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Children and youth's participation in planning process

A case study of children and youth's participation
initiative in Taipei City (Taiwan)

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to understand the participation form of children and youth councils, along with a concern about the possibility to apply this participation form into spatial planning field, in promotion of children and youth's rights and welfare in the context of Taiwan. The analysis was carried out on the basis of a newly emerging initiative - the Children and Youth Representatives in Taipei City (CYRTC). This study seeks to understand to which extent CYRTC promotes children and youth's participation in public domain. With this aim in view, the study firstly approaches theoretical and empirical literature on children and youth's participation theories in general, and then zooms in on children and youth councils by reviewing four empirical studies. The study then develops an analytical framework comprising four aspects: project preparation and design, execution phase, assessment and actors. After reviewing the country's background, the facts about CYRTC and a synopsis of project findings, the study then profits from applying the foregoing analytical framework in a comparative perspective. Three main criticalities are found to be: (1) CYRTC's failure on creating idea-voicing channels cause it to be in fact a "non-participation" project according to Hart's ladders of participation; (2) the asymmetrical power relation between youth representatives and the local authority constitutes the core problem; and (3) the inappropriate generalization of children and youth as a homogenous group led to difficulties in project implementation. Concerning the possibilities to integrate children and youth's participation with spatial planning issues in Taiwan, the political priorities reside primarily in a genuine recovery of children and youth's participation right in the public realm; in addition, the urban planning authority has to be embraced by the existing legislative framework which promotes children and youth's participation right. Finally, this dissertation shows that although CYRTC still has much to improve on, it plays an important role in moulding aware citizens for tomorrow, outside the mainstream school context in Taiwanese society.

Keywords: participation of children and youth; children and youth councils; spatial planning; Children and Youth Representatives in Taipei City; Taiwan

Riassunto

Lo scopo di questa tesi è capire la forma di partecipazione dei Consigli Giovanili, ed esplorare la possibilità di applicare questa forma di partecipazione nel campo della pianificazione spaziale, promuovendo i diritti e il benessere dei bambini e dei giovani nel contesto Taiwanese. L'analisi è stata eseguita sulla base di una iniziativa - I Rappresentanti dei Bambini e dei Giovani nella Città di Taipei (Children and Youth Representatives in Taipei City). Lo studio dapprima esamina la letteratura teorica ed empirica sulle teorie di partecipazione di bambini e giovani in generale, e in seguito focalizza l'attenzione sui consigli giovanili, esaminando quattro studi empirici. Si presenta poi un quadro analitico che comprende quattro aspetti: la preparazione e disegno del progetto, la fase di esecuzione, la valutazione e gli attori. Dopo aver descritto il contesto nazionale, presentato gli elementi fondamentali del CYRTC e i risultati di tale progetto, lo studio procede all'applicazione del suddetto quadro analitico in un'ottica comparativa. Si evidenziano tre criticità: (1) il fallimento di CYRTC nel creare canali che diano voce alle idee lo rende in realtà un progetto di "non-partecipazione" secondo la scala di partecipazione di Hart; (2) la relazione asimmetrica di potere tra i rappresentanti giovanili e l'autorità locale costituisce il cuore del problema; (3) l'inappropriata generalizzazione di bambini e giovani come un gruppo omogeneo comporta difficoltà nell'implementazione del progetto. Riguardo la possibilità di integrare le questioni di pianificazione spaziale nell'ambito della partecipazione di bambini e giovani nel contesto di Taiwan, la priorità politica risiede principalmente in un reale recupero dei diritti di partecipazione giovanile nella sfera pubblica. Inoltre, è necessario che l'autorità di pianificazione urbana sia connessa alle esistenti strutture legislative che promuovono i diritti di partecipazione giovanile. Infine, questa dissertazione dimostra che, nonostante vi siano ancora ampi margini di miglioramento, il CYRTC gioca un ruolo importante nel plasmare futuri cittadini consapevoli, al di fuori del contesto scolastico convenzionale della società taiwanese.

Parole chiave: partecipazione di bambini e giovani; consigli giovanili; pianificazione spaziale; Rappresentanti dei Bambini e dei Giovani nella Città di Taipei; Taiwan

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Children and youth have long been widely perceived as citizens of tomorrow and minorities of today who are in need of protection and supervision from the adults, whereas at the same time the importance of children and youth's capacity of being developed and equipped for citizenship has often been neglected. There have been efforts dedicated to enhancing children and youth's rights to participation, to make visible their needs and to have their voices heard and respected by all, as proclaimed by UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, twenty-two years after the Article 12 of the UNCRC entered into force providing legal framework for children's participation, last year in 2012 the UNICEF in its flagship report still urged governments to put children at the heart of urban planning, proving that children's right to participation today remains largely ignored in the field. Even the older group, the youth, has often been considered by government policies as "not-good-enough citizens" or those "alienated from community" and "withdrawn from participation"; correspondingly the resources are mainly concentrated on youth deficiencies and related services rather than on promoting their capability to change (Checkoway, Allison, & Montoya, 2005; Smith, 2005). Different from the conventional points of view on children and youth, in recent years more and more empirical studies point out the fact that children and youth's participation is in fact beneficial to all (Chawla, 2001; Europe, 2011). It is thus time to stress the importance of children and youth's participation and to argue for its central role in urban life.

Among different possible forms to involve children and youth in public domains, the practice of children and youth councils has been recognized and applied as one of the most popular methods to engage children and youth in changing the cities among western countries since the late 1970s (Alparone, 2001). On the one hand, this form is said to allow the voices of children and youth to be facilitated, and can also be deemed as a means to carry out urban management

with children and youth, from voice to action (Guerra, 2002). However, on the other hand, the legitimacy and effectiveness of such an approach have been questioned over years (Mcginley, 2010). It has been criticized as being top-down and that children and youth are not involved in developing participation methods (Europe, 2011); or it is considered to be an adult-flavored way to involving children and youth's participation, rather than an approach driven by children and youth themselves (Matthews, 2001; Mcginley, 2010). Up to now, there seems to be no fixed conclusion to this approach, but the emerging field experiences in the last decades have at least made one message clear, that the children and youth councils are not homogenous. Although they all take a similar institutional form, varying ways of development, for instance the type of partnership among adult supporting allies, will cause the implementation outcomes to be different (Matthews, 2001). Likewise, it would be impracticable to assume obtaining the same outcomes by transplanting an experience that has proved successful in one specific social and cultural setting into another. For this reason, the discussion of such a participation form applied to the context of Taiwan in this paper is deemed to be meaningful as it is a newly emergent practice to the country, where practices of this kind have not yet received much attention from the local academic community.

In Taiwan, until today there have been little efforts that focus specifically on integrating children's voices into spatial planning process. Yet Taiwan, as an autonomous democratic regime since the early 1990s, fosters positive political conditions for stimulating children and youth's participation in political realms. Nowadays there are several initiatives that work in this direction in the form of children and youth representatives. Though not being the first municipality putting this approach into practice in Taiwan, the 'Children and Youth Representatives' initiative in Taipei City stands out to be the pioneer in enriching the experience by dedicating resources to empower the children and youth within the process. This year the Taipei City's initiative even went beyond the municipal boundary and became a benchmark for the other municipalities who just started implementing or are planning to launch similar initiatives, with specific execution assistance.

It is out of the above-mentioned unique context that I consider it meaningful to examine this particular initiative and pose the following main research questions:

- How has the approach of children and youth councils been developed in the context of Taiwan;
- To what extent does the case study of the children and youth representatives initiative in Taipei promote children and youth participation;
- What could the Taiwanese experience contribute to the discussion at the theoretical level?

These questions are tackled on the basis of a comparative analysis, stemming from other case studies, different under many aspects, analyzed in literature.

It is also among the aims of this thesis to point out feasible ways to reinforce the participation rights of children and youth in Taiwan. Last, a further concern is on evaluating the possibility for enlarging the scope of this form of participation towards the inclusion of spatial planning issues.

Chapter 2. Structure and methodology

The aim of this thesis work is to understand the children and youth's participation in planning process in Taiwan, with a specific concern pointing to the form of children and youth council. It is beyond the scope of this work to cover all the field examples of this form of participation in Taiwan. Instead, one project of this category, "Children and Youth's Representatives Initiative in Taipei City" (CYRTC), is chosen to be the case study in focus because of the particularity it shows in the context of Taiwan pertaining to the following three aspects:

- It pioneers in its methodology by profiting from having empowerment trainings to its young participants;
- The good accessibility of information it has;
- Taipei City, the municipality to which the project belongs to, is considered more inclined to embrace innovative urban policy initiatives.

The details of each of these elements will be presented later in paragraph 5.1.

In order to render the empirical analysis meaningful and concrete, the chapter 3 of this thesis will review the theoretical and empirical literature concerning the children and youth's participation in planning process; in particular, the object of this thesis precisely consists in the form of children and youth council. Other forms of children and youth's participation will not be discussed in this review. I chose to anchor the discussion on the form of children and youth council because of two considerations. First, it represents one of the most popular mechanisms in the process of changing the city through children and youth participation. Second, to date it is amongst the most identifiable forms of children and youth's participation in the public realm in Taiwan. The review in chapter 3 is thus structured in two parts. In the first part, general literature was taken into consideration for the following subtopics:

- Definitions of children and youth;
- Definition of participation;
- Promoting children and youth's participation in planning;

- Participation model and relevant indicators.

Next, four case studies were chosen respectively from USA, Brazil, Scotland and Italy, for their comparability with CYRTC in terms of their administrative level. Combining the understanding of both parts, in the end of this chapter this study arrives at an analytical framework comprising four aspects: project preparation and design, execution phase, assessment and actors. This analytical framework will later be used to guide through the analysis of CYRTC. All publications surveyed in this part, books, journal articles, webpages and news, are in English.

The chapter 4 will present an introduction on Taiwan and outline the country's condition for Children and youth's participation. This chapter serves as precursor for chapter 5. Here, Taiwanese government statistical data, government websites and official reports, along with two online databases – LawBank¹ and Encyclopedia of Taiwan² are used in this section to build up the background knowledge needed for supporting the upcoming discussion on the Taipei City's case- CYRTC.

The chapter 5 will then summarize an exploration of the facts about the “Children and Youth’s Representatives Initiative in Taipei City” (CYRTC) and present a summary of findings in its last section. The data collection methods in this part are characterized firstly by reviewing the following primary sources:

- Official announcements for recruiting participants of the years 2012 and 2013;
- Press releases relating to CYRTC of the years 2012 and 2013;
- Meeting records of the first term of CYRTC;
- Organizers’ reports and project final report of the first term of CYRTC;
- The web platform of “TRY to voice out together for youth”, built up by CYRTC participants.

Secondly, a face-to-face in-depth interview with the main project coordinator was conducted in Taipei. This person was chosen as the key informant because in the foregoing literature review, the project coordinator was identified to be

¹ <http://db.lawbank.com.tw/>

² <http://taiwanpedia.culture.tw/en/index>

the key person in frequent contact with all relevant stakeholders, and is at the same time the adult at the front line to coordinate with the young participants. This study assumes that the project coordinator's particular position would cause him to be able to give first-hand insights on the project. The questions drawn in the interview were developed and structured according to the key issues identified in chapter 3. It was not possible to directly reach the children and youth participants; however, the project coordinator also reported in the interview opinions of children and youth he collected in his role.

In the chapter 6, the final discussion, an attempt will firstly be made to establish the link between the theoretical groundwork and this field experience through comparative analysis. Dealing with a pilot project like CYRTC which has so far accumulated little information available for itself, a comparative study methodology is useful to gain insights from equivalent empirical experiences from abroad, so as to reflect the projects' particularities through the process of comparison. The second part of discussion will then be enriched by suggestions for promoting children and youth participation in spatial planning in Taiwan; the existing findings concerning children and youth's spatial experience will be explored in light of participation, and its interpretation will serve to formulate proposals based on the local context.

Chapter 7 will draw the conclusions of the thesis, combining and re-elaborating the pieces of information collected in the different steps. A final remark will be given to highlight the main critical findings of this research work.

Chapter 3. Children and youth's participation in planning process

3.1 Definitions of “children” and “youth”

The meanings of ‘children’ and ‘youth’ may seem straightly clear to anyone who reads about these terminologies. In fact, the notion of childhood as a specific stage of life, as argued by Philippe Ariès, was not recognized or valued until around seventeenth century; modern schooling system played an influential role in introducing the distinction between adults and children and in promoting the image of children as a dependent being in need of supervision and discipline (Ulanowicz). Therefore in order to avoid any confusion and impreciseness coming from different culture contexts and varying definitions in different languages, it is crucial to clarify each relevant term by giving an explicit definition at the beginning of the discussion.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the principle international document protecting the children's right, defines “child” as any person up to eighteen year-old, covering whoever aged from zero to seventeen year-old included (UNICEF). In His discussion, Hart (1992) applies a more common usage to separate ‘child’ from ‘youth’: ‘child’ refers to the pre-teenage years, up to the ages twelve, and ‘youth’ to the ages thirteen to eighteen.

The official language in Taiwan is traditional Chinese. In Chinese language, two different terms refer respectively to English meanings of ‘children’ and ‘youth’: ‘er-tong’³ refers to ‘children’, while ‘qing-shao-nian’ denotes ‘youth’. Under Taiwanese context, the literal definitions of ‘children’ and ‘youth’ are stated explicitly in legal terms as ‘children’ are those who are aged below twelve, while ‘youth’ indicates those aged between twelve and eighteen⁴. So based on this

³ These Chinese terminologies are presented in ‘han-yu-pin-yin’ format, not in its original hieroglyphic form. ‘Han-yu-pin-yin’ is one of the most commonly used international Chinese Romanization systems.

⁴ According to ‘The Protection of Children and Youths Welfare and Rights Act’, article 2. Source: <http://db.lawbank.com.tw/Eng/FLAW/FLAWDAT0201.asp>

definition, in this thesis we will understand children as persons who fall within the age range of 0 to 11 and youth within the age range of 12 to 18, respectively.

Nevertheless, nowadays in many legislative cases these two groups are bound together under a single title. This is above all because of the consideration to avoid fragmentations that occur during the transient phase from childhood to youth. In Taiwan there used to be two different acts – ‘Children Welfare Act’ and ‘Youth Welfare Act’- addressing the rights and welfares of children and youth; In 2003, they were merged into one single act, ‘The Children and Youth Welfare Act’, and later on in 2011 renamed again as ‘The Protection of Children and Youths Welfare and Rights Act’, which is nowadays the main fundamental legal instrument in Taiwan with respect to children and youth affairs.

3.2 Definition of “participation”

According to Hart (1992) and Chawla (2001), participation of children and youth in policy realm is a process of children and youth’s being engaged with other people around issues that concern and affect their individual life, and the life conditions of the community they are taking part of, with the aim to achieving a shared goal.

Hart (1992) emphasizes the inseparable relationship between participation and democracy, as he states that “[...] *participation [...] is the means by which a democracy is built and it is a standard against which democracies should be measured.*”(Hart, 1992) More precisely he argues that, a nation’s degree of democracy depends on how much its citizens are involved particularly at the community level. To fulfill this goal, the competence of being involved requires time to be gradually developed through practices. He then concludes that, “[...] *there should be gradually increasing opportunities for children to participate in any aspiring democracy, and particularly in those nations already convinced that they are democratic.*” (Hart, 1992)

Lansdown (2001) summarizes certain principles which are considered fundamental to any activities or programs that seek to promote children's democratic participation, as listed below,

1. *Children must understand what the project or the process is about, what it is for and their role within it;*
2. *Power relations and decision-making structures must be transparent;*
3. *Children should be involved from the earliest possible stage of any initiative;*
4. *All children should be treated with equal respect regardless their age, situation, ethnicity, abilities or other factors;*
5. *Ground rules should be established with all the children at the beginning;*
6. *Participation should be voluntary and children should be allowed to leave at any stage;*
7. *Children are entitled to respect for their views and experience.*

3.3 Promoting children and youth's participation in planning

The issue of children and youth's participation has only not long ago been taken seriously in planning. Instead of assuming it an a priori proposition, it is more useful to firstly provide the background of discourse and then explain the reasons for promoting children and youth's participation. Thus the passage will begin with analyzing the absence of children and youth's participation in urban planning; and in the following sections, arguments for supporting the participation actively will be presented from different perspectives, covering both individual level and the social ones.

3.3.1 The absence of children and youth's participation in urban planning

"Every excluded child represents a missed opportunity - because when society fails to extend to urban children the services and protection that would enable them to develop as productive and creative individuals, it loses the social, cultural and economic contributions they could have made." - Anthony Lake, UNICEF director

It is a harsh reality that lays the background for the upcoming development of this thesis- even today, '*urban planning still fails children*'⁵. Children and youth, though they account for at least one third of the world's population, do not proportionally have the visibility, not even to say the power, over the urban issues that center their lives.

The study of Lauwers (2005) in spatial planning and opportunities for children's participation in the municipality of Staden, Belgium reveals that, the interests of children and youth in spatial planning projects are often overlooked, even in the case that the adult stakeholders involved express explicitly their favorable attitude toward children and youth's participation. In addition, it was recognized that although planners and policy-makers have little information on children's use of space at their disposal when developing the plan, most of them expect many practical problems in realizing children's participation because they conceive of participation only as the direct involvement of children (Lauwers, 2005). However, according to Knowles-Yáñez (2005), this absence in the context of United States is not a systematic practice to exclude children purposefully; instead, it results from oversight and a strong cultural belief that adults know what is best for children.

Knowles-Yáñez (2005) denotes the fact that the children's participation is not habitually viewed as a fundamental component of planning process. In general, children's lack of visibility includes the following reasons:

- *Assumptions about who has an interest in planning;*
- *Historical conceptualizations of the child;*
- *Special laws that regulate the use of urban space by children, particularly zoning that has compartmentalized cities so that many urban spaces are viewed as adult places;*
- *The exclusion of children from the idea of public participation.*

⁵ Quoted from the title of online news article by Singh, David. (2012). Urban planning fails children says UNICEF. <http://www.unisdr.org/archive/25480>

Unlike the situation faced by children, youth suffers from being marginalized from public participation and having their role not adequately recognized. Checkoway, Allison, and Montoya (2005) point out that the fragile and hostile images of youth, much portrayed by and transmitted through mass media and reinforced by academic studies, have led to a distorted public view on youth—youth as “victims of poverty”, “problems in society”, “alienated from community” and “withdrawn from participation”. The over-emphasizing of deficiencies and weakness of youth often hinders the efficient resource allocation on youth, and consequently minimizes the youth’s capability to change.

3.3.2 Children’s autonomy

Chawla and Heft (2002) in their findings of the relationship between the physical environment and children’s participation point out that one of the indispensable abilities of a fully functioning person is the propensity to interact with the surrounding environment in a “selective, self-directed, purposive manner”. Children are in general found to be more engaged with the physical settings which they are exposed to than the adults are, either in an active manner such as organizing their playing activities through interacting with the material world, or in a passive manner as their mobility is rather constraint by the physical environment.

In addition, Hart (1992) cited the Piaget’s study to justify the children’s autonomy. Piaget argues that if children are accustomed to authority and have no opportunities for participating in rule settings through interacting with others in a respectful manner, they will not be able to develop as autonomous selves. These social relationships thus are seen as indispensable stimuli for the development of autonomy. From this point of view, children’s participation is not only an effective approach leading to more socially responsible youth; it is also part of the development route to a psychologically healthy grown up.

3.3.3 Participation as a right possessed by children

There have been several influential international policy documents establishing and ensuring children's right to a healthy and safe environment and at the same time, stressing the importance and value of involving young people in the decisions that affect their lives.

Among them the best-known international legal reference concerning the children and youth's participation right is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, generally abbreviated as "UNCRC". It was the first international legal instrument to provide guarantees for the spectrum of human rights for children (Driskell, 2002). With its adoption and ratification in 1989 and entering into force in September 1990, up to now it is the most widely accepted human right treaty in the history, having been ratified by 193 countries, including every member of the United Nations except Somalia, South Sudan and the United States of America⁶. In first part of Article 12, the core article whose content related mostly to the right of participation, it is written,

Article 12.1 "States Parties shall assure to the child who is 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 the age and maturity of the child."

And Article 13 continues to strengthen the idea,

Article 13.1 "The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice."

These articles have been considered involving the most profound and radical aspect of the UN convention (Shier, 2001), contributing to raising the visibility of the rights of children. Even though they do not give the children full rights as adults have, it actually achieves a balanced point of views between protection and participation. As persons, children deserve the right not just to be seen, as

⁶ Citation from ("Convention on the Rights of the Child," ; "United Nations Treaty Collection,").

held by the conventional point of view, but also to be heard; meanwhile their fragility and dependency are also taken into consideration due to their being in a process of development toward maturity (Chawla, 2001).

Here, the democratic participation is deemed not only as a means to ensure other human rights, but it itself is a procedural right worthy of legal protection (Lansdown, 2001). The idea of engaging users in the urban environment planning appeared in the 1970s, and it reached to include the rights of children to be actively involved in planning process in the 1980s (Alparone, 2001). Hence under this context, CRC plays an anchoring role to many approaches to involving children in land use planning because it provides a policy framework by which the rights of the child are realized and affirmed. It has also given new emphasis to the roles of the children's voices in shaping their living environments (Knowles-Yáñez, 2005).

The fundamental thought underpinning the CRC gained further development and was strengthened later in the Agenda 21⁷ from the Rio Conference in 1992 and in the Habitat Agenda⁸ in 1996. Agenda 21 highlighted the competence of children and youth concerning environmental protection and improvement, and advocated the need to establish procedures that integrate children's priorities into policy agendas at local or upper levels. Years later, the Habitat Agenda emphasized not only the children's right to livable neighborhoods, but also the right to the access of continuous improvement of living conditions (Bartlett, 2002).

3.3.4 Towards the 'Social Investment' paradigm

A recent shift of citizenship regime paradigm to 'social investment' paradigm, which emerged in mid 1990s and came into focus after the global economic

⁷ It is an implementation plan in regard to sustainable development with an action agenda that could be put into practice at local, national and global level. It was produced after the UN Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

⁸ It is an action agenda outlines approaches and strategies towards a more sustainable development of the world's urban areas. 171 States adopted it during the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in Istanbul in 1996.

downturn in 2008, can be seen as one of the promoting factors that go hand in hand with the increasing degree of children and youth's participation. The social investment paradigm holds a strong attitude of activating human capital by 'investment', rather than that of the traditional perspective, 'spending'. The ultimate goals of social investment perspective is *'to increase social inclusion and minimize the intergenerational transfer of poverty as well as to ensure that the population is well prepared for the likely employment conditions of contemporary economies'* (Jenson, 2009). Its implication in policy terms includes the growing attention and investment in children and in human capital, and making work pay, which as a result directs the spending pattern toward the abovementioned. Jenson proceeds, *"If the youngest are future citizens, by middle childhood and the teen years, children have gained new rights and have become a focus of citizenship discourse."* For instance under the European context, the social investment paradigm has embodied explicitly in the 2005 European Youth Pact, with one of its views to improving active citizenship of young people through adopting series of common objectives at EU level, at the same time stressing the need for suitable measures at national level to consolidate the common objectives (Union). This emerging social invest paradigm is not only directing the policy framework at EU level but is also going down and embodied in political reform at the local scale. The recent initiative "Maggio 12" by the Municipality of Milan in Italy shows the adoption of the social investment approach at the local level. Here the expenditure for education is understood as an investment for the present and future wellbeing of the city and of the citizenship, expressing a concern of recovering children back at the center of city life. The project's concrete policy actions consist of promoting cultural debate and confrontation with all services' workers, educators, families and experts, as well as with all the citizens on the themes related to the Child Education Services of the Milan Municipality. A collective drafting of a new pedagogic manifesto for the city later followed this political campaign, intending to stimulate innovative discourses and reforms on the existing pedagogic framework and services (Costa and Sabatinelli, 2013).

3.3.5 Benefits from children's participation

Though it has been relatively recent that the children's participation came into practice in policy realm, there are manifold benefits already identified by academics through multidisciplinary researches and empirical studies.

Benefits with regard to the individuals involved are a bundle. It is often claimed that participation allows children to have more positive sense of self, to build a sense of personal and collective competence, to increase their sensitivity to the perspectives and needs of others, to gain greater tolerance and sense of fairness; Some other evidences show that children have opportunities to develop new attitudes, skills and knowledge during the process of participation. New social networks and sense of enjoyment are also among the reported positive outcomes (Chawla, 2001; Chawla & Heft, 2002; Lansdown, 2001; Mcginley, 2010). In addition, participation is said to prepare children and youth for democratic decision-making and active citizenship. Guerra (2002) in her study of the children's participatory budget council in Barra Mansa, Brazil, acknowledges that through being involved in municipal budgetary consulting and spending, children councilors acquired a greater understanding of public institutions and urban management process, and the value and role of taxes in municipal finances, a grasp of different geographical levels and social relations, a better understanding of socioeconomic diversity in the municipality, a broader knowledge of citizenship issues, practical election experience and the commitment to improving the urban area (Guerra, 2002).

Children are not the only beneficiaries of their participation. In her reviewing article based on a symposium on "Children's Participation in Community Settings", Chawla (2001) points out the positive outcomes that can be obtained by other actors. For instance, the organizations that promote children's participation may learn to come up with policy improvements that are sensitive to children's priorities, to establish process of participation, to increase commitment to children's rights and to introduce innovation; In children's communities, the achievements through children's participation may be public education regarding children's rights, more positive attitudes and relationships

towards children, greater social capital and an improved quality of life for all inhabitants.

Knowles-Yáñez (2005) lists several benefits of including children's participation in planning processes: first, the personal and intellectual growth of the individuals involved; second, the synergy of ideas created by organizing groups to educate themselves and to propel them to turn their ideas into action; and third, the creation of another arena in which community development can take place.

3.4 Participation model and relevant indicators

This section will present an overview of Hart's model of children's participation and a set of indicators that support the children and youth's participation. This brief review is considered meaningful contextually for a couple of reasons. First of all, it is crucial to look at the existing research findings on children and youth's participation, as this effort can convey to what point have the academy reached to differentiate types and degrees of children's participation, as well as recognizing some decisive conditions; Second, this understanding will serve as crucial references for the project appraisal of the Taiwanese case in the second part of the thesis.

3.4.1 Hart's model: ladder of children's participation

Hart (1992) proposes a ladder of children's participation to clarify the meaning of varying degrees of participation by adopting Arnstein's citizen participation model which was established in 1969. It is worth examining in detail the content of the theory proposed, since on the one hand it can be counted as the earliest model dedicated to children's participation in public domain; On the other hand, its output has been influential and being referred to repeatedly in the subsequent research studies.

In Hart’s model, eight levels are ranked by the degree of children’s participation from the lowest “manipulation” to the highest “children-initiated, shared decisions with adults”, shown as in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1: Roger Hart's model: Ladder of degrees of children's participation, in sequence from the lowest to the highest

<i>Level (Ranking from low to high)</i>	<i>Type of Children's Participation</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
1 (lowest)	Manipulation	Children do or say what adults suggest they do, but have no real understanding of the issues, or children are asked what they think, adults use some of their ideas but do not tell them what influence they have had on the final decision.
2	Decoration	Children take part in an event, e.g. by singing, dancing or wearing T-shirts with logos on, but they do not really understand the issues.
3	Tokenism	Children are asked to say what they think about an issue but have little or no choice about the way they express those views or the scope of the ideas they can express.
4	Assigned but informed	Adults decide on the project and children volunteer or it. The children understand the project, and know who decide they should be involved and why. Adults respect their views.
5	Consulted and informed	The project is designed and run by adults but children are consulted. They have a full understanding of the process and their opportunities are taken seriously.
6	Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children	Adults have the initial idea but children are involved in every step of the planning and implementation. Not only are their views considered, but also they are involved in taking the decisions.
7	Children-initiated and directed	Children have the initial idea and decide how the project is to be carried out. Adults are available but do not take charge.
8	Children-initiated,	Children have the ideas, set up the

(highest)	shared decisions with adults	project, and invite adults to join with them in making decisions.
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Source: own elaboration on Hart (1992).

One of the most significant contributions of this model comes from the identification of the lowest three levels (manipulation, decoration and tokenism) that are entitled as “non-participation”. It has been verified in practical experiences that, very often only through recognizing these false types of participation can a practitioner determine if a project matches the conditions for genuine participation (Shier, 2001). Here the fourth rung satisfies the minimum conditions for a genuine participation to exist. At this point children are passively assigned certain roles or tasks by their adult allies, but they are clearly informed about the goals and the decision-making processes; having a clear understanding, they can choose to participate or not, and in either cases their view will be respected.

3.4.2 The indicators

Participatory settings at their optimal states share common characteristics across diverse settings. These characteristics thus are capable of functioning as indicators of underlying principles that led to positive developments and outcomes, which support children and youth’s participation. The following summary⁹ points out the characteristics of effective projects for children’s participation (Chawla, 2001).

Summary: characteristics of effective projects for children’s participation

A. Conditions of convergence

- *Whenever possible, the project builds on existing community organizations and structures that support children’s participation.*
- *As much as possible, project activities make children’s participation appear to be a natural part of the setting.*

⁹ An excerpt from a symposium at the University of Oslo on 26-28, June 2000 with the title of “Children’s Participation in Community Settings”.

- *The project is based on children's own issues and interests.*

B. Conditions of entry

- *Participants are fairly¹⁰ selected.*
- *Children and their families give informed consent.*
- *Children freely choose to participate or decline.*
- *The project is accessible in scheduling and location.*

C. Conditions of social support

- *Children are respected as human beings with essential worth and dignity.*
- *There is mutual respect among participants.*
- *Children support and encourage each other.*

D. Conditions for competence

- *Children have real responsibility and influence.*
- *Children understand and have a part in defining the goals of the activity.*
- *Children play a role in decision-making and accomplishing goals.*
- *Children are helped to construct and express their views, and are provided with the information necessary to make informed decisions.*
- *There is a fair sharing of opportunities to contribute and be heard.*
- *The project sets up processes to support children's engagement in issues they initiate themselves.*
- *The project results in tangible outcomes.*

E. Conditions for reflection

- *There is transparency at all stages of decision-making.*
- *Children understand the reasons for outcomes.*
- *There are opportunities for critical reflection.*
- *There are opportunities for evaluation at both group and individual levels.*

¹⁰ The definition of 'fairness' addressed here should be considered according to a compromise that most symposium members accepted: "that evaluation should combine universal criteria of children's well-being with local criteria determined by children and their communities." (Chawla, 2001, p. 2)

- *Participants deliberately negotiate differences in power.*

The above criteria are arranged in accordance with different stages in the development of a project. They are not mutually exclusive in essence, but rather, they are expected to overlap and recur at times (Chawla & Heft, 2002). Though pointing to features in different project phases, all these indicators bear the same concerns of promoting “*children’s dignity as persons, mutual respect among group members, access and support for growing levels of competence*” (Chawla, 2001). This summary underlines that such concerns could be embodied as guiding principles in every project stage; for this reason a similar analytical structure and such dominating concerns will be developed and applied to analyzing the case of CYRT later in the second part of the thesis.

3.5 Focus on children and youth’s council

In history, the very first children and youth council appeared in France in late 1970s. Though having slight differences in formulae, there are common features found in characterizing the approach of children and youth council: (1) an assembly of children or young people elected; (2) with the acknowledgement of the capacity of children to make proposals to town councils and city administrations on issues regarding urban quality, and on activities and services of their direct interest, and (3) funds allocated by municipality for initiatives taken by councils (Alparone, 2001).

The children and youth’s councils represent one of the most popular mechanisms in the process of changing the city through children and youth participation (Alparone, 2001; Mcginley, 2010). It is a practice through which to carry out urban management with children and youth become possible (Guerra, 2002); Besides, it is a key to providing opportunities for children and youth to be engaged in local, regional and national decision making (Mcginley, 2010). However, at the same time, some empirical studies also reveal challenging issues and critical points that will be present in details in the later parts.

Taiwan is a democratic country since the late 1980s. Yet not until recently did the practice of children and youth council enter into policy realm taking a similar form. The Taiwanese initiative “The Children and Youth Representatives in Taipei City” (CYRTC) is experimenting this form of participation since 2012 and has accumulated some results that value to be further explored. It will be the main study focus of the second part of this dissertation. In order to deepen the understanding of this pilot project in Taiwan, it is necessary to firstly look at other existing experiences. Therefore in the following section, I would like to take into account four case studies across countries and continents with regard to the practice of children and youth’s council in promoting children and youth participation in planning.

The four case studies taken into consideration in this discussion are respectively (1) the San Francisco Youth Commission in USA; (2) the children’s participatory council in Barra Mansa, Brazil; (3) the youth councils in Scotland; and (4) the children’s councils in Italy, as shown below in Table 3-2. The reasons to choose them as case studies are principally because the project scale they have is at the municipal level, in concords with the scale of CYRT. The former two case studies (San Francisco and Barra Mansa) are single-case project reports which comprise details of a project in a comprehensive manner, while the latter two case studies (Scotland and Italy), respectively, present synthetic reviews of multiple cases within the country.

Table 3-2 Four case studies concerning the practice of children and youth councils

	<i>The San Francisco Youth Commission In USA</i>	<i>The Children's Participatory Council In Barra Mansa, Brazil</i>	<i>The Youth Councils In Scotland</i>	<i>The Children's Councils In Italy</i>
Institutional level	Municipal	Municipal	Municipal	Municipal
Time of introduction	Since April 1996 to present	Since 1998	Discussion based on two case studies in 2006 and 2007.	The children's council in this discussion was a project initiated in 1991 as a part of 'The Children's City' project. In Italy the practice of children's council emerged after 1990.

Way of introduction	<p>In 1995, local youth advocates lobbied City Hall to develop a resolution that would create a Youth Commission. Yet it was initially voted it down by Board of supervisors. Advocates, in partnership with the elected officials, then proposed a city ballot initiative which won support from the voters at the end.</p>	<p>CPBC's principal precursor was a municipal program '<i>Citizenship Knows No Age</i>' initiating the process of citizenship for children and teenagers in 1997. It set up a children's secretariat and engaged children in municipal secretariats. Other relevant activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •An awareness campaign involving students; •A fiscal contest aiming at informing children, teenagers and families of the importance of tax collection to municipal budget; •Introduction to public budgets in curriculum of municipal schools. <p>This process was later anchored by receiving support from the United Urban Management Program for Latin America and the Caribbean (UMP-LAC).</p>	<p>The promotion of the idea of youth council was founded in the Scottish Parliament 2002.</p>	<p>This children's municipal Laboratory Council was born as part of '<i>The Children's City</i>' project. Therefore its function and characteristics are substantially different from other adult-like municipal children's councils.</p>
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Initiators/ Promoters	Local youth advocates. P.S. San Francisco has a strong tradition of community activism and youth advocacy.	An idea co-conceptualized by the mayor and the coordinator of UMP-LAC.	Historically, youth councils have been developed as structural responses to government policy directives. The meaning and context for participation is strongly influenced by this political discourse.	A research group made up of National Council of Research personnel and that of the City of Rome, dedicated to <i>'The Children's City' project</i> ¹¹ .
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Source: own elaboration on Checkoway et al. (2005), Guerra (2002), Mcginley (2010) and Alparone (2001)

In the following sections, a concise summary of key issues will be presented covering the aspects of (1) the project preparation and design; (2) the execution phase; (3) the assessment; and (4) the actors. These aspects are not entirely mutually exclusive; rather, some issues are transversal in essence. This discussion will serve both as a prelude and a reference to the development of the CYRT initiative in Taiwan. Bearing this ultimate goal in mind, in the preceding analysis I will not get into the details of each case study, but rather, will address conclusively the main issues by underlining the criticalities or risk identified within the four cases and the probable strategies proposed. The discussion will be arranged in accordance with the four aspects mentioned above.

3.5.1 The project preparation and design

To begin with, we will be looking at the aspect which usually highlights the initial stage of a project before it is officially launched into operation. One of the remarkable facts of this part is that, most of the institutional designs were drafted and determined during the initial preparation phase, whose corresponsive effects might take time to be seen in the later stages. To this aspect, five issues are brought into light, titled as,

¹¹ Source: <http://www.lacittadeibambini.org/inglese/lab/gruppo.htm>

- a. Institutionalization;
- b. Location;
- c. Recruitment mechanism;
- d. Possibility to have an actual impact on decision-making;
- e. Identifying real issues of life.

a. Institutionalization

The issue of institutionalization has caught much attention in this stage. This particularly refers to two criticalities. First, the ambiguity in policy stances, either at the municipal level or at higher levels, might limit the project effectiveness (Mcginley, 2010); the possible solution to this challenge could be integrating the strategies of clarifying the political vision, providing a firm legislative base to guarantee the continuity, effectiveness and quality of participation, and maintaining an inherent policy stance in legislation. Second, it is indispensable the understanding of the complex nature of participation and based on this comprehension, creating a better system and structure which permits children and youth to have their true voice heard by all (Allison, 2002; Checkoway et al., 2005; Guerra, 2002; Mcginley, 2010).

b. Location

The location, where the children and youth convene, may cause another criticality to the effectiveness: improper settings may distort children and youth's comprehension and cause discomfort in expressing their ideas. Alparone (2001) claims that the choice of location should be in a setting comprehensible by the children and youth and at the same time correspond to the ways they express themselves.

c. Recruitment mechanism

Both Checkoway et al. (2005) and Mcginley (2010) address the problem of recruitment mechanism in their studies. Children and youth councilors appointed or handpicked by the allied adults lack of representativeness with respect to the ones elected by children and youth in school context or community environments. This also means some other young people are

consequentially discriminated and structurally excluded from having fair participation opportunities. To minimize this impact, it is thus important to design a selection mechanism which is accessible by youth from varying backgrounds.

d. Possibility to have an actual impact on decision-making

Another issue is found to be concerning the to which extent do the children and youth have impact on decision making. The criticality presented here is that the adults may let children and youth have only a symbolic participation, on minor subjects, with no real effect. However, it is noteworthy that in the cases of San Francisco and Barra Mansa municipalities, the children and youth councilors are permitted to have real affecting power through being trained to review municipal budget and to advocate their own proposals and priorities. A certain amount of annual budget even allocated to children's participatory budget council in Barra Mansa at their disposal¹² (Guerra, 2002). These cases elaborate the idea of fostering manifold settings to stimulate different degrees of substantial involvement; the other strategy could be devising proper power-sharing mechanism to confront the issue.

e. Identifying real issues of life

Good designs may inspire the children and youth councilors to identify the real issues of urban life. This proposition composes two parts: children and youth should firstly have the autonomy to choose their own issues of concern; moreover, they should be equipped with a sensitivity to detect meaningful issues of life. Through integrating the above two strategies, children and youth will be able to take one step forward from the predicament of interpreting the urban issues only based on limited personal experiences. As shown in the case of San Francisco Youth Commission, the youth councilors are granted the maximum freedom on exploring and choosing their own issues of interest; in the meantime, the adequate assistance from adult coordinators is available taking the form of consultation (Chawla & Heft, 2002). Another example comes from Barra Mansa

¹² Barra Mansa city council allocated 150,000 Reais (approximately 82,745 Euros) to the children's participatory council in 1999, R\$ 150,000 (approximately 81,701 Euros) in 2000 and has committed R\$ 180,000 (approximately 87,606 Euros) for 2001.

case. Children councilors joined the organized excursions to urban neighborhoods; the result shows that a better and subjective knowledge of the city and its diversity can render children insights to spot the most relevant issues in accordance with their concerns (Guerra, 2002).

3.5.2 The execution phase

Children and youth's experiences also highlight the fact that participation is a dynamic process being exemplified the most in the execution phase. The following issues will be illustrated in this section summarized as,

- a. Timing gap between program schedule and pace of capacity development of participants;
- b. The role, tools and ways of involvement;
- c. The role of adult coordinators;
- d. Relationship with local authority;
- e. Information.

a. Timing gap between program schedule and pace of capacity development of participants

There are two criticalities about timing here. First, there is not enough time to let the project develop. Children and youth participants require sufficient time to develop capacity and make progress through trying, yet the program schedule may not always be flexible enough to consider or adopt this need. Second, the timing of giving children and youth's proposals substantial visibility may not correspond to the project schedule. For instance, Alparone (2001) addresses the difficulty of giving the children's proposals immediate visibility from the side of municipality; Guerra (2002) reports that some children did experience the feeling of frustration coming from 'the very slow process of considering or implementing some of the projects'. In fact, this challenge is closely related to how the adult allies and municipal councils interact with and respond to the children and youth's voice and action. Sometimes children and youth's proposal gradually takes shape in a visible way, as shown in the case of San Francisco Youth Commission- through their campaign a skate boarding facility is

eventually included in the city development plan. The Italian experience also reports two possibilities to confront this issue – *‘the administration can shorten these procedures and adapt them to the children’s needs. If this is not possible, the administration should periodically inform the children of the status of the work to avoid damaging the relationship of trust established through the experience of participation’* (Alparone, 2001). As another practical example, the commissioners of San Francisco Youth Commission have right to be informed in a certain time before a municipal council proposal is about to be passed¹³ (Checkoway et al., 2005).

b. The role, tools and ways of involvement

Another crucial finding is concerning the change of the way of involvement occurring on children and youth during the implementation process. The role of children and youth commissioners is changing over time. Checkoway et al. (2005) points out that commissioners in San Francisco Youth Commission moved from being reactive in the beginning to initiating many actions proactively. Very often the change of role is accompanied and supported by the shift in tools and instruments, as reported by Alparone (2001) *‘[...] only during the actual experiment do their children] learn forms of communication with and consultation of their peers, gradually selecting the tools they consider more suitable for playing their role.’* A responsive project process must be able to foster settings that are adaptable to these developmental changes.

c. The role of adult coordinators

The role of municipal administrators and the adult coordinators are especially crucial in facilitating the execution process and in rendering the results effective. The criticality identified here is also closely related to the power-sharing issue among the youth participants and the adults involved. Adults may be likely to use power to suppress children and youth’s ideas. When assisting the participants, the city administrators should be aware of the power sharing necessity and the relevant criticalities and be prepared to share power with

¹³ The San Francisco Charter specifies that twelve days before a Board of Supervisor vote on legislation affecting children or youth, youth commissioners will receive notice and submit recommendations.

children and youth participants, meanwhile mediating conflict of interests without distortion and manipulation. On the other hand, the adult coordinators are identified as the most influential persons who *'[...] become the main guarantee of children's point of view and protect the experience from the risk of possible exploitation'* (Alparone, 2001).

d. Relationship with local authority

The long-term relationship between the local authority and children and youth participants has influence on effective outputs. To avoid that a relationship lacks proper communication and mutual trust, in fact, manifold ways are available to strengthen it. Municipalities can show their resolution of assisting the initiative. Alparone (2001) suggests, *'The city administration should [...] be able to realize and translate the children's ideas into real works of change, albeit restricted in scope, but which demonstrate above all that it is ready to make an economic investment in the children.'* Some practices are feasible as well. For instance, at least once a year, children councilors can join extraordinary meeting of Town Council at which they are permitted to take the floor and to represent all the children in the city.

e. Information

There are several criticalities in this phase that are related to the issue of information. First, the execution process may not be accompanied by an adequate documentation (Alparone, 2001), which constitutes an important link between the fieldwork experiences and the academic discourse. It could be effective to improve existing documentation mechanism and at the same time to apply multiple documentation tools. Second, it was found that there were varying degrees of involvement among children and youth participants (Mcginley, 2010). To close up this involvement gap, it could be made possible through cultivating mutual understanding and respects among the participants; it is also important that the adult coordinators properly facilitate communication and mutual support within the group. Lastly, in Barra Mansa case a problem was highlighted on the fact that the geographical dispersal of the participants made it difficult to keep all of them informed about the progress of the initiative (Guerra,

2002). A possible answer to this challenge would be to bridge the distance by optimizing the use of wireless communication tools or online forum, along with building an intensive contact network among the participants.

3.5.3 The assessment

Under a project context, the assessment plays a decisive role in understanding the facts and effectiveness of project results; the understanding will serve as a base for the projecting improvements. In this section the focus would be out on the issue of evaluation standards and references.

a. Evaluation standards and references

Compared to the history of citizen participation in general, the children's participation is a rather recent phenomenon, thus it has been characterized as a field being innovative and experimental. Up to now, the amount of projects and experiments carried out still has been far from being significant. This inherent constraint presented in many project evaluations. Unsurprisingly in consequence, there is the lack of action models and systemized indications concerning the effectiveness of instruments and strategies (Alparone, 2001; Guerra, 2002). For this reason, the field is in need of further breakthroughs in spreading the initiative to gain more experiences from fieldwork and in conducting interdisciplinary evaluative researches into effectiveness.

In fact, the children participation initiative is more than being an initiative. Ideally it should involve a cultural evolution, a cultural transformation. It takes time for children and youth participation culture to be built up. Hence, sufficient time should be dedicated to an initiative. Though the immediate visibility and quantitative outcomes are convincing and easy to measure, they should not be the only evaluation criteria. To reverse the trend, a dominating long-term vision has to be properly proposed to all the relevant actors in the earliest possible phase, which also serves to direct the evaluation in the successive steps. Another strategy is in need at the moment is thus to establish effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms which necessarily involves children and youth

participants in an empowering manner. Undoubtedly, this certainly requires more interdisciplinary evaluative researches into its effectiveness.

Within this context, what has been done so far lays the foundation and presents a set of references for the upcoming projects to refer to. These pilot projects serve also as a typology to ensure further effective dissemination (Alparone, 2001).

3.5.4 The actors

This part of the discussion will be focused on issues concerning the actors identified through the case studies review. Although the actors involved are many, they could basically be categorized into five types, as shown in Table 3-3.

Next, two issues would be discussed, titled as:

- a. Development of a network of adult facilitators
- b. Asymmetrical power relations

Table 3-3 Actors identified in the case studies, by type

<i>Type of actors</i>	<i>Actors included</i>
Supporting adult allies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project staffs/coordinators/facilitators • Public officials/ Local authority workers/Agency administrators • Technical experts (architects, town planners, traffic specialists, parks and gardens service) • Parents • Teachers
Governmental bodies and institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayor • Town or City Council/councilors • Board of Supervisors (the chartering authority) • Municipal secretary of education • Municipal child protection councils • Department heads
Non-governmental bodies and institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core local NGOs directly involved • Public and private schools • Community planning partners • Local churches
Neighborhood or citizenship at large	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhoods/Communities • Local children and youth • Local children and youth advocates at large
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mass media

a. Development of a network of adult facilitators

The first criticality noted here in regard to actors involved is composed of two sides: On the one hand, there is insufficiency in terms of numbers of facilitators or the collaboration intensity and scope; on the other hand, the resources from adult facilitators are not properly integrated. The definition of adult facilitators here rather refers to all the adults directly or indirectly related to these projects. Most of the case studies highlight the fact that, the relationship between children and youth participants and the other adult allies is decisive in enhancing the quality of participation and its continuity throughout the process. The experiences from Barra Mansa and Italy both note that, building a network of adult facilitators from the beginning enhances formal and informal supports, and is also beneficial for subsequent development and consolidation.

In her reflection on the Barra Mansa case, Guerra (2002) suggests on the one hand, undertaking a study on the existing facilitators to ascertain their reasons for participation and the main benefits derived so as to strengthen the collaboration; On the other hand, enlarging the collaboration scope by, for instance, forming stronger links with other departments of the city council that are responsible for the execution of projects approved by the child councilors. Another strategy could be working on developing and mobilizing new tools and information to reach wider audience, such as the neighborhood and district representatives.

b. Asymmetrical power relations

It is recognized by Mcginley (2010) that the wider political community sees youth councils as effecting limited change. In essence, the underlying structural constraints imposing by adult allies on children and youth contributes to the asymmetrical power relations that hold the participants back from gaining full autonomy in expressing genuine ideas and making their own priorities. It is therefore the adult allies and the political community who should take the initiative to be aware of this potential hazard and next, be willing to confront it through devising power decentralization mechanisms or strategies, in pursue of making the children and youth's participation substantive.

At the end of the chapter, all the dimensions discussed above are summarized below in Table 3-4.

Table 3-4 Titles, criticalities or risks, and strategies identified in case studies, categorized by aspects

	<i>Title</i>	<i>Criticality or risk</i>	<i>Strategy</i>
Project preparation and design	Institutionalization	Ambiguity in policy stances; lack of institutionalization	Clarifying the political vision; providing a firm legislative base as guarantee; maintaining an inherent policy stance in legislation
			Providing a better system or structure for voicing true ideas
	Location	Improper settings may distort CY's comprehension and cause discomfort in expressing their ideas	Providing a setting comprehensible by CY and corresponding to CY's ways of expression
	Recruitment mechanism	Discrimination and exclusion of the vulnerable CYs	Designing a selection mechanism accessible by youth from varying backgrounds
	Possibility to have an actual impact on decision-making	Letting children and youth have only a symbolic participation, on minor subjects, with no real effect	Fostering settings to stimulate different degrees of substantial involvement; devising proper power-sharing mechanism
	Identifying real issues of life	Lack of autonomy on choosing issues of concern	Granting CYs full autonomy on selecting issues of interest assisted by adequate adult consultation
Organizing excursions to urban neighborhoods			
Execution	Timing gap between program schedule and pace	Not enough time to let the project develop; it takes too long for CYs to	Shortening bureaucratic procedures

	of capacity development of participants	see their proposals implemented.	Intensifying interactions among stakeholders
			Informing children and youth of project progress on a periodical basis
	CY's role, tools and ways of involvement	Changes may occur to their role, tools and ways of involvement	Fostering settings that are adaptable to changes
	Role of adult coordinators	Other adults may use power to suppress CY's ideas	Adult coordinators should be aware of the risk and be the guards to CY's ideas
	Relationship with local authority	Lack of proper communication and mutual trust	Municipalities show their resolution of assisting the initiative
			Children participate in municipal meetings at a regular base
	Information	Lack of adequate documentation	Improving documentation mechanism; applying multiple documentation tools
		Varying degrees of involvement among CYs	Improving mutual understandings and respects; Facilitating communication and mutual supports
		Geographical dispersal hindering the coordination among CYs	Bridging the gap by the use of wireless communication tools or online platforms; building a intensive contact network among the participants
	Assessment	Evaluation standards and references	On empirical level, limited number of existing projects and experiments
		On theoretical level, lack of action models and systemized indications for evaluation	Conducting interdisciplinary evaluative researches into effectiveness

		Evaluation tends to be dominated by immediate visibility and quantitative outcomes	Developing a dominating long-term vision to guide through all project stages
			Establishing and integrating CY's involvement in monitoring and evaluation mechanism
Actors	Development of a network of adult facilitators	Insufficiency in terms of number of facilitators or the collaboration intensity and scope; the resources from facilitators are not properly integrated	Conducting studies on existing facilitators to strengthen incentives of collaboration
			Expanding collaboration scope to other municipal departments
			Developing and mobilizing new tools to reach wider audiences
	Asymmetrical power relations	CY's limited autonomy coming from structural constraints imposed by adults	Raising adult participants' awareness of structural constraints
	Devising power decentralization mechanisms or strategies		

Source: own elaboration Checkoway et al. (2005), Guerra (2002), Mcginley (2010) and Alparone (2001)

Chapter 4. Introduction on Taiwan and its broad context for Children's participation

The focus of the second part of the thesis will be on the “Children and Youth Representative Initiative” in the Municipality of Taipei, Taiwan. To begin with, I would like to provide a brief introduction about Taiwan so as to allowing all the readers to quickly grasp an idea of the country’s condition.

4.1 General background

Situated in the East Asia (see Figure 4-1), geographically Taiwan is composed of the main island of Taiwan and some other minor islands surrounding (see Figure 4-2), with total surface area of 36,193 km². The neighboring countries include People’s Republic of China (PRC), Japan and the Philippines. Taipei city is the political, economical and cultural capital of Taiwan.



Figure 4-1
Maps
depicting the
location of
Taiwan in
East Asia

(Own illustration
based on Google
Map Application,
accessed on 14
November 2013)

Figure 4-2 Map of Taiwan, with its territorial boundaries highlighted

(Source: <http://www.infoplease.com/atlas/country/taiwan.html>)



Taiwan, at present also officially named Republic of China (ROC.), has a complicated political background throughout its history. Before the end of World War II in 1945, Taiwan used to be under Japanese colonial rule as a result of the 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki, by which Chinese Qing-dynasty (1644-1912) ceded the island province to Japan. At the time when Taiwan was still under colonization, in Mainland China in 1911 Xinhai Revolution broke out and overthrew China's last imperial dynasty, the Qing Dynasty, and led to the establishment of the Republic of China (ROC) on 1 January 1912. At the end of World War II in 1945, the government of the Republic of China (ROC) declared Taiwan a province of the Republic. Four years later in 1949, after being defeated

in a civil war by Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rebels, the government of the Republic of China (ROC) led by the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT), retreated to the island of Taiwan. Since then, the ROC government's effective jurisdiction has been limited to Taiwan and its surrounding archipelagos (Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu) along with a number of smaller islands (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013a). In the same year, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime declared the establishment of People's Republic of China (PRC).

The Taipei-based, KMT-led government of Republic of China (ROC) and the Beijing-based, CCP-led government of People's Republic of China (PRC) denied each other's legitimacy. However, they both claimed sovereignty over all of China inclusive of the Mainland and Taiwan and attempted or threatened to use force to resolve the issue. Although in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China (PRC) Taiwan was claimed as part of PRC, yet in fact, Taiwan has been recognized "*an island which has for all practical purposes been independent since 1950*"¹⁴ ("Taiwan profile," 2013), according to the following facts: "*The ROC government exercises sovereignty over territories more populous than three-quarters of the world's nations; it maintains diplomatic relations with other countries; and ROC passports are honored the world over. Moreover, it is consistently ranked by global surveys among the top nations in terms of freedom, human rights and economic performance.*" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013a)

The ROC government was founded based on the ROC Constitution, which took effect on 25 December 1947. This Constitution founded on Three Principles of the People - the Principle of Nationalism, Democracy and Social Well-being. The Constitution guarantees its citizens the rights and freedoms, including equality before the law; the right to work and own property; the powers of election and of recall and initiative by means of referendum; and ensuring the freedoms of speech, choice of residence, movement, assembly, confidential communication, religion and association. Restrictions on constitutional freedoms are valid only if contained in legislation deemed necessary to prevent infringement on the

¹⁴ This refers to the time when KMT-led government of Republic of China retreated to the Island of Taiwan after the defeated in the civic war by Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

freedoms of others, respond to emergencies, maintain social order or enhance public well being (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013b).

However, soon after the Constitution of ROC entered into operation, in 1948 in order to confront the intensified threats coming from the Chinese Communist Party during the civic war, the National Assembly adopted the “Temporary Provisions Effective During the Period of National Mobilization for Suppression of the Communist Rebellion” in accordance with procedural measures necessary to revise the Constitution of ROC. From then onwards, presidential powers were greatly expanded while protection of citizens’ basic freedoms and rights were seriously eroded; moreover, domestic political opposition has been suppressed, all on account of the emergency reason mentioned above. Responding to a tide of democratization starting from the late 1970s of its civil society, in 1991 President Lee Tenghui began to push constitutional reform and the National Assembly passed a resolution on repealing the Temporary Provisions, which entered into effect in May of the same year (Affairs, 2011; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013b). Not until then did the participation rights of citizens be recovered to its full scope in the legal framework.

Being a fully democratic regime since the early 1990s, the autonomous government of Taiwan has been maintained through a democratic electoral system defined by the Constitution of ROC. The presidential election takes place every four years; in the past there used to be National Assembly, which operated as a representative electoral system but was abolished in 2005 with its functions substituted by national referendum. Article 130 of the Constitution of ROC states that, any of its citizens who has attained the age of 20 years shall have the right to vote (Central Election Commission).

In regard to its latest economic performance, Taiwan’s GDP per capita¹⁵ was 20,706.198 USD at the end of October 2013, while the ones for China, Italy and United States show 6,569.348 USD, 33,909.123 USD, and 52,839.162 USD,

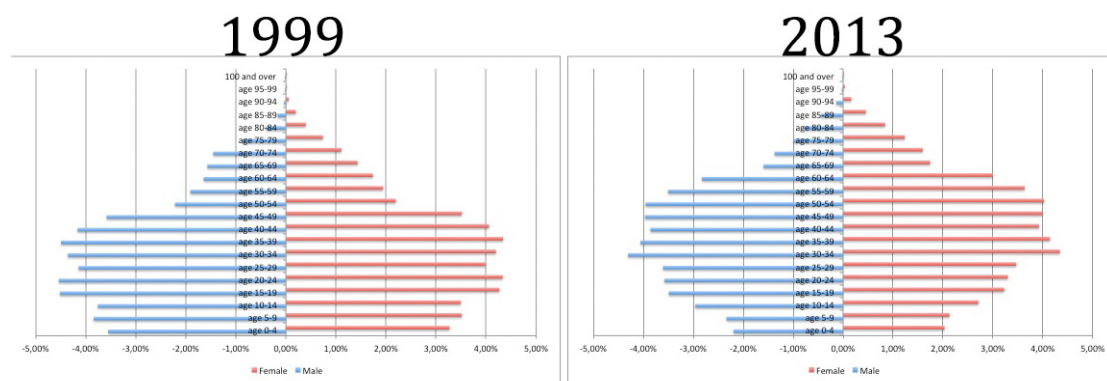
¹⁵ The full name of the indicator used here is “Gross domestic product per capita, current prices in US Dollars”. Source: World Economic Outlook database from International Monetary Fund, <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2013/02/weodata/download.aspx>

respectively. Concerning the labor force condition, in 2012 Taiwan has its unemployment rate at 4.2%, ranked the lowest among the other states in comparison: China (6.5%), Italy (10.6%) and United States (8.1%)¹⁶.

4.2 Demographic and household change

At the end of October 2013, the total resident population of Taiwan is reported 23,361,147. What is worth stressing is here is that the demographic structure of Taiwan has changed significantly in the last decade. Looking at the population pyramid comparison shown below in Figure 4-3, we will notice that from 1990 to 2013 the bottom of pyramid has shrank greatly, marking a drastic decrease of number of newborns in the meantime. Such change shifted the overall balancing point of pyramid upwards, characterized by a relative large number of population concentrated in the older middle ages.

Figure 4-3 Population pyramid of Taiwan, comparison year 1999 and 2013



(Own illustration based on the “[Population by 5-year Age Group](http://www.moi.gov.tw/stat/english/monthly.asp)” file taken from <http://www.moi.gov.tw/stat/english/monthly.asp>)

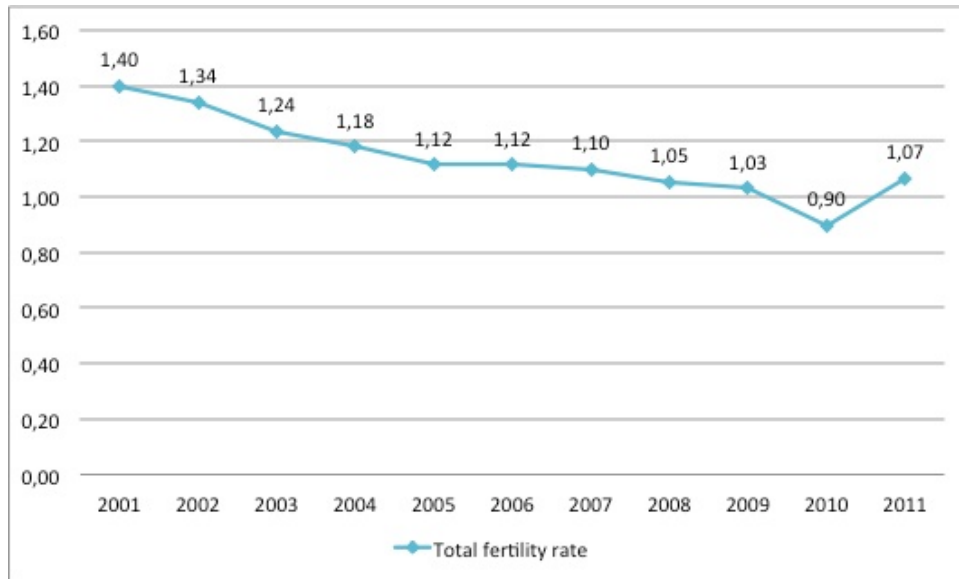
Two significant trends have been the main shaping forces to this process. First, as Figure 4-4 indicates, the fertility rate has been declining throughout the years; in 2010, it even slumped below one. Of the year 2012, Taiwan’s total fertility rate reached only 1.1, on the same rank with Latvia as the lowest among the countries worldwide¹⁷.

¹⁶ Source: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2129.html>

¹⁷ Source: PRB 2012 World Population Data Sheet, Total Fertility Rate, <http://www.prb.org/>

Figure 4-4 Total fertility rates in Taiwan, year 2001-2011

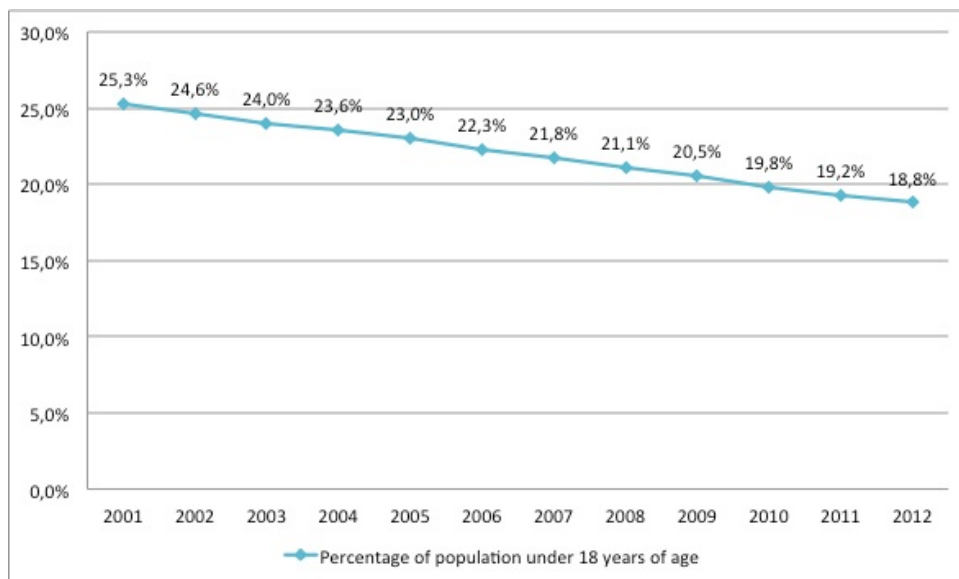
(Own illustration based on the data from Social Indicator 2011 Report)



Similarly, the percentage of children and youth, namely the population under 18 years of age, has been declining in the last decade from representing more than one fourth of the population at the beginning of the years 2000s to 18,8% at the end of 2012, as shown in Figure 4-5.

Figure 4-5 Percentage of population under 18 years of age over total population in Taiwan, year 2001-2012

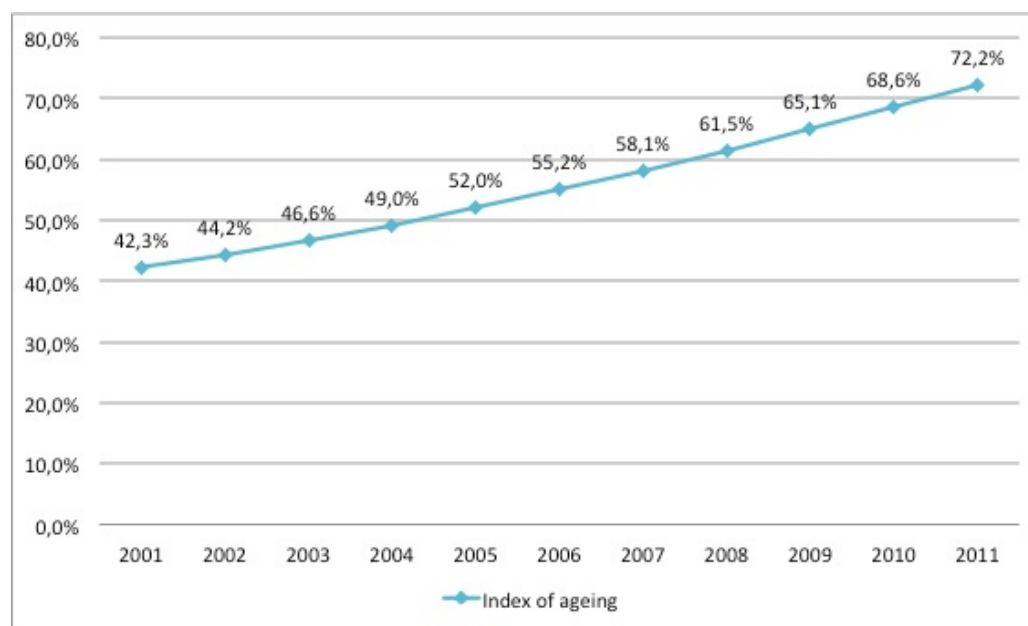
(Own illustration based on the data from <http://sowf.moi.gov.tw/stat/month/list.htm>)



Second, the serious ageing issue appeared in the same period of time as a result of the lowering fertility rates. As illustrated in Figure 4-6, the index of ageing¹⁸ soared dramatically in the last ten years, from 42.3% in 2001 to 72.2% in 2011.

Figure 4-6 Index of ageing in Taiwan, year 2001-2011

(Own illustration based on the data from Social Indicator 2011 Report)

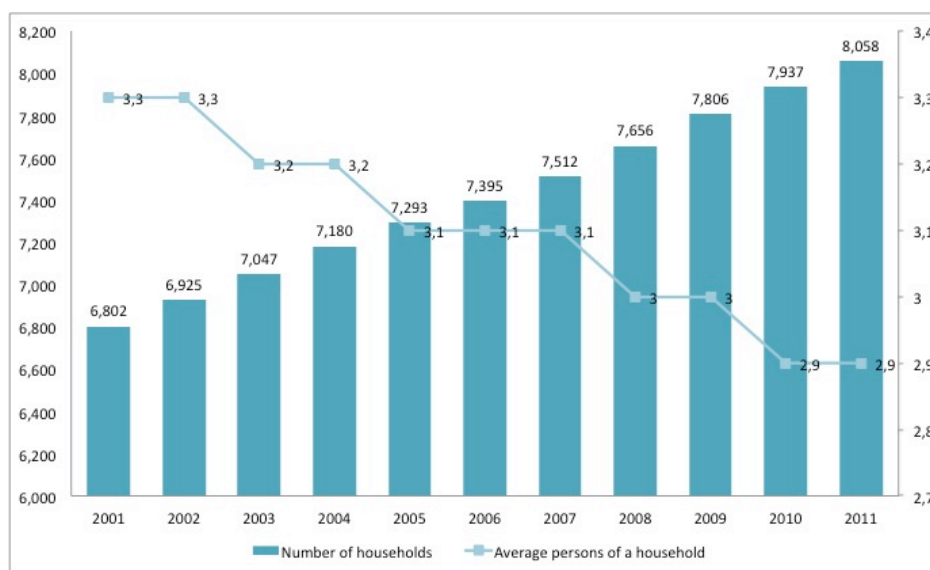


With regard to the change in family structure, Taiwan is in the midst of a global trend towards smaller families. Figure 4-7 proves this phenomenon from two sides: the number of households in Taiwan has been increasing, from 6,802 in 2001 to 8,058 in 2011, whereas the size of the household has been shrinking over years.

¹⁸ It represents the number of older people aged over 60 every 100 young people aged less than 15 years.

Figure 4-7 Number of households in Taiwan(left); Average persons of a household in Taiwan (right), year 2001-2011

(Own illustration based on the data from Social Indicator 2011 Report)



4.3 National legislative framework for children and youth's participation in Taiwan

In this section, a brief overview of the Taiwanese legislative framework related to children and youth's participation will be presented.

Before 2004, there used to be two different acts respectively in charge of the rights and welfares of children and youth. They were called Children Welfare Act (announced in February 1973 and terminated in June 2004, originally with thirty acts) and Youth Welfare Act (announced in January 1989 and terminated in June 2004), containing around 30 articles each. These two acts were integrated into one single act and renamed the Children and Youth Welfare Act in 2004 with the content enlarged to 75 articles. The new act governed the welfare of the minors under eighteen years of age as a whole altogether in one piece of legislation (Shee, 2004). In the past, children who are under twelve years of age were subject to Children Welfare Act; but when they turned into twelve-year-olds the entire previous placement, consultation or protection works had to be interrupted and instead, subject to the Youth Welfare Act. Due to the introduction of the new act, the resources and workforces of these two parts were able to be better converged (R.O.C., 2012).

Nevertheless, the Children and Youth Welfare Act remained limited in the scope as it continued with putting emphasis on residual protections but was lack of fundamental ideas and practical measures to ensure a comprehensive protection of welfare and rights of children and youth. In the light of this limitation, several legislators proposed content reform proposals between the year of 2004 and 2008, but the progress had been very slow with little significance.

From 2007, the main children and youth advocacy group TAAWRW, along with the forces from the other civic groups who labor for children and youth welfares, made up the ‘The Folk Group On Act reform’¹⁹. Later from April 2008, law experts and scholars joined the reviewing process; intensive meetings and public hearing were held on discussing act reform. This revision of the act further took the Convention of the Rights of the Child as the blueprint model. In November 2008 The Folk Group On Act Reform published their final draft of reform proposal. Soon after it was submitted to the Executive Yuan²⁰ for further proceeding. Two years later in November 2011, Legislative Yuan²¹ promulgated the reform with forty-two new amendments added to the original one. At the same time it was renamed as the Protection of Children and Youths Welfare and Rights Act (PCYWRA). The latest version covers up to 118 acts, broadening its scope to include social participation, cultural and leisure issues.

The participation rights of children and youth are stated explicitly in the Article 38 of PCYWRA as,

“The government will connect with private institutes and groups to encourage children and youth to participate in public affairs in schools and

¹⁹ This is own translation directly from Chinese, for no official English translation is available.

²⁰ “The Executive Yuan shall be the highest administrative organ of the State.” Reference: Article 53 of [Constitution of the Republic of China \(Taiwan\)](#).

²¹ “The Legislative Yuan shall be the highest legislative organ of the State, to be constituted of members elected by the people. It shall exercise legislative power on behalf of the people.” Reference: Article 62 of [Constitution of the Republic of China \(Taiwan\)](#).

communities, and offer opportunities to protect participation rights.” (“The Protection of Children and Youths Welfare and Rights Act,”)

According to the Constitution of the Republic of China (R.O.C), the minimum legal age for voting in Taiwan is twenty years of age; any individual whose age is insufficient to this requirement still has the right to actively participate in public affairs in other forms.

In particular, Article 10 of PCYWRA provides the legislative base for the “Children and Youth Representative Initiative”. As the article declares,

“The director of the authorized agency will act as a convener of the relevant scholars or experts, the related local organizations, group representatives and agency representatives to coordinate, study, examine, consult, and promote the welfare policy for children and youth. The above-mentioned relevant scholars, experts and representatives of the related local organizations and groups will not be less than half of attendees, where a single gender will not be less than one third. If necessary, [The above-mentioned relevant scholars, experts and representatives of the related local organizations and groups] invite the youth representatives to attend the meeting.” (“The Protection of Children and Youths Welfare and Rights Act,”)

It guarantees the interest of children and youth to express their own ideas in response to public affairs and issues concerning their daily lives. Furthermore, the government, when necessary, will invite the children and youth representatives to present in the meetings to express their opinions for policy consultation, promotion and formulation.

4.4 Taiwan's absence in UN and its impact on children's participation issue

As mentioned before in the section 3.3.3, The Convention on the Rights of the Child has been the most recognized international legislative framework concerning the protection of the rights of the child. Any contracting party should

dedicate maximum efforts to secure the rights of the child, being constrained by the existence of the Convention. To this objective, the Convention should strive for including as much countries as possible into its scope. However, being restricted by the international political situation, Taiwan (the Republic of China) used to be a contracting party of United Nations since its establishment in 1945²² but forced to withdraw from United Nations in 1971 under the pressure of People's Republic of China, and failed to be accepted again by UN upon its repeated requests for membership ever since (Hsueh).

Without the official recognition by UN as a country, Taiwan is ineligible to sign and access the Convention. Nevertheless in September 1995 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs still declared Taiwan's determination to be bound by the Convention, conforming to the principle stated in the Constitution of the ROC, Article 141,

"The foreign policy of the Republic of China shall be conceived in a spirit of independence and self-reliance and based on the principles of equality and reciprocity to promote friendly relations with other nations and abide by treaties and the Charter of the United Nations so as to protect the rights and interests of Chinese citizens residing abroad, foster international cooperation, advance international justice, and insure world peace." ("The Constitution of the Republic of China,")

However, this unilateral declaration cannot render the rights of Taiwanese children to be equally protected by the international human rights law. Although the principle of indiscriminate has been stated clearly in the Article 2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child - *"States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's [...] national [...] status."* (UNICEF) - Unfortunately in the case of Taiwan, such principle of indiscriminate has not yet been applied (Shee, 2004).

²² The Republic of China was one of the UN's founding member countries and became one of the five standing members of the UN Security Council.

The impact of being barred from signing or accessing to the CRC is not satisfying. First of all, without being a contracting party, it is doubtful how Taiwanese government could effectively execute the policy principles ensured by CRC and apply them to the children within its territory. For example, whether the domestic children protection policy meets the CRC's requirements has no standard to be verified with. In addition, Article 17 of CRC promotes *"international co-operation in the production, exchange and dissemination of such information and material from a diversity of cultural, national and international sources"* (UNICEF); As a non-contracting party, Taiwan has no possibility to benefit from this practice, and consequently might not be able to keep up with the current trend of international children rights protection (Child Welfare Bureau, 2008).

4.5 Low level of public participation of children and youth in Taiwan

The report of "the Survey of Living Conditions of Children and Youth in the Municipality of Taipei in 2009" indicated that, 35% of the children and youth from ten to eighteen years old failed to participate in any social activities in the past year, while those who did involved show only 1.36 times per year. A similar result is found in another report, "the Survey of Living Conditions of Youth in Taiwan 2009", revealing that the number of Taiwanese youth aged between fifteen and twenty-four who had ever engaged in public affairs is around 375,000, which is equivalent to 12.34% of the youth age group. Among these participants, 80% had experiences in 'volunteering works', 20.6% in 'community movements', and only 1.84% in 'activities related to political parties'. The survey result also covers the reasons of juvenile absence in public affairs: 'having no time' (53.8%), 'no access to information' (19.29%), 'too busy' (13.41%) and 'under pressure from work and school'. It is noteworthy that 28.36% of youth interviewed show 'unwillingness to participate in volunteering services' (National Youth Commission, 2005).

The overall results convey an important message that, the level of public participation of Taiwanese children and youth is low and largely concentrated in volunteering fields. This low public affair engagement rate is highly associated with the process of credentialization. It was confirmed that, the prime objectors hindering children and youth from taking part in public affairs are indeed the adults, mostly their parents and school teachers, who often prioritize the children and youth's academic performance above all others and thus tend to discourage their children and student from spending time and efforts on pursuing extra-curriculum activities (TAAYRW, 2012). Even though most of the school curriculums do compose of certain hours of volunteering credits that require students to fulfill, their limited scope usually fail to branch out from school context or bring in substantial empowerment on the children and youth.

It is reported that the children and youth access these types of participation - volunteering works, community movements, and activities related to political parties - through three principal channels: the school curriculum or assignments by schoolteachers (41.67%), social network (31.58%) and school clubs (14.47%). This implies that there is great potential of improving citizenship education through increasing the provision of friendly and highly accessible channels of public participation, which requires a holistic and enduring social investment to be made. To render this a goal a reality, Taiwan has to firstly face the following challenges: both the public and private sectors have weak awareness in making investments in citizenship development of children and youth; Lack of cross-sectoral policies and collaboration on children and youth issues; and insufficient budget allocation. TAAYRW holds that, what is urgent at the moment is to formulate an integral policy and to construct a platform which encourages persistent communication (Welfare, 2012).

4.6 Legislation concerning spatial planning and the role of children and youth within the scope

The prime message that should be given at the beginning of this section is that, there is no regulation in the Taiwanese constitution that aims to ensure just children and youth's influence in spatial planning. In Taiwanese context, what

referred to more often in terms of participation in spatial planning issues is a broader concept called “citizen participation”, of which children and youth are counted as a part.

“Urban Planning Act” (UBA) is the main legislative framework guiding the development of urban areas in Taiwan. It was firstly devised during the Japanese colonial period and later adopted by the Nationalist Government. Not until its first revision in 1964 did the Act contain norms offering rooms for citizen participation. UBA contains basically two levels. The master plans specify planning areas, giving fundamental guidance to land use zoning, main road system, public transport system and sewer system, as well as public facilities. Whereas the detailed plans aim at giving details to foregoing plans, providing public facilities at neighborhood and locality level. Citizens are allowed to participate in the operation process, including program stage, exhibition stage, consultation stage, and adoption stage (Hsu, 2002). There is no specific term for the part of children and youth in the planning process. We assume that what is regulated in the UBA for citizens’ participation should in theory apply to children and youth as well. However, the interviewee from TAAYRW reported that, last year in 2012 when the NGO was attempting to reclaim the youth’s autonomy in renovating the “Taipei-Y17”, a building so-called designed for youth’s leisure and cultural activities, the municipality of Taipei did not even inquire the idea either of the youth nor of the youth NGOs, before the final renovation plan was adopted.

Environmental Impact Appraisal Law (EIA law) is one of the measures to enhancing the environmental rights of every Taiwanese citizen. Environmental policies and all development activities, before entering into the decision-making, should pass through the environmental impact appraisal stage, which is regulated by EIA law. Unlike general regulations, The EIA law focuses more on precautionary protections than imposing penalty and compensation for damage. Therefore, public participation becomes an important mechanism in preventing damaging outcomes due to power abuse and corruption. According to EIA, the public, applying to local residents, NGOs, professional institutions and local governments, are permitted to intervene in the production, review and

supervision phases of EIA proposal (Wang, 2004). There is no specification of regulating development impacts on children and youth in EIA appraisal. Nevertheless children and youth and relevant NGOs could be considered as part of the stakeholders and appeal for their participation rights which has been inferred by the article 15-1 of EIA “*the competent authority... shall consult the opinion of relevant agencies, groups, or citizens.*” (ROC). In order to maximize the effectiveness of consultation and participation, the government should request the developer and its own appraisal agencies to guarantee the information transparency along the assessment process.

This chapter has outlined the general background for children and youth’s participation that (may) take place in the Taiwanese context. It paves the way for understanding the upcoming analysis of the case study - ‘Children and Youth Representatives’ initiative in Taipei City, which will be presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 5. "Children and youth representative initiative" by municipality of Taipei

Before stepping into the details of the case study of the initiative of Children and Youth Representatives in Taipei City, the reasons for choosing this initiative as the focus of the study will be explained, and a short overview of the background out of which it developed will be given.

5.1 The rationale of choosing initiative of Taipei City as the focus of study

There are several reasons for which the 'Children and Youth Representatives' initiative in Taipei City was selected to be the focused case study of this work. Firstly, it pioneers in its methodology. In fact, it is not the first initiative in Taiwan experimenting the approach of children and youth representatives. The primary attempt to this approach was the "Youth Advisory Group On Municipal Affairs" in Taichung City operating from 2009. However in Taichung the coordinators did not offer empowerment trainings, as it has been done in Taipei City, to its youth participants before 2012 and thus showed only limited results in operational effectiveness. In contrary, although the initiative of Taipei City went into operation later than Taichung City, from 2012, in a short time it seemed to outshine Taichung City in terms of the significance of project results by profiting from having empowerment trainings, through which the coordinators were able to bring youth participants to tackle concrete issues. Secondly, it was chosen because of the good accessibility of information it has. The initiative of Taipei City runs its own web platform for facilitating information dissemination through frequent updates of activities info and reports. The operation of online polls and forum allow the representatives to have two-way interactions with the other youth. The third reason lies in the fact that, from the urban planning point of view, Taipei City has been the leading city in formulating new policy actions in the field, and for this reason it is considered more inclined to embrace innovative urban policy initiatives. For instance, there were pilot projects in planning such as 'community planners initiative' and the

summer urban planning workshops for elementary school students. The former was firstly proposed and entered into practice by Taipei City from 1999. It is a mechanism to encourage citizen participation, in the light of constructing 'a city for citizens'. The tasks of 'community planners' include, setting up planning studios to offer consultation to the local public; being engaged in drafting and revising 'local landscape transformation plans'; and being consultant for municipal urban planning affairs. It was deemed as an experimental innovation in Taiwanese urban planning context. The latter was an international workshop in collaboration with other universities from Japan, South Korea and Australia, aiming at increasing children's sensitivity to the local history and environment. It included trips to historical sites, spatial planning games, DIY design activities. It was held first time in summer 2010, and successively in 2011 and 2012.

5.2 Background

5.2.1 The main advocate - Taiwan Alliance for Advancement of Youth Rights and Welfare (TAAWRW)

Taiwan Alliance for Advancement of Youth Rights and Welfare (TAAWRW) is an alliance of thirty-five domestic NGOs geographically across Taiwan whose emphasis of work is placed on promoting youth rights and welfare, which is also the main contributor for the 'Children and Youth Representatives' initiative in Taipei City. It is the main policy advocate in Taiwan who lobbies for the rights and welfare of the Taiwanese children and youth since its establishment. TAAWRW noticed that, for many years in Taiwanese society there had been a lack of a holistic planning on the youth welfare policy, reducing the youth welfare work to solely residual and complementary. On the other hand, the rights and welfare enjoyed by youth as a human being became gradually marginalized in the political realm, and what came along with this policy deficit was the shortage of proper spaces and resources dedicated to physical and mental development of youth. Striving for reversing the trend, TAAWRW was founded in June 2003 by joining together twenty-two NGOs, which nowadays amounts to thirty-five. Its collective aim is to promote six fundamental rights of youth, including "welfare protection rights", "social participation rights", "the right to culture and leisure", "employment protection rights", "education rights" and "Physical and mental

health development rights”. In addition, TAAYRW also monitors every government policy related to Youth welfare and associated budget spending, in order to call the public concern onto the youth policy revision and moreover, to further increase investments in cultivating youth development.

TAAYRW has its mission proclaimed clear as “making policy the strength of youth”. Five precise goals were set to fulfill the mission. These include:

1. Promoting the policy formulation of children and youth issues;
2. Examining and monitoring particularly the policy execution and resource allocation pertaining to the Protection of Children and Youths Welfare and Rights Act (PCYWRA);
3. Deepening the understanding of the needs of youth and correlating right issues;
4. Stabilizing the youth participation and decision-making mechanism;
5. Empowering the youth and working youth.

5.2.2 Policy predecessors

The origin of the form of youth participation in policy as a consultation unit in Taiwan could date back to the year of 2005. The Executive Yuan, the central executive unit in Taiwan composed of councils and commissions, used to have the Committee for the Promotion of Youth Affairs, an inter-departmental branch formed of central officers from varying councils and commission. In 2005, TAAYRW was invited to take part in the Committee as a representative of children and youth NGOs. TAAYRW proposed to set up a youth consultant board; the idea was soon adopted and thus came into being as the ‘Youth advisory group’. It was initially a unit that belonged to central government, hence ranked high in the government hierarchy and had corresponding importance in operation. It allowed the youth advisors to present in the committee meetings with the right to make proposals. Yet its function weakened after its relocation to National Youth Commission, as the youth advisor group was limited to merely passive consultants of solely the commission’s business. This initiative was terminated in 2010.

The other policy predecessor was the 'Advisory Committee On Student Self-Government Groups And Civic Education Policy' under the Ministry of Education, which were in operation from 2008. Its original vision was to adjust relevant policies from the perspective of youth. The participants were mostly chosen among the leaders of student clubs from universities who had prior experiences in managing self-government groups. It operated only once a year by assembling the selected club leaders to hold a conference and have open discussion on their own. Some critics commented that the Ministry of Education would like to manipulate self-government groups through this mechanism, and that this policy did not bring what was originally planned into full play²³. It came to an end in 2012.

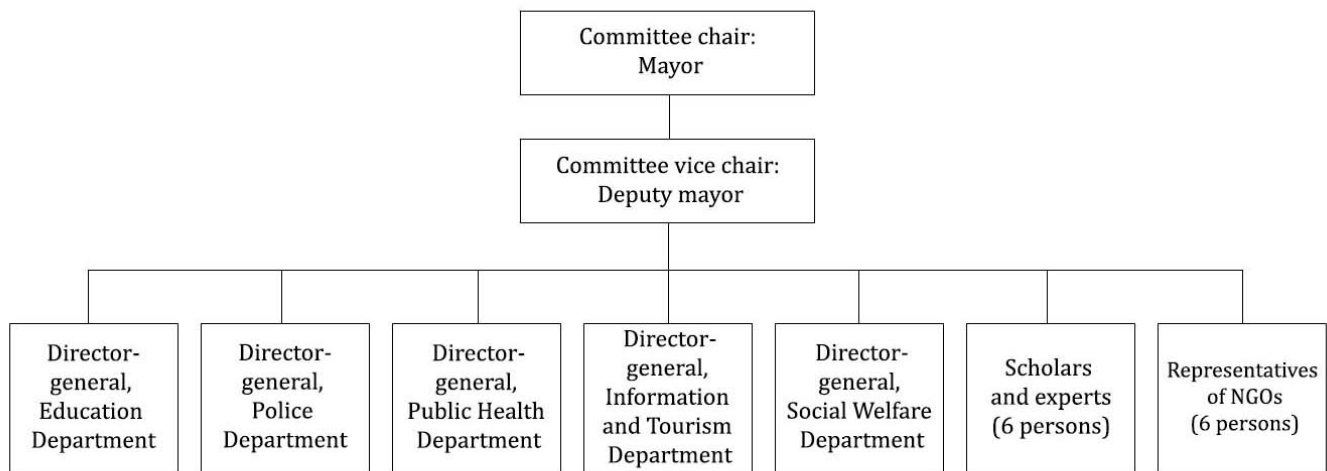
5.3 Introduction of the case study

The Children and Youth Representatives is a pilot project launched in early 2012 by Taipei City. It is under the supervision of the Committee for the Promotion of Children and Youth Rights, an inter-departmental ministerial group at the municipal level (see Figure 5-1). The committee was established with aims to coordinate, innovate, evaluate, consult and promote children and youth policies. Its official missions include the following: (1) coordinating, innovating, evaluating, consulting and promoting affairs concerning children and youth policies at municipal level, (2) managing comprehensive planning for affairs and protection works concerning children and youth. The municipal departments take part in the committee were chosen according to the content of the Protection of Children and Youths Welfare and Rights Act (PCYWRA); the current scope of PCYWRA haven't reached all municipal departments. It is believed that the reform of PCYWRA in 2011 was the main driving force for the birth of the project, because the article 10 provided a strong legal basis for the children and youth representatives' presence in governmental meetings to express their opinions concerning the policy consultation, promotion and formulation. In fact, this adult committee was established in 2005 and has been dealing with children

²³ Cited from the personal interview with Cheng-Jie Wu, the researcher from TAAIRW.

and youth affairs, but it was not until the article 10 became part of PCYWRA that did the committee work on adopting direct consultation mechanism to reach children and youth's voice.

Figure 5-1 The organizational structure of the Committee for the Promotion of Children and Youth Rights of municipality of Taipei



Core project objectives

Based on TAA YRW's prior experiences, there are four dimensions that are core to the development of civic awareness of youth: 'communication', 'empowerment', 'idea voicing' and 'participation'. Of each dimension the project defined its specific objective as outlined below,

- **Communication:** building platforms for youth to exchange opinions and thereby to stimulate new ideas.
- **Empowerment:** Enhances civic awareness and promotes public participation by conducting empowerment training courses.
- **Idea-voicing:** building idea-voicing channels so as to converging the ideas of youth and to promoting the right and capacity of expression.
- **Participation:** Children and youth's participation in committee meetings to offer policy consultation and suggestions.

Participants. Twenty-one children and youth representatives were selected by the committee members to take part in the first term; at the end of the term, the average numbers of participants who reported to be actively involved was sixteen. The age range of participant covers from 11 years to 20 years included. They all currently take part in the schooling system²⁴ with education levels varying from junior high to university.

Selection of participants and term of office. The registration announcement was released by the Social Welfare Department to varying levels of schools and social welfare organizations in Taipei City through official channels. The candidates were either self-recommended or recommended by organizations (i.e. schools and social welfare organizations). The selection was designed to assure the representation of age, gender, ethnicity and geographical location. The representatives have a one-year term of office. The first term started in April 2012 and was completed in April 2013; no participants were allowed to extend their term of office. The registration of the second term was open twice, for there were insufficient candidates after the first run was closed, owing to the fact that the first run was open when children and youth were off campus during summer break. The second registration came to an end in October, and the succeeding selection process is still ongoing at the moment.

Functioning. The aim of the project, from the representatives' side, is to be able to give insights and proposals in the committee meetings concerning children and youth policies. A series of empowerment courses were arranged to serve this purposed. Therefore every meeting is composed of two parts, the representatives meetings and empowerment training courses. In the beginning of the term, the representatives were introduced the contents of PCYWRA and later formed three issue groups which focused on 'cultural and leisure activities', 'disadvantaged minorities' and 'mass media'. Every issue group meets once a month besides the scheduled representative meetings to research issues and

²⁴ The length of compulsory education was extended from six years to nine years in 1968, covering the primary education (from grade 1 to grade 6) and the first part of the secondary education (from grade 7 to grade 9). High school is not counted as compulsory.

focalize their concerns. In monthly representative meetings, three issue groups take turn to hold the meeting and facilitate discussion. The representatives were given full autonomy in scheduling meeting, raising issues and were in charge of doing records.

Location. There is no fixed convening place available at the representatives' disposal, partially because most of the empowering trainings were scheduled with field visits to municipal departments and NGOs.

Budget. The annual budget allocated to the project operation by the municipality was amounted to NTD 250,000 (approximate 6,200 euro). It covers mainly the personnel expense of the adult coordinator and other lecturers from NGOs, subsidy for commuting expenses of the representatives, the rental for convening places.

The other actors involved in the project. The following are the main actors who were present in the process of work. Their relationships with the children and youth representatives are significant in contributing to the continuation of the project.

- **Other children and youth:** they are important source of inquiry to the representatives; one sub-group is made up of interviewees reached by online forums or direct face-to-face contacts on the street through questionnaires; the other sub-group is made up of those had pre-existing relationships with representatives, such as siblings, schoolmates, neighbors and friends. Their collective opinion could influence the role of children and youth representatives.
- **Committee for the promotion of rights and welfare of children and youth:** The commissioners at times participate in the representatives meetings as audience and advisers; their duties were to receive and respond to children and youth's proposals in committee meetings and further proceed the results in policy framework.

- **Social welfare department of Taipei City:** Its role is to provide administrative supports and consultation and at the initial stage in charge of reaching and selecting the participants; one official is present in every representatives meeting to take record and submit reports to the responsible ones of the department.
- **Other municipal departments of Taipei City:** They were reported having no direct interactions with the representatives except those officials who took part in the committee.
- **Other NGOs:** Their role was assisting TAYRW on holding internal empowerment trainings, external workshops and conferences. The main collaborating NGO was identified as “Taiwan Youth Citizen’s Forum” who are specialized in operating deliberative democracy.
- **Parents, schoolteachers and adults from social welfare centers:** They are on the one hand, key witnesses of children and youth representatives’ growth; on the other hand, their approval or disapproval plays a crucial role in affecting the representatives’ degree of involvement.
- **Project coordinator:** being the key person in the whole project execution, the project coordinator’s responsibilities cover manifold aspects. These include, for instance, giving report in the representatives’ monthly meetings, taking leadership to facilitate communication within the three issue group meetings, holding empowerment training courses in collaboration with other adult actors, maintaining the relationships of children and youth representatives with the other stakeholders, budget spending control, supporting administrative works and assisting in holding press conferences.

5.4 Project results and achievements

The ultimate goal of ‘Children and Youth Representatives’ initiative, from the point of view of the youth participants, was to form and submit proposals in committee meetings which run every four months, to make their voice heard by adult commissioners. Three small working groups were formed which respectively focused on issues of ‘cultural and leisure activities’, ‘disadvantaged

minorities' and 'mass media'. In small working group meetings, every time the representatives began with reviewing monthly news concerning children and youth which they collected through websites or newspapers; and then they discussed about the critical points of these news or share about other topics that have caught their attention so as to focalize their concern; if time permitted, they would then proceed to draft proposals which could be brought into discussion in regular representatives meetings with other groups. In monthly representatives meetings, each working group had to present their working process to all participants for exchanging ideas and for drawing consensus on final proposals as well.

In total the children and youth representatives of the first term presented twice in the committee meetings to submit their proposals, of which the contents are shown below by working group in Table 5-1, Table 5-2 and Table 5-3.

Table 5-1 Working group: Cultural and leisure activities

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Proposals submitted to the Committee for the Promotion of Children and Youth Rights</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Service-Learning implementation; •Aesthetic education, art and humanities courses in middle schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Examining the policy implementation of Service Learning and Volunteer Service Hours in schools; •Compelling schools that do not implement the abovementioned policy to include Service-Learning hours into school curriculum; •Building platforms and providing incentives for monitoring and assessment; •Municipality should offer platforms for a better matching of service-learning opportunities with possible candidates, in collaboration with local communities; •Municipal Education Department should firstly apply what have been proposed above to a small number of schools as a pilot project; •Cultural Department should develop plans for implementing art and humanities courses in middle schools; •Education Department should inspect schoolteacher's improper cancelling of 'non-academic courses' and try to improve the situation.

The representatives from the group of cultural and leisure activities addressed the issue that, most of the service-learning courses in middle schools tend to over-emphasize the part of volunteering services and at the same time fail to value the importance of learning. Therefore their proposals bear a vision to claim for a teaching method that balances service and learning so that the students can fully recover the right to learning also in this compulsory subject.

The same group concerned about another critical issue relating to middle and high schoolteachers' substituting 'non-academic subjects' with 'academic subjects'. This has been a common informal practice among teachers from star middle and high schools that deem student's academic excellence the top priority over other aspects of human development. They tends to substitute the originally assigned teaching hours of subjects that would not be tested in high school or university entrance exams, such as music, art, physical education etc., with extra lessons on subjects that matter to entrance exams, for instance mathematics, physics, languages etc. The proposal of children and youth representatives pointed out such a biased preference of school system and call for municipality's intervention upon this issue.

Table 5-2 Working group: Disadvantaged minorities

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Proposals submitted to the Committee for the Promotion of Children and Youth Rights</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Education resource allocation to disadvantaged youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Schools should confront the current issue of lacking disabled-friendly school environments and look for feasible solutions; •Education Department and Social Welfare Department should propose feasible solutions to the abovementioned problem so as to avoid schools to reject disabled students' enrollment requests; •Increasing provisions of social workers and student consultants, while strengthening vocational trainings of teachers to be sensitive about students' physical and mental health and their right to education.

The group caring for disadvantaged minorities made education resource allocation to disadvantaged youth their top concern. The Taiwanese government will extend compulsory education from nine years to twelve years, starting from September 2014; however up to now there are high schools in Taipei City that are still not equipped with disabled-friendly facilities and supporting personnel, which in representatives' opinion damaging the disabled students' right to education. In their proposals they urged the municipality and high schools to confront this shortage and tackle it by increasing resource allocation as well as through intensifying inter-departmental collaboration.

Table 5-3 Working group: Mass media

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Proposals submitted to the Committee for the Promotion of Children and Youth Rights</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Media literacy²⁵ education; •Video games and websites classification. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Education Department should collaborate with Information and Tourism Department for improving media literacy education in schools; •Regulating erotic games distribution through informing all types of relevant distributors; •Intensifying police inspection against illegal selling of erotic video games to minors.

Although the government had integrated the issue of media literacy into course curriculum in middle and high schools, in their surveys the youth representatives from mass media group have found that middle and high school students remained lack of capacity to put into practice what they have learned in class to distinguish correct and incorrect information sources in their daily life. In view of this criticality, they cited the Number nine and ten of Article 7 of PCYWRA concerning the protections of 'reading and listening interests of children and youth' (No. 9) and 'the communication and propagation interests of children and youth' (No. 10) ("The Protection of Children and Youths Welfare and Rights Act,"), to request for an inter-departmental effort on enhancing such

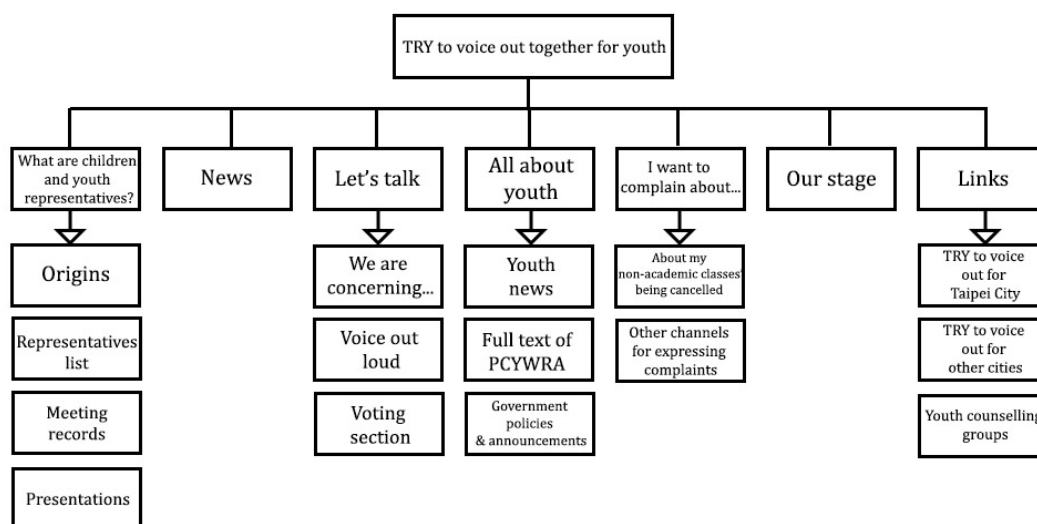
²⁵ "Media Literacy is a 21st century approach to education. It provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate, create and participate with messages in a variety of forms — from print to video to the Internet. Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy." – Center For Media Literacy. Source: <http://www.medialit.org/media-literacy-definition-and-more>

rights through improving media literacy education in schools and in the wider environment.

Collective effort: an informative and interactive web platform

Recognizing their role of representing the children and youth at large in Taipei City, the participants gradually became aware of the importance to reach other children and youth. To this end, they managed to build a web platform²⁶ titled “TRY to voice out together for youth”²⁷, with help from other two schoolmates who specialized in informatics, and run the website in coordination with TAAAYRW. The website composition (see Figure 5-2) is expressing two aims: on the one hand, informing the children and youth at large of the mission and the progress of the CYRTC, of the rights of children and youth and of government policies concerning children and youth; on the other hand, exchanging ideas with the children and youth at large (i.e. through the “Voting section”) and providing channels for diverse voices to be heard (i.e. the sections under “I want to complain about...”).

Figure 5-2 the structure of the web platform developed for the initiative



²⁶ Visit the website at <http://www.taipeiyouth.org.tw/> in Chinese. No English version available.

²⁷ Own translation directly from Chinese title of the website.

5.5 Summary of findings

A single case is insufficient to draw general conclusions, but it is still possible to learn from the following findings of this pilot project.

5.5.1 Types of youth consultation initiatives in Taiwan

Reviewing the CYRTC and the other past policy initiatives in Taiwan which aiming at promoting children and youth's voices, we can identify three types of youth consultation initiatives, taking into consideration the administrative level of the initiatives and if the educational trainings to the young people involved is available or not:

- Type A: initiatives at central government level, without educational training to young participants, i.e. Youth Advisory Group and Advisory Committee on Student Self-government Groups and Civic Education Policy.
- Type B: initiatives at municipal government level, without educational training to young participants, i.e. Youth Advisory Group On Municipal Affairs in Taichung City of the years from 2009 to 2011, and Children and Youth Representatives in New Taipei City of the year 2012.
- Type C: initiatives at municipal government level, with educational training to young participants, i.e. CYRTC (Taipei City), and Youth Advisory Group On Municipal Affairs in Taichung City of the year 2012.

5.5.2 Legal basis plays a crucial role in launching the project and in enhancing project continuation

As it was mentioned previously in the section 6.2.3, before the reform of PCYWRA there were already similar policy initiatives²⁸ at central government level, but their operations lasted for four or five years only, marking the fundamental instability when legal guarantees do not exist. Therefore it is no wonder why TAAYRW's proclamation for youth has been "Make policy the strength of youth." Initially there was opposition coming from government

²⁸ These two initiatives were the 'Youth advisory group' (in operation from 2005 to 2010) and the 'Advisory committee on student self-government groups and civic education policy' (in operation from 2008 to 2012).

officials when TAA YRW was promoting the project. Yet TAA YRW exhibited the determination of doing it by citing PCYWRA as reference and asked the officials to comply with their legal duty. Likewise, children and youth representatives applied a similar strategy in deciding the focus issues for proposals. All of their proposals were grounded in the scope defined explicitly by PCYWRA, which consists of the main duties the committee should adhere to.

5.5.3 Law formulation is just the first step; the follow-up implementation constitutes another big challenge

The inclusion of children and youth's policy participation mechanism in PCYWRA was a significant step realized by TAA YRW's many years of striving against the governments' inattention to children and youth rights. However, PCYWRA only sets the policy direction but does not state in detail how should the initiative be realized; without particular legal instruments dedicated to enhance project quality, the ultimate decision power on the methodology to apply and on the depth of implementation lies with the local municipality; and varying strategies may cause different outcomes. For instance, picking participants from schools can never reach those children and youth who fall outside of education system; another example is that, compared to a project with no empowerment training, conducting empowerment-training courses to representatives could reach more effective results in enhancing the quality of representatives' proposals and in strengthening the project continuation.

5.5.4 Tight municipal budget allocation failed to build a desirable operational environment from the beginning

The government budget allocation to the project in 2012 was only NTD 250,000 (approximate 6,200 euro), far below the desirable amount NTD 1500,000²⁹ (approximate 37,200 euro) that serves for a quality project operation from the point of view of children and youth representatives and TAA YRW. The shortage was especially on the number of coordinators available. According to the

²⁹ This estimation was a consensus reached by TAA YRW and children and youth representatives in the "Joint Workshop For Consensus Building And Empowerment Of Children And Youth Representatives" in 2012 (TAA YRW, 2012). No calculation details provided within the workshop manual.

TAAYRW's estimation, two, instead of one, would be the number of coordinators that optimized a project operation. Owing to the tight budget, TAARYW had difficulty in financing collaboration with other NGOs; likewise, there was no resource available for organizing parents groups and schoolteachers groups, which might be competent instruments for evaluating representatives' growth.

5.5.5 The decisive role of project coordinator and the main challenges met

In the interview, the project coordinator paralleled his role with a mother who pays much attention on children's growing pace and keeps seeking resources to meet their needs in every stage. Thereby one main challenge was reported as the demanding workload: every month he voluntarily spent two-and-a-half days during the weekends to have meetings with representatives, even though these extra working hours were not covered by the project budget. Another challenge was that a one-year program length does not allow those who sowed the seeds to reap the rewards, as illustrated by the coordinator, "*the frustration I have is that, when their [the representatives'] one-year term is done, all of them have to go back to school and couldn't continue with it anymore...I was just sowing some seeds in their hearts, and I have no chance to see the germination.*" The compromised solution found was that, after the first term finished the coordinator started training three ex-representatives, who showed willingness in continuing with the project, to become associate coordinators for the next term.

5.5.6 The definition of 'empowerment' under the project context

Empowerment is a construct that links individual strengths and competencies, natural helping systems, and proactive behaviors to social policy and social change (Rappaport, 1981). Empowering children and youth should not be a process of imposing ideas but a process of enlightening representatives with sensitivity and thinking toward public affairs. One way to realizing the goal demonstrated by the case study in Taipei is that the coordinator offers children and youth only broad suggestions and helps on methodology, and leaves plenty of room for discussion and consensus building. It was reported that a proper empowering training can contribute to maintaining the teamwork spirit and

allow children and youth to grow with the project, instead of being consumed by the long process or being frustrated because of adults' opposition.

5.5.7 Protecting representatives from privacy damages by minimizing the visibility of individuals

It happened in the case of Taichung City³⁰ that, school officials punished one representative after he reported an improper policy of the school³¹ in one committee meeting. This was because the government tends to treat problems as single cases rather than conducting inspection to get a thorough understanding of the problem³²; at times the privacy of representatives may be sacrificed for acquiring information on single cases. The Taipei case exemplified one effective solution to this issue: when a report is given on a specific problem, it is better to present a citywide summary instead of addressing particular examples so that no individuals would become target.

5.5.8 Adults need to be empowered as well

Children and youth were in need of help to deepen their democratic literacy, yet the project result reveals the fact that children and youth representatives were not the only ones that need to be empowered. The adults involved, mostly the municipal officers and commissioners, had prejudice against this initiative and accordingly showed distrust and even fear to the capacity of representatives throughout the process. One example is that, some adult commissioners questioned in a committee meeting the children and youth's representativeness when the commissioners did not appreciate the proposals. These attitudes imply that the adults were not ready to embrace the project; rather, they seemed to accept it passively as 'an obligation'. Even though the children and youth representatives were guaranteed to have response from adult commissioners

³⁰ In Taiwan, the primary attempt to the approach of children and youth representatives at municipal level was the "Youth Advisory Group On Municipal Affairs" in Taichung City operating from 2009.

³¹ The school permits its teachers to substitute the "non-academic subjects" (such as music, art, physical education and home economics) with the "academic ones" (subjects that take part in university or college entrance exams, such as mathematics, history, physics...etc.), which causes the damage of students' rights of education and an unbalanced distribution of education resources.

³² Reported by Cheng-Jie Wu, the researcher from TAAAYRW.

once they submitted proposals, most of them reported not to be satisfied with the adults' perfunctory attitude. To improve the situation for the long run, on the one hand it requires time for the adults to recognize and value properly the representatives' role; on the other hand, the adults commissioners and officers could benefit from having vocational training on relevant issues, such as confronting power sharing relations with children and youth.

5.5.9 Reflection and introspection seminar at personal and group level as an effective way to reinforce the team spirit and to affirm project results

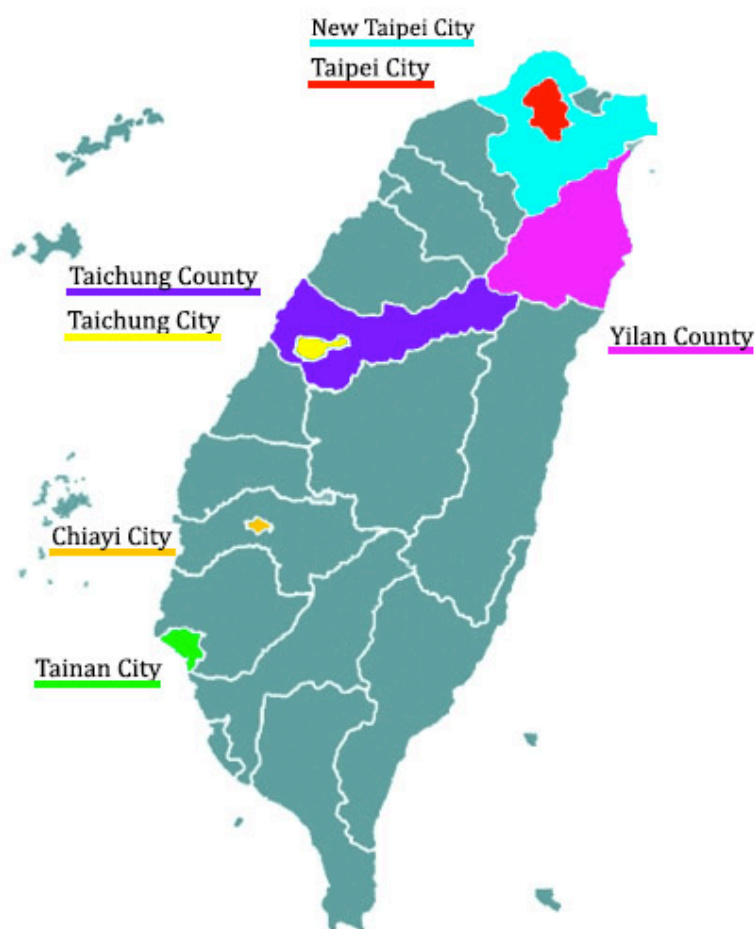
Two reflection and introspection seminars were held respectively at the middle and at the end of the first term. The project coordinator commented that, only through personal reflections and sharing in groups on the themes such as attainments, internal struggles, the laughter and the tears, and suggestions for future improvements could the representatives really gain insights into the personal and collective growth and learn to sympathize with the difficulties of those least engaged ones so as to reinforce the team spirit. Moreover, this process contributes to enhancing the understanding of the overall pros and cons from the coordinator's side.

5.5.10 Children and youth representatives were excluded from project evaluation

The project coordinator reported that in the last commission meeting, all of the children and youth representatives were required to leave the meeting 'for having a break' before the project evaluation session began. Only the project coordinator was allowed to take part in the session. This purposeful exclusion was said to be a collective decision made by all commissioners beforehand, but the representatives and the coordinator were not informed in advance. Children and youth representatives in this case seemed to be assumed by the adult commissioners being too young to have sufficient capacity to reflect properly and to evaluate project results.

Figure 5-3 Location of municipalities

(Own illustration based on http://hot-spring.chna.edu.tw/hot_view.aspx, accessed on 17 November 2013)



5.5.11 Workshop as a means to spread the experience and the know-how

Besides the municipality of Taipei, the New Taipei City and Taichung City (see Figure 5-3) also ran the children and youth representatives project last year in 2012. This year in April TAARYW, entrusted by the central government, organized a joint workshop with the aim of spreading the experience national wide. Many officers and NGOs related to children and youth affairs from other municipalities were invited to this thematic workshop. The key issues discussed include: Why do we need children and youth representatives? How to select? How to operate? How to carry out empowerment trainings? More than forty representatives from Taipei City, New Taipei City and Taichung City came to share their participation experiences and demonstrate project outcomes. At least

four municipalities³³ decided to launch the same initiative this year with the assistance from TAAWR. The workshop serves as an efficient platform for insider experiences to be passed onto those who would like to take first step into this field.

5.5.12 Term of office should be adjusted to match the development pace of representatives

The current term of office of representatives is one-year with no possibility to have further extension. This municipal decision was made in consideration of making the project accessible for as much as prospective children and youth. However, the project coordinator reported that it took approximately six months for the representatives to go through a running-in period and become comfortable in collaborating with each other; when the representatives finally had skills and tools in hand for deepening their proposals, it was almost the end of the term. In this case, one-year term may allow some changes to happen at the individual or group level, but it is still too short to reach significant outcomes at the social level. The extension of the term of service to one year and half or two years may be a better adjustment.

5.5.13 The need to build inter-municipal support groups among front-line coordinators

The front-line coordinators are engaged intensely in varying aspects with heavy workload. Besides support practical matters, they are also the mediators who maintain communication among representatives, commissioners and government officials; the emotional support from coordinators to the representatives is a key factor for their continual participation. However, owing to the budget limit, it is common for every municipality to finance just one project coordinator. At times they have to tackle tough issues and bear frustration alone; they also need emotional supporters. In their hard times, the other front-line workers who have capacity to empathize with their feelings constitute a constant source of encouragement. Hence it is necessary to build a

³³ These municipalities are Tainan City, Chiayi City, Taichung County and Yilan County (see their location in Figure 5-3).

strong network of support group among project coordinators while spreading the initiative.

The intention of this chapter was to demonstrate the experience of Taipei City in experimenting the approach of children and youth representatives, by firstly reviewing the facts about the case and then turning to a follow-up summary of findings. It is worth noting that, although the summary of findings covered many aspects, each of them would become segmented in meaning if it were not reviewed in the whole project context. After exploring the project facts and gaining a preliminary analysis, the following chapter will show further how the case could be placed in a wider context for analysis, through profiting from a comparative study methodology.

Chapter 6. Discussion

6.1 Evaluation of the initiative through comparative study

The last section presents the preliminary analysis and the key findings of the case study of the Children and Youth Representatives of Taipei City (CYRTC). In this chapter, CYRTC will be further discussed through a comparative study with the review of the cases drawn from the literature, using the same analytical grid and focusing on the same dimensions identified in chapter 3.5, as recalled below,

1 The project preparation and design

- a. Institutionalization;
- b. Location;
- c. Recruitment mechanism;
- d. Actual impact on decision-making;
- e. Identification of issues to focus on.

2 The execution phase

- f. Timing gap between program schedule and pace of capacity development of participants;
- g. The role, tools and ways of involvement;
- h. The role of adult coordinators;
- i. Relationship with local authority;
- j. Information.

3 The assessment

- a. Evaluation standards and references.

4 The actors

- c. Development of a network of adult facilitators;
- d. Asymmetrical power relations.

The framework introduced above will guide us through the process to reveal the similarities and differences between the reviewed cases, summarized in table 6-1 below, and the case of CYRTC.

The value added of such a comparative analysis is a better understanding to the case of CYRTC.

Table 6-1 An overview of the reviewed cases on the children and youth councils

Name	<i>The San Francisco Youth Commission (SFYC)</i>	<i>The Children's Participatory Council (CPC)</i>	<i>The Youth Councils In Scotland (YCS)</i>	<i>The Children's Councils In Italy (CCI)</i>
Place	San Francisco, USA	Barra Mansa, Brazil	Scotland	Italy
Time of introduction	Since April 1996 to present	Since 1998	Discussion based on two case studies in 2006 and 2007	The children's council in this discussion was a project initiated in 1991 as a part of 'The Children's City' project. In Italy the practice of children's council emerged after 1990.
Source of reference	Checkoway et al. (2005)	Guerra (2002)	Mcginley (2010)	Alparone (2001)

6.1.1 Project preparation and design

Project preparation is the very initial stage of a project before it officially enters into operation. Most of the institutional designs are determined during this phase, whose corresponsive effects might take time to be seen in the later stages.

Table 6-2 On institutionalization, comparison between the reviewed cases and CYTRC

	<i>Criticality</i>	<i>Strategy</i>
SFYC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of institutionalization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarifying the political vision; Chartering the commission and making it permanent which affects the scope and quality of participation (i.e. specifying its purpose, duties, membership, meetings, compensations, and staffing); Creating systems and structures where youth have a true voice.
CPC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of institutionalization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarifying the political vision.
YCS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ambiguity in policy stances; Lack of institutionalization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining an inherent policy stance in legislation; Providing a national charter which enshrines the rights of children and young people as being protected, promoted and enacted in every subsequent piece of legislation; Devising a systematic way of involving people and inculcating participation as a core feature of our relationship with young people and children.
CCI	Not addressed.	Not addressed.
CYRTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legislation holds a passive attitude towards the realization of practice; Lack of specific enforcement rules to guide the project implementation; Implementation quality relies much on how the local authority who carries out the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requiring further amendments to the existing legislative framework to comprise specifications, which acts to regulate the implementation quality; The supporting adult allies need trainings on acquiring a proper perception towards the coordination with children and youth.

a. Institutionalization

Three reviewed case studies and CYRTC all highlight the failure of lacking a proper institutionalization. Institutionalization of children and youth’s role affords an opportunity to address issues over time. In order to make progress on this aspect, adjustments and amendments to the existing legal framework are deemed to be indispensable. These adjustments could be chartering the commission and making it permanent which affects the scope and quality of participation (i.e. specifying its purpose, duties, membership, meetings, compensations, and staffing); or providing a national charter which enshrines the rights of children and young people as being protected, promoted and enacted in every subsequent piece of legislation.

The case of YCS in particular shows a criticality concerning the ambiguity in policy stances. Reversely, a clear policy stance refers to an integral point of view taking into consideration other parallel policies and initiatives affecting children and young people. The importance of this is that the other policies may to an extent have direct or indirect influences in stimulating or hindering the promotion of the children and youth's participation of the targeted initiative. Government at any level, when tackling children and youth issues, should therefore maintain a clear, inherent policy stance which support children and youth participation in varying government policies and initiatives.

In the case of CYRTC, there is no criticality concerning the ambiguity in policy stances; instead, it fails to guarantee implementation quality resulted from the imperfect legislative framework. Children and youth's participation is passively defined by the law, as the expression of "if necessary" in the article 10 of PCYWRA is used referring to the establishment of children and youth representatives initiatives; besides, no further details in regard to the enforcement or assessment of the initiatives are specified in the law. Therefore, how to patch these leaks in the existing legislative framework is among the priorities that need to be worked out in the context of Taiwan.

Table 6-3 On location, comparison between the reviewed cases and CYTRC

	<i>Criticality</i>	<i>Strategy</i>
SFYC	Not addressed	Not addressed
CPC	Not addressed	Not addressed
YCS	Not addressed	Not addressed
CCI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improper settings may distort children and youth's comprehension and cause discomfort in expressing their ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing a setting comprehensible by CY and corresponding to CY's ways of expression.
CYRTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No constant setting for CY's conventions owing to the constraints from scheduled empowerment trainings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instead, granting children and youth full autonomy in scheduling the layout of meetings.

b. Location

The location, where the children and youth convene, may cause another criticality to the effectiveness: improper settings may distort children and youth’s comprehension and cause discomfort in expressing their ideas.

In the case of CYRTC, there is not a constant setting for representatives’ convention, owing to the frequent scheduled visits to varying municipal departments as a part of empowerment training. However, CYRTC allows the children and youth to have full autonomy in scheduling their own meetings. This is a good strategy on account of its integration of children and youth into the process of defining the project setting; in this case, children and youth are not solely passive recipients to adults’ provision. Although CCI and CYRTC showing differences in their criticalities, both cases execute children-and-youth-centered strategies to enhance the participation quality.

Table 6-4 On Recruitment mechanism, comparison between the reviewed cases and CYTRC

	<i>Criticality</i>	<i>Strategy</i>
SFYC	Not addressed.	Not addressed.
CPC	Not addressed.	Not addressed.
YCS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination and exclusion of the vulnerable CYs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designing a selection mechanism accessible by youth from varying backgrounds.
CCI	Not addressed.	Not addressed.
CYRTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ineffective information dissemination as a result of the opposition from the local authority to the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The supporting adult allies need trainings on acquiring a proper perception towards the coordination with children and youth so that the project can gain full support in the recruitment phase.

c. Recruitment mechanism

There is a fundamental difference in the issues revealed by the comparison between YCS and CYRTC. The criticality found in YCS is basically a drawback in the design of the recruiting process, so the proposed solution aims at improving the existing selection mechanism to include other young people from varying

backgrounds. Comparatively, in the case of CYRTC, the problem in fact roots in the opposition from adult authority to the project vision of empowering the children and youth. Hence the strategy of the latter case emphasizes the necessity of having educational trainings to adult alliances who hold decisive power in affecting the recruitment process. A common element that YCS and CYRTC share is that, the children and youth do not take part in the designing of the recruitment process.

Table 6-5 On actual impact on decision-making, comparison between the reviewed cases and CYTRC

	<i>Criticality</i>	<i>Strategy</i>
SFYC	Not addressed.	Not addressed.
CPC	Not addressed.	Not addressed.
YCS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letting children and youth have only a symbolic participation, on minor subjects, with no real effect. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fostering settings to stimulate different degrees of substantial involvement; Devising proper power-sharing mechanism.
CCI	Not addressed.	Not addressed.
CYRTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CYs have no power to influence the progress after they submit proposals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representatives focalized their issues of concern on topics that fall within the Committee's responsibilities, in order to avoid purposeful ignorance from the adult commissioners; Devising proper power sharing mechanism; Training adult allies to be sensitive for power sharing issues and willing to build up partnership with CYs.

d. Actual impact on decision-making

Upon this aspect the comparison reveals greater similarities than differences between YCS and CYRTC. In both the two, children and youth are placed in an inferior position within the power-sharing contexts. Given that adults have held the decision power for a long time, it constitutes a fundamental challenge to tackle the issue of power decentralization. This demands an integrated solution that works simultaneously from two sides - devising power-sharing mechanism and delivering vocational trainings to the adult allies. A passive but effective strategy was identified in the case of CYRTC. To maximize the effectiveness within a bureaucratic system, the children and youth give proposals by focalizing

their issues of concern on topics that fall within the Committee’s responsibilities, in order to avoid purposeful ignorance from the adult commissioners.

Table 6-6 On identification of issues to focus on, comparison between the reviewed cases and CYTRC

	<i>Criticality</i>	<i>Strategy</i>
SFYC	Not addressed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participants have no limit on the issues they can choose.
CPC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CYs lack autonomy on choosing issues of concern. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Granting CYs full autonomy on selecting issues of interest supported by adequate adult consultation.
YCS	Not addressed.	Not addressed.
CCI	Not addressed.	Not addressed.
CYRTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The representatives’ choices of issues were constrained by two structural conditions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Strong individual ideas that are not supported by other group members have no chance to become group proposals in view of representativeness; The diversity and scope of proposals were confined to the Committee’s responsibilities and duties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holding press conferences to facilitate the voices of specific issues that were not resolved because of the two structural constraints identified in the part of criticality.

e. Identification of issues to focus on

It is worth noting that CYRTC reports structural constraints that discourage children and youth from claiming their real concerns. Although children and youth in CYRTC have the autonomy to explore diverse issues, they were granted only limited freedom in making all issues identified to be seen by the adults. These structural constraints would possibly in return push out the opportunities for those real issues to be considered by children and youth during the process of issue spotting. To fully facilitate children and youth’s voices, it is thus importance to recover their autonomy either for issue spotting or the subsequent issue submission.

6.1.2 Execution phase

Execution phase denotes the period of time when a project is in operation. Children and youth's experiences highlight the fact that participation is a dynamic process being exemplified the most in the execution phase.

Table 6-7 On timing, comparison between the reviewed cases and CYTRC

	<i>Criticality</i>	<i>Strategy</i>
SFYC	Not addressed.	Not addressed.
CPC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very slow process of considering or implementing some of the projects proposed by the child councilors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Securing more systematic external consultation to enable the project coordination team to follow the development and consolidation of the experience.
YCS	Not addressed.	Not addressed.
CCI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not enough time to let the project develop; It takes too long for CYs to see their proposals implemented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shortening bureaucratic procedures; Intensifying interactions among stakeholders; Informing children and youth of project progress on a periodical basis.
CYRTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not enough time to let the project develop and demonstrate the project effects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extending the term of office to one year and a half or two years; Training previous representatives to be future project coordinators.

a. Timing

CPC, CCI and CYRTC encounter the problem of inappropriate scheduling in their implementation. There are two problems about timing here. On the one hand, with insufficient time it is hard for the children and youth to acquire the capacity to develop the project; on the other hand, the development process of a project may take longer time than the schedule originally expected by children and youth. Even though the criticality faced is similar in essence, strategies applied by the three cases exhibited manifold ways to confront the issue. Improvements concerning the schedule could be either shortening the bureaucratic procedure or extending children and youth's term of office; adult's paying more attention to the children and youth's development process in the meanwhile can make contributions to adjusting the project schedule properly; regular informing the young participants of the project progress is also helpful. One solution identified in CYRTC is noteworthy- training representatives to be future project coordinators suggests a win-win solution for both the impossibility of extending term of office and the budget shortage for increasing number of coordinators. In this case, ex-representatives who are trained to be equipped with expertise and

know how could continue with the project without taking over other children and youth's participation opportunities; the project budget can be kept low without hiring many full-time adult coordinators.

Table 6-8 On the role, tools and ways of involvement, comparison between the reviewed cases and CYTRC

	<i>Criticality</i>	<i>Strategy</i>
SFYC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes may occur per se to their role, tools and ways of involvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fostering settings that are adaptable to changes.
CPC	Not addressed.	Not addressed.
YCS	Not addressed.	Not addressed.
CCI	Not addressed.	Not addressed.
CYTRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External stimuli or internal dynamics result in changes in tools and consequently role perception; Internal conflicts among CYs during the break-in period. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project organizer need to have sensitivity to spot issues and foster settings that are adaptable to changes; Applying soft strategies to guide group dynamic.

b. The role, tools and ways of involvement

Both SFYC and CYTRC address the same issue of changes that occur per se in varying aspects during the project implementation. Fostering settings that are adaptable to changes is essential in answering this challenge. In particular, CYTRC highlighted the change in the group dynamic. The relationship among the children and youth is not static and homogenous; rather it changes with time and would influence the quality of coordination. It is thus important that the project coordinator who spends most time with the children and youth possesses the sensibility to perceive this internal dynamic and at the same time, is capable to direct it towards positive outcomes.

Table 6-9 On the role of adult coordinators, comparison between the reviewed cases and CYTRC

	<i>Criticality</i>	<i>Strategy</i>
SFYC	Not addressed.	Not addressed.
CPC	Not addressed.	Not addressed.
YCS	Not addressed.	Not addressed.
CCI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other adults may use power to suppress CY's ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult coordinators should be aware of the risk and be the guards to CY's ideas.

CYRTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of project organizers was insufficient to cover all the operation necessities; • Adult commissioners use power to stop CY from participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project organizer has to be equipped with the sensitivity via trainings or previous experiences; • Increasing budget allocation for meeting the shortage of organizer supply; • Adult organizer protested for representatives against the adult's misuse of power so as to be the role model of speaking out for one's own right.
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c. Role of adult coordinators

The power-sharing issue once again outlines the background to the common criticality addressed here. The voice of children and youth are very often subject to the adult's authority even in projects that aim at promoting children and youth's participation. Besides, the case of CYRTC points out one important issue that, when necessary, the project coordinator should take the lead in protesting against adults' misuse of power; at times children and youth representatives also need someone to show them the possible ways to claim for their participation rights.

Table 6-10 On the relationship with local authority, comparison between the reviewed cases and CYTRC

	<i>Criticality</i>	<i>Strategy</i>
SFYC	Not addressed.	Not addressed.
CPC	Not addressed.	Not addressed.
YCS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all young people- nor local authority workers and community planning partners are ready to engage in this type of dialogue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that children and young people's voices are recognized and that decision making processes reflect the exercise of political power, including the creation of a vibrant youth workforce to act as a dedicated "civil service" which holds the young person as its primary client.
CCI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of proper communication and mutual trust between two parties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipalities show their resolution of assisting the initiative; • Children participate in municipal meetings at a regular base.
CYRTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of mutual trust; • Adults hold perfunctory attitude towards the representatives; • Asymmetrical power relations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project organizer's role as a mediator between two parties; • Adult allies need trainings to be equipped with proper sensitivity for power sharing issues and with the willingness to build partnership with CYs.

d. Relationship with local authority

Two different types of conflicting relationship are shown in the comparison of YCS, CCI and CYRTC. In the case of CCI, the problem was mainly because of the quality of communication; while the YCS and CYRTC both reveal the conflict rooted in the asymmetrical power relations, which is prior to communication defects. YCS’s suggestions focus on improving the decision-making procedure to reflect the exercise of political power; CYRTC emphasizes the role and attitudes of the adults involved. The adult allies could be trained to be equipped with proper sensitivity for power sharing issues and with the willingness to build partnership with CYs.

Table 6-11 On information, comparison between the reviewed cases and CYTRC.

	<i>Criticality</i>	<i>Strategy</i>
SFYC	Not addressed.	Not addressed.
CPC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Geographical dispersal hindering the coordination among CYs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bridging the gap by the use of wireless communication tools or online platforms; Building an intensive contact network among the participants.
YCS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Varying degrees of involvement among CYs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving mutual understandings and respects; Facilitating communication and mutual supports.
CCI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of adequate documentation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving documentation mechanism; applying multiple documentation tools.
CYRTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Varying degrees of involvement among CYs; Pressure of school performances and parental expectation limit the CY’s capacity of participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form small groups (composed of 3 to 5 people) to increase every member’s speaking opportunities; Facilitate group integration via soft strategies so as to strengthen team spirit and mutual supports.

e. Information

The varying degree of involvement does exist among children and youth participants, as some of them are more engaged in the program while some other show more absence because of engagements in life or work. CYRTC applied a simple but effective strategy to close up the involvement gap among the participants – forming small working groups composed of three to five people so that each person would spontaneously have more chances to speak and be

heard; this would accordingly strengthen one’s sense of involvement and the team spirit as a whole.

6.1.3 Assessment

The assessment plays a decisive role in understanding the facts and effectiveness of project results; the understanding will serve as a base for the projecting improvements. The assessment does not necessarily happen only at the closure of a project; it can also be carried out at any point during the process of implementation.

Table 6-12 On evaluation standards and references, comparison between the reviewed cases and CYTRC.

	<i>Criticality</i>	<i>Strategy</i>
SFYC	Not addressed.	Not addressed.
CPC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The amount of projects and experiments carried out has been far from being significant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spreading the initiative to gain more experiences from fieldwork.
YCS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation tends to be dominated by immediate visibility and quantitative outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing and integrating CY's involvement in monitoring and evaluation mechanism.
CCI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lack of consolidated action models and indications concerning the effectiveness of instruments and participative strategies; The absence of interdisciplinary evaluative research into project's effectiveness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spreading the initiative to gain more experiences from fieldwork; Conducting interdisciplinary evaluative researches into effectiveness;

CYRTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No empirical and theoretical references at the preparation stage; • On empirical level, limited number of existing projects and experiments; • On theoretical level, lack of action models and systemized indications for evaluation; • Not all the adult allies involved have clear understanding of the project vision; • CYs were excluded from evaluation process by their adult allies; • Difficulty in measuring project effectiveness to the individuals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw international experiences as a means to complementing the understanding; • Spreading the initiative to other municipalities so as to gain more experiences from fieldwork; • The project organizer plays a key role in spreading the experiences and in know-how building; • Conducting interdisciplinary evaluative researches into effectiveness; • Consolidating communications among actors to ensure everyone's comprehension of the project vision; • Integrating CY's participation in evaluation stage; • Conducting parents groups and teachers groups to enrich the understanding of representatives' situation at every project phase.
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a. Evaluation standards and references

The lack of empirical experiences and academic references are the common issues to be solved. Being part of a young theoretical research field and practice field as the children and youth participation is, the form of children and youth council is still in need of greater number of studies and efforts in every cultural context. What cannot be ignored is the importance of having a long-term vision to the project evaluation in every stage. The case of CYRTC shed more light on the role of adult coordinators, for instance the parents and schoolteachers have significant capacity to make contribution to overall assessment as well.

6.1.4 Actors

As presented before in Table 3-3, the actors identified through the case studies review are mainly identified as the following types:

- Supporting adult allies;
- Government bodies and institutions;
- Non-governmental bodies and institutions;
- Neighborhood or citizenship at large;
- Others.

Table 6-13 On development of a network of adult facilitators, comparison between the reviewed cases and CYTRC.

	<i>Criticality</i>	<i>Strategy</i>
SFYC	Not addressed.	Not addressed.
CPC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficiency in terms of number of facilitators or the collaboration intensity and scope; • The resources from facilitators are not proper integrated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting studies on existing facilitators to strengthen incentives of collaboration; • Expanding collaboration scope to other municipal departments; • Developing and mobilizing new tools to reach wider audiences.
YCS	Not addressed.	Not addressed.
CCI	Not addressed.	Not addressed.
CYRTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortage of adult facilitators; • Weak adult facilitator network owing to the constraints coming from tight budget allocation; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most importantly, Increasing budget allocation to the project; • Expanding legislation framework to integrate other municipal departments; • Strengthening the communication with parents, schoolteachers and communities.

a. Development of a network of adult facilitators

The criticalities found here are the insufficiency in number of adult facilitators and a weak and limited collaboration network. Inclusion of more municipal departments into collaboration network is identified to be a common strategy. Getting to the root of problems presented in the case of CYRTC upon this aspect, we will again find it is primarily because of the shortage of budget supply. In contrary, the CPC case studies do not emphasize the availability of resources; its focus is more on exploring new collaboration potentials beyond existing framework.

Table 6-14 On asymmetrical power relations, comparison between the reviewed cases and CYTRC.

	<i>Criticality</i>	<i>Strategy</i>
SFYC	Not addressed.	Not addressed.
CPC	Not addressed.	Not addressed.

YCS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CY's limited autonomy coming from structural constraints imposed by adults. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising adult participants' awareness of the significant obstacles that young people currently experience in their attempts to participate; • Devising power decentralization mechanisms or strategies; • Ensure that children and youth are actively involved in equal partnership with adults to develop policies which reflect their identified concerns, understanding and aspirations.
CCI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's proposals not being taken seriously by the adults. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The acceptance of the children's requests is the most important condition to guarantee reaching the basic goals of the partnership experience.
CYRTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults abused power to damage representatives participation right 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The supporting adult allies need trainings on acquiring a proper perception towards the coordination with children and youth; • Empowering CYs to defend for their own rights.

b. Asymmetrical power relations

Asymmetrical power relations have negative impacts on the quality of children and youth's participation experiences; it in fact will discourage children and youth from voicing out their real concerns when they find that they are not granted a corresponding power to do so; in other words, it even prevents a genuine participation to occur. In the cases of YCS, the expression of asymmetrical power relations is found in a more imperceptible form of structural constraints, therefore requires the adult allies to firstly become aware of these constraints; while in the case of CCI and CYRTC the expression of asymmetrical power relations is rather explicit; the children and youth were directly conscious of their participation right being suppressed by the adults.

Summary

In comparison with the reviewed cases, CYRTC has two main causes of failures that appeared repeatedly in the above analysis. First, adult authorities failed to be aware of and manage the power-sharing issue with children and youth participants. This failure generated pervasive impacts which can be seen in varying aspects of the project. Second, the insufficiency in budget allocation to

the project indeed limited the whole budget development. This problem does not present in the sources I reviewed but was crucial to the case of CYRTC.

Results show that up to now, the tangible project achievements are not significant and explicit compared to what has been achieved in the reviewed cases, i.e. youth's proposal for a skate boarding facility was adopted as part of the city plan in San Francisco; Children and youth councilors in Barra Mansa used their budget to carry out diverse small-scale improvements on school sites and playgrounds. Nothing comparable happened in the CYRTC. However, in a young democracy like Taiwan, at the same time being a society with patriarchic tradition, the project's spirit, its pioneering role and experimental nature make the strategies devised in response to the limitations confronted to an extent, innovative and effective, i.e. training previous participants to be future project coordinators to solve a dual dilemma coming from the impossibility of extending representatives' term of office and the budget shortage for increasing number of coordinators.

In the next paragraph, I will be focusing on exploring possibilities for improving children and youth participation in spatial planning, taking into consideration the context of Taiwan.

6.2 Outline possibilities for improving children and youth participation in spatial planning

After analyzing the project of Children and Youth Representatives in Taipei City in the foregoing sections, in this part the focus will be on exploring possibilities for improving children and youth participation in spatial planning. This consideration was initially drawn upon a proposition, as outlined before in the introduction: assuming that the form of children and youth's councils in general promotes children and youth's participation, it is then worth considering to what extent it is possible to facilitate this form of children and youth councils in the scope of spatial planning. Yet if we look at the project according to the children's participation ladder proposed by Roger Hart (discussed before in chapter 3.4.1), we will surprisingly find out that, with regard to its failure in providing proper idea-voicing channels, CYRTC should be classified as a "non-participation" project; in other words, children and youth are apparently given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about the style of communicating it, and little or no opportunity to formulate their own opinions. We will come back to this point later in the next chapter.

Since the CYRTC fails to promote genuine participation of children and youth, now we have to reconsider how to approach the idea of promoting children and youth's participation in spatial planning in the context of Taiwan.

Integrating spatial planning issues into PCYWRA

As we have seen before in the analysis, the legislation plays an influential role in directing government policies and initiatives in Taiwan. However, to date there is not a single piece of legislation that concerns, not to even mention 'guarantees', the children and youth's rights in spatial planning issues. Based on the principle that political changes stem from the legislation, if any changes were wished to be made in the spatial planning field concerning children and youth's participation, the first step, above all else, would be to work on integrating spatial planning issues into the coverage of The Protection of Children and Youths Welfare and Rights Act (PCYWRA). As we

have learned from the case of CYRTC, legislation is not able to guarantee the quality of implementation; however at least it gives incentives and references for an idea to be realized by government sectors, especially when the idea is experimental and challenging to the traditional way of thinking.

Fully recover the expression of rights of children and youth

According to the opinion of the project coordinator of CYRTC, it is possible to converge spatial planning with the children and youth's participation. However, in order to reach that converging point many other crucial steps should be taken first. The first one would be to fully recover the expression of rights of children and youth, meaning that their voices must be heard and respected at the same time. This would on the one hand require strategies to empower the children and youth to speak out for their own rights in a genuine manner; yet what is more important but also more difficult to realize is that, the adults at large need to have a willingness to face the power-sharing issue, and put this sharing into practice. If this most basic requirement cannot be met, any projects with higher visions would lack a firm foundation that sustains its development and growth.

Children and youth's competencies to be engaged and proper adult assistance required

Freeman in his researches on planning with children and young people in New Zealand confirms that children and youth do have competencies to participate in spatial planning process: they have understanding, views and ideas relevant to planning and to the improvement of planning practice; youth in particular recognize what benefits could be brought by their involvement (C. Freeman, 2006). Guerra's empirical study on the children's participatory budget council in Barra Mansa also highlights that, it is possible to integrate the participation of children and teenagers into the public management process and that young people can and should play an active role in urban management (Guerra, 2002). However, the competencies the children and youth possess require proper guidance from the adults to be fully developed. Hart (1992) notes that even though there are some

participation cases demonstrating the children and youth's positive achievements in organizing projects on their own, yet at the same time we can also find negative examples (i.e. the street gangs of Santiago in Chile or Medellin in Colombia) in this category. Hence, Hart concludes "*a kind of society we need to look for should be one where children and youth learn to become competent, caring citizens through involvement with competent, caring adults... we should not underestimate the importance of adult involvement, not only for the guidance they can offer, but also for the lessons they need to learn.*" (Hart, 1992, p. 5)

Recognizing planners' crucial role in engaging children and youth in spatial planning

In the last section, the importance of proper adult assistance is affirmed when it comes to including children and youth's participation in spatial planning. In terms of collaboration among children, youth and adults, the planning professions have a central role in achieving this objective. Planners are those who have power to directly impact the children and youth's wellbeing, as well as their participation opportunities in the spatial planning process. For planners, to date considerations made in regard to children are mostly confined to children's educational and recreational needs, for instance creating child-oriented facilities, schools, childcare centers and skate parks. Yet in fact, children permeate the whole environment. Therefore it is a key priority that the planners become aware of the importance of acknowledging the children and youth's needs, the ways they make use of the wider environment, and apply the knowledge into their day-to-day practice (C. Freeman, 2006; C. T. Freeman, Paul, 2011).

When it comes to embracing children and youth in planning professions, Freeman in his studies pointed out several challenges relating to the implementation of the idea, and he has made suggestions on what could be the possible ways to confront them:

- a. Children's capacity to be involved in the planning process is often grossly underestimated by professionals; to overcome this, it is

necessary that children and adults treat each other with respect, and the method of engagement applied must be age-appropriate and meaningful to the participants involved, and the outcome of activities must have a real influence on what happens;

- b. Young people are falsely perceived to be not willing to work with adults; but in reality, young people do want to work with adults and they recognize the benefits of doing so, yet their experiences of working with adults have not always been positive. Only when planners have a sufficient understanding of the youth, are prepared to listen to them and to change planning processes to meet their needs, the collaboration between the two parties would become possible;
- c. Planners are not aware clearly of what is going on at the central and local government level, and they seldom use resources relating to children and youth issues. A proper solution, Freeman suggests, is to develop networks and a better exchange of information between different levels of government, between agencies and between planners;
- d. Many planners know the necessity of adopting an approach which engages children and youth, yet very often they find themselves ill-equipped in terms of their training and resources. The progress can be made through planners' engaging with the wider debates on children, youth and society. They need to gain experiences of working with children to build up relationships and to identify appropriate resources and expertise within the community, organizations and government. Training on how to work with children should be part of professional education. For instance, for many years, working on joint projects with local school children formed an integral part of the education of planning students at Auckland University in New Zealand (C. Freeman, 2006; C. T. Freeman, Paul, 2011).

It is beyond the scope of this study to investigate how the local planning professions in Taiwan are considering children and youth in spatial planning practices. However, during my research process I have not found any local literature or relevant researches concerning embracing children and youth in

spatial planning process. Therefore a suggestion for future studies is that more efforts could be made to examine the planning professions in Taiwan exploring the foregoing issues. I believe more empirical research findings could contribute to suggestions that fit better to the local context.

Next chapter will be the conclusion of this thesis. Critical remarks will be made to give this research work a final interpretation.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

The Children and Youth Representative in Taipei City (CYRTC) came into being thanks to the enthusiastic local NGO, TAAIRW, for its years of advocacy for the rights and welfare of Taiwanese youth. The example of CYRTC displays a reform path which embarked on including children and youth's participation rights into legislative framework, and based on that introduced local policy proposal. Looking at the development process of policies aiming at promoting children and youth's voices in Taiwanese history, apart from the case of CYRTC, we can identify two other types of youth consultation initiatives: type A of central-government level and type B of municipal level, respectively (see chapter 5.5.1. for details). Both type A and type B do not hold educational trainings to their young participants; in type B the youth were given freedom to address own issues, but their proposals were limited to merely personal experiences level and small objectives lacking political influence (i.e. one of the proposals by the youth participants from Youth Advisory Group on Municipal Affairs in Taichung City focused on improving the dirty washrooms in central station). The two initiatives in Type A – “Youth Advisory Group” and “Advisory Committee on Student Self-government Groups and Civic Education Policy” – both show short operating years (respectively four and five). These failures thereby prompt a reasonable doubt pointing to the continuity of CYRTC in the future. There are two sides to this issue. On the one hand, in comparison with the abovementioned initiatives of the past, CYRTC has a better legislative back up outlined in the Protection of Children and Youths Welfare and Rights Act (PCYWRA). Yet on the other hand, the article 10 of PCYWRA uses an ambiguous expression - “if necessary” to define the youth representatives' participation condition without specifying any further terms relating to enforcement. The absence of detailed provisions leaves a grey zone open to the local authorities about the meanings of what is and is not necessary to the project context. That is to say, there is no legal guarantee for project quality and its long-term necessity. Overall speaking, it is hard to foresee the project's future development at the moment.

With regard to the core project objectives of CYRTC which were outlined at the outset touching upon four dimensions - communication, empowerment, idea-voicing and participation - the project results and attainments are successful in fulfilling three of the four goals established, except for the failure in building idea-voicing channels so as to converging the ideas of youth and to promoting the right and capacity of expression. However, if we look at the same project in the light of Hart's theory "the ladder of children's participation", which is amongst the most referred models in the field, the project's degree of success would have to be reassessed. Here CYRTC is in fact caught in an embarrassing state between third rung (Tokenism) and fourth rung (Assigned but informed). The case of CYRTC conforms to the first part of the fourth rung, as it is an initiative launched by adult commissioners, children and youth volunteered for it, with understanding of the project and of who decided they should be involved and why; whereas, in a strict sense, it cannot be said to meet the last part of the fourth rung definition: "adults respect their views". This claim is largely because the adult commissioners treated representatives' proposals with perfunctory replies and excluded young participants from taking part in project evaluation. Although children and youth representatives were dissatisfied with these reactions from adults, they were given no chance to defend themselves, as reported by the project coordinator Cheng-Jie, Wu. According to Hart's classification, the fourth rung satisfies the minimum conditions for a genuine participation to exist; it is thus a surprising fact that, despite CYRTC shows positive outcomes in goal achieving, essentially speaking it is a "non-participation" project. Moreover, in the most agreed upon compromise advocated by Andrew Dawes concerning project assessment, the involvement of children is vital to the seeking of the local assessment criteria: "that evaluation should combine universal criteria of children's well-being with local criteria determined by children and their communities." (Chawla, 2001) According to such a definition, CYRTC's exclusion of its young participants from evaluation constitutes a fundamental methodological error which fails to promote genuinely the right of children and youth's participation.

The criticalities reviewed in the preceding chapters exposed a structural and asymmetrical power relation between youth representatives and the local authority, which is the core problem of project failure. It is the dominating cause of failure even in the case in which the problem, at the first glance, was seemingly found in the communication deficiencies; after finding no flaws in the communication medium and channel (proper setting with high accessibility, empowerment trainings dedicated and freedom to speak were all given to representatives in the case of CYRTC), it is thus reasonable for one to assume that the problem in fact resides more profoundly in the asymmetrical power relation. Both the youth representatives' proposals and the ways for appealing them are challenging the areas which are traditionally under strong adult control in Taiwan. On the one hand, the proposals formulated by three issue groups of CYRTC are all pointing to reforms in school context, where children and youth are very likely subject to the role of inferiors who are subjected to discipline and supervision from adults. On the other hand, if the project is not meant to be only symbolic, the stakeholders involved in the participation form of children and youth representatives would surely have to confront conflict of interest at some stages of the two-way communication. When it comes to the point of decision-making, a real compromise between the two parties would require power decentralization from the adults to the younger ones. This is very difficult to be realized in a short time in the case of CYRTC, as politically the decision making structure was originally made by adults and to support and favor the adults in power, especially in a country in combination of a short democratic history and a strong patriarchic tradition like Taiwan. Here a possible way to minimize the risk could be an appeal for implementation of article 9 of PCYWRA, that specifies that the local authority will be in charge of such affairs related to its authority as stipulated in the law. In particular, one of the affairs defined in No. 3 is concerning "the implementation of professional training of the people handling the welfare of children and youth". In line with such a principle outlined above, the adult commissioners are amongst those handling the welfare of children and youth, therefore it is fit to integrate them into the

scope of professional training. Training in this case could aim at themes departing from CYRTC project's criticalities, such as the need to strengthen the adults' awareness of the criticalities of asymmetrical power relations, or at developing communication skills and sensitivity towards children and youth.

The practical experience also confirmed a limitation resulted from the legal structure and budget shortage. The CYRTC's grouping both children and youth under a single consultation mechanism may be a compromise of good intention to tackle both children and youth affairs at the same time when there is only a small budget at disposal, because the rights and welfare of children and youth affairs are bound together under one single legal framework - PCYWRA. Yet in reality, this is not a very feasible and effective way to do it because of two reasons. First, children and youth are in fact two groups at different stages of development in life, both physically and mentally, and accordingly have different needs and concerns of interest. As shown in the comparison of the San Francisco Youth Commission and Children's Participatory Council in Barra Mansa, although both these two cases tackled the lack of leisure facilities in the city, their choices of the type of facility exemplified the different developmental stages of children and youth. In the case of the San Francisco Youth Commission, the youth commissioners made efforts at getting youth's skate-boarding facilities included in city development plans. In the case of Children's Participatory Council in Barra Mansa, instead, child councilors put focus on improving children's playgrounds in low-income areas. The second reason comes from the difficulties found by the project coordinator during CYRTC's implementation. The large age gap among the young participants, ranging from the youngest of age 11 to the oldest of age 20, takes much time for the team spirit to be built up, and it is also a challenging factor for the project coordinator to design empowerment training courses which could match the need and the ways of expression of children and youth at the same time. It is proper that the legal framework holds an integration view towards children and youth, but when it comes to the level of practices, the heterogeneity of

these two groups should be taken into consideration so that a project can acquire a real understanding of each, instead of resulting in an inappropriate generalization.

Although having shown uncertainty in project continuity, the failure in managing asymmetrical power relations, and inappropriate generalization of children and youth, if we look at CYRTC by considering it in a broader context, this initiative still shows potential importance for the education of children and youth. In fact, it means more than just an attempt to integrating children and youth's participation into existing policy consultation: looking ahead to the future, one would see that this primary experience, which combines participation exercise with empowerment training for its children and youth participants, actually plays an important role in moulding quality citizens for tomorrow outside the mainstream school context. This is affirmed by the project coordinator to be the underlying vision which intends on the one hand, to cultivate the civic awareness and citizenship of the young persons involved, and on the other hand testify to the adults at large that the youth indeed has the capacity to be empowered unto mastering democratic participation once appropriate chances are given to them. Taiwan, as a young democracy which has been striving for promoting human rights and welfare in all possible aspects, requires more similar prototypes of children and youth's participation to be devised and be spread so that a real cultural participation of children and youth could be built up and become a valuable concept to all.

Appendix: Interview transcript

Interviewer: Chiayu Pai

Interviewee: Mr. Cheng-Jie Wu

Place: TAARYW Office (12F., No.75-1, Sec. 2, Roosevelt Rd., Da'an Dist., Taipei City 106, Taiwan)

Date: 14th October 2013

Interviewer: Chia-Yu Pai

Interviewee profile: Cheng-Jie Wu holds the researcher position in the Taiwan Alliance for Advancement of Youth Rights and Welfare (TAARYW), the main NGO that has been laboring for the rights of youth in Taiwan since its establishment in June 2003. He has been working with TAARYW for a long time since his college years. He has bachelor degree in Journalism and Communication Studies and master degree in Social Psychology. He is the main project coordinator for the initiative of Children and Youth Representatives of the municipality of Taipei. This year he becomes consultant for many other municipalities on piloting the local projects of children and youth representatives.

CP - Chiayu Pai

CW - Mr. Cheng-Jie Wu

CP: Could you please introduce a little bit how this Children and Youth Representative initiative came into being?

CW: Let me explain why we are working on this initiative. TAAYRW has been promoting the integration of the opinion of children and youth into policy mechanism. This makes much sense, primarily because the children and youth should be the beneficiaries of the children and youth policy. If their opinions are not inquired and the decision power lies solely on the adults' side, this in fact results in the disrespectfulness of the rights of children and youth. In the very beginning we were not involved in promoting this type of political mechanism. In the past, there was a Committee for the Promotion of Youth Affairs under the Executive Yuan. It was an inter-departmental unit, abbreviated as CPYA. It was at the high level of governmental hierarchy, and was under direct supervision of the premier and vice premier. At that time the TAAYRW had just been funded, and was invited to take part in the committee as representative of the NGOs. There in the committee meetings we proposed to set up youth representatives, and this proposal was at the end accepted and the youth representatives entered into practice. It lasted for three or four years, maybe some information is still available on the Internet. I am not sure of this. It was the first time that youth consultation mechanism entered into the political realm. National Youth Commission was the responsible one for the execution. Later after the new major took office, this initiative ceased to exist. The youth consultation mechanism was

later transformed into youth advisory group. It was a pity that this new group was in charge of the consultation on limited affairs that closely related to National Youth Commission, and was no more at the level of Executive Yuan. In the past, youth representatives could ask for presenting in whichever meeting related to youth affairs, but not anymore.

CP: Now we are talking about the ‘children and youth representatives’, but in reality children and youth are very different in terms of their age definition. Under the Taiwanese context we talk about them together without clear distinction, however it is not so in Western contexts; they either address term ‘children representatives’ or ‘youth representatives’, with clear distinction between the two.

CW: Actually at the very beginning we hoped to use only the term ‘youth’ to address the issue. In Taiwan we refer ‘youth’ to those aged between twelve years to twenty-four, according to the definition of Youth Policy White Paper. Later on the term switched to ‘children and youth’, it was mainly because of another context. It entered into force the practice that every municipality shall have a committee for children and youth affairs, which is regulated by the article 10 of the Protection of Children and Youths Welfare and Rights Act (PCYWRA). Why do we have children and youth representatives? It is exactly because of PCYWRA. At that time of Children and Youth Welfare Act there were already committees for children and youth affairs, but they were without youth representatives. At that time we TAAIRW put strong emphasis on promoting the amending of Children and Youth Welfare Act by gathering the consensus from many children and youth NGOs and legal groups. The new act includes many substantial amendments. At the end there were more than hundred new articles being added. You can even see it as a new act. The earlier merging of the Children Welfare Act with the Youth Welfare Act were just literal, with no significant change. However, this time the amendment did bring in substantial changes, for the amending process was done through examining each article from the point of view of the CRC. In order to ensure the rights of children and youth, many of the supplementary articles were like the article ten, for here it says, when necessary, the youth representatives will be invited to present in the meetings. In fact, the law mentions ‘youth representatives’, instead of ‘children and youth representatives’. We all do agree that the age of the representatives is better to be big than being small; otherwise there might be some difficulties with communication and ways of execution. Besides, since we are NGO promoting for youth welfare, we put our emphasis more on the youth; children affairs have been dealt with by other NGOs. That’s why at that time we mainly promoted youth representatives. Let’s now come back to an even earlier context. There was another youth consultation mechanism in the Ministry of Education, “Advisory committee on student self-government groups and civic education policy”. It had intended to have student representatives presenting in the meetings relating to education policies, and this committee shall discuss what they concerned. However at the end they did only one thing- having once a year the forum for student representatives. Student representatives were allowed to speak with freedom, but it was a pity that they had it only once a year. Some condemned that the Ministry of Education would like to control student self-

government groups through this committee, though this has never been confirmed. Yet what was true was that this committee did not work well, did not work according to its initial intention. In sum, these are some political mechanisms relating to youth and student representatives in the Taiwanese context. What you are concerning in your thesis is the main concern of TAARYW. Our secretary director was at that time a member of the Committee for Youth of the Municipality of Taichung. She proposed to the committee the idea of having youth representatives, and they accepted it. They started having it from 2010, and the initiative is still ongoing. But at that time they did not do anything to empower the representatives. Even though nowadays a lot of municipalities throughout Taiwan are subject to the regulation of having youth representatives presenting in meeting of the Committee of Children and Youth, in reality not everyone would like to put them into full practice. So our secretary director interfered through another mechanism called 'evaluation of the performance of social welfare'. The committee of the children and youth welfare could score higher by setting up children and youth representatives, by having them present in meeting and by their making proposals. Many municipalities were driven by the incentives to do these things. We had supposed that even though they started the process, they would not carry it out with seriousness. Not surprisingly we found that, it was a piece of cake for some municipalities to have youth representatives, but the problem is, where did they come from? The recruitment mechanism becomes an issue. We've discovered that, some municipalities did not have selection process; instead, they just contacted schools to ask for students. It happened to some municipalities that every time the students who came were different from the time before, and this created a problem that the messages they heard were not in coherence. Some other municipalities had another problem- only two or three students presented in the meetings, without being properly empowered; so when they came to discuss in the meetings, their proposals remained always at the level of their experience, often lacked of insights, so at the end it was hard for them to give firm proposals. The proposals they had were mostly coming from their personal, daily experience like "the toilets at the station are stinky, disgusting." I am not saying that this is not good at all, but it is a pity that they can only touch these issues. Actually in Taichung case, in the very beginning they did have done something quite interesting, relating to campaigns against pornography. Children and youth representative went into the pornography shops to videotaping illegal sales to minors and show them in committee meetings. However these things got weakened, probably because they did not receive trainings to be empowered. Learning from this experience, we consider it important to have a proper selection mechanism, taking into consideration varying backgrounds, ages and genders. For this purpose we had several focus-group discussions, to understand what kind of youth representatives are really needed.

CP: Who was involved in these focus-group discussions?

CW: Last year we invited three municipalities- Taipei City, New Taipei City and Taichung City. At that time these three municipalities were all about to start their youth representatives with empowerment trainings included. One of my ex-colleagues at that time happened to move to Taichung and she has just taken

over the project of youth representatives. She started to empower the youth. Actually in this process you will see that one of the crucial things that make a representative project work is the one who carries out the empowerment training, the trainer. What we mean by 'empowering' here does not mean to influence the children and youth to be the flag or microphone of the adults who are in power, but instead, we are saying that the trainer should help the representative to think, to reflect upon their own affairs. So last year we had a workshop uniting three municipalities, and through the workshop the children and youth representative received empowerment training on how they can start from what their concern is to detect policy issues, and realize them with policy recommendations or proposals. The training focused mainly on assisting them to have political reflection on their daily experiences; and since the concerns and ideas were quite varying, the next step was to further focalize the issues, to reach consensus. We introduced the concept and mechanism of deliberative democracy. The workshop was divided into two sessions. One session was dedicated to adults, focusing on reaching consensus on issues like 'what kind of youth representatives do we need?' 'How do we select?' 'How do we empower them?' 'What relationship of youth representatives with NGOs, with organizers and with the municipalities?' At the end everyone agreed that it is necessary to have an organizer in charge of the project. But assume that the organizer is the municipality: should a municipality empower these youth representatives and teach them to command the officers? A lot of policy dilemmas might come up. With this situation the municipality can hardly do it right.

CP: Is this what they encountered in the fieldwork?

CW: No. But they imagined that these would happen. However a municipality did try it in this way. Last year the New Taipei City ran it by themselves without any supports from NGOs on the empowerment course. They decided to carry it out in this way so not surprisingly these would be the cases.

CP: In the adult session the discussion were led onto these issues. Was it because you have drawn some references from abroad?

CW: Not really. Actually we just gathered together and tried to imagine what would be the difficulties that might come up, or what kind of representatives that I am expecting to have. A lot of crucial adult facilitators were there, such as officers from municipalities, the responsible ones from social welfare Department, the organizers. Besides, the Committee for Children and Youth Welfare is composed not only of social welfare Department, but also Information and Tourism Department, Education Department. Ministry of Education presented in the meeting, as well as representatives from NGOs. So we can say the degree of representativeness is high.

CP: Have you been involved from the very beginning of the project?

CW: What do you mean by 'the very beginning'? For the case of Taipei, I almost have been doing this all alone from the time of writing proposal, and then unto execution. At the end of last year, we had a workshop called 'Have you youth

representative(s)?' to share the experience of Taipei with the other municipalities, teaching them how to carry out a project like this. At the end of March of this year, we had another workshop to show everyone, what is the difference between having youth representatives and not having it. The participants were the organizers from the other municipalities and NGOs.

CP: Were these participants all related to youth affairs?

CW: They are the responsible ones who will be in charge of the project once the municipality decides to do it. In that workshop we had several parts. The next session was that every municipality came up and showed how they selected representatives, what kind of representatives they were seeking to have, how they disseminate information, what were the selection standards, how they carried out empowerment and what were the outcomes. Right after the youth representatives from different municipalities shared some of their attainments in the past year, and their policy proposals, and the process of proposal preparation. And then we fostered a World Café discussion to encourage all to express their own ideas. But why at the end we include 'children' in the initiative? One important reason was because the committee was named 'the Committee for the Promotion of Rights and Welfare of Children and Youth'. Because of this, some officials considered it necessary to include children. The other reason was because that the committee deals not only with youth affairs but also children's, so they want to know opinions from children as well. But at the end the age limit were set to minimum 11 years, not below because the commissioners all knew they could not do with younger children. Last year we had representatives with age minimum 11 years and maximum 20 years. I must say the whole process of empowerment training was quite a challenge.

CP: So according to what you just said, more than three municipalities in Taiwan are carrying out this initiative right?

CW: Yes, but so far significant outcomes are mainly from the experience of these three.

CP: So what you mean is that those who have sound structures are Taipei City, New Taipei City and Taichung City?

CW: I would say only Taipei City and Taichung City have so-called sound structure. In light of this scarcity, from last year we started another project, coordinating the ex- Children's Bureau to assist other municipalities in carrying out the empowerment trainings. This year we have assisted Tainan City, Chia-Yi City, Taichung County and Yi-Lan County. We firstly assisted them to set out the project, and did the same empowerment workshop we did last year, and in the meantime we provided them with know-how and background knowledge, and if they encountered any difficulties we offer assistance, too.

CP: Has TAAWRW ever touched any issue related to youth's way of use of urban spaces?

CW: What we did related to urban space was the youth centers. In Taipei there are six youth centers, and what has been done before was that the municipality gathered a group of youth and asked them what kind of youth centers they would like to have, and how these spaces should be planned. During the discussion several maps were drawn for stimulating the ideas. They were encouraged to transform the existing youth centers. The follow-up was that these discussion results were sent to every youth center for their disposal. Youth were engaged throughout the whole process until the point I knew. How it has been like afterwards, honestly I don't have idea about it. And at the moment, we are planning to propose a space dedicated particularly for the leisure and cultural use of youth. Last year we did an inquiry among youth on 'youth-friendly space for cultural and leisure activities', asking their opinion about what should the government provide, and starting from their responses we went to check the government policies, to see if the government was doing what the youth needs. We collaborated with legislators, including reviewing the budget, the future policies and corresponding measures. Of course at present the youth have some cultural and leisure spaces dedicated to them, but what is important for next is that the youth can stand out and speak out what kind of space they really need, and ask for government investment. This in fact makes a big threshold in the context of Taiwan, because we don't really think that the youth are in need of cultural and leisure spaces. Adults mostly hold the idea that the young people should only focus on their academic performance but nothing else. So at that time we have done so to examine the ideas of youth, and have had much discussion in terms of their feeling of depression relating to cultural and leisure activities.

CP: Has this discussion entered into policy stage?

CW: We did have collaboration with commissioners, including asking for budget to do it and we also required the Ministry of Culture to relieve some abandoned spaces for conversion into youth spaces. But asking the government for space is indeed a long-term challenge. For example we have another place in Taipei dedicated to youth development called 'Y17'. The government built it under strong pressure from NGOs who had lobbied a lot for youth rights, but lately it turned out to be a very commercial place, with unreasonably high rental charged for using the spaces, which truly discourages the youth from accessing them. Recently the government decided to get it back and run it by itself, but what they did was just stuffing the building with the offices of departments who are responsible for youth affairs, and with fliers for education information. They don't intend to let the youth have freedom on using the space. So the next step we will take is to have a press conference with municipal councilors to stop them from continuing on this track. The government should at least ask the opinions from NGOs and youth. How could they just make decisions on their own like this? It was absolutely not the ultimate goal to have this building for.

CP: What I have been thinking is: are there possibilities to deepen the urban planning issues by benefiting from the form of participation of children and youth representatives? What do you think?

CW: It is definitely possible. But you know every step before that stage marks the threshold, for urban planning has been deemed as a profession that cannot be challenged by the others; the adult users cannot do this, not to even mention the youth. But nowadays there is an organization called 'OURS', which encourages children to participate in the process of empowerment for community planning. It is a sort of pilot project, an experiment. But what I consider the most important issue for Taiwan at the moment is that the rights to expression of children and youth should be put into focus. Only this already marks a big step. But when this step is done, the spatial planning issues for youth would definitely become possible, as their voice must be heard before the plan is passed. They will take part in the planning process as well.

CP: Have you ever taken into consideration examples from abroad?

CW: Of course we did look at some foreign examples, but without referring to them closely. For example the idea of having youth representatives was influenced by the other governments' emphasis on youth, or their promotion on youth voices to be heard. Besides, me myself in the past have engaged in some international affairs related to youth issues. Though I just participated for a while, when I was at the age of twenty, a lot of concepts did get into me and had strong influence on me. In APEC I got to know the example of Thailand, where youth worked to stop the children prostitution by starting their own radio program to disseminate the idea. Both my boss and I agree on the idea that the media should be accessible for youth, allowing youth to be able to do their own programs. But it is still a goal far in the future for Taiwan. What should be done at the moment is to intervene in the law, to render the rights of expression of youth important and valuable. I must testify that in the beginning of process the attitude of adults was full of doubts about the capacity of youth, or fear of youth's nonsense ideas. Most of the adults have prejudice on the initiative and cannot fully accept it. But we insisted that it is compulsory to have it since it is written in the law. They were feeling like giving it a try, out of bureaucracy reason. Basically TAAYRW has been examining policies and trying to strive for the rights of youth from the policy point of view, and mostly we work on legal amendments, for only the policy can truly empower the youth. In a bureaucratic system like this, if something is not written on the law, they won't be willing to do it. So that's why we try to cut in from the policy to examine if the policy has been realized in reality or not. If something is not written in black and white, the officers would just say 'I agree that this is a good idea, but we don't have any resource to get it done'. So even when it is written in black and white, asking for a thorough realization would be another challenge. At the end of last year when the children and youth representative came to have presentation in a committee meeting, the adults were all amazed by the capacity they showed. But what followed up from the adults' side were more incredible suggestions (in a negative sense). In fact, the most difficult thing to work out in the whole process was the adults' part, because they all have an idea that children and youth need training on their citizenship. But in fact, the adults need this kind of training more than the children and youth do.

CP: In one of the meeting records I have seen that one of the adult commissioners commented that the children and youth representatives should dress in formal suits, to have a 'proper look' for the meeting. What would you comment on this?

CW: Yes, some of them did feel this way. Some would like to see them to have so-called adult's look, but some others would comment that they would not look the way they should look like in their age. Some would even suggest that if this is a good thing, why wouldn't we have two hundred representatives? The adults either have doubts on their capacity, or when the youth prove they are capable, the adults would come up with million new ideas. But more people fear actually. For example one responsible in high position is feeling that the representatives now have the microphone in their hand, and he fears that they would misuse it, and the media would pay too much attention to them. When he feels that the situation is going out of control, he would like to take over the control. In fact, the children and youth representatives do not merely express their opinions, but they also make concrete proposals. You can check the proposals they've made. One of their proposals is concerning the erotic video games. Upon that issue, they were not only expressing their ideas, but also commenting that the government is not doing it right. They hope some improvements can be made. Their proposal was not unrealistic, but rather based on the articles from the PCYWRA. Therefore all of their proposals were in accordance with the things that shall be done according to the law. When these things were at the legal level, they couldn't be rejected with reasons like lack of budget and resources and so on.

CP: I know that the representatives were divided into three issue groups. Was the group division done starting from examining the PCYWRA?

CW: The group division was made starting from understanding everyone's concerns, and then we group similar issues together for them to have further discussion. Firstly we introduced them the content of PCYWRA, including informing them what are guaranteed by PCYWRA. The committee of the children and youth welfare is limited in scope; it does not include all aspects, but the priority of the committee is exactly the PCYWRA. Therefore we were trying to find the balance between the two, which is between the things they are interested in, and the things that could be found in PCYWRA. The things match the two would be listed as prime proposals. But at the same time, some other proposals would not be addressed, for example the indicators for turning into adults. In the beginning when they just started, the representatives would look through all the news of the month, to check for important children and youth news. They have seen a poll on the indicators for issue of turning into adults in England, and they were interested in knowing the indicators for Taiwan upon the same issue. They designed a questionnaire and they went out to schools, streets and auditoriums to distribute it. Later they did further analysis with the result and had a press conference. But this way of doing also arose doubts from some adults. They felt this questionnaire work might cause the representatives overloaded. But some representatives responded: are we here just for being happy?

CP: Did this kind of conversions between representatives and commissioners happen in the committee meetings?

CW: Yes. So you can hear all kinds of voices and ideas coming from the commissioners.

CP: According to your observation, did the children and youth representatives get responses from the municipalities for their opinions and specific proposals?

CW: Of course they did get the replies, but it is totally different from being satisfied with what they've got. Most of the representatives felt that the responses from adults are too flippant. Take the case of erotic video games for example, the adults replied that the police will intensify their inspection, and that's all. In this way, the representatives felt that, we have been taking seriously this issue and have done a lot of these, but at the end we got such a short reply in return. What they are asking the government to do is to strengthen the vocational trainings of the shop owners and salespersons. The crucial thing was that the salespersons have no clear idea about the law. Some of them replied, it is merely written that minorities are not recommended 'to play', not 'to buy'. The salespersons will interpret the law from their perspectives. This is what the children and youth representatives care. The police inspection is only one part. Actually before in their own meetings, the representatives had other suggestions, even stronger ones. But they did not address them in the committee meetings. They will discuss a lot of things, but not all of the issues can be brought into committee meetings, because some issues are not within the scope of responsibility at the municipal level. Besides this concern, the representatives also have to consider what are 'proper proposals' to adult commissioners. One example was that, a youth representative in Taichung addressed the problem of 'lesson crowding out' in his school, but after the committee meeting, the adults from his school sorted him out for being under strong pressure from Education bureau upon this particular issue. We consider this measure very inappropriate, and this is also one of the main concerns expressed by many representatives. For example this year when I was carrying out the empowerment training in the south, many representatives from those municipalities were worried if their proposals would be properly protected or no. I taught them the way I have done to deal with this matter. What I did before in Taipei was that, to lower the particularity to the minimum. Take the case of 'lesson crowding out' for instance, I would present the overall result of poll and ask the municipality to do a thorough investigation on this issue, instead of presenting a single case. In general the governments are inclining to have 'particular cases', for in their opinion, if these particular cases are resolved, simultaneously the problem would be resolved as well. Another example is that, one of our representatives in Taipei arose the issue of disabled-friendly facilities in schools, for he, being a disable, suffered from being rejected by a particular high school for enrollment solely because that school does not provide disabled-friendly facilities and had no plan to provide them in the future. He arose this issue in a representative meeting, and after that we went into many schools to check if there are disabled-friendly facilities. Some students from other schools did report the same problem in their school. So with the result the representative went to talk with

the municipality about the issue, but the reply they've got was that 'this must be a misunderstanding, could you please let us know which school you are referring to for this issue? We will deal with that case.' But later the representatives pushed the municipality to take a thorough look at the disabled-friendly facilities in secondary schools so as to direct the issue away from particularity. This is a better strategy, also because that we know a lot of things are not particular cases but rather, they are indeed general problems. If only the particular cases are presented, the municipality would definitely think that these are just cases. I shared this with other municipalities that this is a better strategy to both reflecting a general problem and having their representatives protected.

CP: Have this project entered into the second term?

CW: Well... we haven't managed to start the second term yet. It is so because the first term had just done this April.

CP: Shouldn't the second term begin right after?

CW: The responsible one in high position does not like the project that much and thus has been intervening in changing something of it. One of the comments was made on the recruitment process: it should not be done by having meeting and by voting, but by public ballot, in order to avoid any kind of influence from lobbying and the possibility that someone becomes star politician out of this.

CP: How would he/she like to do with a public ballot?

CW: In the beginning he/she suggested to do the ballot on schools and those balloted out should send representatives. I totally cannot agree with this suggestion, for having ballot on schools, the first concern would be, how could we reach those youth who are not in the school system? Wouldn't them be blocked out from having chances to be chosen? And the second concern is, the schools usually intend to choose students with excellent academic performance but not the others.

CP: How did you do with the selection for the first term? Wasn't it like this?

CW: No. Many of the representatives of the first term were not recommended by schools, but by NGOs. A lot of them are types of youth that schoolteachers won't like.

CP: How did you manage to reach them?

CW: We just disseminate the information. Some representatives were recommended by their parents or by the NGOs. In contrary, what has been done in HsinChu City was that the municipality asked two schools for recommendation, and they got eight representatives in total, four from each. Those are mostly excellent ones on academic performances. The critical point of this method is being lack of diversity. Besides, since it is not a selection mechanism, it could not be counted as of representative. You know, even those

came out through selection mechanism have ever been doubted by the adults saying, 'you only represent yourselves, or at maximum represent twenty-one of you. How could you represent the voice of youth as a collectivity?' With this kind of comments, the representatives started to work on questionnaire and survey, in order to present the voice of majority.

CP: Besides using questionnaires and survey, what else were the tools they applied?

CW: They did surveys and holding conferences. Actually they were not intending to hold conferences on their own, and they hoped the municipality could help them ask favor of some schools to let them carry on with the process. They did mostly the conferences in schools, and plus one outside of school, and have discussion on their proposal of the issue regarding 'learning by service course'. They invited anyone who is interested in this topic to come and exchange ideas, and try to gain more support for it. But at the end for almost all the conference the representatives received support from the schools they have attended before. The municipality did not work out anything for them.

CP: Did they ask the municipality for support from the beginning?

CW: In fact, the proposal of having conference in schools came firstly from the commissioners. And those commissioners promise to help them on finding schools to do it. But obviously it did not work out at the end. To be honest, I don't know what is the problem, but anyway the representatives they managed to have the task done on their own.

CP: Did they do something with the press? Or did they try some other tools or channels?

CW: They contacted the press in the last stage, when they had the result. I did the press conference with them, and had press release. As I know, in some other municipalities the representatives would pass their proposals to the certain offices to have further progress. But the number of committee meetings has decreased from four times a year to twice a year. This decrease did infect the opportunities for their proposals to be heard. In Taichung, the committee even limits the time for the representatives to speak. And in Taipei, once in a committee meeting the commissioners asked the representatives to leave the meeting 'for having a snack break' and shot them out from joining a particular session. I was also in the meeting. I turned on the microphone to ask all the commissioners why the representatives should be shot out at this particular time? The chairperson said this is the decision of all. The representatives were forced to go out, because that session was about the evaluation of the first term and proposals for the second term. They told me it is not good for the representatives to join this part, but why?

CP: So at the end the representatives did not participate in evaluation right?

CW: The commissioners felt that it is more proper to have only us the organizers in that session, and we can bring in some voices of youth. In fact this is very improper way of doing. Besides, we did not know about this decision at all beforehand, so we couldn't do anything to protest in advance. The representatives were all upset by what had happened; yet it was already at the end of the term. And for now the new representatives are not here yet.

CP: What kind of platforms did you use to disseminate information? I assume that type of platforms would affect the type of youth that you can reach.

CW: In the case of Taipei, the recruitment was not in charged by us, but by the municipality. We received the representatives from the municipality. At that time we had discussed all these things, but in my opinion the greatest hindrance of this year came from the unwillingness of that particular responsible one I mentioned before. Because of him/her, the release of the recruiting announcement was postponed to the summertime, when all the students were off campus. In that case, how could many students know about this? The registration was open solely during the summer.

CP: Did you contact also the NGOs related to children and youth affairs?

CW: We did. But in my opinion the main obstacle is still the one I mentioned before, the responsible was not giving full consent on this, neither he/she was not putting effort in promoting it.

CP: Were the children and youth representative participated in the designing of the empowerment courses and did they have power of decision over how to carry out the representative meetings?

CW: They decided how the meetings should be carried out. Every month there is one 'big meeting' and one 'small meeting'. A 'big meeting' will include all the representatives. They are divided into three groups and take turns to be the chairperson. They have decision power over presentation, scheduling, and they hold the meetings too. I am in charge of solely giving the report for the organizers' side, for this part is set on the schedule. I only give report on my own stuffs and the rest of the issues are left for them to discuss. They keep the record for the meeting. On the other hand, in small meetings I have relatively more dominance. Each three groups have once a month a small meeting, and I will join each of them. In the small meetings they try to focalize their concerns, so usually we discuss about how to specify the questions and how to collect ideas from the other youth. We usually repeat this process until the issue comes into focus. Their ideas direct the discussion, but if necessary I would join them by giving some advices on methodologies and ideas that can be further developed. For example I might suggest them for specific concerns, what could be the laws they can go and check for details. Even if I know something in detail, I won't pose the answer to them right away. I only suggest rough ideas and I don't like to offer straight answer. But this methodology requires the persons to have more prior background knowledge or sensitivity of the issue relating to children and youth. Otherwise it would be quite hard for them to come to concrete proposals.

CP: Were there different degrees of involvement among children and youth representatives? If yes, how did you tackle this issue?

CW: Definitely there are differences in terms of degrees of involvement. But in small meetings even a person is shy, it is hard for him/her to remain silent.

CP: How many are there in small meetings?

CW: They are in total twenty-one, but four dropped out from the very beginning. So in small meetings we usually have three to five people.

CP: Do you know the reason they decided to drop out?

CW: Many of them were recommended by NGOs, and in fact, there are a lot of things more to them other than this. They may count it more important playing basketball with friends than coming to representative meetings.

CP: Did they freely choose to participate in the initiative?

CW: Some were recommended by NGOs. They did not come maybe because that this project is different from what they had imagined. We did not have access to know the situation, and it is very hard to do so. Some people did have difficulties in coming to the meetings because of part-time jobs they had. For this reason we gave them compensation on their commuting expense, but only for big meetings. In the small meeting it is easier for everyone to express their ideas and have discussion. I also tried to have everybody speak by calming down those very talkative ones and guided them to hear what the others said. I was like a chairperson in a meeting of deliberative democracy, guiding everyone's voice to be heard by the others and assisted them to summarize some ideas. But I can substitute them to do the main part. I intervened also in distribution of task by watching them doing it until it is done. I insist that everyone should have something to do. I did this from the first small meeting until the end. I would like to emphasize one thing that, many times after the representatives left the meeting they forgot this project at all; this is because the school life today has too strong influence on them, and they are highly engaged in it. It is no wonder why they forgot things they decided to do in the meetings when they got back to school. I had to remind the contact person of each group and had to do this again and again. For this the organizer from the municipality said I was like their mom who kept reminding them of this and that. But I knew that only in this way they would work things out. Besides, it took time for our relationship to be built up, in my case, more or less three months. They also needed someone to group them together and got time to be friends with each other. For this purpose I asked them to have an overnight empowerment workshop this year. Last year we did it in Taipei without over-night stay, because the municipality did not have budget for their accommodation. The budget was only NTD 250,000 (approximately 6,530 euros) for the whole term, even not enough for paying my salary. This year we had one workshop in the north and one in the south. For that one in the south they stayed overnight and you could see the difference it made. But that team

spirit created by the workshop may disappear very quickly once the representatives went back to their normal life, and they won't remember it anymore. So it is still crucial the role of organizer, in pulling everyone back to the initiative every month. By the way they mostly met on the weekends, and they have full power in deciding when to meet. They also invented some mechanism to discipline. For example they had a set of indicators to measure the attendance and decided that whoever being absent over a certain criterion cannot obtain the certificate at the end of the term. But this idea did not come true at the end. This shows they tried to do something to encourage the attendance. As for the meeting schedule, they include also certain time for discussion of monthly news. They went through all news, picked up important issues and then collected related news from all perspectives together; then they listed out the varying perspectives, and designed several questions for further discussion in the big meeting.

CP: Were there any evaluation mechanisms among the representatives? For example in which part did they come up with the issue of low attendance?

CW: It was in the part of the motion, usually at the end of the meeting. Some representatives felt that the attendance was not satisfactory, so that's why we had it discussed together. As for the evaluation mechanism, I did twice the workshop for communication and heart opening. It was more like a time for reflection upon the things that have done. They were asked to reflect on their experience, to see what they have gained, what examples they appreciated and learnt some from. And we also discussed about the improvement that can be made to the execution process, or suggestions for the next term.

CP: In your opinion, how was this part?

CW: Personally I love this part very much, because only through this reflection time they can really get to know what they have learned and gained. It is also easier for me to share with others why it is so important to have this project. Every representative can also learn from each other, to get to know other people's growth, difficulties. Several times they complained that some other had low attendance, but I would like them to know through this sharing that everyone has his or her own difficulty that requires respect and support from the others.

CP: What were the difficulties they had?

CW: Mostly they are too busy for the schoolwork, or there are some other things they deemed more importance than this. But the issue should be, how could I manage such a tight schedule? For example, a representative shared that his/her parents were worried about his/her academic performances, so he/she tried the best to maintain it well so that he/she can keep coming to the meetings. The other one shared that he/she had a obligation in school service team, and he/she shared what he/she was doing as a representative to his/her team member; So when there were some tasks assigned for the service that were overlapped with the schedule of our meetings, his/her team members will help by taking over

his/her part saying, 'you should go to the meeting because that is more important than this service. Don't worry let me help you.' I hoped that they could all share such things, and know from this that everyone has different choices and priorities in life, but everyone also has heart to be part of the project. Everyone has his or her own difficulties to overcome. I had this idea of sharing from my own experience in the past. I was a club leader before when I was in university. I had applied the same strategy to let every club member be emphasized with each other. Besides two workshops for communication and heart opening, we had another show time, having everyone performed something. They proposed this idea to me and I felt that was very good and they should give it a try. Through that show time everyone got to know each other much better.

CP: Did they become familiar enough with each other at the end of the project?

CW: Yes. They were close with each other from around the sixth month. They started to join other conferences together and to hold their own conferences.

CP: You have mentioned that a coordinator plays a key role to the whole project. Being a coordinator what was the main challenge you've met in the process?

CW: I had to spend a lot of time on that project. I had to at least spend one full day plus three half days to have meetings with them every month. I was willing to do that because it was one of the sources of joy in my life, but you cannot expect every program coordinator to dedicate that much time like I did. Besides, the representatives had time to meet only during the weekends, so I had no choice but to work overtime to be with them. I remember once in a weekend my parents came to visit me from the south, but the representatives had to meet that particular day, so I had to 'abandon my parents' to be with them. But it was very comforting to hear some representatives saying that, they received a lot of support from me. I would say, our (adults') supports are very important, and we should let the representatives know that they have someone to lean on, their opinion will be heard and there is someone helping their ideas to be heard. Sometimes they were upset by the municipality's way of doing, and I myself had to go and speak for them or I had to encourage them to speak out. Otherwise if they remained silent, the municipality would not care their feelings that much.

CP: Was there someone from the municipality's side in collaboration with you at that time?

CW: Yes, Ms. Chen from the Social Welfare Bureau. I had a lot of interactions with her. She participated in all the big meetings too. Before we also discussed about issue of the relationship between the organizers and the representatives. The organizers should assist them on reaching information or some bureaucratic procedures, on providing trainings and emotional supports. And then we would detect what do they need at that moment so as to fix the topic of empowerment course. We had in the beginning a draft, but we wouldn't have it fixed until the last moment. Or we would try to benefit from the available resource we had. The reason why they went to do the survey at the auditorium was because they were invited to a basketball game for free, but we had already planned to have

meeting on that particular day. Then it came to me the idea that, the representatives were planning to carry out the survey, why don't they benefit from this chance by doing the survey in the auditorium? It was even easier to do it in an auditorium than on the street, as people usually don't leave their seats before a game begins. I pose the idea to them and they were willing to give it a try, so I help them with the bureaucratic procedures so that that could carry out the survey. In one of the sharing workshop I asked them to remind themselves of the most impressive thing they have done in the project, and some of them said it was the experience of carrying out that survey. They liked it very much, for it was the first time they went out to contact people, to be brave, to introduce themselves as children and youth representatives to others, and hear the voice of the youth. To them it was the decisive moment of realizing themselves as being representatives. Later on the 10th August, we had a big youth fair in Ximen District. The children and youth representatives set up a table to introduce to people what they are doing being as representatives, and they designed a activity to ask what people concern about the children and youth issues. They also disseminate the information of applying for the second term, because at that time the registration was still open. They did show their growth, but you have to leave hold of them and let them do it, and give them time to prove they are able. It is not something can be done in a second. For example I found out they did not really know how to lead a discussion. They did it like asking if anyone has questions and that's it. So after that I arranged an empowerment course on 'how to lead a discussion?' and 'How to hold a meeting?' Another time was that they were discussing about an issue related to youth democracy. They would like to learn about how could youth democracy deepen its roots. It came to my mind a film I had seen sometime before, a Chinese film called "Give me a vote" (own translation from Chinese) which deals with the issue of voting in school context, particularly focusing on revealing the 'invisible hands' that directs the result of so-called democratic voting. I used this video to inspire them to think about: Does the voting equals democracy? Are there any means to democracy? Lately I found another very nice Taiwanese short film called 'Travel with Lai-He' (own translation from Chinese). In the film there are six youth protagonists. They did not know each other, but were selected to have a trip together from Taipei to Chang-hua on foot. During the trip they also encountered some urban development issues. I contacted the director of film and arranged a meeting for the director and the youth protagonists from the film to come and have talk with the representatives. That conversation was very good, for some adaption issues happened to the youth protagonists were exactly the representatives were experiencing. This film is a good tool for a group that has been working together for a while to watch and share. It also demonstrates how you can bring in the traditionally critical development issues and protests in such a soft way. What I learned from being a coordinator is that, it requires you to have some sensitivity to the development of the group, to continually search for proper resource. So that's why I was saying I was like their mom. A mom rejoices with the growth of children and tends to pay all her attention on looking for the best things for her children. I think my role is to cultivate this group, to help them experience how the democracy is all about in the real world so as to expand their scope of life. But the frustration I have is that, when their one-year term is done, all of them have to go back to school and couldn't continue with it anymore.

CP: Do all of them have to leave? Or someone could choose to stay?

CW: The municipality made the decision that no one can stay, for they want more youth could have chance to participate. Originally they guaranteed some quota for those who would like to stay, but they changed their mind anyway. There were some representatives who would like to go on with the project, so I started to give them some training so as to prepare them the trainers for the next term. Now my task is to train these three persons to do what I have done last year. At that time not everyone was willing to stay, before some of them were busy for their schoolwork. At the end they still have to surrender to the reality, but I was quite upset about their leaving. They all said to me that they had a lot of fun and growth because of the project, but when the term is over, they were all gone... The frustration to me was, I was just sowing some seeds in their hearts, and I couldn't expect to see the germination. Maybe one day when they are in university, when there is no more great pressure for academic performances like right now, these seeds would again have chance to grow. On the other hand I saw some representatives had their confidence built through the project. Before they came here, no one would like to spend time to hear them. But when they come here, they are treated like human beings and have their voices heard.

CP: You did see some changes on this aspect?

CW: I have seen this happen to many of them. There are several representatives who felt that TAAYRW gave them a microphone to speak that they had had never before in the past. They felt the adults finally started to be willing to hear from them, and this become a very important sense of self-acceptance in them. In fact, the ultimate goal of this project is not only to include the voice of youth, but more important, to empower the prospect citizens. It is an empowerment project, which not only centers on participation, but to profit from the form of participation to cultivate citizenship and capacity, and on the other hand, show to the adults that the youth have capacity of being empowered unto citizens.

CP: Would you please talk about the issue of budget allocation? For example the human resources and monetary resources assigned to the project?

CW: Basically there was only me as project coordinator. The Social Welfare Bureau did their things only. I was the only one in charge of the execution of the project, and the Social Welfare Bureau was acting like my consultant. For example I had to consult them if the representative could put some so-called 'aggressive words' on their webpage, because the municipality financed the project. However, the Social Welfare Bureau did give some firm supports, as for renting places for meetings and some other administrative supports. I would have discussion with Ms. Chen and support each other. When she got rejection from her boss, she would come to talk to me. Once she had to give a presentation in front of all the responsible ones but she had no idea about what to present, and for that she called me to have a talk. She became so relieved when our conversation was over, and she even said that it seemed like all the problems had been solved. Many times she called me to regain the strength for going on.

CP: Besides you two, were there any other NGOs in collaboration with you for the project?

CW: Actually no. But for some empowerment course we would ask trainers from some NGOs or from someone with experience in empowering youth. One NGO was TYCF. They work on empowering youth through engagements in deliberative democracy. They assisted us with supports on this aspect. They also helped us with organizing activities and coordinating for some big meetings.

CP: Did they do these for free?

CW: No, we paid them for their help, but not much.

CP: In your opinion, were the resources sufficient?

Of course not. The budget was even not enough for paying my salary. We have discussed this issue before. We estimated that to have the project run smoothly, we need about NTD 1,500,000 (approximately 37,500 euro), including money for hiring two coordinators and the renting fee for meetings and salaries for the trainers. With these expenses included the project could be better off.

CP: Did you try to reach children and youth with particular backgrounds or with physical disabilities?

CW: Yes we did have both. The one with particular background is from social placement agency. He lives in that organization and has unknown parents. He has difficulty that the organization does not so agree with his participation in the project. Besides he has very limit access to Internet and limit time of using computer. It is also quite hard to contact him, for he does not have a mobile phone. He is able to come to the meetings during weekends, but if there are scheduled activities of the organization, he has to stay there. The difficult thing was that, he has been feeling that he is inferior to other people, that he does not have capacity to do something. But I have been encouraging him that, everyone is different, and it does not mean that you are inferior to others. He has the mentality that a person having no parents like he does cannot fit it the other people's experiences. The other issue was about the contradiction of values. For example one representative was taught that homosexuality is a sin. Therefore our discussion on homosexuality was seen as something forbidden to him. You could see conflict of values like this case. But you know, values would change too.

CP: In your opinion, how long does it usually take for a significant change to take place?

CW: According to my experience, it takes at least six months for a change to occur. It is better to have a project over a year, even better to have it for two years, because it takes a year for the representatives to get familiar with the process, but when they finally got into it, the project is closing down. So now we

encourage all the municipalities to do it for two years. Yi-Lan City does follow what we've said.

CP: Did you have interactions with the youth representatives' parents?

CW: Not much but I did. One lady was quite close to me. Sometimes we talked about the growth of the child or about the changes that the child had. Ideally we should have parents group and teachers group to know about the substantial changes children and youth representatives had from the project. But it is something hard to realize, because there is one coordinator that is I. Even if you paid me double salary, I cannot make it. That's why we suggested it would be better to have two coordinators rather than having only one. Besides, this is not the only task I have in TAAYRW.

CP: Has it ever happened to the children and youth representatives that they left the initiative because of adaptation problems?

CW: Yes, some people left in the middle, and those have been coming regularly were about fifteen, so that was 80%. Some of them had strong motive from the very beginning. For example there was a representative, whose father is a commissioner of one committee in favor of disabled people, has been used to voicing out his opinions. He joined the project with a specific purpose to promote the rights of the disabled. But because of this particular personal idea, for a while it was hard for him to communicate with the others when he felt that his proposal did not receive the support it deserved. But there was an agreement among all representatives from the beginning that, before a proposal is submitted in the committee meeting, it should have already been discussed and everyone had consensus upon. When one speaks in the committee meeting, he or she is representing all of the youth, not himself or herself alone. We are not really sure whether it is good or not to work in this way, as there were some criticism on this. But it is quite obvious that the representatives are not representing themselves alone. They are representatives of all youth. We did not try to depersonalization. For those strong personal ideas, we suggested them to be dealt with in other ways, instead of being submitted as proposals in committee meetings.

CP: Are there any other municipal departments that are in collaboration with you on this project?

CW: So far the collaboration scope is limited to the municipal Committee of the promotion of rights of Children and Youth.

CP: How about those departments whose obligations are related to the content of proposals? For example urban planning department?

CW: There are already other departments in the municipal Committee of the promotion of rights of Children and Youth. And in the PCYWRA it does not include anything related to architecture or urban planning. And before PCYWRA came into being, all those departments in the committee were counted as having

nothing to do with the children and youth affairs. It took a long time and a lot of effort for those departments to 'become' related to children and youth affairs. It indeed marked a significant breakthrough; otherwise everyone would still remain with that wrong impression that everything should be only in charged by the Social Welfare Bureau.

CP: What do you think are the things could be improved in the next term?

CW: Now we have seen some progress from last year, and we would like to go on with a long-term perspective, besides empowering the youth, at the moment we should put more emphasis on empowering the coordinators, because after the first term we now know what kind of problems and difficulties a coordinator might run into in the process. It is time to build a system of know-how or models, anything that can be utilized easily by other coordinators. One thing I think is very crucial also, that is the support group for coordinators. So for this year, we plan to give training to coordinators that work in other municipalities by establishing contact network among them. It is really important that every coordinator is in contact with the others and in the support network.

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