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Cultural Heritage and Responsibility: Linking Narratives of the Past to Perspectives of the Future

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This paper aims at identifying factors behind *the-making-of* cultural heritage reproduced within educational settings by trying to answer the following question: How do young people link narratives of the past with their own cultural identities and perspectives on the future? Observations made at conferences by two different non-formal educational organisations in the same region in Germany form the data for this analysis. Both conferences were structurally similar but very different in their perspectives on Germany's role in global history and on young people's responsibilities to create a future worth living in. Since both organisations are concerned with political education and target a similar group of young people from similar economic and educational backgrounds, these differences seem especially significant for thinking about discursive practices in educational settings. Building on the understanding that heritage is a discursive practice in a field of power relations, the paper provides insights into the links between certain images of the past, which are recreated in very specific ways in different educational settings, and the cultural practices young people produce within their local contexts.

Key words: Cultural heritage, young people, non-formal education, narratives of the past, responsibility

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INTRODUCTION

The world is constantly changing and young people have to find ways of living in this everchanging world. Sometimes they might feel threatened by new developments while at other times they celebrate them as achievements, depending on their specific

perspectives, which are influenced by their knowledge of the past and their visions of the future. They are educated and educate themselves within social structures that have grown historically and which were usually created to achieve certain goals. While these goals may differ in content and even contradict each other at times, they usually share one common denominator, which is the overarching concept of economic growth. This has never gone unchallenged but nonetheless is the mainstream political view.

Recently, more and more scholars have started taking a critical stand on this concept. Calls can be heard from different directions for a much needed transformation to correct "the side effects of a capitalist consumer society – such as environmental degradation and financial debt – whose consequences can be severe for younger and future generations" (Magatti, Giaccardi, Martinelli, 2019: 474). Within these critical perspectives on capitalism and its side effects, the concepts of transition and transformation towards greater sustainability are emerging. The idea of rethinking economy in ecological terms is not new. In 1987, Bookchin talked of the need for a "social ecology" that would take the connection between social inequalities and environmental problems into consideration. With new grassroots youth movements like Fridays-for-Future in particular, the discussion has (re)surfaced in the past few years resulting in new research and new theoretical approaches.

Rosa (2019b), for example, states that the current paradigm of sovereignty, which forms the basis of economic growth and structures all relations between humans and their environment in "modern" societies, necessarily leads to escalation and aggression. He argues that no structural reform can alter that unless the underlying paradigm is changed. The creation of new utopias requires human relations (including space, time, history and politics) to be transformed into what he calls "resonance" (Rosa, 2019b). This metaphor means neither owning the environment nor being victimised by it but instead sending out vibrations that are reflected whilst "listening" to the vibrations sent out by ourselves, other humans, and nature, and trying to get them to resonate in harmony. This new relationship with oneself and others entails a new relationship with history. Rosa (2019a) is critical of the fact that the modern way of being in the world is based on cutting the link between the genesis and validity of values and norms. Severing the link to the past in this way also means cutting the link to the future. If cultural heritage is seen in the light of resonance, it cannot be understood as something static, and education cannot mean teaching certain facts leading to a pre-defined goal of cultural literacy. It would instead mean constantly connecting aspects of history from different perspectives.

Magatti et al. (2019) offer a slightly different concept. Theirs is not explicitly aimed at such a radical transformation of society but is nonetheless critical of the "toxic legacy of neoliberalism [which] requires us to enter a new era, hopefully more beautiful and desirable than the one we have left behind us" (p. 484). Not unlike Rosa, they call for a new paradigm which they call "social generativity". This principle expands on ideas of maturity and responsibility based on Erikson's psychological model of development. "Only if and when subjects overcome a self-centered orientation (typical of adolescence) are they able to open up and interact positively with their surroundings within an inter-subjective social and inter-generational framework" (Magatti et al., 2019: 473).

Chomsky, whose essay "The Responsibility of Intellectuals" (1967) gained an international reputation, is another who can be counted among the scholars who state

the need for a social transformation towards greater sustainability. "The effects of climate change have already been playing quite a significant role in exacerbating some of the major conflicts in the world. […] So what's the responsibility of everyone? Well, to try to avert this catastrophe" (Chomsky, 2019a: 105).

This article takes a closer look at specific ways in which young people take responsibility for creating the future: how they learn from the past, which aspects they consider important or relevant to their lives, and how they link this knowledge to their motivation for creating or preserving cultural practices for the future. Their perspectives on the future are remarkably diverse, with different social statuses creating various sets of opportunities, visions, and barriers that influence these perspectives. This article, however, shows that, perspectives on the future can vary vastly within the same social class, depending on specific choices. One of these choices concerns the question of responsibility. Which responsibilities do young people adopt as their own?

These questions will be discussed in the following sections based on qualitative empirical data gathered at two different youth conferences in Northern Germany. The conference participants were informed about the research project and the attendance of the researcher. One researcher participated in each conference and took notes simultaneously or immediately after the activities. Both researchers were instructed in the methods of ethnographic participant observation (Kawulich, 2005) and used the same structured protocol separating descriptive from interpretative notes, resulting in 118 pages of collected material. The focus of the observation was to identify young people's bottom-up cultural and educational practices. Each conference lasted two days and consisted of speeches, workshops, and informal gatherings and discussions during breaks and meal times. The observation protocols were analysed following a two-step coding process as suggested by Charmaz (1996). First, the protocols were coded openly line by line, then the emerging codes were organised into categories and sub-categories with those most relevant to the focus of the observation being selected.

This focus was provided by the theoretical framework mentioned above, especially Rosa's concept of resonance which includes resonating with the past. Empirical indicators of how the past and future are linked in Germany were found in previous research findings on the top-down practices of cultural education in Germany (Seukwa, Marmer, Sylla, 2018; Sylla, Marmer, Seukwa, 2019). These findings showed the importance of commemoration culture in relation to the national identity but also pointed to a significant historical amnesia on Germany's colonial past in policy papers (Seukwa et al., 2018) and the official curricula in Hamburg, which contained no references to postcolonial critique (Sylla et al., 2019).

In Germany the social sciences have produced a few approaches on the relevance of memory and oblivion in relation to social structures and in turn the relevance of (dynamic) social structures regarding the organisation and reproduction of certain forms of certain knowledge archives. Some of these approaches are based on Halbwachs' concept of "social memory", which has increasingly been acknowledged in German cultural studies since the 1980s but has not (yet) initiated a "mnemonic turn" (Dimbath, Heinlein, 2014). While some social form of memory is implicit in many social theories, it has not been further examined or conceptualised. This article does not claim to fill that gap but aims to illustrate the theoretical concepts that explain how collective memory structures societal knowledge archives and how these are in turn structured

by contemporary decisions on what should be remembered and what should be forgotten. These can be applied to different dimensions of collectives, individual as well as groups of people (communities) all the way up to nation states or even supranational structures.

Memories could be conceptualised "as a link or connection between the individual and the collective, rather than attempting to establish its location in either domain" (Hoskins, 2016: 348). This concept of connective rather than collective memory can easily be integrated into Rosa's concept of resonance: "One way to connect the individual and the collective is through affording greater attention to the environment in which remembering and forgetting take place" (Hoskins, 2016: 353).

When choosing the research sites, the aim was to represent a broad spectrum of cultural activities. Therefore, the research team initially chose three organisations which promoted strikingly different aspects of culture: one was an organisation focused on political education promoting the idea of European unification, the second was an organisation addressing ecological sustainability that promoted activities aimed at preserving nature, and the third was focused on giving young people a space in which to be creative, produce art and music, and to express their feelings and opinions in stage performances. This third organisation was extremely interesting to research and provided us with extremely important insights into the diversity of young people's cultural practices (see Sylla, Fahr, Siegl, Marmer, Seukwa, 2020). However, this article focuses on the observations obtained at the first two sites because, despite their differences, their striking similarities enable us to analyse the differences in specific details of their activities. In the main, both organisations attracted privileged white middle- or upper-class youths with high levels of general education. Both held conferences with different speakers – some of whom were international guests – who talked about global power structures, but in quite different ways. In this article the first group will be referred to as "Activists for Europe" and the second as "Activists for Nature". The similarities and differences will be outlined and the effect these have on young people's sense of responsibility for action will be analysed.

Both organisations are similar in that the content was largely created by the young people themselves, while the adults, the educational practitioners, did not take on leading roles but mainly acted as advisors, were invited speakers at the conference, or coached the young people on specific aspects they wanted to learn about. The young people in these organisations actively create and participate in the structures of their respective organisations, expressing their needs and educating each other as well as themselves. This personal initiative, which can be seen as the starting point of social generativity (Magatti et al., 2019), serves as the starting point of our discussion. Then in the second section we discuss how these young people fit into or challenge the framework of commemoration education provided by German formal cultural education. The third section consists of a critical discussion of the relation between the reproduction of privilege and the social transformation aim, which leads into the conclusion, where we attempt to link young people's narratives of the past to their perceptions of responsibility.

YOUTH ACTION – YOUNG PEOPLE TAKING THEIR FUTURE INTO THEIR HANDS

First the similarities between the two conferences will be considered. Both are held regularly by local youth branches of bigger international associations. The organisations can in part rely on the resources of their respective parent organisations, but they create their own programme and are responsible for the running of the youth branches. Both groups are organised in a democratic fashion, with the representatives being elected and every member who wishes to participate in the planning and administration being encouraged to do so. The atmosphere that was observed at the conferences was similar in terms of the involvement of the many members and the culture of the communication. Young people in both organisations seemed eager to present their knowledge and opinions, discuss topics of interest with peers and to learn from each other. They all appeared very motivated to actively participate in the conferences. Even between the workshop sessions and speeches, young people eagerly discussed political topics, continuing the discussions from the sessions at a high intellectual level or starting new topics. The terminology used and the complexity of the concepts discussed revealed remarkably high levels of specific knowledge.

The "Activists for Europe" conference is held annually alongside their more frequent events, such as a monthly round table and workshops held in collaboration with schools. Each year, the conference topic is chosen by the young members themselves. They discuss what they want to focus on and then plan everything. They receive financial and infrastructural support from their parent organisation but also from the local ministry of social affairs and a renowned high-profile foundation that cooperates with them regularly. The venue is the same every year – a mansion owned by the foundation near the Baltic Sea. This year, twenty members chose to learn more about African-European relations and invited the South African ambassador, an Amnesty International intern, a social scientist from a research institute specializing in international affairs, and an economics professor as the speakers. Some workshops were moderated by young members of the organisation. These were very professionally prepared and had extensive presentation and moderation skills.

The "Activists for Nature" held their conference in cooperation with the "Fridays for Future" movement,[1] and it was part of a series of conferences organised in different regions of Germany by various local branches of the same association or by other youth groups. Approximately 100 participants attended. Speakers from Uganda, Liberia, and the Philippines were invited to speak about the impact of climate change on their local environment and about the economic structures that lead to these impacts. Participants were invited to choose two out of four possible workshops: how to give interviews to public media, ideas for transforming transport policies, European structures of environmental politics, and degrowth. The researcher chose to observe the latter two. They were moderated by adult experts on the topics, all of whom were members of the parent branch of the organisation. In addition to this conference, the youth group meets

1 "Fridays for future" is a youth movement initiated by Greta Thunberg in Sweden to raise climate change awareness through pupils striking on Fridays and demonstrating in public places (https://fridaysforfuture.de/).

weekly and organises different forms of political activities, performances, workshops, and lectures, mostly focusing on climate change topics.

One of the most striking differences between the two groups relates to the practice of "othering" (Hall, 1994). Support and respect were not equally distributed. Young people from both youth groups showed signs of "a drive to lead and manage groups, organizations, and even firms in a way that enables individuation by authorizing followers to pursue their own projects" (Magatti et al., 2019: 477), which is considered a basis for the above-mentioned concept of social generativity. However, these signs manifest themselves differently in the two groups and do not enable individuation to the same extent. In both youth groups, the members are incredibly supportive of each other, they respect different opinions and other people's right to express them, and they help each other out with advice and hands-on support. It is easy to imagine a member in each group proposing an idea and then letting others take it on and use it for different purposes or it leading to results that were not part of the initial intention. But, especially among the "Activists for Europe", this supportive attitude changed slightly when applied to people outside the organisation and especially outside their national frame of reference. In informal discussions, they reproduced common stereotypes of high poverty and crime rates among migrants, and seemed irritated when one person (the researcher) brought up the idea that structural racism leads to higher persecution rates. The conversation stopped immediately. When they talked about African trade, the colonial continuity in economic relations was apparent and was not challenged by these young people. Some even uncritically spoke about relatives who were engaged in international trade and owned large plantations or factories in Africa but without reflecting on how this might affect the local societies. They did not question their right to profit from the riches of the continent or their own involvement in problematic social inequalities. In this context, they referred to common "development aid" discourses, suggesting that they know what Others[2] should do to solve their problems but did not reflect on the global dimension of these problems nor their own lack of expertise to solve them.

They might be promoting "a form of realization of the self in which an active and creative subject is able to offer a contribution to the surrounding context in such a way that the autonomous self-realization of others is encouraged and sustained" (Magatti et al., 2019: 472), but it is limited to their in-group. As a group, they do not extend this encouragement to Others nor do they attempt to overcome capitalist historical constructs based on the exploitation of Others. During informal discussions, it became clear that the conference participants saw the knowledge being presented as beneficial for their careers. Many of them wanted to engage in international trade and found information on societal structures useful for that purpose. Individual members may have been more critical, but the overall impression of the discussions implied that they did not question their own role in reproducing colonial structures.

The "Activists for Nature", by contrast, did challenge the idea that prosperity is based on economic growth. They criticised the exploitation of human as well as natural resources for the profit of some but at the expense of others from both a global and

2 The term "Other" is written with a capital O whenever it refers to the results of the processes of othering (Hall, 1994).

intergenerational perspective. During the de-growth workshop they discussed how the colonial history of exploitation, which they clearly see as the foundation of their own wealth and consumerism, has led to a situation that urgently requires change and de-growth in privileged and powerful countries. The violent history of these current power relations in turn prevents them from imposing the same principles of de-growth on former colonies who have not profited in the same way but have always paid the price for economic growth.

This can be interpreted as a difference in paradigms that Rosa (2019a) explained in accordance with his concept of resonance. He stated that the social paradigm of economic growth relies on the idea that autonomy and sovereignty towards the world has severed the link between the past and the future. So perhaps the young people from "Activists for Nature" are trying to shape their future by attempting to reconnect these links, whereas the "Activists for Europe" are located within the established frame of reference.

(NOT) LINKING THE PAST WITH THE FUTURE – COMMEMORATION CULTURE IN GERMANY

With Black Lives Matter,[3] which started as an American movement against racial injustice, becoming a global initiative, the idea that certain communities are excluded from or underrepresented in official history has gained popularity in Germany. Calls to revise German commemoration culture so it includes the perspectives of people who were silenced or oppressed can be heard, but they are a fairly new development. Since 2004, the descendants of the victims of the German genocide in Namibia have made great efforts to bring the colonial legacy to public attention. Since 2018, some of that discourse has been included in official policy.[4]

As commonly practiced, German commemoration culture has not yet fully embraced all communities. Certain aspects of history have become integral to the concept of the nation state and even the dynamics of European integration. In education, "Never Again Auschwitz" and – since reunification in 1990 – remembrance of the victims of East Germany's former ruling party the SED (Social Unity Party of Germany) have become particularly dominant. But although the NS (National Socialist) ideology could only have emerged out of the knowledge produced during colonial exploitation, violence, and oppression, Germany's participation in colonising Africa and its economic, political and cultural implications are not a significant part of the collective memory (Eggers, 2005). This enables the reproduction and the dominance of colonial concepts like Euro-centricity, nationalism, racism, and the claim of cultural superiority as represented in supposedly European achievements like democracy and individual freedom (Seukwa et al., 2018). Remembering the historical facts of the NS dictatorship, without connecting them to the genesis of the ideologies that enabled them and the influences these still have on cultural practices today cannot prevent this continued reproduction.

3 https://blacklivesmatter.com/8-years-strong/.

4 https://www.migazin.de/2018/01/29/polenz-erinnerungskultur-herero-vertreter-beteiligung/.

In a similar way, as Walker (2019) has analysed in relation to the UK, German commemoration culture mainly excludes Others' perspectives of history: "Historical injustices against blacks remain barely acknowledged, let alone commemorated; it is with trepidation that people of colour lift their heads to speak truth to power on any issue, even those that relate to their own history and experience, for fear they find themselves derided at best, the subject of witch-hunts or threats of violence at the worst" (Walker, 2019: 30). The same could be said for injustices towards all other marginalised communities.

The Shoah could to some extent be seen as an exception since at least historical injustices are acknowledged in mainstream education. *Education after Auschwitz* (Adorno, 2005 [1966]) is often referenced and can be considered an integral part of Germany's cultural heritage. The aim of preventing right-wing extremism or radical nationalism is apparent in all policy papers and curricula. However, even the historic aspects that are to be remembered usually represent one side of the story. Only those aspects that help construct the identity of the Germans as a freed and purged people (Czollek, 2018) are considered, while other perspectives that could challenge this image are forgotten or ignored.

These findings are also reflected in the observations from the youth conferences, although one group seemed to be more aware of the impact of colonial structures on German cultural heritage than the other.

"Activists for Nature" did not explicitly speak about history during their conference, but their perspective on "development" was quite broad both historically and geographically. Climate change was analysed, including data relating to the last Ice Age, the consequences of industrialisation and digitalisation, and taking global power relations into account by differentiating between different needs and means of action in different parts of the world, which they saw as interrelated. While there was no explicit workshop on postcolonial critique, this perspective was implicitly covered in at least some of the workshops. When talking about de-growth movements for example, they discussed whether the same principles should be applied globally or whether "the western world" had a responsibility to change its consumerist ways, and whether formerly colonized nations should be respected for developing their own perspectives instead of having to adopt the normative concepts of former colonists. The fact that environmental activists from Uganda, Liberia, and the Philippines were invited as keynote speakers and sat on a discussion panel supports this analysis.

In contrast, several of the young "Activists for Europe" explicitly mentioned that today's way of life could no longer be associated with certain parts of German and European history. They spoke about the past in way that resembles some of the behaviours that Rosa criticises. In their view, German participation in colonialism, for example, is something that they could easily ignore in their national context. Although, during their conference, different speakers explicitly presented colonial continuities and many members of the group possessed quite a lot of historical knowledge, they did not seem to consider these facts very important for their everyday lives. They knew which countries had been German colonies and in which years; some even mentioned details about Bismarck's intentions when "entering the race for colonies". They also mentioned international treaties including information about the date and location they were signed. Nevertheless, all this is considered mere historical fact, not part of their own cultural heritage. They seemed to present these facts in order to impress others,

not to explain or question their own situations. Some expressed genuine surprise that colonialism still seemed to matter in African economics; they found it interesting, but the link to their own lives was limited to the idea that this knowledge could be valuable in international trade and/or politics. Considering the findings from the policy and curricula reviews summarised above, the amount of knowledge these young people had about the names and dates of German colonial history was slightly surprising, but they still reproduced the common schema of excluding Others' perspectives and commonly forgotten aspects of history from their own cultural identities.

Colonial continuities are not only problematic insofar as the cultural aspects of discrimination are concerned, as noted above, the denial of certain perspectives is intricately connected to economic and ecological structures. This has been researched extensively in several studies on communities in colonised regions, for example in Chile by Graf, Schmalz and Sittel (2019). Gonçalves (2019) states that the construction of state structures based on the principle of equality plays a role in creating or reproducing inequality, since it disguises the existing power imbalance. This imbalance is the basis of capitalism and othering is required to justify the exploitation and expropriation. Rosa (2019a) has also noted these connections and stresses the importance of a resonant relationship with history as well as with other people. Time and spatial dimensions relate to each other in the same way as nature and history. In his approach severing these ties and ignoring the historical links are the necessary precursor to exploitation, which is the corollary of being resonant in the world. A resonant relationship cannot, in his view, operate around a specific goal; it is an open (Rosa, 2019a) relationship and as such is incompatible with economic growth being the paradigm for societal relations.

DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON ECONOMIC GROWTH – REPRODUCING PRIVILEGE OR TRANSFORMING SOCIETY

As many studies have found and even the UN sustainability goals reflect, climate change and lack of sustainability are inseparable from capitalist social structures, which rely on inequality (Backhouse, Tittor, 2019). Capitalism has been widely critiqued, with many intellectuals calling for change. Esser (2019) puts it dramatically, saying that capitalism is now devouring its well-nourished children from rich regions of the world who have filled their bellies elsewhere through externalisation and exploitation.

Following this criticism, several "degrowth" or "post-growth" initiatives have emerged, but they do not all promote the same principles for change and differ in terms of levels of activity. These initiatives are often limited to socially privileged, academically educated people. The strong self-reflection, which is also found in the complicated "non-discriminatory" language and a specific lifestyle oriented towards ecologic sustainability, stems from privilege and could exclude less privileged milieus. This is indicative of the highly complex historical and economic connections to the future that are difficult to overcome. But degrowth-movements could generate real change if they led to the non-hierarchical exchange of ideas with people living in all parts of the world (Eversberg, Muraca, 2019).

Elements of these ideas could be observed in the practices of the "Activists for Nature". They explicitly learned about degrowth principles, starting off by questioning their own

consumption and looking for ways to live a more sustainable lifestyle, avoiding fast fashion and fast food, plastic, and all forms of waste. They employed non-discriminatory language, actively called for everybody's equal right to speak up and tried to ensure that no one was silenced on the basis of their gender or ability to express themselves fluently in German. They invited speakers from less privileged regions of the world and respected them for their expertise in mechanisms of climate change and capitalism that they had not previously been aware of. But they themselves were mostly very privileged young people, who displayed high levels of education, spoke about their travel experiences and university studies, and reflected on their level of privilege during the workshops. They had incredibly detailed and broad knowledge about global, and specifically European, political structures, they knew scientific facts and numbers relating to climate change that greatly impressed the researcher (a social scientist) because she acquired a lot of additional knowledge about politics and the natural sciences just by listening in on the informal conversations of young people in between the sessions. But it remained unclear how aware of their privilege they were and what they were doing to challenge or reproduce it.

While these young people from the "Activists for Nature" mostly supported the idea of degrowth, there are other attempts in practice and theory that aim at social transformation towards sustainability but without giving up the paradigm of economic growth (Adloff, Neckel, 2019). In this frame of reference, economic growth is seen as the necessary basis of "a good life" and radical transformations are seen as a threat to this form of prosperity.

According to Adloff and Neckel (2019), visions are just as important as structures and practices when analysing the potential for social transformation.The structure of the "Activists for Europe" visions became quite visible in their practices. The way they dressed, talked, and organised conferences showed that they were influenced by the mainstream educational system, which is clearly oriented towards reproducing the existing hierarchies through preserving high culture without critically reappraising the underlying exclusive mechanisms of knowledge production (Seukwa et al., 2018). From their interactions and clothing, from the jokes they made and the stories they told about their families, their elevated and distinguished cultural capital was visible. Sometimes they even noticed it. They mentioned that they were privileged, but did not seem to feel any need to change it. In many interactions, they did not seem to notice that their habitus was distinctive. As Bourdieu puts it: "[T]he schemes of the habitus, the primary form of classification, owe their specific efficacy to the fact that they function below the level of consciousness and language, beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control by the will" (Bourdieu, 2010: 469). For Bourdieu, social distinction that reproduces inequality in society manifests itself in practices of high culture. Young people in this organisation seemed to reproduce this mechanism. They held their conference in very distinguished places that they could not usually have afforded, but whatever they lacked in economic capital they compensated by activating their social capital. The location of the conference, a rather grand old manor, was one example. Although it was mentioned that the organisation could never have afforded this location if it had not been supported by the high-profile foundation that lets them use it for free, this is just another sign of the configuration of social capital that these young people can rely on. They were generally ambitious, career-oriented, and appeared confident when speaking in front of an audience and to a level that even slightly intimidated the student assistant who

participated in the weekend seminar for the observation. She "noted in the protocol that her first impression of the organisation after researching them online made her iron some blouses, because she feared she might be 'underdressed', since in the pictures of previous seminars, the participants were all wearing dress shirts or blouses" (Sylla, Fahr, et al. 2020: 120). She also noted several aspects that show signs of specific cultural and social capital that is inseparable from high privilege.

As these observations show, the differences in perspectives on the past between the two groups are linked to a more general difference in perspectives on the world, on social relations, and on an individual's way of being in the world. Starting from a point of privilege does not necessarily result in the same visions and practices. Following Magatti et al. (2019), overcoming the historical construct of the necessity for economic growth that capitalism has created is not easy; it requires a distinction to be made between individuation and individualisation, with the former representing a more "mature" way of living than the latter. Magatti et al. (2019) do not discard the idea of growth in general but aim to change the qualitative aspects of it:

> *[T]he challenge is to optimistically look for a new type of prosperity, moving away from a societal adolescence (based on quantitative growth and consumerism) toward a more mature social organization based on a distinctive model of self-realization, where creativity and human flourishing may become the qualifying elements of a new development model. This is a task that the notion of social generativity may help accomplish* (Magatti et al., 2019: 471).

Rosa (2019a), as has been shown above, opts for a radically new paradigm. In his view, sustainability cannot be realised if the stability of society relies on constant dynamic growth. All reforms will fall short of their transformational impact if they do not consider the bases of relations between individuals and their environment. According to him, the dynamic growth which necessarily leads to escalation and conflict can only be overcome by challenging the idea of individual sovereignty and autonomy; individuals would have to consider themselves connected, not owning, or being threatened by the other, or by change, but resonating with it (Rosa, 2019a).

Coming back to Chomsky (1967), the responsibility of intellectuals derives from their privileged positions. "It's just obvious that intellectuals should tell the truth. It is equally obvious that it is not only intellectuals who have this responsibility. But Chomsky argues that intellectuals have responsibilities that go beyond the responsibilities of others because they have a particularly privileged position" (Allott, 2019: 1). A tremendous part of that privilege has been achieved at the expense of others and these mechanisms have been veiled, so the responsibility includes lifting those veils, researching which interests are behind certain policies or a certain rhetoric. Chomsky suggests that we should investigate our own connections to injustices as thoroughly as we would the crimes of our official enemies (Chomsky, 2019b).

CONCLUSION: LINKING THE PAST TO THE FUTURE THROUGH RESPONSIBILITY

In the previous sections of this article, several aspects of how young people can and do relate narratives of the past to their ways of being in the world and their imaginations of the future have been presented. It has become apparent that privilege, although it structures the possibilities of knowledge about the past, does not necessarily always lead to perspectives seeking to reproduce the social inequality that allowed this privilege. One main difference can be identified in the notion of responsibility. "Responsibility and memory are indelibly linked" (Howard, 2020: 87). This link can be seen in both directions. While their shared privilege allowed young members of both organisations to acquire the same factual knowledge about the past, they connected to it differently. While the "Activists for Nature" used knowledge about the colonial past to question inequality, to actively learn more about it, and to look for ways in which their own lives are connected to the hierarchical structures generated through colonialism, the "Activists for Europe" did not see this connection and did not challenge their privileged position. This observation leads to the conclusion that the teaching of historical facts in itself is not sufficient for young people to develop a sense of responsibility – it has to include the connections to their own lives. "An aspect of more responsible positioning towards the study of memory, then, is a commitment to articulating its dynamism and pluralism precisely because memory, agency, and social obligations are bound together" (Howard, 2020: 98–99).

One of the principles that could guide the investigation into these connections is the principle of sustainability and, hence, a shift away from a capitalist economic cost and profits perspective towards a more ecological perspective. While the perspective on the future in the economic sector is about looking for future profits that can be initiated today, in the sustainability perspective the future costs are more actively considered in a desire to avoid them (Adloff, Neckel, 2019). This is not simple and requires drastic transformation, as has been shown. "Despite the rise of fair-trade initiatives, the single motivating factor for most companies remains profit" (Smith, Smith, 2019: 12).

In the collective volume honouring the 50th anniversary of Chomsky's essay "The Responsibility of Intellectuals" (Allot, Knight, Smith, *Eds.*, 2019), Chomsky reconstructs the historical circumstances in which his essay was first written. He describes how the debate on the responsibility for certain historical events has changed over the course of time and how certain perceptions or positions on the topic were unthinkable in mainstream discourse, despite being held by the majority of the public during a certain period (Chomsky, 2019). He also recounts historical events in which the relentless work of young activists (probably not only young ones) actually led to a change in the injustices caused and/or ignored by people in power: "[M]inds were changed – or more accurately, opened, at least among large parts of the general public if not intellectual elites, which continue, routinely, to ignore or simply deny the facts" (Chomsky, 2019: 82). In his original essay, he stressed the importance of historical knowledge in the perspective on responsibility for political decisions: "If it is the responsibility of the intellectual to insist upon the truth, it is also his duty to see events in their historical perspective" (Chomsky, 1967). In the light of the aforementioned historical perspective on colonial continuities and the devaluation of the voices and actions of certain people,

"the responsibility of the intellectual is to be part of a movement for change, discarding the trappings that separate thought from action, body from mind, that confine some of us to action in the classroom and others to the streets. Until the streets become the classrooms and the classrooms the streets our task as intellectuals will be incomplete" (Walker, 2019: 32). The ways in which young people speak, the words they use, can show how they conceptualise their responsibility for change. When they take responsibility for their own actions and for the effects these actions have on their surroundings, they usually accept that "words may affect the course that life takes and, therefore, should not be used in vain" (Siragusa, 2020: 79). Perhaps this is what should be taught to young people: that each part of history influences their lives in specific ways and that everything they say or do can also have an impact. If so, then they need to learn to critically analyse, listen, and carefully choose their words and actions in relation to the connection with their environment.

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