

UNSEEN PARTICIPATION? WHEN THE UNINVITED SHAPE MATTERS OF COLLECTIVE CONCERN

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Ways of taking part in formulating and addressing matters of shared concern are diverse. Practices people employ to engage in shaping societal orders go far beyond organized formats such as citizen juries or co-production sessions, where questions and tasks are, to a large extent, preset. Particularly creative practices emerge in situations when participation is not invited, but is discouraged, met with hostility, or not even recognized as such. Such situations are not exceptional because even in established democracies pockets of exclusion exist.

Practices of participation under adverse circumstances deserve more attention. Besides known and highly visible protest movements, there are also mundane and non-heroic practices that, nonetheless, feed into maintaining, transforming, or disrupting governance arrangements. An example in this sense are the activities of people diagnosed with life-threatening conditions but with limited access to medications, who come together in concealed ways to re-distribute the medicines and financial resources they can muster to ensure continuity of treatment in contexts where state authorities heavily neglect and stigmatize them. But one can also think of the various ad-hoc practices which locals undertake to render certain urban spaces more inhabitable, and which are often discarded by authoritative groups as acts of vandalism. Such everyday practices are generally not recognized as participation because of an established analytical focus on more dialogical and explicit participatory formats. Furthermore, participation under adverse circumstances may involve working around formal procedures and public spaces and depend on remaining hidden. Yet, since public participation tends to be conceptualised as dependent on making issues visible and debatable, these hidden practices often escape scrutiny.

We invite papers that consider how, in situations of hostility to participation, participation is still made possible and with which consequences. In line with the call to turn to 'alternative

knowledges and visions, emerging modes of resistance and unseen strategies of world-making at the margins', we would like to critically examine diverse forms of participation, often unrecognized as such, either as a result of particular power effects, or because their effectiveness is predicated on their covert character. This undertaking makes noticeable the arrangements and imaginaries brought into our common world via these different types of unseen and marginalized participatory practices, and invites reflections on the current and future political consequences of such practices.

Key words: participation, hostility, invisibility