Chapter 13

Theorizing underlying notions of citizenship in the dynamics of learning in public policy units

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Abstract

In this chapter, we explore the research findings acquired for a recent pilot project carried out in the public services sector in Belgium as a relevant case for discussing notions of citizenship in anti-poverty strategies. These anti-poverty policies and practices are embedded in a participatory logic, as social policy practitioners have shown an interest in putting people with experience of poverty into participatory positions in order to implement anti-poverty strategies. Based on an analysis of the enacted practices of participation which are evolving in public policy units, and the emerging dynamics of learning, underlying notions of citizenship in these social practices are considered, and potential risks and challenges are discussed.

Keywords: civic learning; citizenship; democracy; policy; democracy

Introduction

Currently there is an increasing interest among politicians and policy-makers in the question of democratic citizenship and political participation, which can be seen as “responding both to an alleged crisis in society and to an alleged crisis in democracy” (Biesta, 2011a, p. 1). In this chapter, we focus on the current emphasis of social policy-makers in Flanders (the Dutch speaking part of Belgium) on the issue of the (user) participation of people with experience of poverty. This emphasis on the participation of people in poverty as service users is in line with international developments, where practitioners of social policy have shown an interest in putting people with experience of poverty into participatory positions in order to implement anti-poverty policies and to pursue a more democratic society (Cruikshank, 1999; Beresford, 2002; Lister, 2004; Krumer-Nevo, 2005, 2008).

It is argued, however, that the participation of service users, such as people with experience of poverty, in social policy-making is a crucial and yet a deeply problematic process (see Cook, 2002; Simmons & Birchall, 2005; Beresford, 2010; Simmons, 2011). In addition, it has been argued that there is a lack of the empirical research which would allow us to discuss the potential risks and challenges of the actual procedures and practices of implementing user participation (Krumer-Nevo & Barak, 2006). In that light, we discuss research concerning a recent federal pilot project in Belgium in which service users with experience of poverty were employed, as requested by the federal Public Service for Social Integration (POD MI), to bridge the existing gap between people in poverty and those working in the administration of federal public policy units (POD MI, 2006). This ‘gap’ was seen in the lack of responsiveness of social administrators to service users who were poor (Demeyer & Réa, 2008). In response to this failure to provide responsive public services, users with experience of poverty were trained as experts and employed as interpreters of the poverty problem in the administration of these public policy units (Casman et al., 2010).

In what follows, we first chart the conceptual debate on poverty, citizenship, participation and civic learning. Second, we throw light on recent developments in Belgium. Third, in the light of the ambiguous practices of user participation in public policy units in Belgium, we discuss the dynamics of learning found in those public policy units, and underlying notions of citizenship.

Poverty, citizenship, participation and civic learning

It has been observed that conceptualizations of poverty and anti-poverty policy-making are closely interrelated. Lister (2004, p. 12) indicates that “how we define poverty is critical to political, policy

and academic debates; it is bound up with explanations and has implications for solutions". As Veit-Wilson (2000) observes, the ways in which poverty, anti-poverty policy-making and social justice are defined and pursued are influenced by the prevailing welfare state regime, and the issue of citizenship has been essential in this. Anti-poverty policy-making has been linked to wider concerns about citizenship and democracy, by referring to the nexus of the lack of citizenship, voice and power of people in poverty (Mehta, 2008). Lister (2004) asserts that the realisation of the citizenship of people in poverty should be perceived as vital to human dignity in order "to address economic and social inequalities" (Lister, 1997, p. 17).

In *reality* our societies are often characterized by the dynamics of social exclusion and marginalization (Kabeer, 2005). The experience of people in poverty of not being recognised as citizens is frequently identified, and refers to the discrepancy between their formal citizenship (embodied as an entitlement and a status) and their *de facto* citizenship (constructed through the experience of being a member of a particular community and society in practice) (Lister, 2004). This *de facto* social inequality of people in poverty, which is seen in structural class divisions between non-poor and poor citizens (Jones, 2002), is based, both in historical and in current arrangements, to the social question (Rosanvallon, 2000). These gross social inequalities continue to cut across the everyday lives of people in poverty and "can lead to second-class citizenship" (Lister, 2004, p. 165). This reflects the exclusionary tensions and contradictions in citizenship.

From our point of view, citizenship refers to the ways in which the relationship between the individual and the state is constructed, and we are also concerned with the political values of Western democracies such as equality, freedom and solidarity (Schuyt, 1972). This relationship between the individual and the state can be constructed in different ways, depending on different underlying assumptions about the responsibilities of a citizen and the state, and about processes of learning. In that vein, Biesta (2011a) makes a conceptual distinction between citizenship as a social identity and citizenship as a political identity.

Biesta (2011a, p. 1) asserts that citizenship can be seen as a *social identity*, referring to the citizen's place and role in the life of society and the citizen's *social participation*, since "the one who fits in, the one who goes with the flow" is part of the social fabric. In this frame of reference, citizenship is considered to be an identity that should be established by the individual citizen, and is "obtained through identification with an existing socio-political order" (Biesta, 2011a, p. 145). As such, citizenship is often perceived "as an individualistic bourgeois charade designed to obscure fundamental economic and social class divisions" (Lister, 1997, p. 17). In the case of people in poverty, their second-class citizenship has been translated as a problem of the deviant behaviour of the poor (Lister, 2004). In this understanding of citizenship, poverty is predominantly framed as an individual problem, and therefore as something that needs to be overcome by the individual as part of a process of identification or of conforming to the socio-political order. In that vein, Biesta (2011a, p. 5) refers to a socialisation conception of civic learning, which is about the individual *learning* of people in poverty *for future citizenship* that is necessary to become part of an existing socio-political order.

A different conception implies that citizenship is perceived as a *political identity* (Biesta, 2011a); this refers to the democratic potential for the citizen to have *political participation* as the one who stands "out from the crowd, the one who goes against the flow, (...) and who, in a sense, is always slightly 'out of order'" (Biesta, 2011a, p. 1). According to Biesta (2011a, p. 3), who draws on the work of Rancière, no social order can ever be fully equal: "While in some societies or social configurations there may be more equality – or less inequality – than in others, the very way in which the social is structured precludes the possibility of full equality, or at least makes it highly unlikely. (...) Rancière maintains that every social order is all-inclusive in that in any given order everyone has a particular

place, role, and identity. But this does not mean – and this is crucial – that everyone is included in the ruling of the order”. Rancière defines politics as always democratic, “as an interruption of an existing social order with reference to the idea of equality” (Biesta, 2011a, p. 3). In that vein, democracy has to be understood as occurring in the moments when the logic of the existing order is confronted with the logic of equality. However, the moment of democracy is therefore “not merely an interruption of the existing order, but an interruption that results in a reconfiguration of this order into one in which new ways of being and acting exist and new identities come into play”, as a process of dis-identification or subjectification (Biesta, 2011a, p. 4). For Biesta (2011a, p. 5), this also suggests a subjectification conception of civic learning, which is about the learning that is involved in the engagement with an ongoing and never-ending ‘experiment’ of democracy, implying both individual and collective processes of *learning from current citizenship experiences*.

Participation of people in poverty: the Belgian case

Over the last decades, the symbolic significance of participation as full citizens for people in poverty – which indicates a collective sense of human dignity and solidarity in our society (Fraser, 1996, 2000) – has been defended and extended through the political struggles, campaigns and collective action of a rather vibrant civil society, including people in poverty or the so-called *de facto* non-citizens, for structural and participatory democracy (Powell, 2008). This struggle for the marginalized to have full participation in society has been pushed onto the political agenda, and since the 1960s and 1970s the argument has gone that the political and policy-making process is strengthened when the standpoints, perspectives and experiences of minority groups are directly represented (Beresford, 2002, 2010). Since the 1990s, the formal participation of people with experience of poverty in policy-making has figured prominently on the international agenda as “they have the capacity to place, and indeed sometimes to force, life knowledge on the political, professional, academic and policy making agenda” (Beresford, 2000, p. 493). In order to enhance the performance of key public services, *user participation* has moved into the foreground of social policy, placing participatory ideas and strategies into a more central position (Lister, 2002; Simmons & Birchall, 2005; Krumer-Nevo, 2005, 2008). User participation has been put forward as a way of using dialogue to support new forms of responsiveness and accountability, because it is assumed that user participation has “practical value for the performance of key public services by shaping better-informed decisions and ensuring that limited resources are used to meet service users’ priorities” (Simmons & Birchall, 2005, p. 261).

In parallel with international developments (Cancian & Danziger, 2009), Belgian conceptualizations of poverty and anti-poverty policy-making have shifted and changed, and have informed assumptions about the citizenship and participation of people in poverty. In that vein, Vranken (1998) describes a remarkable conceptual shift in anti-poverty politics in Belgium that has been inspired by these developments since the 1990s. During the ‘golden sixties’ and the seventies, social policy ‘rediscovered’ poverty owing to “a broad critique on welfare politics since the Belgian welfare state was conceived and implemented, such as negative consequences of economic growth, dehumanizing and alienating effects of production measures, and increasingly uni-dimensional patterns of consumption” (Deleeck, 1972, as cited in Vranken, 1998, p. 64). After this ‘rediscovery’ there followed a ‘redefinition’: from the end of the 1970s and during the early 1980s the focus of the definition of poverty mainly shifted to non-materialistic and cultural aspects, rather than lack of material and social resources, and “this shift took place because of the belief that material poverty was eradicated” (Vranken, 1998, p. 67). Along with this shift in perception, people in poverty were mobilized as social actors “through social movements, such as ATD Fourth World, who asserted the claim to give voice to the real interests and concerns of poor people” (Vranken, 1998, p. 68). A significant milestone was the appearance of the *General Report on Poverty* (AVA) in 1994. This was the result of a joint venture by social workers and other actors in civil society, particularly (self-)advocacy organizations of people in poverty, and was aimed at guaranteeing the recognition of the

standpoints of people in poverty in a structural dialogue with representative policy-makers in the Belgian welfare state to pursue full citizenship for people in poverty. As the Prime Minister of the day, J.-L. Dehaene, stated, “in the future, the government will take the conclusions and the suggestions in the general report as a point of departure for anti-poverty policy making” (AVA, 1994, p. 416). The coordination of the AVA as a policy instrument became an annual Belgian enterprise, and a network of social movements of poor people, calling for their rights of citizenship, was constituted (Van Robaey et al., 2005).

As a consequence of these developments, participation has come to function as a central and dominant social policy concept for the implementation of anti-poverty strategies in Belgium (Bouverne-De Bie, 2003). Anti-poverty policy-making has been predominantly based on the principle of empowering people with experience of poverty in order to support their participation in policy-making processes (Dierckx, 2007). The depth of the yawning gap between the poor and the non-poor is emphasized as an essential cultural dimension of poverty, and anti-poverty policy-making is pursued through making individual empowerment the building block which enables user participation:

We cannot forget that the accumulation of social inequality and exclusion makes up the individuality of poverty. The dimension of the depth of this gap is of crucial importance: how deep is the gap between the poor and the rest of society? (...) The powerlessness of the poor is crucial: they cannot bridge the gap that separates them from the rest of society under their own power; they need help to do this. And that is exactly the role of government intervention and the welfare sector (Vranken, 2007, p. 37).

In this dominant Belgian approach, explicit government intervention is meant to bridge the cultural gap created by vicious processes of social exclusion which result in individual feelings of powerlessness, apathy, isolation and shame (Van Regenmortel, 2002). This ‘psychology of powerlessness’ has been the rationale behind a paradigm of individual empowerment which is intended “to improve the participation of people in poverty” (Van Regenmortel, 2002, p. 75). According to this approach, participation “is viewed as (...) the mechanism by which people gain mastery over their lives” (Van Regenmortel, 2002, p. 75). That being the case, Belgian social policy concerned with anti-poverty policy-making is formally preoccupied with empowering people in poverty so that they can engage in self-advocacy and participation and can claim their full citizenship; this is the dominant way to implement anti-poverty strategies (Dierckx, 2007).

In the next section, we go on to describe and discuss empirical research on the challenges of practices of citizenship and participation which are inspired by these perspectives and assumptions in anti-poverty policy strategies (Krumer-Nevo & Barak, 2006). We aim to discuss the underlying dynamics of learning in these practices.

User participation in public policy units: a pilot project

In this section, we describe the framework of the innovative pilot project in public policy units in Belgium, and our research involvement.

An innovative pilot project

Since anti-poverty policy-making in Belgium is embedded in a logic of user participation, social policy has shown an interest in deploying, in public policy units, users with experience of poverty as experts in implementing and monitoring anti-poverty policies. In the drive to become more responsive to the needs of disadvantaged users, user participation has been injected into public service delivery to empower the recipients of social policy (Gilliatt et al., 2000). Since 2003 (see the Flemish ‘Decree on Poverty Policy’ in Degrande, 2003), the user participation of people with experience of poverty in

public service delivery has been formally recognized by policy-makers in Belgium. The 'Decree on Poverty Policy' stated that people in poverty can only transform their experience into expertise by following an advanced educational programme (Walschap, 2001). The surplus value of active participation by the poor in public service delivery was emphasized because of an assumption that poverty at play in public services was in tension with the 'hard-to-understand' culture of poverty, characterized as a psychology of powerlessness (Nicaise & Dewilde, 1995). This assumption is defined as 'the missing link':

The idea of an expert by experience in social exclusion is a response to (...) a missing link between the policy makers and aid providers of all the services with which the socially excluded come into contact, on the one hand, and the excluded persons themselves, on the other hand. (...) The key element consists of the fundamental difference between the position of an excluded person, who is forced to live in long-term exclusion and that of the organisations and participants in policy making, who are not familiar with this social experience nor with the harsh reality of the life of socially excluded people in all its aspects, particularly the sense of shame and humiliation due to the fact that the excluded have no control over their own lives (The Missing Link Europe, 2011).

In 2004 the Council of Ministers in Belgium decided to recruit service users with experience of poverty to work in public policy units, and this initiative was launched by way of an innovative pilot project coordinated by the Federal Public Service for Social Integration (POD MI). The POD MI was commissioned by the government to enhance and reinforce national anti-poverty policies in Belgium (POD MI, 2006). This was an idea which was developed in the Belgian National Action Plan (NAP) on Social Inclusion 2004-2006, so the rationale behind the pilot project was the idea mentioned above of a missing link, or gap, between people in poverty and the government; this gap is most obvious in the psychological effects that are manifest in people in poverty since their experiences with federal public policy units often cause feelings of powerlessness and incapacity (POD MI, 2006). The gap was defined as a lack of responsiveness in social administrators to poor service users (Demeyer & Réa, 2008). In response to this failure to provide high-quality responsive public services, people with experience of poverty were educated and trained as experts, by taking part in an educational programme which transformed their experience of living in poverty into expertise in order to drive changes from inside the public policy units (Spiesschaert, 2005; Casman et al., 2010). The POD MI agreed a full-time contract for each of these experts with experience of poverty, the costs of which were subsidized by the European Social Fund (ESF); under these contracts, the experts were required to continue their advanced education for two days a week and were employed in federal public policy units for the remaining three days a week.

In 2011, 26 experts with experience of poverty worked across 22 federal public policy units, and their tasks involved (see POD MI, 2011):

- improving accessibility for service users in general and for poor and socially excluded service users in particular;
- supporting the recipients of welfare in dealing with administrative procedures;
- listing the needs of poor service users;
- improving the quality of accessibility by means of proposals with respect to communication;
- assisting in transversal collaboration between the policy units involved; and
- drawing attention to the structural lack of voice for people in poverty.

The project ran from the beginning of September 2005 until the end of August 2011 and was integrally funded by the ESF. As researchers, we were appointed as external and interim evaluators from March until August 2008 (see Final Report, POD MI, 2008).

Research involvement

The evaluation research was carried out as a piece of applied policy research to document and consider the implementation process through which organizations affect levels of privilege and disadvantage in society, as well as the distribution of privileges and advantages in these organizations (Hinings & Greenwood, 2002). The research team applied a qualitative research design (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998), using two complementary research approaches in order to document and analyse what actually happened in the federal policy units involved:

- we collected all the relevant and available documents: policy documents, collaboration protocols, function profiles of the experts with experience of poverty in each federal public service, reports of consultations of with experts with experience of poverty and their colleagues, observations made by members of the coordination team and by the members of the organization responsible for advanced education, and reports and observations made by the experts with experience of poverty
- we selected and contacted research participants, asking them to attend a *qualitative semi-structured interview* (see Bogdan & Biklen, 1998), on the basis of their being directly involved with the employment of the service users with experience of poverty in the context of each federal public service involved. Eventually, eight employed experts with experience of poverty and eight of their close colleagues who were appointed as their support workers were recruited and participated in the research project.

We applied a qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), analysing the available documents and the sixteen qualitative, in-depth interviews with the relevant actors who were directly involved. In the next section, we discuss the enacted practices of participation and civic learning which are evolving in the public policy units, and the underlying notions of citizenship.

Uncovering different notions of participation and learning in public policy units

Our research documents ambiguous social practices relating to user participation in the public policy units. In what follows, we address the underlying notions of participation in the practices in the public policy units involved, and discuss the dynamics of learning there. Since it has been observed that the extent to which user participation is “substantively modified by group processes (...) or by individual processes (...) remains an open question” (Simmons & Birchall, 2005, p. 275), we distinguish between the dynamics of the individual learning of the employed service users, and the dynamics of the joint and collective learning of the employed service users and other employees.

Dynamics of the individual learning of the employed service users

In the Belgian approach, the conceptualization of poverty as a ‘gap that poor people cannot bridge under their own power’ translates anti-poverty policy strategies and practices into a logic of empowerment to induce an individualized process of the personal growth of poor people. This approach is clearly at work in the educational programme, where poor people were educated and trained as experts to transform their experience of living in poverty into expertise in order to drive changes from inside the public policy units (Casman et al., 2010). The educational programme produces people in poverty who have socialised (or specialised) in ‘being poor’, and therefore have a reason to exist in the public policy units. Many of the public policy units involved act upon this use of user participation by recognizing that these people are experts who “personally experienced exclusion, who have coped with this experience and extended it” (The Missing Link Europe, 2011). As employed users, their viewpoints on poverty and anti-poverty policy-making in the public service unit acquire a status of authority and expertise; but, in deference to their expertise, they are individually responsible for solving problems associated with the delivery of a responsive public service on an interpersonal or organizational level (Block, 2003). In practice, the so-called anti-poverty practices in the public policy units turn out to have counterproductive implications, as they “construct citizens committed to a personal identity [and] a moral responsibility” (Rose, 1989, p. 131, as cited in Baistow, 2000, p. 98), or lead to an *identity politics* of people in poverty. As Phillips (2004, pp. 36-7) argues, “identity politics

threaten to reinforce the very patterns of domination they otherwise claim to challenge, for in ignoring or promising to transcend differences (...); they treat difference as a problem – and those marked by them as a problem too. (...) In doing so, they leave the agenda to be set by people whose power has been so much taken for granted that they do not even think of themselves as a distinct social group”. In the public policy units, the expertise of employed experts with experience of poverty risks remaining exclusively an expertise in poverty and social exclusion, and discourages opportunities for collective learning about the ways in which public policy units can deal with, and act upon, poverty and social inequality issues in the long run.

Moreover, these practices of user participation may lead merely to rhetorical change, because service users with experience of poverty risk being, in the end, little more than physically present. As one of the experts with experience of poverty observes, she was dealt with during the implementation process as an expert who had been expelled from the group, and not as a colleague:

“That moment, a colleague asked me: “Oh, are you alone here?” and I said, “Yes, please join me!” But the colleague refused: “No, I sit over there with the colleagues; you’re not an employee or a colleague here”. In the federal public service, I was like an appendage to the regular employees. I was allowed to be physically present, nothing more. If you ask me, employing us seems to be a charitable act to help us poor duffers, because they want to do something about poverty in our country. However, the employment of 10 or 20 individuals with experience of poverty won’t uproot poverty at all.”

Le Grand (2003) grasps the nettle by asking how *democratic* user participation can actually be if the participation of service users tends to remain primarily instrumental and tokenistic, merely implying rhetorical change. As Beresford (2010, p. 499) observes, since “the aim is to draw in the views and ideas of service users to inform and in some cases legitimate, existing decision-makers and power holders, (...) for many service users, it can feel like little more than tokenism or a ‘box ticking’ exercise rather than meaningful involvement”. Participation may become an empty exercise, at best a token gesture or, at worst, a manipulative and exploitative exercise. As Cook (2002, p. 522) argues, we have to ask fundamental questions about participation processes in which the objects of social policy are meant to find their voice in different areas of social policy: “if we are not prepared to do anything about the responses, why ask the questions in the first place?”

Dynamics of collective learning from experiences

Focusing on the ways in which practices of user participation can influence the extent to which the public policy units in question give meaning to, and challenge, poverty issues shows the importance of collective and reciprocal processes of learning. Employing *expert* users with experience of poverty – which is done by the POD MI as an external incentive to guarantee the quality of public service delivery – might discourage and free the social administrators in the public policy units from learning to be responsive to service users, including those living in poverty. User participation might work as a camouflage technique that masks the lack of collective responsibility and accountability for dealing with the poverty problem in public policy units. However, in contrast to these practices, in some public policy units a collective concern and responsibility for dealing with the poverty problem was established. This collective responsibility appears to be a political choice made in some public policy units, those units where people with experience of poverty were employed on the condition that the units first explicitly subscribed to anti-poverty politics as a mission statement. Simmons and Birchall (2005, pp. 273-4) also stress that the interplay between collective and institutional dynamics and user participation is essential, arguing that “as a starting point, providers must decide whether or not they actually want greater participation”. From that perspective, one of the employed people with experience of poverty explains how the meaning of the anti-poverty perspective is construed in practice.

“The director of the public service was well-informed and implemented the anti-poverty policy-making incentive in the organization. I didn’t have a clearly outlined task, just that my colleagues could ask for my advice when they had to deal with problems associated with poor service users and inaccessibility. My colleagues told me that it was really useful – there was an openness allowing us to ask questions and to reflect – as they had expected that I would be a know-it-all and give orders about what to do. They appreciated the joint process of learning and I became a colleague in the collective.”

In these policy units, it is remarkable to see that the employed service users with experience of poverty were perceived as regular employees whose perspectives were included and discussed in everyday practices because of their specific knowledge of the strategies of people living in poverty which was gained from their personal experience, rather than as experts who had a monopoly of knowledge and an individual responsibility in bridging the ‘missing link’. In this scenario, the questions of people with experience of poverty can offer the collective a lens through which a public service can question taken-for-granted practices and improve its responsiveness, which symbolizes “a demonstration of respect for people in poverty as being equal citizens” (Lister, 2001, p. 70). In these public policy units, the role of employed service users enables both individual and collective processes of learning from current experiences, in a process of subjectification and civic learning on an organizational level. As one of the employed service users observes:

“A lot of colleagues said that they didn’t know the taste of poverty. They told me that they couldn’t grasp the depth of poverty. For them, the homeless and beggars are ‘really poor’. I explained to them that poverty is a very complex and existential condition, sometimes very subtle and hard to recognize. And I stressed the importance of their involvement in recognizing this in our public service delivery, because we can’t solve poverty and certainly not when it is considered to be an individual responsibility; but we can work upon the structural dynamics of social exclusion.”

This involves a continuous and collective questioning about whether, and how, the public service delivery is of high quality, and whether the administration is useful for the range of questions posed by recipients of welfare in general and by people in poverty in particular.

Concluding reflections

One can argue that the educational programme implements the idea that poor people should *learn for* future citizenship by establishing a social identity as a poor, although articulate and expert, consumer, an identity that is necessary for becoming part of an existing socio-political order; this is a socialisation conception of civic learning (Biesta, 2011a). Biesta (2011b, p. 143) warns of the tricky nature of “entry conditions for participation” for individuals who wish to take part in the game of democratic participation; “when democratic politics is restricted to those who already agree on the basic rules of the political game, the most important and most difficult aspect of democratic politics, that is, the process through which such an agreement about basic rules is achieved, is left out of the picture”. In the first approach, when the educated and trained expert service users are employed as interpreters of the poverty problem in the administration of these public policy units (Casman et al., 2010), they are supposed to bridge the gap, or the ‘missing link’, between people in poverty and those working in the administration of federal public policy units (POD MI, 2006). It can be argued that this approach reflects social citizenship because the ways in which the public policy units deal with the poverty problem is implied in supplying the ‘missing link’, in tuning the demands of poor service users to the ways in which the service is, usually, offered. The employed experts by experience are not included in the decisions made, or in the ruling of the order. In addition, the logic of equality remains out of the picture, which implies that these practices remain undemocratic. The research findings show that this idea of bridging the ‘missing link’ turns out to be instrumental and tokenistic in practice, discouraging opportunities for

collective learning about the ways in which public policy units can deal with, and act upon, poverty and social inequality issues in society in the long run. The second approach might echo the democratic potential of the participation of people with experience of poverty as employees, whose new identities can come into play while a process of dis-identification with being an 'expert' takes place, and who stand "out from the crowd, the one who goes against the flow, (...) and who, in a sense, is always slightly 'out of order'" (Biesta, 2011a, p. 1). Their interruptions can make "visible what has no business being seen", linking up with the idea of equality (Biesta, 2011b, p. 144), and are "work that happens on the borders of the democratic order" (Biesta, 2011b, p. 146). However, in the second approach, one could also argue that the involvement of people with experience of poverty does not necessarily and inherently grant them political citizenship, since the moment of democracy implies not merely an interruption of the existing order due to a confrontation with the issue of poverty and (in)equality, but should also result in a reconfiguration of the collective. The vital question remains when, and how, these moments of interruption, which can perturb the arrangements in public policy units that have been taken for granted, are actually captured as political resistance against the existence of poverty and social inequality in our society. This suggests the necessity of a politicization of citizenship, that can take place in actual social practices that develop in the relationships between people, is embedded in a set of inter-relational questions and in a diversity and plurality of interests and concerns, and is actualized and constantly renegotiated through (inter)actions in which temporary lack of consensus is a vital element (Roose & De Bie, 2007; Roets et al., 2012). Anti-poverty politics thus require a reclaiming of collective politics and values such as solidarity, collective responsibility and interdependency (Lister, 2004).

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