

# Children, Citizenship, and Commons: Insights from Three Case Studies in Lisbon on the 3 C's



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**Abstract** Listening to children in educational settings is vital for establishing inclusive and equitable environments. This approach recognizes children as active agents and contributors to their education, enabling them to express their needs and participate in decision-making processes. By involving children in educational discourse, pedagogical practices can better align with their interests, resulting in more effective, engaging, and democratic learning experiences. The synergy between Childhood Studies and Educational Sciences underscores the necessity of heeding children's voices to enhance educational quality and foster active citizenship. This chapter presents the findings of the SMOOTH subproject—*RED\_Rights, Equity, and Diversity in Educational Contexts*. It conducted three case studies in Lisbon, Portugal, involving focus groups with children from diverse educational contexts, involving both formal and non-formal settings, between September and October 2022. These studies aimed to explore diverse dimensions of the educational commons concept, including *children's roles as commoners, commoning practices, and communal aspects related to goods and values* within educational and community settings. The findings apprise children's perspectives as citizens and commoners, highlighting their creativity, self-awareness, interests, and active participation in activities. Additionally, they shed light on emotional and expressive reactions and highlight intersectionality issues within these contexts. This research underscores the vital importance of listening to children, ultimately enhancing educational quality, and promoting active citizenship.

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## 1 Introduction

Over the past three decades, children's participation has emerged as a significant and prominent subject of discussion, particularly following the enactment of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN 1989). This has led to the development of a substantial *corpus* of legal and scientific literature, both at the international and national levels. These contributions originate from fields such as Childhood Studies, Child Rights Studies, and Educational Sciences [7, 11, 14, 17, 19, 36], shedding light on the challenges associated with children's participation and its profound impact on their daily lives as they seek to fully realise their identities as citizens and rights holders.

However, children continue to be excluded from full citizenship status, becoming "waiting citizens" [23]. They face exclusion and invisibility in the public and sociopolitical sphere [18, 32, 33, 35, 39, 41], including at school, where they spend most of their time.

Children are subjects with the right to actively participate in social, cultural, and educational life. They possess the capacity to influence collective decisions and engage in community life. This aspect constitutes a central dimension in the development of the child-citizen paradigm [14, 16, 30, 38] and the existence of horizons of possibility in favour of education as a common good [5, 8, 40]. It is important to think about a different perspective of education to build the common(s). Education, as a common good, stands as a fundamental pillar of political empowerment for both children and adults [27].

These are indeed some of the fundamental dimensions of the SMOOTH project, titled *Educational Common Spaces: Passing through Enclosures and Reversing Inequalities* (Horizon 2020, EU). Specifically, the project aims to develop and implement the concept of educational commons. This concept provides an alternative framework of principles and actions that pertain to shared and open educational resources, materials, and practices. These resources are collaboratively developed, maintained, and made accessible, ultimately benefiting a broader educational community.

Informed by a dialogue between the fields of Childhood Studies and Educational Sciences, and situated within the context of the SMOOTH project, this chapter presents the findings and reflections of the subproject RED *Rights, Equity, and Diversity in Educational Contexts*, which conducted three case studies in Lisbon, Portugal, by NOVA team. These case studies explored the three dimensions of the educational commons concept: (i) *the role of children as commoners* [27] refers to their involvement in and contributions to common resources and shared spaces, particularly in the context of educational and communal settings; (ii) *commoning practices*, delved into elements such as sharing, caring, cooperation, and conflict resolution within these communities; and the (iii) *communal aspects of goods and values*,

examined aspects of community belonging, collaboration among stakeholders, intercultural dialogue, and social integration. These dimensions are grounded in core principles of *sharing*, *caring*, and *cooperation*.

This chapter presents qualitative findings obtained through methodological procedures used to collect and analyse children's perspectives on the three dimensions across the three educational settings. Prior to this, we introduce the conceptual framework of the research.

## **2 Concepts Utilised and Associated Perspectives**

### **2.1 *Children as Commoners***

The concept of children as citizens with rights has evolved from the recognition of children as active individuals entitled to engage in the public sphere and within the socio-political context [1, 15, 19, 31, 38]. Children's participation is a multifaceted and intricate process, encompassing both a valuable learning experience and a fundamental individual and collective child right, which serves to reinforce democratic values [6, 7, 20]. The epistemological and theoretical-methodological heritage of the Childhood Studies has extensively investigated children's participation [11, 20, 37, 38]. However, there are challenges associated with establishing and implementing structures and processes to actively engage with and consider children's perspectives and agency. It is, however, crucial to listen to them, recognizing their existence and their social and political competence. However, it is recognized that children's participation is often crossed by adultism [21, 22], asymmetrical power and domination relations, especially in educational contexts. Children's voices, a complex and vague terminology, must always be considered from specific institutional contexts, inherently multidimensional and conflictual [10]. Being attentive not only to verbal communication and actions but also to the diverse languages employed by children, including their moments of silence and non-verbal expressions, is crucial for truly listening to and comprehending children's perspectives and recognizing the implications of their voices.

### **2.2 *Commoning Practices and Childhood***

Commoning involves the management and communal sharing of resources, the collaborative creation of entities, and cooperative efforts aimed at achieving shared objectives within a community of individuals [4, 5]. Those engaged in commoning processes are individuals who emphasise the importance of mutual care. Acts such as volunteering, altruism, selflessness, peer-assistance, and mutual support can all be regarded as synonymous with commoning [3].

Commoning encompasses the act of establishing and managing a shared resource based on principles of openness, equality, collaborative participation, diversity, and sustainability. The educational commons encompass the communal ownership and control of educational resources and processes by a community [27]. This extends beyond conveying formal knowledge about rights and responsibilities, encompassing identity development across sociopolitical, cultural, and economic aspects. The notion of educational commons is associated with citizenship, but it diverges from conventional formal education-based citizenship. The educational commons represent an alternative pedagogical approach capable of fostering democratic transformation [27]. This potential emerges from the structure of the commons, which brings together common goods, rules, and “commoners.” In the context of education, these participants encompass both adults and children, both of whom contribute to shaping community practices and regulations through their active engagement and participation in decision-making processes.

Building upon this perspective, Childhood Studies [11, 13, 34], as mentioned above, introduced a critical perspective on redefining our understanding of childhood as a social construct and the role of children as active agents. This counter-hegemonic perspective on childhood introduces complexities that have an impact on the relationships between adults and children, including within educational settings.

### ***2.3 Community and Common Goods and Childhood***

Within the realm of sociological and educational literature, a growing discourse has arisen regarding education’s status as a shared asset and the adoption of a communal perspective on education [2, 24–27]. The idea of common goods indicates a transformation of public institutions, emphasising increased citizen and community involvement in the implementation of viable policies and practices. This shift aims to move away from utilitarian and individualistic approaches, ultimately fostering the development of more democratic education systems. Furthermore, the concept of education as a common good challenges the prevailing utilitarian model that views education solely as an individual socio-economic investment. Instead, it advocates for a humanistic perspective that prioritises individuals and their interconnectedness with the community [24]. Elinor [26] concept of ‘commons’ refers to shared resources managed collectively and equitably by communities. She advocates for principles of collective ownership as effective alternatives to privatisation or external regulation. Ostrom emphasises the importance of community-based sustainable frameworks, extending the concept of common goods to encompass social relationships and various educational assets, both physical and intangible. In education, this involves collaboration within interconnected networks to ensure the well-being of individuals and collective resources.

### 3 Methodology and Ethics

The qualitative research conducted in this study promotes a dialogue between the fields of Childhood Studies, specifically Sociology of Childhood, and Educational Sciences. Its primary objective is to document children's perspectives and experiences concerning their roles within school and community contexts. Additionally, it explores their viewpoints on aspects such as sharing, care, cooperation, and conflict resolution within these communities, as well as their sense of belonging to the community.

The research comprises three distinct case studies conducted by the NOVA research team, involving children from kindergarten, the 1st, and the 2nd Cycle of Basic Education (CBE) across one private school and two public schools located in Lisbon, Portugal. The research was carried out between March 2022 and June 2023. In this chapter, we focused uniquely on the period during which the focus groups were conducted, which occurred between September and October 2022. Given the various ways in which these focus groups were organised, it was necessary to adapt the provided script, encompassing the three dimensions and questions, for all SMOOTH partners. This adaptation became necessary due to delays encountered in the NOVA case studies (CS) resulting from bureaucratic and contextual challenges. Additionally, researchers introduced extra questions to improve the quality of interactions with the children. In the case of younger participants, there were instances where they showed resistance. Although these children initially participated enthusiastically in the focus groups, they later exhibited restlessness, which included interruptions and signs of fatigue. To address these challenges, the interviews were structured with intermittent breaks for play, providing the children with opportunities to refocus and actively engage in the interviews afterward.

Demonstrating a firm commitment to children's rights and adhering to ethical research practices with children [12, 29] we obtained informed consent from responsible adults and the participating children. In all three contexts, children's voluntary participation in focus groups was a fundamental criterion for conducting the interviews, ensuring anonymity, confidentiality, and promoting more equitable power relations and information sharing.

In our research, we exclusively interviewed children, but we received support from adult supervisors overseeing the groups. For the kindergarten, we had a 38-year-old educator with 12 years of experience and a 27-year-old educational assistant with 3 years of experience. In the 1st cycle, a 44-year-old teacher with 10 years of experience, four at the current school, led the group. In the 2nd cycle, a 54-year-old teacher with nearly 30 years of experience, five at this school, was responsible for the group.

Twelve focus groups were conducted in total, with four in kindergarten, five in the 1st Cycle of Basic Education (CBE), and 3 in the 2nd CBE. Each group consisted of 3–4 children. We employed semi-structured scripts from the SMOOTH project containing questions grouped into three research dimensions (see Table 1 in the annex for details).

**Table 1** Children's perspectives for each of the cores—Synthesis

| Core dimension and number of questions | Sub-dimensions  | Typology/nature of the questions  | Children's perspectives   |
|--|---|---|---|
| 1—children as commoners (25Q)          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children's response as creative and self-aware subjects</li> <li>• Children's interest and participation in activities</li> <li>• Children's emotional and expressive reactions</li> <li>• Children's living conditions and status (intersectionality issues)</li> </ul> | <p>Favourite activities in an educational context</p> <p>Educational environment</p> <p>Children's participation (times, spaces, materials, activity proposals)</p> | <p><b>Best experiences at school</b><br/>Play with friends, draw, and participate in school activities (kindergarten and 1st CBE)</p> <p><b>Worst experiences at school</b><br/>Conflicts between peers (kindergarten and 1st CBE)<br/>Some activities/subjects (1st CBE)</p> <p><b>Diversity, inclusion, and justice</b><br/>Demonstrated empathy between peers in the 3 contexts, and shared positive experiences of inclusion and welcome with foreign children (1st and 2nd CEB) or younger children (kindergarten)</p>   |
| 2—commoning practices (30Q)            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing and caring</li> <li>• Cooperating and collective creativity</li> <li>• Engaged citizenship</li> <li>• Conflict resolution</li> <li>• Conviviality</li> </ul>   | <p>Peer interactions and collaboration in group activities</p> <p>Participation</p> <p>Participation and gender</p> <p>Participation and social inequalities</p>    | <p><b>Working in groups</b><br/>More freedom to choose which group to join (kindergarten)<br/>Limited flexibility regarding collaborative activities (1st and 2nd CEB)</p> <p><b>Gender</b><br/>Perception of gender distinctions in play linked to specific spaces (kindergarten) and the distribution of group work responsibilities (2nd CEB), with a focus on inclusive play regardless of gender (1st CEB)</p> <p><b>Conflicts</b><br/>Children discussed conflicts and how they are resolved, including seeking help from adults such as assistants and teachers (1st and 2nd CEB)</p> <p>Children emphasise the importance of helping their friends and, in cases of conflict, resolution usually involves talking, apologising, and sometimes temporarily stopping playing (kindergarten)</p> |

(continued)

**Table 1** (continued)

| Core dimension and number of questions       | Sub-dimensions  | Typology/nature of the questions  | Children’s perspectives   |
|--|---|---|---|
| <p>3—community and the common good (18Q)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community belongingness and educational commons</li> <li>• Collaboration with local community members (parents, educators, practitioners, etc.) for developing commons attitudes</li> <li>• Intercultural and intergenerational dialogue and social integration</li> </ul> | <p>Relationship with the community, territory and public space</p> <p>Family participation at school</p> <p>Interaction in extended sociability networks at school</p> <p>Activities and belongings outside of school</p> <p>Policy, processes and actors</p> | <p><b>Cultural Context Inclusion:</b> In the context of cultural background, children living near the school have a stronger connection to their school neighbourhoods, while those who live farther away feel disconnected. Kindergarten children, on the other hand, live in close neighbourhoods and have a sense of belonging. The kindergarten context encourages neighbourhood socialisation through grassroots associations and events, even for those living farther away. In contrast, the 1st CBE school struggles with limited family involvement, and caregivers face challenges in taking children to extracurricular activities due to resource and time constraints. Similarly, the 2nd CBE context lacks a strong connection between neighbourhood projects and the school, and family involvement is minimal, with attendance primarily limited to disciplinary or academic meetings</p> <p><b>Peer education and common goods:</b> In the 1st CBE and kindergarten contexts, peer interaction and collaborative activities are encouraged and facilitated. However, in the 2nd CBE context, there are limitations due to restricted time and space, particularly after class, which hinder opportunities for peer interaction and collaboration</p> <p><b>Social inclusion:</b> Children from vulnerable social groups continue to present a persistent challenge in all three contexts. The kindergarten context demonstrates relatively more success in addressing this challenge due to the reduced social and intersectional differences among its children</p> |

**Table 2** Analysis of schools, number of children, and their socioeconomic status—summary for 2022/2023

| Indicators                   | Kindergarten                     | 1st CBE                         | 2nd CEB |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------|
| School territorial insertion | Urban context                    | Urban context (TEIP)            |         |
| Socioeconomic composition    | Predominance of the middle class | Predominance of the lower class |         |
| Number of children/class     | 25                               | 23                              | 24      |
| Number of female children    | 12                               | 10                              | 10      |
| Number of male children      | 13                               | 13                              | 14      |

Source Data collected under the RED—SMOOTH project

### 3.1 Context and Participants

The case studies were conducted in three schools located in Lisbon, Portugal. These schools are situated in areas affected by processes such as gentrification, touristification, fragmentation, and institutionalisation, which have led to significant socioeconomic, cultural, linguistic, and educational diversity. The two public schools are situated within the urban context and are part of Educational Territories of Priority Intervention (TEIP). In each of the three contexts studied, there were classes consisting of 25 children in kindergarten, 23 children in the 1st Cycle of Basic Education (CBE), and 24 children in the 2nd CBE. These schools are in two distinct neighbourhoods within Lisbon. Importantly, it is worth noting that both the 1st and 2nd CBE schools predominantly cater to students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, as illustrated in Table 2.

The kindergarten is associated with the Pink School, a Private Institution of Social Solidarity, and follows the Pedagogical Model of the Modern School Movement.<sup>1</sup> It caters to 25 children aged 3 to 6, primarily of Portuguese nationality (see Table 3). The 1st CBE (White School) is part of a school cluster in Lisbon, comprising three educational institutions. Our research encompassed both formal and non-formal contexts, including Curricular Enrichment Activities (AEC in Portuguese). In this 1st CBE, the group of children displays significant ethnic and cultural diversity. While the school itself represents diverse social backgrounds, the case study group reflects a lower socio-economic status and consists of 23 children aged 6 to 8 from various countries (see Table 3). The 2nd CBE (Blue School) is also located within a Lisbon school cluster comprising four institutions. Our research primarily focused on the

<sup>1</sup> The Pedagogical Model of the Modern School Movement in Portugal, known as "Movimento da Escola Moderna" (MEM), is an educational approach characterized by progressive and student-centred teaching methods. It is influenced by the global modern education movement but has distinct features tailored to the Portuguese context. Key aspects of this model include a child-centred approach, cooperative and active learning, democratic classroom practices, an interdisciplinary curriculum, promotion of critical thinking, project-based learning, a commitment to inclusion and equity, and a focus on professional development.



formal context. The case study group from the 2nd CBE consists of 24 children aged 10–12, representing various nationalities (see Table 3).

## 4 Unveiling Children’s Perspectives: Research Highlights

In this section, we delineate the findings obtained across the following dimensions: (i) Children as Commoners: Reflection on their rights and duties; (ii) Children’s Acts of Commoning: Caring and showing concern for each other; (iii) Community and Common Goods: A sense of belonging to the neighbour.

### 4.1 *Children as Commoners: Reflection on Their Rights and Duties*

The most striking difference between the contexts is the approach to activities. In the kindergarten, there is a diverse array of activities for children to select from, promoting autonomy. In contrast, the other two schools require all children to participate in the same activity simultaneously, with a compulsory collective completion time, which frequently leads to frustration for the children. Additionally, during group activity discussions, children with more institutional experience expressed their views more assertively and sometimes prevented newcomers from sharing their thoughts.

The 2nd CBE group, which follows a traditional pedagogical model, struggled to comprehend the concept of rights. Many children in this group could not answer questions about rights because they lacked a fundamental understanding of the concept. For instance, when asked if they believed they had the same rights in the classroom, they remained silent. On the other hand, the 1st CBE group was able to articulate their responsibilities as pupils in their school, primarily related to organising classroom spaces. For example, Luisa suggested, “keeping the teacher’s desk but adding a reading corner to the room”. Marta chimed in, expressing the need for “a reading corner to read instead of just working and feeling uninformed”. However, they found it unfair that there was a reading corner in preschool but not in the second grade, prompting Luisa’s remark, “Very ridiculous” (1st CEB).

Children’s speech highlights space issues in the 1st cycle, where there is a lack of equipped spaces for non-formal education activities, and the formal education room lacked recreational spaces until the SMOOTH project intervention. In contrast, kindergarten children had a clear understanding of their rights, as they frequently discussed them during their daily and weekly meetings.

In the 1st CBE, the teacher determines the nature and objectives of the activity, but in general children have autonomy in deciding how to carry it out. However,

**Table 3** Socio-demographic characteristics of the children interviewed

| Ages | Kindergarten |          | 1.º CBE   |                     | 2.º CBE   |       |
|------|--------------|----------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|-------|
|      | Boys         | Girls    | Boys      | Girls               | Boys      | Girls |
| 3    | Carlos       | Patrícia |           |                     |           |       |
|      | Felipe       | Lis      |           |                     |           |       |
|      | Rodrigo      | Clara    |           |                     |           |       |
| 4    | Diego        | Rute     |           |                     |           |       |
|      | Daniel       | Maria    |           |                     |           |       |
|      |              | Julia    |           |                     |           |       |
| 5    | Martim       | Carolina |           |                     |           |       |
|      | David        | Aline    |           |                     |           |       |
|      | Rafael       | Joana    |           |                     |           |       |
|      | Francisco    |          |           |                     |           |       |
|      | Pedro        |          |           |                     |           |       |
|      | Bruno        |          |           |                     |           |       |
|      | Lucas        |          |           |                     |           |       |
|      | Anónio       |          |           |                     |           |       |
| 6    | João         | Ana      | Guilherme |                     |           |       |
|      |              | Susana   |           |                     |           |       |
| 7    |              |          | Lucas     | Marta <sup>1</sup>  |           |       |
|      |              |          | José      | Luisa               |           |       |
|      |              |          | Fernando  | Camila <sup>2</sup> |           |       |
|      |              |          | Rui       | Carolina            |           |       |
|      |              |          | Pedro     | Júlia               |           |       |
|      |              |          | Francisco | Leticia             |           |       |
|      |              |          | Rafael    | Joana               |           |       |
|      |              |          | Gustavo   | Catarina            |           |       |
|      |              |          | Carlos    | Yana <sup>4</sup>   |           |       |
|      |              |          | Tiago     |                     |           |       |
|      |              |          | David     |                     |           |       |
| 8    |              |          |           | Maria               |           |       |
|      |              |          |           | Raquel <sup>1</sup> |           |       |
|      |              |          |           | Laura <sup>2</sup>  |           |       |
| 10   |              |          |           |                     | Francisco |       |
|      |              |          |           |                     | Tomás     |       |
| 11   |              |          |           |                     | Mateus    | Ana   |
|      |              |          |           |                     | Tiago     | Inês  |

(continued)

**Table 3** (continued)

| Ages | Kindergarten |       | 1.º CBE |       | 2.º CBE            |                      |
|------|--------------|-------|---------|-------|--------------------|----------------------|
|      | Boys         | Girls | Boys    | Girls | Boys               | Girls                |
|      |              |       |         |       | João <sup>6</sup>  | Maria                |
|      |              |       |         |       | Pedro <sup>2</sup> | Carolina             |
|      |              |       |         |       | José               | Clara <sup>5</sup>   |
|      |              |       |         |       | Francisco          | Aline                |
|      |              |       |         |       | Ricardo            | Natália              |
|      |              |       |         |       | David              | Mariana <sup>2</sup> |
|      |              |       |         |       | Gabriel            | Luciana <sup>3</sup> |
|      |              |       |         |       | Raj <sup>7</sup>   |                      |
|      |              |       |         |       | Roger <sup>8</sup> |                      |
| 12   |              |       |         |       | André              |                      |

Legend: <sup>1</sup>Venezuela; <sup>2</sup>Brazil; <sup>3</sup>Nepal; <sup>4</sup>Ukraine; <sup>5</sup>Cape-Verde; <sup>6</sup>São Tomé; <sup>7</sup>India; <sup>8</sup>United States of America

in the 2nd CBE, rules are established without children's input, serving as tools for control and reinforcing power dynamics, resulting in activities imposed on them.

The topic of excessive rules gains prominence in kindergarten, with children expressing their feelings about these rules during focus group discussions. The conversation revolves around numerous rules, such as not interrupting, not talking to the side, and not walking with Patricia and Susana mentioning the practice of leaving the room and returning, which they find challenging (kindergarten).

Adults primarily create the rules in both traditional education contexts (1st and 2nd CBE). When asked about school rules in the 1st CBE, a child mentions rules like "behave well, don't climb on the table, don't hide under the table, don't shout, don't get up without asking." (1st CBE). When questioned about who makes these rules, Leticia responds, "The teacher does!" (1st CBE), and the children remain silent and do not suggest any alternative rules.

In the 2nd CBE, children are aware that not following the rules results in punishment, such as being sent home and receiving a note from the teacher in their notebook. There are no formal or informal opportunities to discuss rules involving children, which means they do not see the possibility of making changes in this regard. They appear confused by the idea that they could have a say in creating rules, as they perceive rulemaking as something done exclusively by adults.

## ***4.2 Children's Acts of Commoning: Caring and Showing Concern for Each Other***

In the kindergarten, there is a strong emphasis on caring for and sharing with others, fostered through various activities. During outings or study visits, children always go out in pairs, with one older child paired with one younger child. This arrangement is intended to ensure the safety of the younger children, as Rafael mentioned, "When we went to the park, the little children had to stay on the side of the wall, because if they're not careful, a car could run over them." The goal is for one child to look after the other, and they are encouraged to participate in pairs. Rafael further explained that this pairing helps the younger children understand the different areas and encourages them to hold hands.

In situations where a child struggles to complete an activity, they are encouraged to seek help from a peer rather than an educator or educational assistant, promoting cooperation and collaboration among peers.

In the other two CBE contexts, children also displayed empathy and support for their younger peers, particularly those with disabilities or language barriers. They independently assisted their peers in understanding questions and provided explanations for why some children did not respond, such as shyness or language difficulties. Additionally, children took it upon themselves to organise the belongings of hyperactive peers who tended to create messes, demonstrating a sense of collective care and responsibility.

In the second CBE context, a child shared with the researcher, during the focus group interview, that he doesn't feel comfortable discussing his feelings in a group setting. This suggests a reluctance to express dislikes and a lack of self-reflection among the children. In general, adults handle conflict resolution, and the children are not informed about how these conflicts are resolved. Furthermore, issues arise from unfair comparisons and positive reinforcement, which can lead some children to feel inferior and unfairly treated. This, in turn, results in their reluctance to participate in certain activities. In both schools, some children expressed their dislike of certain activities due to the adults' tendency to make comparisons, which creates discomfort among the children.

The study identifies significant intersectional issues [9] influencing the responses and behaviours observed in the three CS contexts regarding social class, gender and migration background affecting their language skills, sense of inclusion, and interaction patterns.

The social class factor plays a significant role in shaping the responses and behaviours of primary school children during the interviews. This is reflected in their language use, sentence construction, and body language. Children from more literate family backgrounds have a conversation more fluidly. In contrast, children from less privileged backgrounds faced more difficulties, struggling to understand certain words. These children often displayed insecurity in expressing themselves openly, frequently interrupting sentences and asking to repeat questions or confirming if they were using correct language.

In 1st and 2nd CBE, children’s perspectives on the world, especially concerning immigration issues, present notable challenges, as observed in the research. Language barriers are evident, with Brazilian and Angolan children facing difficulties in comprehending questions posed in Portuguese or English. Children with Portuguese as their first language but from different cultural backgrounds encounter identity-related obstacles. Stereotypes about countries persist, even among younger children, leading to Brazilian children feeling marginalised and hesitant to engage in conversations.

In the 2nd CBE, children with Portuguese as a second language faced communication challenges. To accommodate language diversity, the researcher divided the presentation of focus group topics into two parts, with Raj, Sonam, and Roger, non-Portuguese speakers. Raj volunteered to participate in the group, prompting the researcher to communicate in both Portuguese and English to ensure comprehension.

The gender factor was clearly visible in the organisation of the room’s pre and post interviews. The girls who frequently cleaned the environments that the boys messed up and they did this without the researcher asking. The girls also play this organisational role in the activities, and the boys said that they often look for them to ask help to finish a task or to organise a group activity. During the interviews, the girls often voiced their concerns about boys leaving messes without cleaning up and instances of boys exhibiting violent behaviour during conflicts. Mariana from the kindergarten said, “when a girl hits or a boy hits, it’s different (...) the boys hit harder, and the girls hit less.” Subsequently the teachers from the three contexts also affirmed this when asked about the differences in how boys and girls resolve conflicts.

Individual characteristics and peer internal dissymmetry is another important issue. For example, in the 2nd CBE context, Clara and Maria displayed reserved and quiet behaviour, even during the focus group discussions. In contrast, both her peers and Aline herself recognized her as a leader. She expressed a preference for group work when collaborating with some peers, but she assumed her dissatisfaction with her science group due to interpersonal conflicts: “I enjoy group work when I have specific classmates. I want to work with... I did not really enjoy my science group. It was an activity I didn’t like because my group didn’t get along”.

### ***4.3 Community and Common Goods: A Sense of Belonging to the Neighbour***

In each of the CS, children’s integration into their respective cultural contexts varies significantly. In the 1st CBE, there are clear distinctions between two groups of children. Some commute from distant areas solely for school, while others are active members of the neighbourhood community. From a sociological perspective, these disparities are especially evident among children residing in more distant areas where discrimination and racism are part of daily life [28]. These children

frequently experience a sense of detachment and estrangement from their neighbourhood. This disconnection becomes evident when they engage in discussions about local parks and historical landmarks. In contrast, in the 2nd CBE, most children are divided between two neighbourhoods, and they demonstrate familiarity with urban spaces, mentioning places of interest like the skate park, gardens, and the Lisbon Mosque. They also engage in outdoor activities independently, such as playing football, cycling, and exploring with friends without adult supervision. The 2nd CBE children displayed vibrant discussions about their communities, street games, and neighbourhood characteristics. They addressed problems like garbage disposal and recycling bins.

In the kindergarten setting, children experience a seamless integration into their neighbourhood. Notably, there are no significant disparities in how these children connect with the local community. They all express a profound sense of belonging to the neighbourhood and share equal opportunities to explore its surroundings. These children often visit both public and private spaces in the neighbourhood with their families, expressing their genuine enjoyment of the area. However, a significant challenge emerged in June 2023 when the 2nd CBE schools faced difficulties related to a shortage of buses provided by the Lisbon City Council. This issue led to the suspension of field trips from January 2023. The problem stemmed from increased class sizes in public schools and a backlog of over 30 children, primarily immigrants, awaiting enrolment. In contrast, a private kindergarten benefits from superior resources, including its transportation system and community partnerships, which enhance the integration of children within the local area.

In summary, the challenge of ensuring social inclusion for children is hindered by the lack of specialised departments or offices in all three contexts. Although it should be a primary concern, it becomes particularly crucial in the 1st and 2nd CBE contexts, marked by significant diversity. Consequently, the adoption of commons-based approaches to address inequality and intersectionality and promote social inclusion among children from vulnerable social groups is less developed. The kindergarten context, on the other hand, demonstrates a more effective response to this issue, as it involves a group of children with fewer social and intersectional disparities.

In the 1st CBE and kindergarten, children have more opportunities for peer interaction and collaborative activities, which foster the development of peer-based common goods through programs like after school programmes. However, in the 2nd CBE, children depart immediately after classes, lacking dedicated space and time for such interactions, resulting in a deficiency of full-time school initiatives. During focus group interviews, children expressed criticism of certain school activities and a strong desire for more group-based activities. They also articulated their aspiration for greater involvement in reshaping their classroom environment.

## 5 Conclusions

In the RED project case studies, we explore the intricate dynamics of Commoning Practices in relation to children's understanding of citizenship. These dynamics vary across educational settings, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of children's roles as citizens. For example, in the kindergarten group following the Modern School Pedagogical Model, active participation and collective decision-making foster a tangible sense of care, a core aspect of citizenship. However, emotional expression differs among children, highlighting the complexity within the citizenship framework. Variations in rules and activities also influence children's autonomy, shaped by the structural framework. Social class influences children's discourses and interactions, particularly for marginalised backgrounds, intersecting with social inequality. Migration backgrounds introduce further complexity related to language, identity, and stereotypes. Gender roles add another layer, with girls often assuming organisational responsibilities, shaped by societal expectations.

Our case studies underscore the substantial impact of Community and Common Goods on children's integration into their communities, which is also influenced by school conditions. The handling of issues related to social inclusion and intersectionality varies, thereby impeding progress toward achieving equitable citizenship. In conclusion, our exploration underscores the significance of incorporating children's participation, sharing, caring, and a sense of community belonging to foster equitable outcomes for children, enabling them to be active community members and global citizens.

At its core, this chapter extends an invitation for collective reflection and the enactment of distinct approaches within the realms of the '3 C's'—children, citizenship, and commons, all centred around engaging with children and advocating for their rights and interests, while also delving into the rich landscape of educational resources within the commons.

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