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HOW TO MAKE A BETTER WORLD

- A study of adolescent deliberations in a problem-solving simulation

Tommi Eränpalo & Tiina Karhuvirta

Abstract: The article examines the impact of the teaching methods in social studies on the classroom atmosphere and on the students' motivation, attitudes and engagement. School as a social space consists of several layers and role differentiations, the existence of which may not have been widely recognised and which may prevent students from adopting an active role in class discussions. Particularly from the perspective of teaching social studies, it is essential to create a deliberative atmosphere in the classroom, so that social issues are seen as genuinely open, controversial and approachable from different angles – in other words, as political. The article presents a qualitative case study in which a group of Nordic young people processes problems found in society by playing a simulation game called Act Now!. The data gathered from playing the game has been analysed based on grounded theory and the Straussian inductive-deductive approach. The study examines simulation as a method that has an impact on the learning environment. Simulation can be seen as a method that opens new fruitful possibilities for addressing societal issues in social studies teaching from the interdisciplinary point of view. The results suggest that a proper pedagogic approach for a social interaction creates an atmosphere that allows all students to participate and feel included. This experience of classroom contribution strengthens young people's positive self-image as citizens who care about public issues. Therefore experiences of classroom contribution should be set more in the focus in social studies education today.

KEYWORDS: CIVIC EDUCATION, SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHING, CRITICAL THINKING, GROUNDED THEORY, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, SIMULATIONS

Towards Teaching that Encourages Civic Engagement

Studies exploring young people's involvement in civic matters have repeatedly labelled young people as not being interested in politics or having their say, even if they have good social skills and good social awareness (CIVED 1999ⁱ, ICCS 2009ⁱⁱ). Young people's passivity is a demonstration of a wider change in the cultural atmosphere as well as in social structures and actors. This change can be seen globally in the young generation's civic disengagement, which has drawn researchers around the world to pay attention not only to the phenomenon itself but also to its causes and consequences. (e.g. Paakkunainen & Hoikkala 2007, Campbell 2008, Kisby & Sloam 2009) A number of researchers have pointed out the complexity of this phenomenon and questioned the results of the above-mentioned large-scale surveys (e.g. Amnå 2008, Piattoeva 2010). All the same, it is clear that young people's social involvement has substantially changed in expression and character, and this is why the majority of researchers considers the importance of teaching civic skills in schools essential. (e.g. Amnå et al. 2010, Dejaeghere & Tudball 2007, Kisby & Sloam 2009)

As a result of studies revealing young people's passive attitudes, the Finnish National Board of Education surveyed the state of democracy education in Finnish schools. In summary, it can be said that the reality in Finnish schools with regard to participation and democracy is that civic skills and democracy education are not as highlighted as they should be. The survey points out the weak discussion culture related to political and social issues and calls for society as a whole to provide the prerequisites for building an identity that allows positive encounters, interaction and democracy between people. The survey also charted teachers' views on strengthening democracy education and young people's inclusion in social and democratic processes. According to the teachers, student opportunities to participate and have their say at school should be improved. (Finnish National Board of Education 2011.)

In this light the process of renewing the Finnish national core curriculum for basic educationⁱⁱⁱ is on the right track. The memorandum of the expert group that discussed the general objectives in basic education and the distribution of lesson hours states that more than before teaching should not only provide information but also enhance students' motivation for using civic knowledge both in daily life and for increasing student involvement, student motivation is highlighted as a key issue. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2012.) Christensen (2011) points out that the task of today's social studies is to develop the students' ability to connect their social science knowledge with societal development and with their own possibilities to act in society based on democratic decision making, with the ability of self-governance and normative reflection. Teaching must, therefore, motivate students to think about social issues and thus ensure they will be willing to contribute to and engage in society. Getting teenagers motivated can, however, be a very challenging task. Studies on American youth have found that the motivation to study significantly decreases among lower-secondary school students (e.g. Epstein & McPartland 1976, Pintrich

2000). Similar observations have also been made outside the United States, for example in Australia (Watt 2004). In addition to studying, the decrease in motivation has been observed in other areas too, such as sociability, creativity and curiosity (Skelton & Valentine 2003). Wigfield, Byrnes and Eccles (2006) describe the all-encompassing drop in motivation and initiative during the lower secondary school as radical.

It has been noted that there seems to be a clear link between motivation and the methods used in teaching. The PISA 2000 survey revealed that the teaching methods that emphasised problem solving and experiential aspects yielded better results than teacher-centred question-and-answer methods (Baumert et al. 2001). Teaching methods that lead to discoveries or insights are especially important as they motivate students (DeLeon 2008).

These observations require a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach to teaching social studies. It is a challenging question how these are represented in the classroom. In the past, disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity were regarded as a dichotomy, and disciplines as major obstacles to interdisciplinary studies. Impediments and disincentives persist. Fiscella & Kimmel (1999) claim interdisciplinarity is a key factor in discussion of disciplines and school subjects in “contemporary life”. School- and university-level subjects are intersecting with a host of interdisciplinary fields, from international studies to environmental studies. Heightened demands for problem solving have fostered greater interest in collaboration and the ability to work with multiple sources of knowledge. Educators are also incorporating new research into their lessons. Literature teachers are adding a new plurality of cultural texts while drawing on social history and new theories of language and meaning. Social-science and sociology teachers are infusing new understandings of behaviour into the traditional curriculum. (Klein 2006.) Teaching that encourages civic engagement must therefore include knowledge and skills, but also elements that motivate and support the student's willingness and ability to participate in the public debate.

Creating a Socially Aware Learning Environment in Social Studies Teaching

Over the last decade the role of school in civic education and teaching methods in civics have been extensively discussed in social studies education. This debate has revealed the need to develop the civic studies material content, evaluation, and students' involvement. (e.g. Norris 1999, Torney-Purta 2002, Amnå 2008, Odenstad 2010) The classroom atmosphere, group dynamics, and interaction between the teacher and the students play a decisive role in determining the tone of deliberation in the classroom. Schools must introduce models that allow teachers and students to engage in a dialogue as their real selves. Discussion on social issues must deal with problems related to the reality of young people. This reality has become ever more

global and complex. Consequently, school world needs new solutions for teaching social studies. (Eränpalo 2012)

The pedagogic solutions for social studies are best found in the surrounding society. The learning environment can be seen as a social space whose dynamic is affected not only by the individuals present but also by the pressure of the power relations created within the various societal elements. Fornäs (1995) has studied market and state control in relation to the life world of young people. He has divided this life world into different spheres, such as political parties, civic organisations or schools. These spheres are transformed due to the pressure of change caused by the actions of individuals.

Nikkola (2011) outlines the layers contained in social atmosphere and group dynamics by dividing the school into visible and hidden dimensions. People are usually unaware of these layers in pedagogical discussions; instead, the class is expected to function in a kind of ideal state in the teaching situation. Understanding the group situation, observing both the visible and hidden aspects, and having a genuine encounter with each student will take teaching towards a fruitful dialogue and participation.

Paju (2011), in turn, divides the school world into new kinds of spheres: the official, unofficial and physical school. (See also Gordon 1999, Jackson 1990.) According to Paju, the social space and group dynamics in a classroom are shaped according to the distance the students keep from the official school.

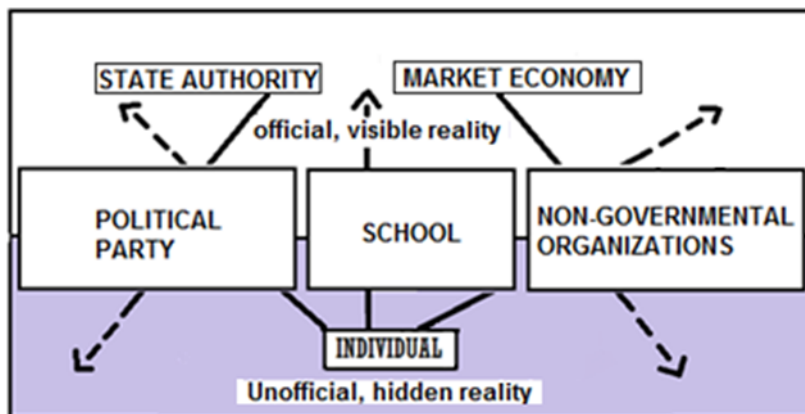


FIGURE 1

The views of Fornäs, Nikkola & Paju

Figure 1 presents the views of Fornäs (1995), Nikkola (2011) and Paju (2011) combined. The school as a sphere of its own can be divided into an official and unofficial reality. The official reality at school is controlled and implemented by teachers, the unofficial by the students themselves. The unofficial school encourages boys, in particular, to behave in a passive way, or even to behave against the values of the official school (Paju 2011). The juxtaposition is less sharp if the different realities and their interrelationships are successfully taken into account in teaching.

It is also essential to pay attention to the special characteristics of the content in different subjects. The learning contents in social studies usually include concrete models of social systems and schematic models of operating in various social, legal and political actions and events encountered in daily life. In reality, however, problems in society are not schematic but more abstract, and the solutions to them are often unpredictable and even illogical. This fluctuation somewhere between the abstract and the concrete seems to be the Achilles heel of social studies teaching. Students seem to choose a formal and concrete answer, a structure learned by rote, even when dealing with abstract concepts. Thinking about social issues cannot, however, be something learned by rote; it requires more creative and critical thinking. (Petrik 2003.)

Wagenschein (1991) has developed the so-called genetic principle that combines knowledge of everyday things with the learning content. This method is based on critically evaluating problems and compiling answers using logical deduction (Petrik 2004). This kind of teaching enables the development of autonomous and informed citizenship and supports the emergence of a young person's political identity. Toulmin (1964) bases his argumentation theory on the theses of philosophical formal logic. The best-known part in Toulmin's *Uses of Argument* is the model of analysing argumentation that he calls an "organic schema". The model provides a tool for analysing the elements of an argument and their interrelations. In order for the model to work, it needs a framework, and the better structured the framework is, the more the model governs the direction of the argument. The teaching of social studies provides just an appropriate framework for an argumentation that follows Toulmin's theory.

Toulmin's Argumentation Pattern

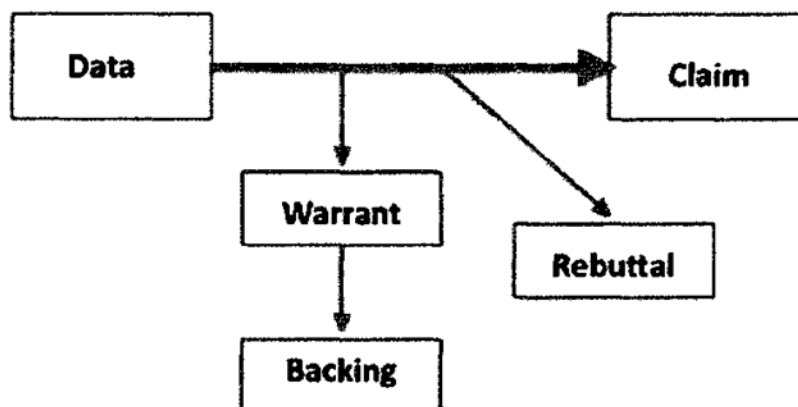


FIGURE 2

Toulmin's (1964, 101–104) model for analysing argumentation.

Using this argumentation pattern in teaching is comparable to the pedagogic model of enquiry-based learning by Hakkarainen, Lonka and Lipponen (2004) that follows the principles of scientific research. The aim is to understand the phenomenon under study

or to solve a problem. New information about the matter is gathered socially in a group, but it is also sought individually according to the agreed division of work. The information found will be analysed and critically discussed in the group. Learning takes place as a spiral process so that the object being studied will be defined and examined with an increasingly in-depth approach. As work progresses, the object of study becomes more specific through new questions (research problems). The best results are achieved if the research problems are real and authentic to the students themselves.

The *Act Now!* Simulation

Researchers have been looking for a new approach to motivation problems by using different kinds of games. They have noted that games can be used for teaching how to integrate unconnected sets of civic knowledge and skills with the complex values of the real world. (Adams 1998, Barab et al. 2001, Gee 2003, Shaffer et al. 2005.)

Simulations, in particular, work well in this situation (Bagley & Shaffer 2009). With simulations, one can create situations similar to real ones. It has been stated that they are one of the most effective ways of teaching new concepts and ideas, since they allow participation, commitment and risk taking in a safe environment (DeLeon 2008). This perspective is supported by the fact that social studies teaching has often been criticised for emphasising the hegemony of the dominant ideologies by suppressing the formation of the students' own opinions.

The *Act Now!* simulation is a board game that was developed together with Finnish ninth-graders (15-16-year-old students). A group of students met once a week in a Parliament Club^{iv} to discuss social issues during term time, and to plan a Nordic gathering. This planning resulted in the creation of the *Act Now!* simulation.

The simulation serves as a teaching method for participation in society that is based on the pedagogic model of enquiry-based learning (Hakkarainen et al. 2004). The idea of the simulation is built on the principle of the genetic method (Petrik 2004, Wagenschein 1991) and it progresses following Toulmin's (1964) argumentation pattern, letting students process social and civic issues right from the fundamentals (Westbury 2000). The players choose a concrete problem that includes social tensions and conflicts of interest. To solve the problem, the players use the channels of influence available in society. The simulation provides a framework for this process. The players may consult a variety of resources. The winner of the game will be the best process – or at least the best presentation, which is often the case in politics, too, due to its contingent nature. The simulation instructions can be found in Appendix 1. The game board outlines a city environment, highlighting some of the problems that commonly affect young people and presenting some of the values found in society. The model for the simulation is Duckburg, the hometown of Donald Duck, a popular Disney comics among young Finnish people; for example, the city-owned houses waiting to be demolished are modelled after the houses of Donald Duck and J. Jones, his neighbour^v.



FIGURE 3

Act Now! Game Board

The elements of the simulation are based on basic social values, following the contents of the Finnish social studies curriculum (Finnish National Board of Education 2004) and including various channels of influence. These are presented on separate cards in Appendix 2. Students can choose either official or unofficial channels of influence from the cards to use in their problem-solving process. These channels can be seen to reflect the battle of social power structures between official, unofficial or even illegal channels as described by Fornäs (1995), Nikkola (2011) and Paju (2011).

The significant issue in the simulation is to see which social problems young people will address and what methods of influence they will choose. Through critical thinking and argumentation (cf. Petrik 2003, Toulmin 1964, Wagenschein 1991), the best ideas will be refined over the course of the game, resulting in a problem-solving process consensually developed by the participants (cf. Hakkarainen et al. 2004). For research, the key issue is whether the game will lead young people into thinking about social matters and whether it will bring out data that hasn't come up when using other means.

Methodology

The study involved 16 students, aged 15–17, who met at a Nordic youth parliament event (Nordisk Ungdomsparlamentet) in March 2012. This meeting was part of the Nordic Nord Plus Junior-funded project which brought young people together to discuss social issues.^{vi} The participants coming from Finland, Sweden and Norway were divided into four groups, with one representative from each school in every group. These young people played the *Act Now!* simulation over the course of one day. The data was collected by observing the activity in each group, recording the groups' presentations on video and gathering the participants' reports on the game afterwards^{vii}.

The study has applied the procedures of the grounded theory approach in a flexible way. The study can be characterised as a dialogue between the researcher and the data according to the Straussian inductive-deductive model. It also includes a Glaserian perspective that emphasises data-based substantivity (Glaser 1992, Strauss & Corbin 1990.)

The research data consists of notes, video recordings and student writings, thus letting the voices of the participants be heard. The analysis proceeds from abductively observing and describing the phenomenon to mapping its characteristic features and constructing a conceptual framework in a deductive way. The theoretical framework being built in the course of the study will be examined in parallel with the literature-based framework partly compiled earlier. Both of these frameworks will be complemented as the analysis progresses.

The aim is to have a theoretical approach to the social and didactic dimensions of the learning situation and to identify its layers. The study uses the *Act Now!* simulation to generate new kinds of data. It focuses on collecting information on creating a favourable atmosphere for teaching and examines the impact of this kind of atmosphere on the students' motivation, initiative and attitudes.

The process involves a constant dialogue between empirical data and theoretical examination; the analysis of the data gives direction to the collection of theoretical material and the next phases of analysis. The research questions are broad at first and only become more specific with the progress of the research process (Strauss & Corbin 1990). The categories of open codes are being examined flexibly along with the data and literature collected (triangulation). The aim is to produce a theoretical framework for the substance area, which is inductively based on the collected data. (Strauss & Corbin 1994.)

The process of analysing the data is systematic, the stages of which are discussed on the basis of views presented by Creswell (1998) and Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1994). What follows are the key points of the study that was conducted using the method of continuing comparison analysis.

Substantive Coding

The purpose of coding is to analyse the research data sentence by sentence. Identifying individual sentences from the data is called open coding. The aim of open

coding is to look for empirical codes for the assumptions, or indicators, set in advance based on the game^{viii}. Concrete indicators were the concepts arising from the game structure, such as social problems and the methods of influence chosen. These were comparable to the concepts of democracy and knowledge of the political system used in argumentation. Abstract indicators included the occurrence of the school's official and unofficial aspects and the perceptions of citizenship. Knowledge of everyday life was combined with social concepts in the young people's discussions in a natural way. They were thus clearly talking about politics (cf. Petrik 2004, Löfström 2011). The participants eagerly spotted problems from the game board, suggesting them to others at a fast pace. The fictional cityscape soon became just a scene for the events, and the players forgot it was a game. The problems picked out were first local, gaining ever wider and socially deeper features during the game. The expressions used in the discussion were similar to the following:

VE1G4P4,6(9): The trams in Gothenburg are always at a standstill, you can easily get where you want by bus.

ME1G4P1,2: What about nursing? There's a shortage of nurses, and the number of old people is growing all the time.

ME1G1P1,1: Racism is society's biggest problem [---](10). From this perspective, many countries are still in the Middle Ages.

The young players first oriented themselves to the game as individuals, while the structure and institutions, such as the authorities, were side lined. In various contexts, discussions on democracy have included a juxtaposition of representative democracy and participatory democracy, the first representing a thin process implemented through elections and the latter representing thick, critical commitment and social justice (Gandin & Apple 2002). From an individual's perspective one can talk about civic identity, which can be understood as the individual's sense of belonging to a larger community and taking responsibility in terms of contributing to its well-being. (e.g. Kirshner 2009.)

The concepts of thick and thin democracy also presented themselves in the way the students reacted to the problems under discussion. The representative dimension of democracy remained thin and distant, because the students have very little contact with it in their everyday reality, and because no model for including it in the discussion was given (cf. e.g. van den Berg 2010). The thick side of democracy, in turn, is value-laden, which makes it easy for students to voice their opinions as citizens (Westheimer & Kahne 2004). The following student comment is a good example of the values involved:

VE4G1P1,11: There is no illegal immigration in a democratic society. Although this only sounds like idealism, it will be possible in the long run when all people are made to understand this.

The ways in which the participants chose to address the social drawbacks presented in the simulation reflected the views of Finger (1990), among others, as to how dynamic movements and organisations have a greater impact on society than formal institutions. These young people made use of unofficial channels and media activism,

which involves utilising the media to encourage social activism. According to Carroll and Hackett (2006), democratic media activism, or media democratisation, uses the media to highlight and emphasise democratic communication and the subjective right to communicate. This kind of grassroots-level activism lives in symbiosis with the media.

VE5G1P1,2: The media has huge power. If television channels and big newspapers launch a massive campaign against racism, the way people think will really begin to change.

The protest and rebellion inherent in social movements also appeared in the students' presentations, but mainly to acquire media visibility or to be used when decision-makers did not act as desired. In almost all of the actions presented by the groups, the official actor was the one that was expected to solve the problem in the end.

ME4G2P2,2: The city council must take the petition seriously, otherwise we'll protest [---] or take the matter all the way to the parliament!

VE4G2P3,3: The city council decides if valuable buildings are demolished or preserved [---] if all else fails, we'll occupy the houses.

Argumentation in the groups was largely based on a fast-paced exchange of ideas. At this stage, no arguments really took place; instead, the groups consistently proceeded towards a common goal in a spiral way by focusing on and defining opinions (cf. Toulmin 1964):

ME5G2P3,5: High-profile protests against the destruction of cultural heritage are worth the effort, it appeals to politicians too.

This kind of deliberation can be said to describe critical citizenship, which is also the prerequisite for genuine democracy. The ability to validate one's opinions and to evaluate the sensibility of the reasons is characteristic of a critical citizen (Doyle 1999). It can be considered critical thinking if a person weighs what is sensible or possible in a given problem situation. The students chose methods of influence that were possible for them here and now.

VE4G4P3,3: The purpose of the Facebook group is to emphasise that the tax money collected from the city's residents should be used for a hospital that benefits all of them.

ME5G4P2,8: The Internet and especially Facebook are the best ways of highlighting problems.

VE5G1P1,2: The media has the power to change people's thoughts...that's why I think we should use all of them [mass media].

In their argumentation, the students used the concepts of democracy quite naturally, but in a narrow way and as if just learned by rote. In this respect, the answers were institution-centred. Some of the expressions were created by the students, some clearly copied from elsewhere. Although the terminology was simple, the participants didn't try to go for the easiest solution. Political rights have usually been regarded as the core of citizenship, making the political sphere the most traditional environment in which to act. Consequently, active citizenship especially refers to political participation or

the right to it (Nivala 2007). The students showed in their comments and attitudes that they wanted to take initiative in addressing the problems at hand by using channels other than politics; citizenship and political involvement therefore occurred as separate issues. The Finnish participants also felt removed from political decision-making as described by Koskimaa (2011). Young people think of politics as “MPs, not the parties, taking care of business; something that happens ‘somewhere out there’”:

ME3G2P1,5: Let them [politicians] finish off the matter.

*VE5G3P4,2: We must get an EU agreement for the protection of the Baltic Sea, one that is linked with international oil transportation agreements [---]
Our task is to inform people about this.*

According to Koskimaa (2011), the adjectives associated with politics were quite negative, describing politics as slow, complicated and boring. The data does not support the view that young people think politics has moved outside the parliamentary system; rather, the data strengthens the image of politics as state government that does not touch individuals’ lives. (cf. Koskimaa 2011.)

ME1G2P3,1: We should focus on something we can really make a difference to.

This attitude, a kind of bystander mentality, does not mean, however, that young people are not interested in politics. According to Helve (2009), young people recognise political issues and are able to critically evaluate them. Young people are not disconnected from society; an economic recession, for example, may affect their attitudes to the extent that they believe less in their chances of getting their voice heard. An example of this is when such changes concretely affect their own world, like the weakening of education opportunities and bleak employment prospects. (Helve 2009.)

If political activity is understood more broadly as a public activity related to common, i.e. social matters, civic life will be defined broadly in relation to citizenship. It includes citizens’ activities as employees and taxpayers, consumers and recyclers, involvement in associations and leisure activities, active engagement in their neighbourhood, etc. Understood like this, citizenship extends the scope of civic education into providing wide-ranging support for people’s capacity to act in society, which includes knowledge, skills, other capacities, and attitude development. (Rytkölä, Kesler & Karhuvirta 2011, Nivala 2007.)

Defining active citizenship is problematic, especially as regards young people, and one should be careful not to form the kind of negative stereotypes that often are presented on the basis of the ICCS results. Olson (2012) aptly notes that if we wish to grow young people with a positive and creative attitude towards civic responsibilities, we must provide a variety of opportunities to participate (or not to participate) and avoid teaching a one-sided “correct” model at school.

Axial Coding

The purpose of axial coding is to look into code similarities to find messages that are significant in terms of the phenomenon under study. Here, the codes were divided into three main categories: the phenomenon's functional dimension, content dimension and social dimension. Each of the main categories had their own subcategories in which the collected codes were placed according to empirical indicators. The examples presented here are taken from the matching codes. In the videotaped material, attention was paid not only to the message but also to the students' facial expressions, tone of voice and body language. The tables with the key points of the coding are presented in Appendix 3.

Functional Dimension

In the category of functional dimension, the students were examined in terms of compliance with instructions, motivation and attitudes, and working and argumentation. The subcategories were analysed to see if the activities were teacher-dependent, individual-oriented or group-based, and how enthusiastic the students were during the activity.

During the simulation, the students usually closely followed the teacher's instructions, and the tasks were approached exactly according to the teacher's directions. When the work started, the students' enthusiasm was clearly visible, and motivation and attitude as well as working and argumentation were strongly student-based and demonstrated group formation. The students took the task seriously and felt they had a chance to participate. The role of motivation was central; the discovery and insight emphasised by DeLeon (2008) motivated the students. In line with the theses of enquiry-based learning by Hakkarainen et al. (2004), the students opened up in the simulation situation and plunged themselves into the world of limitless possibilities offered by fiction. The values of fiction were quickly integrated with those of the real world (Bagley and Shaffer 2008, among others), and the real problems encountered by young people in an increasingly global risk society (Beck 2000) soon surfaced. The illusion of full authority created by the simulation was maintained, and the participants acted like active, politically aware citizens (cf. Dahlgren 2006).

The analysis of the functional dimension illustrates young people's perception of participation. Francis and Lorenzo (2005) have presented different ways of viewing children's participation in designing the urban environment. As the game progressed, some of these thought patterns could be seen. The activity was 'proactive', it engaged young people as 'learners' and 'citizens', but first and foremost, they had a chance to 'romantically' plan and create future. The working method also demonstrated the ideas of social dynamics in its various layers as put forward by Fornäs (1995), Nikkola (2011) and Paju (2011). The participants were well aware of the power of the different actors in society, especially that of market forces. The official school was mainly represented by the teacher's instructions at the turning points of the game, while working and argumentation rested on unofficial elements. From the didactical point of view, the analysis of the functional dimension highlighted the importance of students'

teamwork skills in this kind of learning situation. The goal and the challenge of developing these skills have often not been addressed within social sciences didactics as they easily fall outside its traditional realm (cf. Klein 2006).

ME6G2P3,7:I'll go and ask the teacher if we're doing it right.

The student's comment above well illustrates the presence of the official school. There was a lot of variation among the students as to their distance from the official school:

ME6G1P1,3:When we go out to take pictures, I'll drop in at McDonald's!

This comment aptly describes a student who was well aware of the opportunities offered by the unofficial school in this situation. Occasionally, the unofficial side emerged spontaneously in the official presentation too:

M6G3P1,5:Look what a cool picture we got on this topic!

At other times, it was more hidden, like below, only surfacing in the student's written comment after the game had already finished:

TE6G2P4:If you say no to a campaign against racism, then you're a racist [--] that's why the campaign against racism won.

Content Dimension

In the category of content dimension, the codes also formed three subcategories: problem selection, method of influence, and the role of active citizenship. These subcategories were analysed for the local, global and structural aspect of the content, as well as for their relation to values.

In choosing the problem, the starting points of all groups included a local dimension; in two groups the problem was also seen as global. The students readily included in their presentations expressions that demonstrated knowledge of the political system and the key concepts of democracy that were linked to the problems presented on the game board. This dimension remained quite thin, however, which is perhaps a sign of politics becoming extra-parliamentary (cf. Koskimaa 2011).

VE7G4P3,6:Have to get somebody along who has influence in the city, that's when others will understand it too.

It was clearly more common to choose the media and the civic society's unofficial, grassroots-level channels as the methods of influence, rather than the official political channels or the safety nets of the constitutional state. Civic engagement and the importance of being organised stood out, which demonstrates understanding of the deeper substance of democracy(cf. Petrik 2003).

VE7G3P2,4: People have a too short-sighted view of things, our duty is to think of future generations.

The presentations highlighted many international organisations, such as Greenpeace and Amnesty International. The role of these kinds of movements is significant. They represent the vital and active part of a democratic society, all political views and perspectives, including negative and very hostile views, but that is exactly why they

are pedagogically fruitful. Regardless of a movement's intentions or aims, it can be examined objectively as a phenomenon of a democratic society, as an expression of opinion that can be used as the starting point for class discussions. (Hall et al. 2006, Carroll & Hackett 2006.)

As instructed, the participants highlighted the characteristics of an active citizen in their presentations. Active citizenship was seen as independent of the political system. The students avoided defining issues based on the pseudo-knowledge described by Wagenschein (1991), since no ready-made solutions were provided in advance. The simulation guided the students to connect social science knowledge with practical societal development and their own possibilities to act in a democratic society (cf. Christensen 2011). Citizenship was seen as value-based and collective, yet it was also viewed as incorporating thoughts and action that reflected the values of state institutions. The students thus tried to define themselves as citizens in order to act as citizens. (cf. Dahlgren 2006.)

Social Dimension

In analysing the students' behaviour in the category of the social dimension, the codes were divided into the subcategories of official, unofficial, contradictory and conciliatory. The subcategories were examined in light of group dynamics, atmosphere and the so-called aftermath, i.e. the feedback received from the participants' reports after the game.

The working method provided distance from the regrettably common indoctrinating role of the teacher and teaching (Tammi 2008), in other words, from the official school; the students noticed this change and responded to it in a positive way. A balance in group dynamics was sought using young people's language and rules. Unfamiliar peers were treated with curiosity and increasing intensity. This was demonstrated by the pace and passion of the discussion as well as by body language.

ME6G4P2,3: Yes, yes, but my opinion is important too!

The layers of the official, unofficial and physical school described by Paju (2011) were revealed. The simulation reached the so-called work group state in which the group knew how to read and use symbols, the interaction was rational, and the discussion open and critical (cf. Nikkola 2011). The teachers' instructions and guidelines for performing the task were listened to attentively, but they were soon given a new interpretation and realisation model, yet the result was in compliance with the required criteria.

ME6G2P3,7: I'll go and ask the teacher if we're doing it right.

ME6G1P1,3: As you're going [to the kiosk], bring us some sweets too.

In her study, Sofia Laine (2012) divides young people into the categories of everyday-makers and expert citizens; expert citizens actively look for opportunities to have a say, whereas everyday-makers easily remain in a passive role. Laine calls for 'contact zones', (i.e. spaces or situations where the aforementioned orientations and their differences temporarily disappear or weaken) for deeper democracy and for boosted

dialogue between different kinds of participants. It was easy to gauge the category of each participant as they found their own roles in the heat of the game: one took the role of the group leader, another showed initiative in working on the presentation or in comparing opinions; no one remained in the role of bystander.

VE7G1P1,19: The ideas of all groups can still be developed further, even if the campaign against racism has become the number one choice.

Grounded theory research includes the idea of constant triangulation (Strauss & Corbin 1990). This means that the phenomenon being studied will be approached from many different angles, using a mixed method approach. Here, it means examining empirical data and theoretical data side by side. The triangulation of the categories and literature resulted in the selection of three distinct core concepts. These concepts provided the key research questions:

a) Functionality

Did the method motivate the students to use their knowledge and skills?

b) Content

Did the method activate students to think about the substance of active citizenship and democracy?

c) Social interaction

Did the method influence the learning atmosphere?

Selective Coding and Core Process Saturation

Selective coding is based on reflecting the categories and core concepts as well as the research questions against the existing theory background. The main categories of functionality, content and social interaction, along with their subcategories, that resulted from the axial coding naturally evoke the research questions mentioned above. The analysis can be further deepened by looking for the thread of the study, or the story line, that connects these categories and research questions. The analysis resulted in the following story line:

After analysing the various elements in the study, it seems that the central issue is the students' opportunity to make classroom contributions. The building blocks of a rich experience of participation and contribution are motivating functionality, content found through inquiry, and positive social interaction experienced in a relaxed atmosphere.

The aim of the grounded theory methodology is to achieve a point of saturation for the analysis. This is achieved and the making of observations is stopped once the general features of the new observations appear to keep repeating the general nature of the

observations made earlier (Strauss & Glaser 1967). Next we will compare the message of the story line with the theoretical data gathered during the process.

Teaching methods that lead to discovery or insight (DeLeon 2008) and emphasise problem solving and experiential learning (Baumert et al. 2001) motivate students. New knowledge of the subject being taught is built socially in a group (Hakkarainen et al. 2004, Petrik 2003). Finding a solution in a group requires a well-functioning system of deliberation.

Deliberation provides an opportunity to practise important civic skills. A key issue for successful deliberation is creating a favourable atmosphere in the teaching situation. The school contains tensions resulting from society's power configurations, which to some extent prevents the creation of a favourable atmosphere. Tensions ease off if the teaching method manages to open the door between the parallel realities described by Fornäs (1995), Nikkola (2011) and Paju (2011).

The pedagogic goal of social studies is to create a foundation for active citizenship, which especially means participation in decision-making in society, or at least the right to it (Nivala 2007). Young people view the idea of participation individually; some become active when an opportunity arises, while others withdraw (van den Berg 2010). Defining active citizenship should therefore include the options to assume the role of an active player and that of a follower (cf. Olson 2012, Laine 2012). This is why new pedagogic solutions should be socially aware in the point of infusing new understandings of social behavior into the traditional curriculum (Klein 2006).

Socially aware pedagogy can be described with the terms used by Gandin and Apple (2002), who define democracy as *thin* or *thick*. Thin democracy stays within the school's official sphere and is based on the teacher's status and the learning content. Strong, socially aware pedagogy implements learning as a process and requires participation and critical commitment. This kind of pedagogy opens the door to the initiative hidden in the school's unofficial sphere, turning the learning environment into a new kind of contact zone.

Wagenschein (1991) and Petrik (2003) say the Achilles heel of social studies is that it oscillates in the middle ground between abstract and concrete, in a state in which students cannot use model answers learned beforehand, but neither can they break away from the role defined by the social framework in order to participate as their true selves. It seems that a simulation reminiscent of real life breaks down this contradiction between official and unofficial, thus providing a new kind of opportunity for participation and inclusion. Perhaps modern-day agoras (cf. Laine 2012) are similar to simulations; virtual and real at the same time, transnational and local, and perhaps that is the reason the official school does not offer young people the forum and the podium they long for. This is why it is important that teachers broaden the perspective of the cognitive landscape they offer in teaching (cf. Grammes 1998).

Helping Young People to Adopt a More Active Role

The *Act Now!* simulation contributed a new kind of material to the discussion on young people's active engagement in society. The simulation helped create a truly deliberative learning environment in which young people had a chance to participate and contribute in natural roles. This motivated the students to use their knowledge and skills to look for solutions to the problems in society and to reflect on the issues related to active citizenship and democracy.

Among the many hopes attached to school and teaching social sciences in school, the highest one clearly seems to be the need to find a forum that bridges the gap between the rigid and hard-to-understand democratic-bureaucratic system and the fragmented reality experienced by young people; a forum where the old and new ways of active engagement can meet (Eränpalo 2012). In order to do that the teachers need tools for creating such a forum since a more interdisciplinary approach is needed in today's social science didactics (Klein 2006).

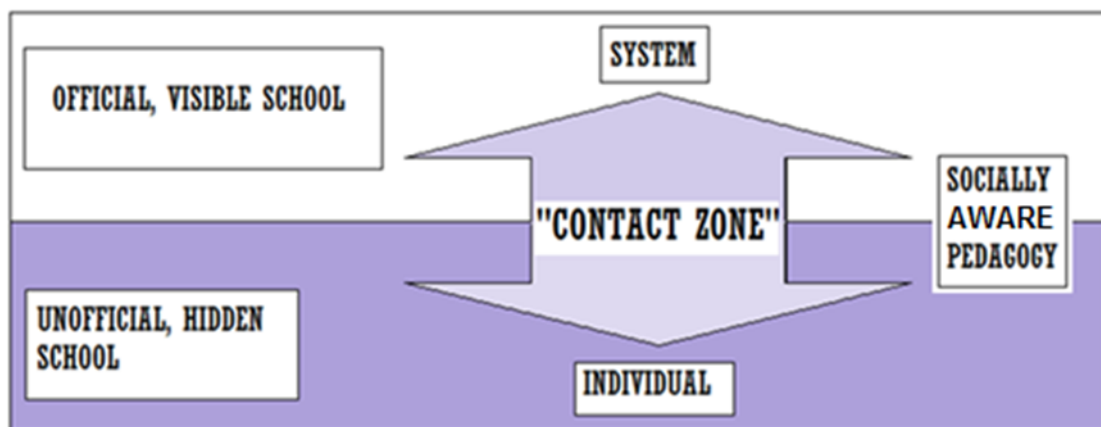


FIGURE 4

A model of a forum that can bridge the gap between system and individuals experience

Socially aware pedagogy takes the school's various social layers into account and strives to ease tensions between them, as well as to clear the way for an inquiry-based, inspiring and deliberative learning environment. This kind of environment bridges the social gap between the official and the unofficial school, thus creating a contact zone where participation can be experienced in a new way.

TE6G3P4: The game was educational and interesting. I got lots of food for thought. It was really nice to take pictures. It was tough to try and reach a consensus, but the result was good!

Through the learning environment created with the simulation, it is possible to encourage young people to become aware of the problems in their own environment and to search for real channels of influence, thus shaping their attitudes towards participation in society. As a number of social problems appears in the way that *Act Now!* –simulation opens them - as much politically, culturally, philosophically or

scientifically approachable, more interdisciplinary approach is needed in today's social science didactics (Klein 2006).

The data on active citizenship and young people's views of democracy indicates that more in-depth examination of these issues is warranted. Using grounded theory methodology, our research will continue by addressing young people's perceptions of active citizenship and democracy.

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Notes

ⁱ Civic Education Study. An international study of civic education (1999) that examines teenagers’ civic knowledge, skills, views, attitudes and activities. Original study: Torney-Purta, J., Lehmann, R., Oswald, H. and Schulz, W. (2001). *Citizenship and Education in Twenty-eight Countries: Civic Knowledge and Engagement at Age Fourteen*. The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement. Delft Nederland: Eburon Publishers.

ⁱⁱ International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (2009). Conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). The aim of the study is to investigate the ways in which young people are prepared to undertake their roles as active citizens in the 21st-century society. Original study: Kerr, D., Sturman, L., Schulz, W. and Burge, B. (2010). *ICCS 2009 European Report: Civic knowledge, attitudes, and engagement among lower secondary students in 24 European countries*. The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement.

ⁱⁱⁱ The national core curriculum is a regulation that obliges the education provider to include the education objectives and core contents in the school- or provider-specific curriculum. This regulation ensures that basic education rights, equality, educational uniformity, quality and legal protection are realised. The Finnish National Board of Education monitors the functional effects of the curricula and the qualification requirements mainly in connection with the evaluation of education.

^{iv} The Youth Parliament event, which is based on the Parliament Clubs run by schools, culminates in a plenary session held every other year in the Parliament House. Through current topics, the Parliament Clubs introduce students to the key issues of democracy and the ways in which young people can have a say and participate. For legislators, the Youth Parliament provides an opportunity to hear the views of young people

^v In the Nordic countries, the Donald Duck magazine is very popular among readers of all ages. Its rich and colourful language is generally considered constructive, and the stories often include moral and educational lessons. The weekly magazine is valued and considered a good read for children and young people.

^{vi} "Nordisk Ungdomsparlamentet" is a Nordic Nordplus Junior -founded project to gather young people from Finland, Sweden and Norway to discuss social issues. The project involves three lower secondary schools and one upper secondary school. The students are selected annually by their academic activities.

^{vii} The emphasis of the study lies in the functionality of the method. The aim is to later carry out a comparison of the Nordic countries with a focus on the youth profiles in each country.

^{viii} According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), the inductive-deductive analysis can include the use of pre-selected empirical indicators. In this study, these indicators are based on the *Act Now!* simulation used as a teaching method.

Empirical indicators (E):

1. Social problems
2. Local dimension – global dimension
3. Methods of influence chosen
4. Use of the concepts of democracy
5. Knowledge of the political system
6. Official school – unofficial school
7. Characteristics of an active citizen
9. Marks used in coding: V (video), M (notes), T (text), E (number of empirical indicator), G (group number), P (pupil number), statement number.
10. words omitted

Appendix 1

Instructions for the game:

Teacher's instruction 1

Divide the class into groups of 4–5 students, giving each group a game board and the cards, a camera and a computer with an Internet access.

Teacher's instruction 2

Introduce students to the game board's cityscape and its social references: values, structures, phenomena. Guide students to choose jointly a social problem they think is the key issue. The problem can be related to a fictional city, our own city, or it can be global.

Teacher's instruction 3

Guide students to select one or more cards that provide a suitable framework for finding a solution to the problem. They may also access the Internet, making use of the key words on the cards.

Teacher's instruction 4

Send the groups out with the task of taking a picture related to the problem somewhere nearby. It can be real or staged.

Teacher's instruction 5

Instruct the groups to make a Power Point presentation about the problem they chose, with a description of the problem and an action plan for tackling it. Teach the students to use Toulmin's argumentation pattern. Tell the students that they should also discuss what being a 'good citizen' means.

Teacher's instruction 6

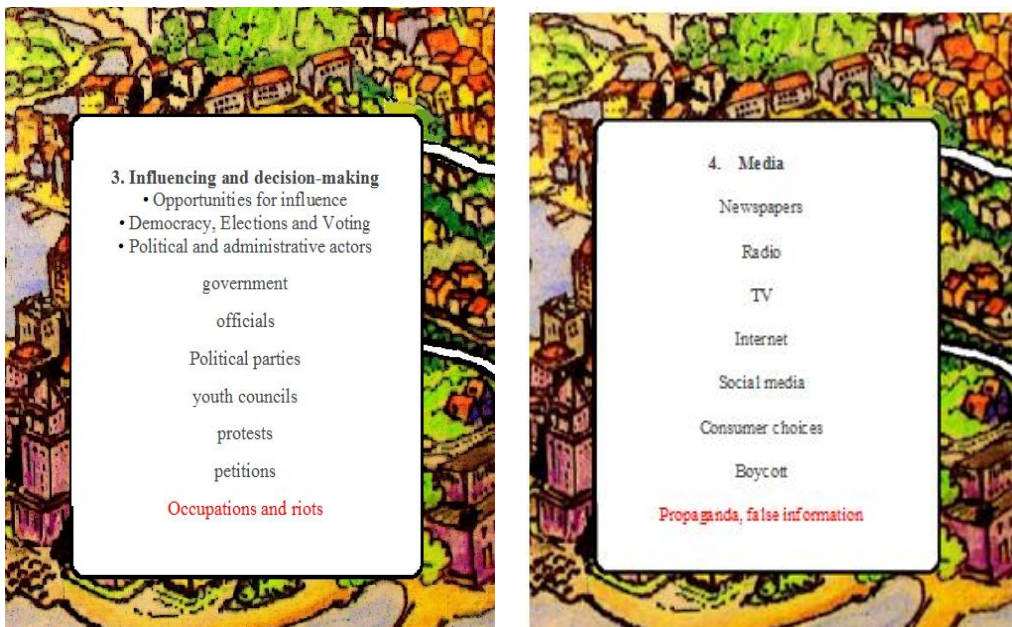
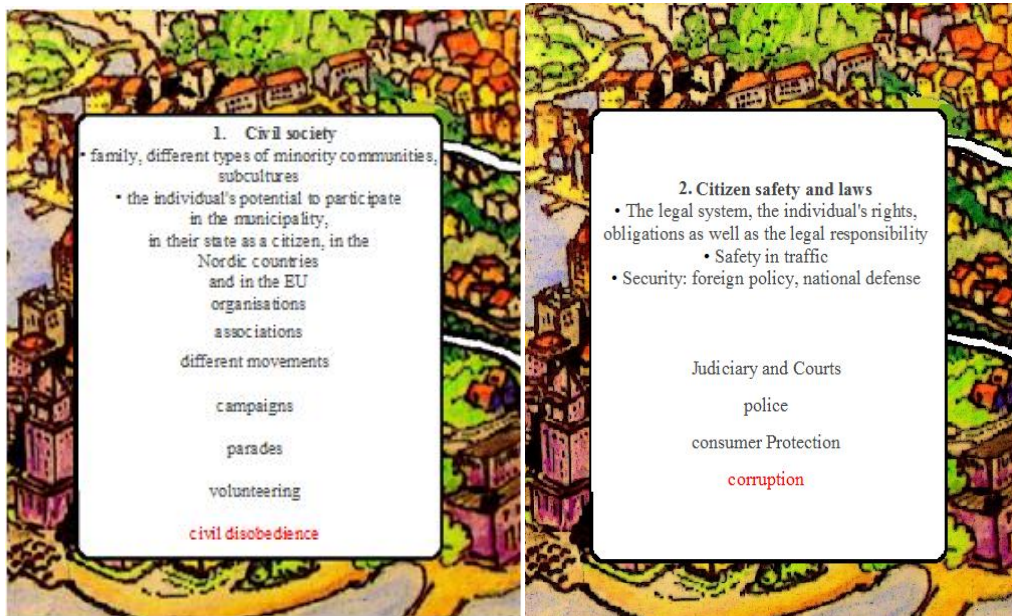
After watching all of the presentations, the groups will have a joint discussion with the aim of finding one problem and a plan of action to address the problem. The students will present the final results together.

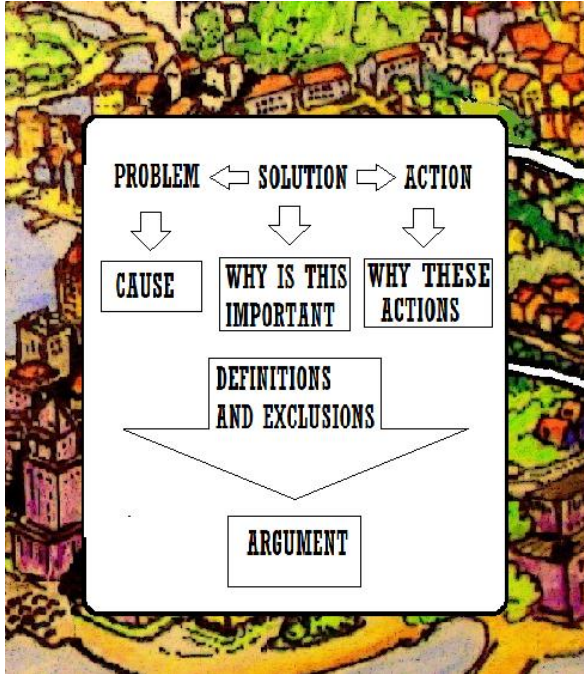
Teacher's instruction 7

Give the students a chance to comment on the solution individually – for example, by having them write feedback on playing the game and on its solutions.

Appendix 2

Act Now! simulation cards





Appendix 3

The key points in axial coding in terms of the functional dimension
 V/M/TIG1P1,1

V (video), M (notes), T (text), E (number of empirical indicator), G (group number), P (pupil number), statement number.

	Compliance with instructions	Motivation and attitude	Working and argumentation
Teacher-dependent	12 codes ME6G2P3,7: "I'll go and ask the teacher if we're doing it right."	3 codes ME4G3P1,2: "Put the Parliament and Government into the slide, that's what they want."	1 code ME6G3P3,2: "Isn't it like this, teacher?"
Individual-oriented	1 code VE6G1P1,9: "This was my way of solving this."	4 codes ME6G4P2,4: "This'll affect my school marks."	8 codes VE6G1P1,14: "A racist society is like a cake with salt and pepper added to it."
Group-based	16 codes VE6G2P2,4: "The End! Yes, well done us!"	18 codes VE7G1: Picture of the whole student group: We are active citizens!	22 codes VE7G1P1,19: "The ideas of all groups can still be developed further, even if the campaign against racism has become the number one choice."

HOW TO MAKE A BETTER WORLD – A STUDY OF ADOLESCENT DELIBERATIONS IN A
PROBLEM-SOLVING SIMULATION

Tommi Eränpalo & Tiina Karhuvirta

Enthusiastic	VE6G1,2,3,4 All of the students showed enthusiasm.	VE6G1,2,3,4 All of the students showed enthusiasm.	VE6G1,2,3,4 All of the students showed enthusiasm.
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In terms of the content dimension

	Selecting the problem	Method of influence	Active citizenship
Local	G1,G2,G3,G4 VE1G4P4,6:“The trams in Gothenburg are always at a standstill, you can easily get where you want by bus.”	G1,G2,G3,G4 ME1G2P3,1:“Let’s focus on something we can really make a difference to.”	G4 VE7G4P3,6:“Have to get somebody along who has influence in the city, that’s when others will understand it too.”
Global	G1,G3 ME1G1P1,1:“Racism is society’s biggest problem. From this perspective, many countries are still in the Middle Ages.”	G3 VE4G3P1,4:“The work of the Helsinki Commission is based on governmental co-operation within the EU.”	G1,G2,G3,G4 VE7G3P4,7:“Although protecting the Baltic Sea is our business, it’s connected to all other seas and everybody has to take care of the entire planet.”
Structural	G2,G4 VE4G2P3,3:“The city council decides if valuable buildings are demolished or preserved.”	G2 VE5G4P2,6:“The city council must take the petition seriously, otherwise we’ll protest... or take the matter all the way to parliament!”	- No matching codes
Value-based	G1,G3 VE6G1P1,14:“A racist society is like a cake with salt and pepper added to it.”	G1,G2,G3,G4 VE5G1P1,2:“The media has huge power. If television channels and big newspapers launch a massive campaign against racism, the way people think will really begin to change.”	G1,G2,G3,G4 VE7G3P2,4:“People have a too short-sighted view of things, our duty is to think of future generations.”

In terms of the social dimension

	Official	Unofficial	Contradictory	Conciliatory
Group dynamics	4 codes ME6G4P2,2:“Let’s divide the tasks, and everyone can work on their own section.”	9 codes ME6G3P1,4:“If you write and google the texts, I’ll take care of the pictures.”	1 code ME6G4P1,1:“If everyone does their own piece of work, it’s not teamwork; it has to be a joint effort.”	2 codes ME3G1P2,4:“Hey, let’s do as P1 says, this will be really good...Everybody supports this.”
Atmosphere	1 code ME5G4P3,3: “The city council deals with these kinds of issues quickly.”	27 codes ME6G1P1,3:“When we go out to take pictures, I’ll drop in at McDonald’s!”	- No matching codes	1 code ME1G2P3,2: “Let’s first hear everyone’s own ideas.”

HOW TO MAKE A BETTER WORLD – A STUDY OF ADOLESCENT DELIBERATIONS IN A
PROBLEM-SOLVING SIMULATION

Tommi Eränpalo & Tiina Karhuvirta

Feedback	1 code TE6G3P2:“An absolutely brilliant game, and we reached the final solution together!Hope we can play this at home too!”	5 codes TE6G2P4:If you say no to a campaign against racism, then you’re a racist... that’s why the campaign against racism won.”	1 code TE6G4P3:“We agreed on the result, but I would have expressed my opinions more firmly if this had been in my own language.”	1 code TE6G1P2:“We reached a consensus.Everyone has a right to criticise it afterwards, but at that moment we all agreed.”
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