‘Children’s participation is…’: Using metaphors to explore lived meanings
‘La partecipazione è…’: L’utilizzo della metafora per esplorare i significati vissuti

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ABSTRACT

Hermeneutic phenomenology provides a framework to understand shared, interrelated, and embodied human existence since it is concerned with meaning-making and revealing what the experience is like. Metaphors, part of poetic language, offer an effective method for presenting complex, rich understandings, giving room for play and ambiguity, and uncovering novel and unexpected ways of conceptualizing experiences. Drawing on a broader case study on the collaboration between the Children’s Parliament Scotland and an Aberdeen primary school, this article presents how metaphor was used to gather material on the “meanings of children's participation in decision-making processes”. This choice was guided by the epistemological conviction that image-related representations can be significant sources of knowledge about the human world, revealing new meanings that can illuminate both theory and practice.

L’approccio fenomenologico-ermeneutico alla ricerca offre una cornice per significare e comprendere l’interrelata, condivisa e incarnata esistenza umana. Le metafore, parte del linguaggio poetico, rappresentano un metodo efficace per comprendere in maniera ricca e complessa, dando spazio al gioco e all’ambiguità, le esperienze vissute, generando nuovi e inaspettati significati. Prendendo spunto da un caso studio più ampio sulla collaborazione tra il Children’s Parliament Scotland e una scuola primaria di Aberdeen, questo articolo presenta come la metafora sia stata utilizzata per raccogliere materiale sui “significati della partecipazione dei bambini e delle bambine ai processi decisionali”. Questa scelta è stata guidata dalla convinzione epistemologica che le rappresentazioni legate alle immagini possano essere fonti significative di conoscenza relative al mondo umano, aprendo a nuovi significati in grado di illuminare sia la teoria sia la prassi.

KEYWORDS
Child participation, Metaphors, Poetic language, Pedagogical research, Meaning-making
Partecipazione dei minorenni, Metafore, Linguaggio poetico, Ricerca pedagogica, Significati

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1. Introduction: poetic language as a research path

«Poems, surrounded by space and weighted by silence, break through the noise to present an essence» (Leavy, 2015, p. 66). Leggo, a pioneer in poetic inquiry, writes: «Poetry invites us to experiment with language, to create, to know, to engage creatively and imaginatively with experience» (cited in Leavy, 2015, p. 66). Using poetic language as a possible source of information in research projects is certainly part of the qualitative research approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Primarily, it seeks to interpret the human phenomena we investigate in terms of the meanings that study participants associate with them. Exploring the fluidity of meaning, we turn our attention to silence and elicit emotional evocation as part of the meaning-making process. Thanks to postmodern theory, postcolonial theory, feminist postmodernism, and feminist poststructuralism, the use of poetry in the production of knowledge in the social sciences has increased significantly in recent decades. All these approaches challenge traditional modes of knowledge. These schools of thought are concerned with accessing and empowering suppressed voices, with particular focus on how discourse shapes experience. These traditions see what eludes the epistemological model of positivism as a possible research subject. Within the framework of phenomenological-hermeneutic research philosophy, van Manen argues that the use of images offers the opportunity to create new meanings by using them as «a source of lived experience» (van Manen, 2016[1997]). He discusses the value of poetic art forms, through which he experiences forms of human existence by identifying with the protagonist and the experiences being told and discovering new words to describe his experiences. In this way, images are associated with concepts and emotions with words. It doesn't necessarily have to be explicit. The language of images expresses ideas by analogy, and the image and its interpretation are creative acts that are closely related to the person who realizes them. In other words, poetic language offers a potential method for presenting in-depth, nuanced understandings, providing room for play and ambiguity, and revealing novel and unexpected ways into the phenomena. To this end, Gadamer spoke of «*das Einleuchtende*» (the illuminating) and also «*einleuchtend*» (what is evident, revealed or shining in): «To shine means to shine on something, and so to make that on which the light falls appear» (Gadamer, 2013, p. 498).

2. Metaphors: figures of lived experience

A metaphor is often seen as either a literary device or a distinguishing feature of figurative language (Lakoff, 1986a; 1986b). However, several linguistics scholars have sketched a broader view of metaphor, one that connects metaphor use to ordinary, everyday language and shows how our thinking is influenced by metaphor use. Lakoff has stated that although it is often contrasted to literal language, a more accurate definition of metaphor likens it to «a structural mapping from one domain of subject matter (the source domain) to another (the target domain) » (Lakoff, 1986b, p. 294). He argued that metaphor is not just a figurative expression we choose after we perceive and think about a situation; rather, how we describe some situation or things indicates how we are viewing it, storing it, and linking it and that this occurs in terms of knowledge we already have. That is, the concepts we already know influence what we will notice in a situation (Lakoff, 1986a; Perrin, 1987), and the metaphor we choose in a situation reveals implicit belief systems (Marshall, 1990; Schön, 1992). Following this interpretation, Perrin (1987, p. 255) described metaphors as a «mnemonic vestige of prior experiences»; in effect, more a «figure of experience» than a figure of speech.

As Farahi (2020) contends, for thousands of years, metaphors have been a fundamental component of language, albeit in many different forms. The word metaphor derives from the Greek (*metaphorá*), and means transferring, transporting something. Metaphors served two purposes in Greek and Roman classicism: to embellish a text or discourse and to persuade or make the arguments expounded more incisive, offering an objective, concrete, experiential correlative to sensorially substantiate abstract ideas. Since metaphor engages the mind in an associative game that is triggered by the tension it produces between "is", "is not", and "is like" and that finds its most sharp expressive form in language, metaphor can be regarded as a cognitive event even before it is linguistic:

> Metaphor is the rhetorical process by which discourse unleashes the power that certain fictions have to redescribe reality. By linking fiction and redescription in this way, we restore the full depth of meaning to the proper semantic operation consisting in seeing the similar in the dissimilar (Lakoff 1986a; Perrin 1987).

From this conjunction of fiction and redescription, one can conclude that:

> The "place" of metaphor, its most intimate and ultimate abode, is neither the name, nor the sentence, nor even discourse, but the copula of the verb to be. The metaphorical "is" at once signifies both "is not" and "is like". If this is really so, we are allowed to speak of metaphorical truth, but in an equally "tensive" sense of the word "truth" (Ricoeur 2006, p. 6).

Ricoeur (1986) emphasizes how metaphor is transdisciplinary. If one of its traits is the creation of new meanings, then it cannot be said to be solely a function of rhetoric but also of semantics, hermeneutics, and education. From a purely pedagogical perspective, interest in metaphor has concentrated on aspects related to its hermeneutic-educational implications, highlighting how it is, first and foremost, its inherent dimensions of figurality, imagination, dynamism, and creativity that contribute to creating a subjective, dynamic, and expressive vision of the world and help the individual to go beyond what is already known to view something creative and generative in the reading of experience.

Therefore, the epistemological conviction that representations linked to images can be important sources of knowledge relating to the human world, guided the choice of using metaphors as an instrument, to be proposed to research participants (Montà, 2022) for the collection of material related to the meanings of "children's participation", as will be described in the following paragraphs.

3. Exploring the meanings of children's participation: metaphors for accessing lived experience

3.1 Children's participation: what are we talking about?

The epistemological conviction, therefore, that representations linked to images can be important sources of knowledge relating to the human world, guided the choice of using metaphors as an instrument for the collection of material related to the meanings of "children's participation", within a larger study (Montà, 2022) on the meanings of children's participation in decision-making processes, at a policy level and within educational practices.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [UNCRC] (UN, 1989) contains a unique provision in its Article 12. The first paragraph of the article assures, to every child capable of forming his or her own views, the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with age and maturity. The second paragraph states, in particular, that the child shall be afforded the right to be heard in any judicial or administrative proceedings affecting him or her. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has identified Article 12 as one of the four general principles of the Convention, the others being the right to non-discrimination, the right to life and development, and the primary consideration of the child's best interests, which highlights the fact that this article establishes not only a right in itself but should also be considered in the interpretation and implementation of all other rights.

The concept of children's participation is commonly associated with article 12 of the UNCRC but the Convention does not refer to the concept of participation. It is the Committee on the Rights of the Child with its General Comment No. 12 (2009) that makes this connection. Specifically, participation is defined as:

> A widespread practice has emerged in recent years, which has been broadly conceptualized as "participation", although this term itself does not appear in the text of article 12. This term has evolved and is now widely used to describe ongoing processes, which include information-sharing and dialogue between children and adults based on mutual respect, and in which children can learn how their views and those of adults are taken into account and shape the outcome of such processes (UN, 1989, p. 3).

This definition sheds some light on the meanings of participation. It is a practice and not only a concept; it is a process, which means it is not linear but recursive. The process has specific characteristics. Firstly, it implies the sharing of information. One cannot participate if she/he does not have the needed information. Secondly, it is a dialogical process, which by definition contemplates conflict and the management of power dynamics. Thirdly, it is an intergenerational process. Finally, it is an educational experience: children need to have the possibility to learn how their views and those of adults are taken into account and shape the outcome of such processes. This last point tells us that participation needs to generate some kind of impact.

At the same time, children are being involved in research, assessments, monitoring and consultations (Ritterbusch et al., 2020; Thomas et al., 2016). They are engaged in various activities such as journalism, health promotion and peer education (Mitchell et al., 2007; Mukhopadhyay & Bhatnagar, 2005; Usellini, 2020). Children's clubs, parliaments and youth organizations were established in many countries (Scottish Children's Parliament, Eurochild, etc.) and in some cases, children influenced public decisions and resource allocation (Finnie, 2017; Shier et al., 2014). Different participatory practices have been introduced, different definitions explored, and different levels of power shared (Lansdown, 2001), all of which suggest changes in the relationship between adults and children (John, 1996). Child participation has also been extensively studied at a theoretical level. However, a comprehensive framework to uncover or make sense of it is still lacking (Clark et al., 2019; Malone & Hartung, 2010). In this regard, pedagogy and politics are not listed among the disciplines informing child participation (Malone & Hartung, 2010), even though participation needs to be learnt (Dewey, 1916; Freire, 2018[1968]) and draws its roots and aims from the political sphere of life (Cornwall, 2006; Somervill, 2011).

Participation is thus a nebulous concept because it simply refers to "taking part," but in what? It might contain practically anything. More broadly, the idea of participation has fallen short of offering a solid enough theoretical foundation to create a plan for children's engagement (Theis, 2010). There are ongoing debates on the appropriate prioritization of participation, both from a practical and a human rights perspective, and whether it is an 'end' in itself, a 'means' for the promotion and protection of human rights, or both (Lansdown, 2001). Moreover, its conceptual existence requires ladders, degrees, levels, supporting environments and adjectives (e.g., Hart, 1992; Lundy, 2007; Shier, 2001).

As a result, schools and education tend not to be participatory (Kılıç & Öztürk, 2018; Rudduck & Flutter, 2000; Triani, 2020). Most government decisions are made without considering the perspective of children (European Commission et al., 2015) or without fully involving children in all stages of decision-making (European Commission et al., 2021). The media often broadcast offensive and personal attacks on children defending their right to participate. Indeed, the participatory thrust of the UNCRC poses a major pedagogical challenge:

> Considerable – sometimes profound – change in cultural attitudes towards children.

> Even adults who are utterly sympathetic to the principle of enabling children to express their views may often feel uncomfortable with the ways, means and implications of putting this into practice. Indeed, children themselves frequently experience similar feelings of unease (Lansdown, 2001, p. v).

Nevertheless, today the participation of all people in the decision-making process is seen as key to building a sustainable world (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). In this respect, children's participation is seen as a 'last chance' (Biemmi & Macinai, 2020). Education, equipped with research paradigms, theoretical models, methods, and tools, can play an important role by fostering a learning process based on reflection and practice (UN, 1989, Art. 12; EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, Article 24, Council of Europe Recommendation 2012) for all actors involved in this challenge. This challenge concerns issues of what children learn and do, and issues related to what it means to be and to act as humans (Amadini et al., 2020; Biemmi & Macinai, 2020).

3.2 The case-study: the collaboration between Children's Parliament Scotland and Manor Park Primary School

As we have seen in the previous paragraphs, the definition of child participation is nebulous and presents several levels of complexity and ambiguities in policy agendas and documents (Montà, 2021). Therefore, to try and grasp the meaning of this fundamental construct, at the heart of policy and the contemporary scientific debate, turning to lived experience becomes necessary.

The project is part of a qualitative research approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), based on the phenomenological-hermeneutic method (Mortari, 2016; van Manen, 2014; 2016[1997]), according to the case study strategy (Yin, 2014). The case was identified in the exemplary experience offered by the work carried out by the Scottish Children's Parliament (CP) in collaboration with Manor Park Primary School in Aberdeen. It is a context able to translate into educational practices the sense of children's participation in public, formal and structured decision-making processes as described by policies.

The mission of Children's Parliament is to support the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child throughout Scotland and to raise awareness of the importance of children's human rights. Children's Parliament collaborates with local partners to showcase a children's human rights perspective and to help them implement the UNCRC to bring about long-lasting change. Children's Parliament (CP) and Manor Park Primary School (Manor Park PS) began collaborating in 2015 as part of the Imagining Aberdeen programme, which aimed to utilise a children's rights approach so that children's voices could impact service design and delivery across the entire city. Participating in this project were 4 out of the 19 Scottish Attainment Challenge schools (Education Scotland, 2020). This was the beginning of a relationship between Children's Parliament and Manor Park Primary that naturally grew into projects over the following five years that centred on student involvement in school development. North of Aberdeen, in a region with significant poverty, is where Manor Park Primary is situated. Manor Park PS felt unsafe when Children's Parliament (CP) first visited the school in 2015 – 2016. Reflecting this culture is the figure of 245 temporary exclusions during 2016 – 2017, which resulted in Manor Park becoming the primary school with the most exclusions in Scotland for this school year (Reporter, 2018). With a new Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in place, Manor Park PS started a journey in 2017 to transform the school's reputation and culture to build a place where all students, teachers, and members of the larger school community feel proud of their school and the learning that takes place there. The SLT partnered with Children's Parliament to develop a new model of student participation throughout the school to support these improvements, by incorporating a rights-based perspective and a pedagogy of listening (Macartney, 2012). Between 2017 and 2020, this cooperation and the work it produced helped Manor Park PS undergo significant change, as evidenced by the statistic that the number of temporary school exclusions dropped by 96%, from 245 in 2016 – 2017 to 9 in 2019 – 2020.

3.3 Walking the research path: methodological and data analysis considerations.

Data collection and documentation of the research process took place through the collection and studying of documentation (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007, p. 200) produced by CP; ethnographic observations (Anderson-Levitt, 2006; Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011; van Manen, 2016[1997]) of the work done by CP workers with the school; semi-structured interviews (Hesse-Biber, 2017; Merriam, 2009; Sità, 2012) with CP workers and the school's head teacher and focus groups with the teachers that were held also online (Moore et al., 2015; Salmons, 2014; Stancanelli, 2010; Wilson, 1997). Within this context, the researcher explored the *meanings attributed to child participation* by the Children's Parliament's workers (one project manager and two project workers), the head teacher of the school, the teachers and the children themselves, also by recurring to poetic language and specifically by asking the involved participants to *share a metaphor for children's participation*.

Data analysis was conducted following the phenomenological-hermeneutic approach (van Manen, 2016[1997]) with the support of NVivo software. Specifically, the data analysis process, of the collected metaphors, followed the guidelines suggested by the phenomenological philosophy, the framework that guided the building of the research project. This approach allowed the researcher to hold the complexity of the collected data together and elaborate a pedagogical reflection that considers the lived experience and the meanings attributed to the phenomenon under study. Referring to the phenomenological-hermeneutic direction, the researcher relied on the contributions offered by van Manen (2016[1997]) and Mortari (2016) that suggest thematic analysis to elaborate the collected data. «Phenomenological themes

may be understood as the structures of experience. So, when we analyze a phenomenon, we are trying to determine what the themes are, the experiential structures that make up that experience» (van Manen, 2016[1997], p. 79). A theme expresses a crucial point that concerns the investigated phenomenon. It indicates a semantic direction within the collected data. This means that once the themes that compose the phenomenon have been retrieved, they can be used as 'instruments' to get close to the global meaning of the experience (van Manen, 2016[1997]). This process aims to create a form of knowledge that can inform daily practice. The theme 'fixes' the ineffable essence of the phenomenon in a temporary and exemplary form, always keeping in mind that no thematic formulation can completely unveil the essence of a phenomenon. A theme, in fact, is always a reduction but it allows the touching of the core of the phenomenon we are trying to understand. Metaphorically themes are:

> Knots in the webs of our experiences, around which certain lived experiences are spun and thus lived through as meaningful wholes. Themes are the stars that make up the universe of meaning we live through. By the light of these themes, we can navigate and explore such universes (van Manen, 2016[1997], p. 90).

The final step of analysis is to provide interpretations of the phenomenon under study, by focusing on the themes and connections that emerge.

3.4 Child participation is… emerging meanings

The project manager of CP represents the meaning of participation as an "open door". She says:

> I think to a certain degree you have to have an open door. And that open door is just a… it doesn't mean that they have a rights-based practice, but it means that they're willing to open up and change to embed that. And in terms of adults working with us, I think when you've got that open door, it actually allows those differences to be made. I think participation needs to be really built into what people do.

Children's Parliament is an organization that has great acknowledged expertise in the field of children's rights, with specific attention to participation. However, this is not enough to create a sustainable culture based on children's rights. It is necessary for the subjects that live a certain reality to be engaged, to be open to change and this takes time to accept and learn to practice. Specifically, it is the adults who detain the power to take decisions and are duty-bearers that need to be open to the possibility of integrating children's perspectives into their decisions.

It cannot be taken for granted that people in high-up positions, so people that detain responsibility, are willing to give children «a seat at the table», as one of the project workers mentions. «It's sort of like children having a seat at the table. I guess that's how I imagine it. It's not on the side, it's part of…». This requires a continuous and balanced «up-and-down» movement to «ride the seesaw» of participation like another project worker argues: «I guess it's like a seesaw. It's got to be balanced so that children have as much involvement as the adults».

To this end, let's see what an adult, in a position of responsibility, precisely the head teacher says about the meanings of children's participation. Participation, from the head teacher's perspective, is about «having a voice and being heard». She says:

> I worry that participation in some places will be tokens and just more ticking boxes: "Yes, we consulted students" but actually I think participation is about giving children that might not have had the voice a voice and letting them be able to be confident enough to speak because that can be life-changing for them.

Traditionally, children have been described as *infants*, so lacking *logos*. This image is overturned by this metaphor that is especially dedicated to those children that for different reasons "might not have had the voice", in terms of opportunities to express themselves in the best possible way for them and spaces to feel confident enough to do so. Creating the conditions for children to "exercise" their *logos* can be life changing.

Coming to teacher's metaphors, an important methodological note to keep in mind is that their metaphors derive from a co-construction of meaning, as they have been imagined during a focus group. The teachers co-constructed two intertwined images: a flower/blossom and a tree. Let's see the components of these metaphors and what they have to say about participation.

> *Teacher 1:* «I don't' …would an example of that be like: water a flower and it will grow? If you say like… Just say if you water a flower, it will grow. So, like, if you give the children the information, they'll learn, kind of that».
> *Teacher 2:* «I agree. Like Blossoms…It starts off like something small. When it blossoms, it blossoms into something beautiful and every flower and every tree, or whatever, all grow differently in different directions».
> *Teacher 3:* «And you never really know how it was going to turn out».
> *Teacher 4:* « I was thinking like a tree. One of our values in School is aspiration and I've actually just been doing a bit of work with my kids this week on this. That's why it's come to mind. But we have been talking all about growth and how, you know, having ambition is important... So, when they are at school, and I think through the Children's Parliament, I saw a big difference in some of my kids in terms of growth. What was nice about the kids I had certainly working with Children's Parliament was the group that were chosen were very, very quiet children. And for the time they worked with Children's Parliament, I did see them grow because they were then much more willing to cooperate in class. They would volunteer and they would get up in front of the class to share the work that they've been doing with the Children's Parlia-

> ment. And so, growth is definitely something I would agree with, it is something that I saw personally, with the Children's Parliament».

"Growth" and its stemmed words are cited a dozen times, constituting a core meaning of the teacher's experience. Growth is possible thanks to "water", which corresponds to information, one of the key aspects of participation, also cited by the UNCRC. Growth is something that requires time but that can lead to beautiful, unexpected outcomes, like the different directions of the branches of a tree – the non-linearity of the process emerges. For example, thanks to the participatory process, children learned to take the initiative in class and to cooperate, something quite unexpected considering the quietness of some of the children that participated in the participatory process.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and consequent school lockdown, the researcher was not able to directly explore the research question with children, except during her observations. At the same time, since children's perspective is essential to understanding the phenomenon under study, the researcher has drawn from documentation consisting of rap music videos produced in the context of the Imagining Aberdeen Project, in which children from MP school also took part in. The researcher is aware of the limitations of this kind of decision – amongst them, it is not exactly the same context, and the participants are not exactly the same – but the achievements outweigh the limitations.

Here are their words:

> This is the blossom tree, and we are the blossoms. The roots of the tree are the policy and laws of the government. The trunk is what the government expects adults to do for the children (adults should listen to me, don't judge me because of who I am or where I am from; adults should try to see things from a children's point of view The leaves on the tree are what the adults already do to keep us healthy, happy and safe (you give us nice food, you care, you are trustworthy, you put a roof on our heads; they give us support when we need it)—and the blossoms are what we feel when the adults do all these things for us. This is the blossom tree and we are the blossoms (we feel confident; happy; important; loved; cared for). If adults do what they should do we'll blossom.

Children in their song elaborate a complex metaphor of participation, that recalls teachers' images. Participation is a tree. Policy and laws constitute the roots of the tree, so the means through which the tree can nourish itself and live. The trunk, which allows the tree to stand strong and tall, is the action that adults are expected to do—listen to children, don't judge them, and adopt a child-centred perspective. The leaves correspond to what adults already do for children: adults provide food, shelter, support, and care and are trustworthy. The blossoms are how children feel when adults do all these things: confident, happy, important, loved and cared for.

4. Conclusions and openings

While analytical and succinct descriptions and explanations will typically capture some, but not all, of what we want to comprehend, poetic language can support us to go beyond mere words and sentences. This enables us to make sense of key concepts. In fact, Sfard (1998) states in her influential article on metaphors and education that:

> [M]etaphors are the most primitive, most elusive, and yet most amazingly informative objects of analysis. Their special power stems from the fact that they often cross the borders between the spontaneous and the scientific, between the intuitive and the formal […] they enable conceptual osmosis between everyday and scientific discourses, letting our primary intuition shape scientific ideas and the formal conceptions feed back into the intuition (Sfard, 1998, p. 4).

Thus, metaphors are invaluable in allowing us to relate concepts and go from one conceptual domain to another. Furthermore, they support meaning-making, like in the case of a "buzzword" like "participation". The use of metaphors allowed crucial dimensions of the concept and practice of participation to emerge. For instance, it needs strong "roots", therefore a policy framework that can orient practice. As we have seen, participation is at the heart of policy agendas but still in an ambiguous manner. For instance, children are described both as resourceful citizens and as a vulnerable group; not only are the policies written by adults, although concerning children, but they are inaccessible to them (Montà, 2021). Connected to this aspect is the fact that, in response to adult-centric agendas, many models that aim at promoting forms of child participation that are "fully" "child initiated" or "authentic", or in other words that are "adult-free" (Hart, 1992; Shier, 2001; Treseder & Smith, 1997) have been created. The metaphors, instead, in line with recent literature on the topic (Mannion, 2007; Wyness, 2012), depict an intergenerational idea of participation. Reintroducing adults into the process requires rethinking the oppositions between "autonomous" adults and "dependent" children, "agentic" adults and "developing agency" in children, and "vulnerable" childhood and "invulnerable" adulthood. This calls for the exquisite pedagogical premise that humans are Mitsein (Biffi, 2020; Macinai, 2020). The "I" only has significance within a relation. This implies that as a species, we are all susceptible and dependent. When considering human rights, this indicates that they are only possible because of the existence of an "Other" (Macinai, 2020). As a result, the relational and dialogical components of the participative process must be recovered (Percy-Smith, 2006), without denying the power dynamics and the conflict that can be generated – participation contains an 'up and down' movement, continuous rebalancing. To this purpose, it is crucial to highlight once more how the teachers and the students both compared participation to a blossom or tree, emphasising how their perspectives are complementary and similar, perspectives in which both children and adults are contemplated, where both have a "seat at the table".

The case study participants encourage us to avoid allowing ideas of «childhood» and «adulthood» as well as concepts like «children's space», «the degree of adult involvement», and «which decisions» (COE, 2016) and «the weight» to be given to these decisions, to limit, segregate, or increase the distances between adults and children. Instead, consider all human beings' autonomy, agency, and potential as part of a relational and ongoing learning process in which participants constantly reposition themselves and their roles in response to the variable environments they inhabit (Bertolini, 1988).

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