exclusionary practices might silence and exclude some adolescents and young people based on structural inequalities. Within this landscape, an intersectional analysis

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BOX 30.1   DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What types of policies and programmes exist to foster young people's voice, agency and civic engagement, and at what scale do they operate? How effective have they been for promoting participation?
- To what extent do existing programmes and policies engage with barriers to participation based on gender, age and other social identities?
- What steps can programme designers and implementers take to support the exercise of agency and voice by young people who are particularly marginalised (e.g. adolescents and young people with disabilities, who are LGBTQ+, who are from an ethnic minority)?
- This chapter discusses child-friendly cities and child rights budget monitoring as examples of improving participation and accountability. Can you think of any other ways of mainstreaming young people's perspectives into policy?
- Why might governments fail to implement policies that promote adolescent and young people's participation?

(Crenshaw, 1989) can help to understand how adolescents and young people are subject to multiple issues of inequality, stigma and stereotyping – issues that often remain invisible due to the tendency to focus solely on identity and not on the multiple variables such as policies, institutions and practices that perpetuate inequality.

NOTES

1   As with all human rights treaties, UNCRC articles must be analysed with other provisions. Hence, Article 12 has to be read and interpreted in connection with other rights to participation – freedom of expression (Article 13), freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 14), freedom of association (Article 15) and access to information (Article 17). Furthermore, these participation articles also need to be read together with the inclusion of the principle of non-discrimination (Article 2), best interests of the child (Article 3) and parental guidance (Article 5).

2   The member states still to ratify the African Children's Charter are Morocco, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, Somalia, South Sudan and Tunisia.

3   Article 7 and Article 12 of the African Children's Charter outline the right of freedom of expression and participation (African Union, 1990). Article 7 states 'Every child who is capable of communicating his or her own views shall be assured the rights to express his opinions freely in all matters and to disseminate his opinions subject to such restrictions as are prescribed by laws. Article 12 writes: States Parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity'.

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