Gestione dei processi partecipativi e dei processi decisionali inclusivi per l'SDG16 e l'educazione alla pace

Managing participatory processes and inclusive decision making for SDG16 and peace education

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ABSTRACT

Strengthening participatory institutions through representative decision-making processes at all levels is one of the prerequisites for achieving peaceful societies, as implied by Agenda 2030 SDG16. The definition of participatory settings and community activation constitute education for peace and respect for the other. The paper aims to present the theoretical approaches and practical applications that the University of Florence spin-off, MoCa Future Designers, has used in four years of managing participatory processes involving different stakeholders.

ABSTRACT

Il rafforzamento delle istituzioni partecipative attraverso processi decisionali rappresentativi a tutti i livelli è uno dei prerequisiti per il raggiungimento di società pacifiche, come previsto dall'Obiettivo di Sviluppo Sostenibile (SDG) 16 dell'Agenda 2030. La definizione di contesti partecipativi e l'attivazione delle comunità costituiscono un'educazione alla pace e al rispetto dell'altro. Il documento intende presentare gli approcci teorici e le applicazioni pratiche che lo spin-off dell'Università di Firenze, MoCa Future Designers, ha utilizzato in quattro anni di gestione di processi partecipativi coinvolgendo diversi stakeholder territoriali.

KEYWORDS / PAROLE CHIAVE
Participatory processes / SDG16 / Peace education / Decision making
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INTRODUCTION

Since 2015, the United Nations' Agenda 2030, with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), clearly indicates the pathways leading to the realization of sustainability, an issue that is no longer purely environmental but, thanks to an inte-grated approach, aims to address and incentivize actions toward an important socio-economic paradigm and identifies multiple lines of action: no poverty, halting the processes leading to climate change, combating social, economic and gender inequalities, the right to quality

education, peace and strong institutions (Guetta & Iossa, 2022).

Ecological consciousness and sustainable behaviors overcome the segmentation of human knowledge in that the now fragile balances of a sustainable ecosystem must be read and analyzed 360°, meditating on the relationship between the part and the whole as one is included in the other (Guetta & Iossa, 2022).

The five pillars of the 2030 Agenda, referred to as the "5 Ps" of sustainable development, contain strategic choices that refer to the following 5 dimensions (United Nations, 2015):

- People. Eliminate hunger and poverty in all forms, ensure dignity and equality.
- Prosperity. Ensuring prosperity and lives in harmony with nature.
- Planet. Protecting the planet's natural resources and climate for future generations.
- Partnership. Implement the 2030 Agenda through strong partnerships.
- Peace. Promote peaceful, justice and inclusive societies.

Among these, the theme of peace and peaceful societies presents itself as also central and foundational to the achievement of truly inclusive development. The need to pursue peace is made explicit by Goal 16, "Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions," which aims to reduce forms of violence, combat organized crime, and corruption but, above all, aims to promote the rule of law and the strengthening of participatory institutions (United Nations, 2015):. The participation of all in both the achievement, even partial, of all 17 SDGs and of Goal 16 on peace, is a key theme that sees its recognition primarily in Target 16.7:

«Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels»

Considering the role that participatory processes and inclusive decision-making can play as drivers for peace, it becomes meaningful to engage in concrete efforts to contribute to citizen representation.

With these premises, the paper will highlight the role of participation, facilitation of participatory processes, and the work of MoCa Future Designers - a spin-off of the University of Florence in the area of educational sciences - in organizing and facilitating participatory and inclusive processes through scientifically validated methods to respond to the university's third mission in the area of social and educational projects with territorial impact, in order to contribute to the achievement of Goal 16 of Agenda 2030 through education for peace and respect for others through the representation of all and the participation of territorial stakeholder voices.

PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES FOR PEACE

The Expanding spaces for civic engagement, personal and collective responsibility, empowerment, and promoting more direct participation of people in decisions that affect their local area can be an important factor in fostering more inclusive collective and territorial governance. The perception of being able to play a role in actions, policies, and decisions is closely related to increased trust in the welfare system, community and

local potential, and governance, and can foster stronger political engagement, a greater sense of responsibility, and social and peaceful inclusion (United Nations Development Programme, 2022).

Data resulting from surveys of 45 countries conducted by the World Values Survey (Haerpfer et al., 2022) show that, on average, only slightly more than half of the respondents-61.5 percent-believe that they participate in the policies, even at the micro level, of their country or the area in which they live. In addition to this survey, it is also possible to mention the survey conducted by European Social Survey (United Nations Development Programme, 2022) which found that only 38 percent of those surveyed believed that their regional political system gave them a way to actively participate in decisions on social and economic policies. However, SDG16 and the United Nations have explicitly emphasized the importance of ensuring inclusive and responsive decision- making, and it is part of the 2030 Agenda monitoring framework encouraging all member states to actively work on this front, without which real sustainability would not be achieved.

The use of participatory decision-making approaches generates several benefits related to achieving the goal of peace and strong institutions connected to the SDG16 (Roberts & Escobar, 2015; O'Flynn, 2007; Luskin et al., 2014):

- Better policy outcomes. Participation of community stakeholders allows points of view that are often never heard to be highlighted. With the idea that diversity of viewpoints and beliefs is valuable in problem-solving and discussion, collective intelligence results in better outcomes than the intelligence of the individual or the intelligence of a group of like-minded individuals and beliefs.

- It enables future challenges to be addressed more successfully. In continuity with the previous point, citizen participation is a driver for building skills that make the citizens of a community, the people of a specific place, more capable of dealing with potential future challenges in the area.

- New resources and human relations. Participatory processes make more tangible and intangible resources available and provide ways to create new relationships among stakeholders, thereby increasing the availability of social capital in the community (Bagnasco, 1999).

- Increased perceptions of equity in public decision-making. Participants involved in inclusive decision-making processes believe that outcomes arrived at through mutual dialogue are more fair, respectful, and meet the real needs of all. People are more likely to accept decisions made even if they do not meet their own vision.

- It promotes social cohesion and peace, even in post-conflict societies. Crucially, inclusive participatory and decision-making processes make possible dialogue between even very different social, cultural, and religious fabrics, initiate conflict management processes, and thus are a driver for achieving peaceful, just, inclusive societies.

Globally, many efforts are currently underway that aim to foster citizen activism, a sense of global citizenship, and actions that attempt to improve inclusiveness and responsiveness in public decision-making. Such actions are based on the concept of

participatory governance (Ianniello, 2016), according to which those who are interested in a particular issue of public interest should be enabled to take part in the decision-making process of that specific issue, without any form of discrimination. The right to participation and management of public affairs can be realized not only through voting but also in the opportunity to be an elected representative, through participation in popular assemblies that can make decisions, through the organization of public debates and dialogues, by forming associations or joining them.

Participation means "taking part" in an act or process or "being part" of a community, a group. Participatory processes in the social field involve the collaboration of the various stakeholders of a specific community who, through the organization of meetings in specific spaces, are involved in the joint planning, conception, definition, and implementation of a new policy, a new project, an action that can have an impact not only on the participants but also on the group to which they belong (Martini & Torti, 2003). The fields of application for participatory processes with citizens are innumerable, from the health of citizens themselves, to environment and sustainability, urban safety, city and town planning, policy formulation, and the creation of innovative services for all citizens or segments of citizens in particular. From a practical point of view, participatory processes can be promoted by the public administration with a top-down approach, by a private entity usually a nonprofit, or by the citizens of the community with processes initiated from below through associationism and with territorial development purposes. Participatory processes are managed by a facilitator, an increasingly emerging professional in the landscape of figures contributing to socio-educational and cultural innovation, who is in charge of managing the discussion in terms of timing and everyone's participation, stimulating the conversation, contributing to mutual collaboration and cooperation, managing any conflicts, ensuring participation, plural and inclusive sharing of all actors present.

Facilitators who, through their work, ensure the success of participatory processes and citizen inclusion contribute in practice to educating people about peace, respect for others, and a sense of responsibility for their local area (Bobbio, 2004). In their task of promoting consensus between the parties and managing the entire process, they also take on the role of mediators and constructive conflict transformation, raising awareness of the values of peace and nonviolence and educating for peace that sees all participants as "students".

MOCA FUTURE DESIGNERS AND THE THIRD UNIVERSITY MISSION

MoCa Future Designers was born within the Department of Education Sciences and Psychology of the University of Florence and is the first spin-off in the pedagogical area. It was born from the experience gained in the research and participatory action research pathways carried out over the years in the field of education, training, and socio-educational services in collaboration with both public entities, especially local authorities and school institutes, and private entities, especially foundations, social cooperatives, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), training agencies, social enterprises, associations, and for-profit companies. Based on scientific theories and methodologies and thanks to a

focus also on emerging and highly innovative paradigms in interventions in the social sector (such as, for example, Translational Research, Implementation Science and Knowledge Mobili- sation), MoCa's research is aimed at testing practical interventions on the ground that can provide effective responses to the demands and needs coming from services, institutions, and national but especially local policy makers. The experience gained from the research has made it possible to highlight the forms of learning that take place within various contexts, such as in Third Sector organizations, social, educational and cultural contexts, and through the involvement of many subjects, especially when the promoted interventions encourage the overcoming of processes of adaptation in favor of processes of understanding, awareness and critical reflection, determining change that the participating subjects make their own. The detection of changes generated by promoted interventions has enabled the creation of service models that aim to build forms of community welfare, including in participatory process management and facilitation.

THE MANAGEMENT OF MOCA FUTURE DESIGNERS' PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES: METHODOLOGIES AND EXPERIENCES

In light of the premises highlighted in the previous pages, where the links between Goal 16 of Agenda 2030 for the development of peaceful societies and the organization and management of participatory processes and between education for sustainable development and peace education were made explicit, highlight the evidenced-based methodologies and some experiences of participatory processes that MoCa has facilitated and managed.

Open space technology (OST)
The goal of the OST is to structure a problem-oriented formative moment so that participants feel free to propose topics and discussion only if they are interested in them, fully respecting participatory democracy. If the working group is united by passion and interest it will be able to self-organize and achieve its purpose. The challenge of the OST is to start meetings without set agendas and timelines, rather clarifying the topic that must be close to the participants' lives and important to them, in order to incentivize personal empowerment and willingness to participate personally in the discussion without delegating the floor to others, as can happen in non-participatory settings (Owen, 2008).
Facilitations in which OST was used.
Facilitation of the co-design process for Oxfam and a network of Third Sector partners in the province of Florence in order to define an intervention to address child educational poverty. Educators and young graduates also participated in the facilitation.
Facilitation at the festival organized by Social Cooperative Project 5. The participatory workshop called "The Child-Friendly City" was aimed at defining the characteristics of the child-friendly city of the future, and MoCa's participatory techniques were functional for discussion and to investigate actions that individually and collectively could contribute to the theme and active citizenship.

World cafè

The World Café setting makes it possible to transform the word participation from an abstract concept to real, measurable practices. The steps for using such a participatory method are:

- Preparing the working environment carefully, clarifying the topic to be debated on, goals, timing.
- Creating welcoming spaces. The reference to coffee, which in the collective imagination is linked to a moment of pleasure and a break from stress, shows that creating a welcoming space is a key dimension of the methodology.
- Choose themes and topics that are relevant and related to participants' daily and real lives, on which the facilitator will identify questions.
- Recognize and encourage everyone's input. The facilitator encourages not only to listen attentively but also to give input in decision-making, in choosing courses of action, while not forcing anyone to answer.
- Relate participants and connect different perspectives, exchanging experiences and helping to enliven thinking, deconstruct stereotypes or clichés.
- Sharing collective findings. As conversations at the tables wind down, it is important to gather the main ideas in a plenary, seeking a point of contact between the reflections presented.

Facilitations in which the world café was used.

A participatory path of activation of the entire local network of Bastia Umbra was carried out with a view to promoting an inclusive sport - Baskin - in the territory and in particular in collaboration with Croce Rossa Bastia Umbra. The participatory event aimed to investigate and identify different ways to start Baskin in the territory.

MoCa facilitated a participatory and reflective event in collaboration with the City of Florence with representatives of the cooperatives that participated in the Presidi Positivi project of "Street Education" in the neighborhoods of the city of Florence, aimed at understanding how to improve street education and what policies to propose to policy makers.

European Awareness Scenario Workshop (EASW)

The European Awareness Scenario Workshop (EASW) methodology originated in Denmark in the early 1990s. In 1994 it was officially adopted, promoted, and disseminated by the European Commission's Innovation program to stimulate participatory, negotiated, consensual, bottom-up planning among large groups of local actors (European Commission, 1998). The reference to scenario is particularly useful in that it refers to theater, thus to the imagination of another possible, but yet unverified, reality. It is considered that scenario analysis was first developed in the military, and then became a tool for policy construction. Two dimensions in this approach appear to be prioritized:

- Assessing the transferability of good practices across different cultural and political contexts, reflecting on the different conditions that led to their success.
- Identifying and exploring new tools, also transferable

transnationally. EASW consists of three phases:

- Scenario development.
- The mapping of stakeholders and their connections in local governance and organization.
- The workshop where stakeholders meet and pool visions, limitations, needs and aspiration and based on these produce transformative ideas.

Facilitations in which EASW was used.
MoCa facilitated a project to regenerate some urban spaces in the town of Tavernelle by guiding and accompanying a group of 11- and 12-year-olds in the development of a design idea for the renovation of a green area in their town.
BarCamps

BarCamp is a technique similar to open space and world café, but the discussion content is shared online before the in-person meeting is held. The events mainly deal with topics related to innovations on the use of the web, open source, and social networks. The ideal barcamp is a collaborative unconference where everyone contributes, and no one is just a spectator. The purpose is to bring out and grow free thinking, curiosity, dissemination, and diffusion of topics, especially those related to the Web. The bar camp is organized in sessions, to which one freely registers through the specific barcamp wiki page: each person can book to speak and expound, for no more than ten minutes, in thematic sessions of about an hour. There can be up to three to four sessions in a day that simultaneously address different subtopics from the main theme (Dennerlein et. al., 2013).
Facilitations in which BarCamps was used.
The participatory path "Map of the Livorno Mountains," aimed at constructing a community map of the Livorno Mountains, had the objective of reflecting on the identity of places and communities. MoCa managed the facilitation of the entire pathway and, together with invited stakeholders, developed a management and enhancement strategy for the entire area.

CONCLUSIONS

Within this framework of community services that refer to the formative and educational dimension of the recipients of the spin-off's actions, attention to sustainability, the Sustainable Development Goals, and especially sustainability education aimed at MoCa's targets of intervention, finds a concrete space. Sustainability education finds its crowning glory in SDG 4 - quality education - which plays a connector role among the other goals, as especially underlined by target 4.7 (United Nations Statistics Division Development Data and Outreach Branch, n.d.).

"By 2030 ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development".

Education for sustainable development must therefore occupy a well-defined and clear space within those contexts that are responsible for educating citizens-even in non-formal settings-and that deliver services that provide educational opportunities because education for sustainability enables informed decision-making and responsible action also and especially for a just and peaceful society for present and future generations; educating for sustainability becomes a means through which to educate for peace, and MoCa Future Designers, through its facilitation services, participatory processes, and

inclusive decision making, contributes, even if on a micro-territorial level, to building strong institutions and peace.

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