

7 Conflict and Mediation in International Groups of Children

Vittorio Iervese

INTRODUCTION

Since the late twentieth century, projects aimed at encouraging the participation of children were widespread in various social systems and also gained considerable attention in the field of social sciences (e.g. Christensen and O'Brien 2003; Tisdall et al. 2006; Percy Smith and Thomas 2010). These studies were mainly aimed at analysing policies that promote participation or meanings formulated by the participants, rather than the interaction that involves them.

Notwithstanding the substantial and significant differences that mark the different approaches to participation, some of their main cultural presuppositions (see Baraldi, Chapter 4, this volume) can be identified in (1) the importance of children's agency and (2) the need for children's participation in decision-making. The meaning of children's participation is not limited to just these two presuppositions, but they do however contain the central elements to redefine social interactions between adults and children. In short, the view of participation tends to consider children as social agents who may affect the choices and meanings that are produced in interactions (see Percy-Smith, Warming, Baraldi, Chapters 1, 2 and 4 respectively, this volume).

These presuppositions have a problematic nature because they introduce important elements of innovation in social systems. Various studies have observed how promoting children's participation significantly affects communication between adults and children, including factors of insecurity and increasing the probability of conflict between participants (Maoz 2001; Davies 2004). In other words, promoting children's active participation, and altering the ways and forms of adult-children interaction, has the potential to change social systems.

More precisely, the elements of insecurity that the promotion of active participation introduces in the communication concern the network of expectations that involve the participants, i.e. the cultural presupposition of their actions, and the organisation of the interaction. These elements of insecurity may encourage conflict to emerge and, consequently, the need

to deal with and manage it within the very flow of communication that caused it.

The education system has, in many instances, included the principle of children's active participation in its reflection; however, the education system presents a number of problems and contradictions in transforming this reflection into programs and communication. For example, the epistemic authority (Raymond and Heritage 2006) on which educational communication is based may be weakened or transformed during the interaction. This means that the social asymmetry between educators and children, based on the educators' epistemic authority, allows teaching the incompetent social actors, who are limited to the experience of the educator's action. This epistemic authority may be retraced in the types of expectation that restrict participation in a communicative setting. For example, educators expect to be heard and to receive feedback that confirms the learning; whereas students expect confirmation of having been understood correctly and, hence, positive evaluation. Epistemic authority may also be observed in that set of cultural presuppositions that guides the participants' actions and restricts the forms of interaction (how a discussion begins and ends; who poses the questions and how and when this is done; how a decision is managed etc.).

The social asymmetry between educators and children is reorganised in the interactions aiming to actively involve children by stimulating their social participation. This chapter aims to observe what happens when promoting children's participation turns into conflict between the participants, focusing on analysis of the interactional components. In particular, attention will be focused on the relationship (1) between participation and conflict and (2) between conflict management and decision-making, during some educational activities in a non-scholastic context. The data presented here were gathered as part of a study in CISV activities with children and adolescents (see also Baraldi, Chapter 4, this volume). This chapter analyses interactions between adults and children aged eleven, during the workshops organized in eight CISV Villages in Italy. The language spoken by both facilitators and children is English as a lingua franca. The interactions were videotaped and transcribed for a total of 270 hours.

THE TRANSCULTURAL PARADOX

CISV may be observed as a wide and complex world workshop, in which children are working together with adults, in constructing and re-constructing intercultural relationships as interpersonal relationships (Watson, Chapter 11, this volume). In order to achieve this aim, CISV is modelled on principles of experiential learning, which allow children to engage in forms of intercultural communication with peers and adults, and to reflect upon the meaning of these experiences. This set of experiences occurs in

specific situations in which children relate each other by using differentiated linguistic and cultural skills (Zhu Hua and Jiang Yan, Chapter 6, this volume).

Communication is intercultural when different cultural presuppositions are observed, which prevent the creation of a single culture that is shared and acknowledged by all the participants (Carbaugh 1990). In these cases, uncertainty is created in communication, which may be faced through new presuppositions or giving rise to contradictions and conflict (Carbaugh 2007).

In CISV Villages, on one hand, the promotion of ‘intercultural’ communication **can be observed**; on the other hand, there is an attempt to create a shared ‘transcultural’ form (Baraldi 2009). This ambivalence is perhaps the most interesting and controversial aspect of the CISV experience, which seeks to outline a ‘monoculture’ based on consideration and preservation of cultural diversity, while changing children’s perspectives. The general purpose of CISV is to develop ‘intercultural competencies’ by means of cooperation between children in activities supported and facilitated by adults (Watson, Chapter 11, this volume). In this way, the CISV experience is particularly charged because it proposes a setting in which different elements converge: promoting the wide range of children’s expressions; questioning these different perspectives; creating and sharing a coherent position that takes into consideration these differences. In doing so, the CISV villages must face the risk of contradiction and conflict through strategies that *prevent, avoid* or attempt to *manage them*. This means that children’s participation should acquire forms that are compatible with those provided by the activities and their educational presuppositions. A normative conflict resolution (NCR) as well as a *we-identity* are often produced in order to reorganise the emergent contradictions, whereas the need to adopt forms of coordination and mediation to tackle these contradictions emerges only where the first two attempts have proven ineffective.

PARTICIPATION AND EDUCATIONAL CULTURE

The meaning of the participants’ performances in educational interactions strictly depends on the function and culture of the education system, that is, on the educational culture (Luhmann and Schorr 1979; see also Baraldi, Chapter 4, this volume). According to this culture, the asymmetric relationship between teachers and learners is central, as well as learners’ normative adjustment to specific rules of behaviour. These aspects of the educational culture guide the participants’ actions, which are evaluated in order to check their success and validity. The educational culture guides the social organisation of educational interactions and the possibility of building relationships between the participants.

The introduction of participatory forms in the education system should therefore be analysed in the context of the educational culture, which determines its meaning and outlines the possibilities that are allowed and those not allowed for participation. Participation may be observed as useful and appealing in the education system as it is deemed to offer a range of opportunities. On one hand, it contributes to the development of children's skills; on the other hand, it develops feelings of friendship, sociability and community spirit (Alkire 2002). Furthermore, it is deemed to encourage the shaping of values and a sense of responsibility, as it makes the participants aware of the effects of their decisions, not only for themselves, but also for their interlocutors.

Participation is therefore a tool for the cognitive and normative development of the child, whereas learning is regarded as a "socially situated" process (Anderson, Reder and Simone 1996), which takes place in a participatory framework in which the beginner or, in other terms, the learner gains access to the expert's business by playing different roles, "each of which implies a different kind of responsibility, a distinct set of role relationships and a different interactive involvement" (Hanks 1991, 15). In this way, rather than a social actor, the child is regarded as an agent, that is, a "legitimate peripheral participant" in the social world of adults (Lave and Wenger 1991). This expression conveys the particular forms of participation of learners, involved in the empirical practice of an expert, but only partially and with limited responsibility compared to the overall final product. The focus on children's participation in the education system affirms the relational and contextualised nature of learning and the negotiated nature of its meaning; at the same time, participation is subordinated to the function of the education system, which seeks to preserve its structure. Promoting children's active participation in educational contexts may therefore generate multiple contradictions and/or oscillations in the interaction, going as far as potentially representing a problem for educational plans, forcing certain scholars to regard 'participatory forms' as constrictive and dysfunctional for the education system (Cooke and Konthari 2001).

These criticisms are motivated in the first place by the statement that promoting participation is based on the cultural presupposition of the importance of supporting and accepting the wide range of perspectives of each participant, instead of the standardized and measurable perspectives preferred by the education system. Secondly, expectations about participation in listening and action are not always compatible with the teaching/learning expectations of the education system. Lastly, when children become active participants, the interaction tends to adopt a trend that is not always predictable or albeit considerably different to what educational interactions usually have. In fact, problems can be seen by the way in which a discussion begins and ends; the organization of turn-taking; questions are posed and answers are given; alignments or adjustments to the previous turns are proposed etc.

During educational activities, a generalized structure can be observed, including (1) adults' explanations and questions, (2) children's executions and answers and (3) adults' remarks, such as assessments, appreciations, continuers, formulations, evaluation and so on (Mehan 1979). Each of these parts of the interaction presents recurrent forms that define children's opportunities to participate. Successful activities must respect the expected times and forms of communication, and children's participation that tends to deviate from these expected times and forms is discouraged. As a result, conflicts are not regarded as opportunities for participation, but as obstacles to the achievement and fulfilment of planned activities.

CONFLICT IN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS

Conflicts may emerge when a 'no' is introduced in communication and the possibility is given to express different points of view in a contradictory manner; it may therefore be maintained that participatory forms prepare contradictory interactions (Baraldi and Iervese 2010). Notwithstanding this, it is improbable that these turn into important conflicts, given that every system generates strategies and procedures for the prevention, avoidance and resolution of conflict.

In the simplest case, a conflict episode is established by a statement followed by a counterstatement, followed by a counterstatement (Maynard 1985). Eisenberg and Garvey (1981, 150) state that "an adversative episode is a sequence which begins with an opposition" and ends with the occurrence of resolution or dissipation of the conflict. Maynard (1985) states that any action can be treated as arguable and opposed; arguments are defined by the interaction of an action unit and an additional action-opposition pair. Chains of these pairs become an argument sequence or "action-opposition sequence" (Hutchby 1996, 2001). More precisely, Hutchby identified actions that allow a party to 'do being argumentative' in the context of precedent utterances, and stated that the 'argumentativeness' of utterance types defines their meaning. Eisenberg and Garvey (1981) conceptualised this sequential emergence of responses to antecedent events, which evolved into Maynard's (1985) term 'arguable actions': the oppositional move becomes the next arguable action, and thus can be followed by another oppositional move.

Every conflict may therefore be observed in its interactional structure, which may determine its reproduction and escalation. In this way, some authors end up maintaining that "conflicts move in negative directions because people are incapable of diagnosing the conflict and altering their behavior" and that they can be "trapped in their own interaction patterns" (Folger, Poole and Stutman 1997, 73).

According to Garcia (1991), expert systems and organisations tend to develop strategies to reduce conflict by minimizing the arguments. In

educational contexts, the main conflict control devices consist of references to cognitive expectations and normative references that are more or less decided. These references may adopt the explicit form of normative conflict resolution (Baraldi 2009), that is, resolutions based on hierarchical relationships whereby one part discourages and limits the participation of the other part. More specifically, by observing examples of talk-in-interaction, these control devices appear to be aimed at discouraging the emergence of adversative episodes through the interruption of argument sequences.

These interventions are typical of the education system because they presuppose that epistemic authority must be stressed and communicative asymmetry confirmed. When approaches promoting the diversity of children's expressions are consolidated, these procedures become less and less effective and, at times, contradictory. In these cases, arguments in the interaction, hence adversative episodes, are often observed. In other words, in these cases communication more frequently adopts the form of conflict and attempts to manage conflict become clearer.

In educational contexts, the most probable and frequent conflicts are usually those concerning competition and divergence (Iervese 2007). These conflicts may equally be generated in situations of *communicative asymmetry* (e.g. epistemic authority manages and determines the speech turn-taking, introduces the communicable topics, assesses performances etc.), as well as when communication tends to be *symmetric* (e.g. the meanings of the interaction are determined by the competition of all the participants, the choices are shared etc.). Competitive conflicts may be observed when participants are called upon to dispute an aim or perform a task, whereas divergence concerns the disagreement about contents and/or ways of interacting. In an intercultural educational context, such as CISV, conflict of divergence may be observed above all when communication oscillates between asymmetric and symmetric forms. We shall try to tackle this aspect in detail in the next paragraph.

AVOIDING CONFLICTS

CISV Villages try to generate what Lave and Wenger (1991) call a “community of practice”, that is, a group of people brought together by some mutual endeavour, some common enterprise in which they are engaged and to which they bring a shared repertoire of resources, including linguistic resources, and for which they are mutually accountable. This community works through operational consensus (Goffman 1963), which should be created and confirmed in the interaction, silencing the differences. In this way, conflict represents a threat to the community logic (*we-rationale*) because it puts at risk agreement and syntony (Iervese and Rossi 2009).

Children's participation normally refers to shared intents, which are turned into coherent practices. When this does not happen, conflicts of divergence

may be generated. These conflicts are often avoided by introducing forms of asymmetry in communication. One example of conflict avoidance is shown in the following extract, in which some children are involved in an action game. The rules are explained by the Italian and Danish leaders (LFita and LMdan) before the beginning of the game. “Playing the game” is the shared objective of the community of practice created by the children and the leaders.

Extract 7.1

1. LFita: here there is the prison. When you find/touch one of the other team you must bring him/her here, and they will draw (?) you a line.
2. M1ita: can we go in their prison?
3. LFita: yes. If they catch you, then you go to their prison.
4. M1ita: but it is stupid this game, if one catch you then -
5. LFita: you have to try to be not caught.
(*LMdan arranges the red team into two lines*)
6. LMdan: we've got two lines. Alright?! Jenny there, Gianmaria here. Ok guys. Listen up! You are red team! You are the red team! Act as a team!
7. (?): yea!
8. LMdan: Don't run around screaming (..) Red Team!
9. (?): yea.
10. LMdan: act as one! Alright?! So when we move we move together!

In turn 1, LFita explains the dynamics of the game. In turn 2 an Italian child (M1ita) asks a question and LFita answers in turn 3. Questions normally function to initiate question-answer sequences; however, they also function to shift the focus of the interaction. The question in turn 2 is not a simple request for information as it prepares the later turns and propels the disagreement. Its location as the second position in the pair relates it closely to the previous turn, making the new turn a “questionable turn” (Gruber 2001). In this case, the leader’s response to the child’s question is affirmative, but it is followed by apparently unnecessary additional information. In fact, the use of the particle ‘if’ in turn 3 introduces a statement that has the function of emphasising and confirming the spirit of the game and the need to conform to it. Turn 4 begins with a disclaiming “but”, followed by a negative comment, motivated with reference to the game logic, which is introduced by the hypothetical “if”. Since it replicates the structure of turn 3, turn 4 introduces an explicit contradiction, to which the leader responds in turn 5 by stressing the purpose of the game. According to Pomerantz’s preference model (1984), agreement is the preferred or “unmarked” response in conversation and the use of disagreement stresses disruption in the sequence. Dispreferred responses require work in turn construction and their effects are often mitigated by explanations, apologies etc. However, Goodwin (1990) demonstrates that children do not necessarily orient to disagreement as a dispreferred second-pair response, as they may directly challenge the previous turn.

In this case, on the one hand, the beginning of a conflict of divergence is observed in an asymmetric situation and the start of an adversative episode, whereas, on the other hand, the objection is not accepted by LFita, hence preventing the creation of what Hutchby (1996) calls an “action-opposition sequence”, i.e. the build-up of an argument (Hutchby 2001).

In turn 4, the opposition of the Italian child is interrupted in the argumentative stage to insert a confirmative utterance. By ‘confirmative utterance’, here we mean the confirmation of the position (illustration of the game) without the opposition (the rules are senseless) uttered in the next turn, which might project an argument. A confirmative utterance is therefore a reformulation of the first turn that does not take in the interlocutor’s second turn, avoiding contradicting or criticising it. Starting with turn 6, the turn-taking system is managed by the Danish leader (LMdan), who uses incitements and instructions aimed at bringing the interaction back to its purpose (playing the game) and to its standardizing form (turn 10: “act as one”). In this instance, the conflict is openly ignored through the use of normative reference to collective action. This, therefore, means that personal participation is discouraged in favour of the request for performances (turns 5, 6, 8, 10).

On the one hand, the child’s objection gives rise to symmetry in communication; on the other hand, the conflict is discouraged by re-introducing asymmetry, which forces the children to become executors and no longer social agents. They are therefore called upon to confirm the expectations of the leaders, reacting to the turns proposed by them (turns 7, 9). Interruptions are fundamental in re-establishing the leaders’ epistemic authority and determining alignment. From a conversation analytic perspective, all interruptions are violations of the current speaker’s right to the floor and disrupt the flow of the conversation (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974). However, some authors note that interruptions also connote cooperation, therefore distinguishing between power and non-power, confirming and disconfirming, disruptive and supportive interruptions (Kennedy and Camden 1983). Goldberg (1990) claims that power interruptions are used to gain control of process and/or content by gaining the floor. This use of interruptions can often be seen in the interactions in which children are involved, as well as in projects aimed at encouraging their participation as extract 7.2 clearly shows. In short, the leader’s interventions in this sequence ensure that the interaction is not directed at the opposition and turns into an adversative episode.

Extract 7.2 is part of a long planning session for the staging of “Cinderella”. The extract concerns a discussion between the leader from Slovenia (LFslo) and a girl from Guatemala involved in devising the set design of the sketch. In this case, the conversation, as is often the case when promoting the active participation of children, focuses on reflections of the participants’ proposals and on attempts to manage decisions in a coordinated way.

Extract 7.2

1. LFslo: what do we use to carry Cinderella?
2. F2gua: it's easy we use the car we use for the food
3. LFslo: it's that we don't want no one to be injured
4. F2gua: but we are careful, we know how to use it
5. LFslo: it's not something you can be sure of
6. F2gua: but we tried
7. LFslo: you mean you used it?
8. F2gua: and no one was injured
9. LFslo: do: not do it again it's dangerous
10. F2gua: but: how do you know it we tried it [we: -
11. LFslo: [no more
12. F1gua: o:h °ok°
13. LFslo: and: food goes on it
14. F2gua: a:h no problem there is no food, they are: empty
15. LFslo: .hh but there will be food (.) food in a few hours
16. F2gua: but we find a lot of [these-
17. LFslo: [where?
18. F2gua: ehm in the: [kitch-
19. LFslo: [did you go in the kitchen, you can:nnot do it
20. F2gua: no no (.) not in the: kitchen outside the kitchen
21. LFslo: hh where they were ready to carry food hh so don't use them
22. F2gua: °ok° ((she goes away))

Contrary to what happens in the previous example, in this extract one can observe the emergence of an argument sequence or “action-opposition sequence” (Hutchby 1996, 2001), hence of an adversative episode. In this sequence, the turn-taking of the leader and the girl from Guatemala (F2gua) is regular and continuous, outlining a question-response-correction-claim structure.

The sequence begins with the Slovenian leader's open question, which is clearly a way of encouraging the children's participation. In the second turn, F2gua answers sharply and consistently. In the third turn, the leader assesses the proposal in a critical way. In the fourth turn, F2gua objects to this assessment (claim). This is therefore a Question-Answer-Assessment-Claim (QAAC) structure, which is recurrent in educational interactions, when the leader's third turn assesses children's learning (Farini 2009). The assessment in the third turn may be either an appreciation or a critical comment. In this case, it is in the fourth turn, the one marked by the girl's contradiction, that a difference compared to traditional educational structures may be noted. Beginning a conflict of divergence with an adult is rather costly and it is possible only if there are favourable conditions for children's active participation. In turns 3 and 4, the conflict may be observed through a double negation (Luhmann 1984). This sequence is repeated in the next two turns (turns 5 and 6), giving rise to a quick repartee. Starting from turn 7, the ‘question-answer-assessment-claim’ structure is repeated in a similar way, although the emphasis on correction becomes clearer, and produces the leaders' normative interruption in turn 11 and the girl's alignment in

turn 12. The last part of this extract is opened by LFslo's statement, which stimulates an action-opposition sequence, connoted by disruptive interruptions (turns 17, 19) and peremptory normative statements (turns 19, 21). These actions first produce the child's repair attempt (turn 20), then her final alignment and her consequent disengagement from the interaction (turn 22). The leader's final turns may therefore be identified as explicit normative conflict resolution (NCR), inspired by the need to protect the children from possible hazards that unhindered participation may produce, as well as from the need to resolve the conflict in such a way as to take the communication back to a consistent operative line. NCR is prepared in the previous turns and concludes the episode by taking the communication back to the topic and purpose of the interaction. The conflict is in fact seen as distortion and abandonment of the central outline or "track of attention" (Goffman 1974). In this way, participation becomes albeit subordinated to the identification of the right and wrong sides of the performance. It is nevertheless interesting to note in this sequence that communication is also reproduced in the conflict and, it could be said, *thanks* to the conflict that is generated. While the leader's normative statements fail, the generation of arguments allows the conversation to proceed in a balanced way.

For one part of this sequence, the leader's actions do not limit the child's participation, but promote it. The question in turn 7, for example, is a request that checks the leader's understanding. This is a typical action aimed at once more promoting participation (Baraldi, Chapter 4, this volume). Even in the final part of this sequence, in turn 17, although the leader interrupts the girl's turn, her open question shows the purpose of gathering further information, thereby allowing the child to provide more details about what happened. It is also interesting to note the child's repeated use of 'but' in turns 4, 6, 10 and 16, which can be interpreted as a cue for disclaiming, i.e. as a way of arguing and continuing the opposition, connecting it to the previous turn (Baraldi and Caiti 2009). The disclaimer is also resumed by the leader in turn 15 and is interrupted when the normative statement becomes more pressing, hence sustaining the conflict becomes riskier and more demanding.

Contrary to what is normally believed, conflicts do not necessarily interrupt or weaken active participation, but they can be managed and create opportunities for interaction. In the twenty-two turns stated in this example, we can note that the conversation involves only two interlocutors and excludes the others, although when F2gua speaks, the collective 'we' used for the entire sequence refers to the group in its entirety. Conflicts usually repeat themselves in oppositive and dyadic structures that confront two subjects or two groups. Another important aspect is that the adversative episode that is produced between the leader and the child diverts the discussion from the main topic to the issue of correct behaviour and observance of rules. Finally, the conflict tends to "parasitize" communication and the system in which it is generated (Luhmann 1984). In other words,

conflict tends to reproduce itself, substituting the purpose of the interaction. In this situation, this may create a problem in planning the activities for “Cinderella”.

NCR limits the reproduction of the conflict, interrupting alternating shifts among the conflict parties and obtaining children’s adaptation. This function may be achieved through the adults’ normative intervention, stressing a superior epistemic authority, as well as through other regulatory forms based, for example, on the majority vote or even drawing lots (e.g. counting rhymes).

MEDIATING CONFLICT

According to Winslade (2006, 503), “from a constructionist perspective, mediation would be focused much more explicitly on the politics of meaning-making”. In this way, if promoting participation manifests itself in the expression of a wide range of points of view, and conflict may emerge when these points of view are contradicting each other, mediation is the medium that allows diversity of perspectives to be maintained, avoiding the standstill of communication. In other words, mediation does not avoid conflict and does not prevent the emergence of adversative episodes; it moves from sequences consisting of ‘action-opposition pair’ to others, establishing coordination in the interaction.

The previous section presented cases in which, in order to avoid conflict, the leaders attempt to stop the reproduction of arguments by hindering the children’s active participation. However, support and appreciation of active participation do not fuel the conflict and, on the contrary, may be useful elements for managing conflict, as shown in extract 7.3.

Extract 7.3 takes place in a ‘Peace-War-Peace’ debriefing phase, a typical activity in CISV Villages, which consists in a group construction of a ‘perfect city’ and in its destruction by another group. The third phase introduces a reflection upon the activity, which mainly focuses on opinions, feelings and states of mind of the participants.

Extract 7.3

1. SFusa: R., what about you? Are you (?)?
2. M2nz1: ahm:
3. LFnz1: how did you feel about making war?
4. M2nz1: it was fun.
5. LFnz1: it was fun.
6. ((*laughing*))
7. LFnz1: ok. ((*she smiles*)). What do you mean- [What he means
8. Flnz1: [Can I say something?
9. SFusa: yes of course.
10. Flnz1: I think that you feel better about making peace, but it’s harder to do it, and it’s easier to do war but you feel bad about it.

11. ((SFusa nods)).
12. LFznz1: you got the point.
13. F1nz1: does that make sense?
14. LFznz1: yea.
15. F1nz1: ok ((laughs)).
16. SFusa: what about you Miss S.? (.) Was it easy to create war?
17. F2usa: mm: yes, it was fun.
18. ((Laughing))
19. F1nz1: it was fun (more).
20. Flusa: I (was) like walking and everyone else do it more though.
21. ((Flusa starts narrating amusing episodes of destruction, while the other children are laughing))

In the first three turns of this sequence, the leader from New Zealand (LFznz1) and an American staff member (SFusa) attempt to involve a child in the reflection. The reformulation of the question in turn 3 is a clear indication of the will to promote the child's participation. In turn 4, a child from New Zealand's (M2nz1) response is eccentric with respect to the expectations and aims of the activity, as shown by the general laughter in turn 6. In the interactions observed in our research, responses like this clearly caused conflict, mostly managed with cognitive or normative references to the value of peace and the purposes of the activity (Iervese and Rossi 2009). In this case, instead in turn 5 we can see a simple echo by the leader. Echoes help to 'reverberate' previous contributions without comments or assessments. In turn 7, the leader asks an open question to clarify the meaning of the child's response. The question is put to the child, as well as to the group, which is called upon to interpret the response. This attempt at entrusting the child's response to the interaction system has the double purpose of (1) promoting and distributing the turns and (2) avoiding conflict between the two parties. Although fuelling the conflict is avoided, this attempt does not hinder the argument and, on the contrary, encourages its expression. In turn 10, F1nz1's formulation (Baraldi, Hutchby, Chapters 4 and 5 respectively, this volume) provides an interesting interpretation of M2nz1's response, which receives the appreciation of the adults. Moreover, it also helps to restart participation. In turn 16, SFusa refers to this formulation in order to ask a new question. In turn 19 in which the echo, with a back-up comment, comes from a girl, and subsequent turns in which a sequence of contributions is caused, associated with the fun generated by taking part in the perfect city destruction game. In this sequence, divergence is faced, which arises from the active participation of children, promoting and distributing further participation. This type of management does not necessarily involve achieving a shared agreement, yet affirms the importance and involvement of all the participants in creating a coordinated and operative perspective. The shift from agreement to coordination is a fundamental aspect for mediation in participatory contexts. Both agreement and coordination may allow the interaction and efficiency of the participants,

but they do it in considerably different ways and with considerably different consequences.

Extract 7.4 is an example of how the dialogic management (Baraldi, Chapter 4, this volume) of the interaction = allows the participation to be not compromised (for example, by excluding or limiting some contributions) and, at the same time, promotes the interaction without distorting or altering its aims. These are highly complex management forms that are not always advanced in a coherent way: the imponderability of the communicative process that arises from dialogic mediation forces interlocutors to revise their expectations, continually taking into account others' expectations. In extract 7.4, conflict arises out of differences about which materials should be used to create the perfect city, which children are called upon to design and construct together. It is a long and complicated conflict that initially involves two children, then extends to other participants and has repercussions on the entire activity, which is interrupted due to the decision-making deadlock. The leader's intervention is not aimed at interrupting the dispute; rather it (1) checks the positions and interests of the conflicting parties, (2) finds points of contact between them, (3) attempts a compromise, producing mitigating normative and hierarchical contributions at times, and (4) finally, involves all participants in seeking operative coordination and unfolding the conflict rather than resolving it, thereby resulting in asymmetry.

After an initial phase in which the leader undertakes to understand that the dispute regards the use of glue or sellotape to create a cardboard construction, there is then a long stage of persuasion by the leader. Notwithstanding this, the conflict continues and enters into deadlock, that is, a phase in which the same arguments are repeated by both parties without any progress in communication. This situation is part of a recurrent dynamic of escalating conflict, which must be tackled to bring the focus back to the interaction and its participants. This is the third phase that presents the first part of the following extract.

Extract 7.4a

45. LFDut: ok. So you think it's not working? ((turning to Feng))
 46. Feng: I've just put all together
 47. LFDut: but you are not (sure) that it will work ((turning to Mdut))
 48. Mcos: she's just saying that it's not stable
 49. Mdut: it's stable, you can put it
 50. Mcos: no, no
 51. Mdut: if we do more tape we can also can do this
 52. Mcos: we can do-
 53. LFDut: (??) but maybe you can work on (.) on make it (..) I think you don't like it because you don't like the tape, right? You don't like [the tape
 54. Mdut: [it's just ugly
 55. LFDut: but maybe you can help-

56. Mdut: she is just saying, the only thing she's saying is that it has to be stable
57. LFdut: but it is important that
58. Feng: ok, it doesn't matter if it is stable or not
59. LFdut: I do think, well you can still make it pretty, that doesn't mean that-
60. Feng: yea yea
61. LFdut: so maybe you can concentrate on that, even if you don't like the tape, you can try and try to make a nice building
62. Mdut: we only have few minutes
63. LFdut: but it's plenty of time
64. Mdut: (??)
65. LFdut: well few people can (??) and few can make the building pretty
66. Mcos: (??)
67. LFnor: and then we can have a swimming pool, right?
68. LFdut: oh (..) I like the swimming pool!
69. Mcos: do you know how to draw it?
70. LFdut: ok so maybe
71. Mcos: then the roof
72. Mdut: but if you do more tape, it's so ugly. If you don't more tape it won't
73. LFnor: you can also correct that one
74. Mdut: you can do like this and you can put more tape, but it isn't stable
75. Feng: look, we have this *((passing him some paper))*
76. Mdut: ah, we can make the the, yes, the garden!
77. LFnor: and also you can make the (??), yeah?
78. Mdut: look, the garden

The sequence begins with the leader's confirmation of the previous turn and with a formulation in the form of a question, which propels the English child's (Feng) next turn. Feng answers in an indirect way and, in turn 48, the leader introduces a second formulation that seeks to verify her understanding of the positions. This perception-checking action is combined with an action promoting the children's participation. In turn 49 a Danish child (Mdut) formulates, i.e. interprets and summarises, Feng's position. In this way, the meaning of the conflict is entrusted to the interaction and not to the leader's monologue. A Costa Rican child's (Mcos) turn produces Mdut's reaction; this exchange prefigures possible ways out of the deadlock (line 51: "we can also do this" and line 52: "we can do"). This exchange is accepted by the leader with a back-up proposal in turn 53, followed by a formulation of Mdut's position, which is confirmed in the next turn by the person concerned. On one hand, there is concern about the stability of the construction; on the other hand, about its appearance. Here it can be observed how, by means of confrontation between the participants, the interactive construction of a "dispute narrative" (Stewart and Maxwell 2010) is possible, initially by identifying the "adversarial narrative pattern" (Briggs 1996) when such rival narratives are observed.

Identifying the conflict pattern, on one hand, allows attempts to identify the possible ways of dealing with the conflict (turn 55) and, on the other hand, for the disputing parties to relativize the position of others and their own (turns 56 and 58). In this case, it is the leader—acting as a mediator—who guarantees the petitions of the opposing parties, showing recognition for the concerns that they express (turn 57) and avoiding siding with one party (turn 59). This concern is motivated by the need to guarantee a fair and widespread participation, which allows the complexity of the points of views to be taken into account, as well as the differences that have emerged. In turn 61, the leader introduces an operative proposal, which does not resolve the conflict, yet attempts coordination. In turn 62, Mdut does not abandon the conflict of divergence to attempt a conflict of hindrance (Glasl 1999; Iervese 2007), which uses the “lack of time” as a conventional and recurrent argument (Schwarze 2007). Starting from turn 65, coordination seems to work and the interaction gradually leaves the conflict behind to go back to building parts of the perfect city. This passage is distinguished by the adults’ promotion of participation (turns 65, 67 and 68) and their support of other children (turns 69 and 71).

Notwithstanding this, the opposition of Mdut persists, witnessing that the conflict is not resolved, but communicatively “perturbed” (Luhmann 1984). LFnor, in turn 73, gives Mdut the possibility to leave the conflictual position in which he is still confined to take up another functional position for the non-conflictual continuation of the interaction, which continues in such a way as to make the two opposing parties capable of coordinating among themselves (turns 74–78). Starting from turn 61, the construction of an exit “threshold” from the conflict is observed (Froelich-Archangelo and Iervese 2007), that is, the creation of occasions to re-position participants and co-construct an “alternative narrative” (Stewart and Maxwell 2010). Turns 72 and 74 are examples of this re-positioning, whereby Mdut takes on board Feng’s concerns and incorporates them into his arguments. On the other hand, with regard to the creation of an alternative narrative, reference can be made to the close of this long sequence stated below.

Extract 7.4b

79. (*The Norwegian leader cuts a piece of paper and puts it on the handmade city*)
 80. Mdut: but we don’t see anything!
 81. (*They laugh, then the boys work together though Mdut continues to lead a bit, while Feng remains a little bit apart but she laughs*)
 82. LFnor: but can you see how it works better to work as a team? Can you see that now?
 83. Mdut: mmm
 84. LFnor: yea!

85. *((The boys are working together; Mdut asks Feng her opinion about their work and little by little she reaches the group and collaborates))*

In turn 82, the Norwegian leader's (LFnor) question introduces an educational reference, which acts also as a summary of the alternative narrative created in the interaction. This mitigating normative and explicit proposal is not accepted by Mdut, who does not answer the leader's question and continues to coordinate with Feng and collaborate with the other participants. In turn 82 the leader leaves mediation and moves to expertise, pointing out the positive and negative sides of the children's performance. This turn is introduced by a disclaiming "but" that traces a distinction between before and after the conflict. The oscillation between mediation and education that can be observed in the last two extracts allows an understanding of the difference between the two forms of communication and the impact that they may have on the interaction. On one hand, mediation allows a participatory management of meanings and decision-making (Winslade 2006) within the interaction; on the other hand, the educational intervention seeks to adapt the interaction to principles that are deemed positive. The two parts of this example highlight the ambiguity between reaching an operative agreement (turn 82) and reaching an operative coordination (summarised in turn 85). However, if in the first instance the children are required to get in line with the adults' epistemic authority, in the second instance the shared responsibility of choices is affirmed, giving substance to the interaction.

CONCLUSIONS

The link between participation, conflict and mediation may be identified in the fact that the interaction and the meanings it produces are a result of the active participation of those who take part in them. This premise implies that interactions cannot have predictable and obligatory outcomes and that any outcome may be none other than a result of the way in which the participants manage to coordinate among themselves. For this reason, in this chapter I have attempted to highlight how actions that support active participation, conflict management and mediation are closely related and mutually dependent. This interdependence frequently creates contradictions within education systems, regarding expectations, cultural presuppositions and organisation of the interaction.

Empirical observation of interactions involving adults and children in CISV Villages shows the contradictions between education and promotion of participation, which manifests itself with the emergence of conflict. Conflict may therefore be regarded as a communication problem

or a symptom of a problem to be tackled. In the first case, the strategies of avoidance and control devices seek to prevent the reproduction of arguments and adversative sequences, but, in so doing, they have an impact on the normative block in participation and disempowerment of participants. In the second case, conflict is taken as an opportunity for the interaction, which must however re-position and reformulate the conflictual relations that tend to recur and take root.

The challenge of mediation therefore lies in making negotiable and open to revision stances that seem irreconcilable and fixed, yet offering a co-constructed alternative narration. As shown in the extracts, the choice is essentially between agreement and coordination, different ways that are both aimed at guaranteeing the efficiency of the interaction systems, yet with interactive dynamics and different consequences.

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