SUPEER

SUSTAINABLE INTEGRATION THROUGH PEER-TO-PEER SUPPORT

THE SUPEER BOOKLET COLLECTION
ON CONCEPTS AND METHODOLOGIES

BOOKLET 3 of 4

PEER LEARNING IN YOUTH WORK AND INTEGRATION

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SOCIAL CAPITAL
IN YOUTH WORK
AND INTEGRATION

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PREFACE

SUPEER – sustainable integration through peer support – is a European project supported by the EU-Commission within the Erasmus+ programme for strategic partnerships. Partner organisations from 6 European countries are collaborating in the SUPEER project from the common aim to support the building of communities, empowerment, social capital and active citizenship among young people from both minority and majority environments. A further aim is to pave the way for a sustainable integration process among young refugees and newcomers through an innovative and peer-based concept, where young people with diverse backgrounds establish equal, appreciative and stable relations through a common learning and networking programme.

Thus, **PEER LEARNING** is the focal point of the pedagogical and methodological approach in the SUPEER project. However, the peer learning programme is closely linked to **3 CORE CONCEPTS**, each of which forms the theoretical and conceptual basis for the aims, objectives and activities in the project:

- **EMPOWERMENT**
- **SOCIAL CAPITAL**
- **CITIZENSHIP**

Generally, these concepts are described and applied separately due to their anchoring in different theoretical and conceptual traditions. However, in the SUPEER project, where young people's well-being, participation, collaboration and mutual learning are at the center – the 3 concepts form a unified, coherent and holistic conceptual framework for the planning and implementation of all learning activities. This approach is based on the following ideas:

- **By building a bridge between the separated concepts, we can show in practice how empowerment, social capital and active citizenship mutually support each other as basic elements in young people's social, cultural, relational and personal growth as well as their well-being and experience of a positive affiliation with the surrounding society. This applies to young people who were born and raised in that society as well as to young newcomers.**

- **By using the holistic conceptual framework, we can define practices such as integration, inclusion and belonging from a positive and resourceful perspective, where the intercultural encounter between young people with diverse backgrounds and experiences learn from each other through**

> a collaboration where everyone is respected for their special contributions.
>
> • When young people are empowered through a common learning process and common activities, they mutually enhance their social and cultural capital, which generally will strengthen their motivation for an active and participatory citizenship.

Thus, peer learning becomes the focal point where the conceptual holism is translated into an equal learning practice for young peers across minority and majority environments. By making empowerment, social capital and active citizenship key concepts in the common learning process, we also create a new and resource-based framework for the young people's mutual integration process:

As an introduction to the conceptual approach and framework for the SUPEER peer learning activities, we have prepared 4 booklets that briefly illustrate how we perceive the key concepts of the project, and how we can translate them into practical peer-based learning situations. Each booklet is supplied with references to relevant literature and other links used.

THE SUPEER BOOKLET COLLECTION ON CONCEPTS AND METHODOLOGIES includes:

BOOKLET 1: Peer learning in youth work and integration
BOOKLET 2: Empowerment in peer learning and integration
BOOKLET 3: Social capital in peer learning and integration
BOOKLET 4: Citizenship in peer learning and integration

1. INTRODUCTION

The SUPEER project aims at promoting youth social capital in the majority and minority cultures through facilitating peer relations in and across social networks.

Social capital is a core concept in the SUPEER-project because it is an active agent in youth empowerment and integration in general. Among peers, social capital is a major source of identity and wellbeing as it provides a sense of belonging to and engagement in a community, thus it promotes citizenship and integration.

Building peer social capital also is building youths' mutual trust, recognition, commitments and expectations as well as promoting their engagement and integration in new social networks and in the community in general. Especially in European societies, youth are growing up in a rapidly changing and increasingly globalized society where migration and immigration are widening. Getting a positive outcome of this environment requires building youth social capital that can ensure positive development and growth for the community and provide means of resolving potential conflicts within the community.

1. HOW DO WE PERCEIVE THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL CAPITAL?

"Social capital can be defined simply as the existence of certain set of informal values or norms shared among members of a group that permit cooperation among them."

Francis Fukoyama

This simplified definition of social capital is the result of many theories within different academic disciplines, primarily political science, economics and sociology, out of which three main theorists and their definitions of social capital are referred to here: Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, sociologist James Coleman and political scientist Robert D. Putman.

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1- Pierre Bourdieu: Forms of capital

Bourdieu is the first to define capital as not only economic but also social and cultural. The three forms of capital are central in understanding three concepts, which Bourdieu operates with; agent, habitus and field. **Agent** is the individual in a society. The agent's **habitus**; knowledge, norms, values and manners that are acquired by and embodied in the agent. It enables the agent to act in accordance with its own benefits and interests in the **field**. *The field is* a society, a network, a social structure or any set of relationships. Bourdieu underlines the importance of constantly evaluating and assessing each form of capital in the context of the overall theoretical framework and how each form of capital always affects and gets affected by the two other form.

Social capital, according to Bourdieu, is *"the sum of the current and potential resources associated with the individual's position in a network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition."* (Bourdieu 1986). Social capital, therefore, is resources that the individual gets access to by joining social networks. The individual's potential social capital builds on the mutual recognition of members in the network to each other. It is also affected by the size of the network as well as other types of capital that the individual holds.
Bourdieu discusses also *state social capital*. It is the public institutions and organizations that are expected to provide physical protection, legal defense, welfare, education and health care to citizens as members of the large community.

Cultural capital symbolizes sources in the form of a specific education, knowledge, cultural knowledge about literature, music, art, etc., and is about the agent's ability to understand what is perceived as a specific culture of a specific network.

2. James Coleman: Forms of social capital

Coleman defines Bourdieu's cultural capital, such as education, as human capital. However, Bourdieu´s and Coleman's theories are similar in that they both focus on the existence of several forms of capital. They are also similar in considering social relations in networks as the main source of social capital.

Social capital, according to Coleman's definition, is a form of capital that exists within social relationships among people in several forms of social networks. These social relationships

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give members of social networks access to several useful resources that function in a way that can affect their quality of life. Coleman distinguishes three functional forms of social capital:

1. **Commitments, expectations and credibility**
   Relations and networks provide services. And these services are repaid. This reciprocal mechanism requires that members of a network acknowledge each other as committed, trustworthy and credible individuals. The acknowledgement provides a sense of safety and belonging by identifying with other members of the social network.

2. **Information channels**
   Information and knowledge are important tools for acting in accordance with one's different social roles as well as one's own interests and benefits. Social relationships can provide free access to information.

3. **Social norms; rewards and sanctions**
   Norms are important in describing how members of a social network act and how the network works in general. Norms determine what actions are considered proper or improper. Norms are usually enforced through sanctions in a form of reward or punishment.

Robert D. Putman: Relational structures and social capital

Putman defines social capital as *"features of social organizations such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for the mutual benefit.[1]"*
Like Bourdieu and Coleman, Putman also emphasizes that understanding social capital requires understanding the social relations and ties within which social capital is embedded, generated and accessed. Putman underlines that social capital also can be negative and can creates many problems both for the individuals and communities. Gang-groups are networks where social relations and ties have a negative impact on the members of the network as well as the community in general.
Putman defines following three key relational dimensions along which social capital is to be assessed:

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[1] Putman 1995

- **Hierarchical relational structure:** Relations and ties are assessed in terms of whether they are **vertical** or **horizontal.**
- Vertical relations are those among members of different hierarchal levels in the structure of a given social network. Relations and ties can be intense and therefore bonding as in child-mother relation, and they can be mild as in employee-employer relation.
- Horizontal relations are those among members at the same hierarchal level such as friend-friend relation. Horizontal relations can also be intense and bonding like among close friends, or mild like among colleagues.

- **Density relational structure:** Relations and ties are assessed in terms of whether they are **intense** or **mild**.
  Intense relations are intimate and trust-based through bonding and through providing mutual support, a sense of belonging and a collective identity. Intense relations are those among kin and confidants. As well as being bonding, intense relations are binding and deeply rooted in the network's cultural set of values and norms. One's core values and norms are formed within such intense social relations. Mild relations are based on shared elements of identity such as gender, age, religion, social class, language and ethnicity.

- **Typifying relational structure**: Relations and ties are assessed in terms of whether they are **bonding** or **bridging**.
  Bonding relations are those among members who share elements of culture and identity such as age, gender, religion, social class, neighborhood, language and ethnicity. The more shared elements in the network, the more intense and bonding the relation is among members.

  Bridging relations are those across members of diverse networks and identity groups and derived from the members' shared interests. Empowerment is mainly connected to bridging relation. because one's social capital develops through bridging and encountering relations and ties with more diverse characteristics and resources. Diverse resources lead to different and new resources and increase chances for obtaining new resources and therefore empowerment.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Building relations among young people from minority and majority cultural environments

calls for taking the impact of cultural differences in consideration. The following are some of these considerations:

1. Coleman describes how individuals in European societies with accessibility to public services have less and less need for each other's social capital. One can also ask, whether the increasing focus in European societies on the individual's self-development is leaving less and less space for social relations thus less social capital.

2. Bourdieu defines public services as the state social capital. In migrant cultures, where states often are weak and public services are poor, the lack of state social capital increases the need to and thus the role of social relations. Therefore, communities in migrant cultures invest more in nourishing, generating and protecting social relations. Relations within kin resemble the strongest institution and organization in a community. While many forms of social support in European cultures have been overtaken by public institutions, family in migrant cultures still functions as a bank, a nursery, a nursing home and many others.

3. Social capital is subject to the cultural sets of values and norms within which networks, relations, and ties are established. Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions highlights six dimensions through which social relations in networks can be addressed. One of these dimensions is power distance, as high or low, between members of a social structure. High power distance implies vertical authority-obedience relations between individuals or groups. On its turn, low power distance implies horizontal relations on equal relations.

   Seen from the cultural dimension, power distance, social relations and structures in migrant cultures are dominantly hierarchical relations and imply a higher power distance between levels in networks. For example, in migrant cultures, an adult-youth relation is rooted in cultural norms that grant adults power and authority over youth. In European cultures, values in general promote horizontal cultural structures and a lower power distance between members.

4. The difference between migrant and European networks is also present on the conceptional level of the value of respect. In many migrant cultures, the perception of the value "respect" is intermingled with other values such as love, loyalty and authority. Respect is offered in return for support. In native European social network, respect is a

reciprocal and horizontal value and does not relate to values such as love, loyalty or authority.

3. WHY IS SOCIAL CAPITAL A CORE CONCEPT FOR YOUTH WORK AND INTEGRATION?

Social capital is an essential element in empowering youth and integrating them in the community. Social capital provides youth with the following: It provides youth with a sense of belonging to and bonding with members of youth social networks and communities. It also enables youth to exchange commitments, share expectations and obtain credibility with members of social networks and provides a channel of information, knowledge, competences and tools that promote empowerment. Moreover, social capital within bridging relations across networks promotes social mobility.

Social capital plays an essential role in youths' wellbeing. Well-integrated youth members of a community are those who have healthy and constructive relations with and across different networks in the community. Within these relations and ties to the community, youth cultivate and access their social capital.

The value of youth social capital is also due to the rather limited economic and human/cultural capital among most youth. In this early phase of their life, youths' economic and human capital are still being established. Therefore, social capital plays a major role in youths' capital in general.

Another important fact about youth social capital is that youth, in the process towards independence from parents and adults in general, increasingly ally with peer social networks. The unique social capital in these allegiances/networks facilitate peer-resolving of identity conflicts and peer-learning of how to handle obstacles and difficulties on the way to adulthood. Therefore, building new relations and providing access to networks in the community is essential to integrating youth in communities and building their access to social capital.

It is important to mention that both positive and negative social capital exist. The consequences of being involved in negative networks is accumulating negative social capital. Therefore, building healthy and constructive social capital lessens the risk of being involved in negative networks and thus generating negative social capital.

4. HOW DO WE USE THE SOCIAL CAPITAL IN THE SUPEER YOUTH PROGRAMMES?

As social capital is accessed through social relationships in networks, social capital in peer-relations and networks is an important area to work with in peer- learning programs. Working with the concept of social capital through workshops, tasks and mini-projects in peer-learning programs create awareness of the following among peers:

- The role of relations and ties in and across different cultural social networks
- The set of values and norms in which one's relations and networks are rooted
- One's own social capital in cultural and intercultural networks
- One's potential bridging relations to new, beneficial social networks in intercultural environment, generating inter-cultural capital and facilitating inter-cultural social integration in general.

Examples:

Building awareness of one's capital in general

Lead in and discussion:
"*We, and those whom we live among, have diverse sources of wellbeing.*"

Brainstorm on diverse forms of sources to wellbeing:

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Physical health   Mental health   Emotional health   Family

Money   Information   Interests   Education   Qualifications

Experience Friends   relations   Work   Cultural knowledge   skills

Other?

Building awareness of relations' and networks' contributions to one's wellbeing

<u>Group discussion</u>:

"*which sources of wellbeing are dependent on relations to others?*"

Emotional health?   Interests?   Education? Skills?   Experience?

Friends?   Information?   Cultural knowledge?
Other?

5. CONCLUSION

In addition to economic capital, communities operate with many forms of capital. Among these forms, the two most influential are human and social capital.

Human capital, also called *intellectual* capital, is the knowledge and experience of the individual or a network that is acquired through investments in education and training.

Social capital is a form of "unity power" that is generated through relations among members of a social network. Social capital provides individuals with important basic needs such as goodwill, companionship, credibility and trustworthiness. Social capital is a major source of peers' identity and wellbeing through providing a sense of belonging to other members of peer groups and social networks in general.

Negative social capital also exists in relations among individuals or groups -also called sub-cultures- that are excluded and not tolerated in the community. Putman underlines that dark/negative social capital creates many problems. Gang-groups are networks where social relations and ties have a negative impact on the members of the network as well as the community in general.

Building social capital among youth from both minority and majority environments has a constructive effect on integrating them in social communities and thus promoting empowerment and active citizenship among them. Youths' peer networks are an essential source of youth social capital, social integration and mutual trust-building. It's an important source of identity as it provides bonding, acceptance, companionship and protection to peer individuals. Youth seek relationships with peers in the process of seeking independence from parents and adults in general. Therefore, promoting and facilitating relations and networks among peers is important.

In this early phase in life, youth have limited access to economic capital, and their cultural and human capital is still being built. Therefore, promoting youth social capital is essential for empowering youth and integrating them in the community.

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