

Young People and Political Participation: European Research



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**Young People and Political
Participation: European Research**

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Jorge Benedicto and Andreu López Blasco

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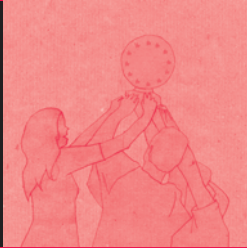
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THE TOPIC



**Young people and political participation:
European researches**

THE TOPIC

The participation of young people in politics, which is the subject that this issue of the Magazine is devoted to, is one of those topics that, at a first glance, seems to have been fully dealt with in the past, so much so that nothing new can be added, apart from mentioning once again, the pessimistic predictions that can be gleaned from public opinion. However, if one goes more deeply into its characteristics and the way it has evolved, paying particular attention to the different contexts in which this participation takes place, one finds it surprising just how complex the matter is, how difficult it is to reach final conclusions one way or another and, above all, how little we know about why and how young people participate in politics in this globalised society.

At first glance, everything has already been said about young people's political participation, the theme of this new issue of the *Revista de Estudios de Juventud*, and it is only possible to again confirm pessimistic predictions on the topic among public opinion. However, as we carry out a detailed analysis of the characteristics and the development of this topic, paying attention to the different contexts where it takes place, the complexity it hides, the difficulties to establish conclusions in one sense or the other, and above all, how little we know about why and how young people participate in politics in this globalized society is surprising.

Most of the times, common negative judgments by adults regarding political participation of today's youth, comparing the hypothetic previous situation where patterns of participation seemed to be the rule and not the exception, are not based on systematic evidences. On the contrary, they rather constitute a symptom of confusion and disorientation of adults that face processes of change that not only affect the new generations that access public sphere, but also –and very specially– adults themselves. These processes of change that are deeply modifying the relation of citizens to politics are very strong and affect young people due to their life situation, as they are trying to define their personal and social identity. The uncertainty that is a natural part of youth transitions, the resistance against long-term commitments or the trend towards presentism that characterizes young people's engagement in social issues, sometimes make it difficult to see what really is changing: the relative position of politics in social life, and at the same time, the relevance given by citizens to the activities developed in this field. Therefore, the study of predominant patterns of political participation of young people can provide us with interesting elements in order to improve our understanding of the socio-political changes that are taking place, answer some of the questions related to this issue and analyze the contradictions that arise in societies that assume democracy as an inevitable fact of their life-style.

The objective of social scientists has to be to find research methods that are appropriate to describe the complexity of the topic, that allow precise assessment of possible changes in attitudes and behaviours of young people in the field of politics and provide key explanations to understand their nature and meanings.

In order to carry out this task the first difficulty we will have to face is the analytical perspective usually used in researches about political participation, with assumptions that do not adapt to the characteristics of today's liquid societies, using Bauman's terminology. Traditional approaches used by political sciences based on the quantification of the number of activities carried out by citizens and the identification of typologies depending on the

type and quantity of actions are obsolete in the context of constant change, uncertainty and the disappearance of the reference models that characterize our societies. In this situation, there is not consensus about what activities are to be considered political. Traditional limits that identified and separated different fields of the social life have dissolved or, at least, have deeply changed.

Besides, clear and predictable patterns of political behaviours of the citizens have disappeared. Therefore, discontinuous patterns are every time more frequent, and citizens change between stages of sporadic, almost volcanic eruptions of public activity and stages of apparent apathy and lack of interest. Researches about political participation need to adapt to the new situation, paying attention not only to who participates and how they do it (participation as accumulation of individual activities), but above all to key issues like the meaning of political participation for citizens, their motivations and the context of meaning and experience of the different forms of participation (participation as a collective phenomenon). Only focusing on these aspects, and how they relate to each other, we will be able to understand the position of political participation in today's societies and its importance for the citizens.

The second difficulty is related to the specific characteristics of young people's political participation: patterns of participation are not always coincident with predominant forms of participation among adults, due to the different meanings of participation and mobilization among young people, who are in a constant and uninterrupted process of definition of their own identities. The importance of the social context, the expressive dimension of youth actions and the search for new forms of communication are some of the components that make participation of young people in the public sphere a very complex issue. But of all these aspects, the main source of complexity is caused by the increasing loss of prestige of explicitly political meanings among young people, that is, those meanings that identify politics with institutional processes; at the same time, there is a weaker separation between the social and political sphere, and between the public and the private sphere. In this context, a high number of young people's practices, especially those with which they identify, are in risk of being excluded of the field of concerns of researches or at least of not being understood in all their meaning. This is even more serious if we take into account that these practices constitute the main instruments used by young people to influence on the social issues, overcoming the narrow perspective of individual private interests and taking part in the process of transition to adulthood.

With all this in mind we have developed the content of this monographic issue, aiming to provide a varied view of the researches carried out about this issue in different European countries. As it happens with other issues, European comparisons, understood as researches that compare several national cases, as well as separately studying different national contexts, allow us to assess the singularities of the patterns of participation of, for example, young Spanish people, which is the result of our national political culture and historical traditions, and a specific manifestation of a phenomenon with similar characteristics in the wider context of the democratic Europe.

Without a doubt, there are more similarities than differences, as we face the same problems in a shared context of globalization. Therefore, different European researches carry out trans-national comparative projects in the field of young people's participation, like *EUYOUPART –political participation of young people in Europe– development of indicators for comparative research in the European Union*. This research is funded by the 5th Framework Programme of the European Commission and it includes eight countries (Austria, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Slovakia and the United Kingdom). This research faced a double objective: a) a methodological objective aiming to define quantitative objectives on a European level to use as a reference for future comparative researches about young people's political participation; b) an analytical objective, aiming to collect relevant data that allow analyzing and understanding behaviours of participation of young people, as they are a fundamental element to take a glimpse at the future of democracy in Europe. Most authors participating in this monographic issue use, more or less directly, approaches or results of EUYOUPART for their respective works. In some cases they also use other international researches like the European Values Survey, the European Social Survey or the European Electoral Study.

Apart from the comparative approaches, we also tried to answer to the problems of studying political participation today, in the context of societies that are in the middle of a growing process of deinstitutionalization, where politics has lost its previous central position and many young people do no longer become adults by coping with a series of pre-established stages, like becoming an adult who accepts the obligations of political participation. All authors have tried to answer the question about what is political participation and about how to analyze political participation of young people. The reading of the articles presented in this issue will show us similarities regarding the diagnosis of the situation and the proposals to deal with the situation. Although it is the readers who have to reach their own conclusions, we can highlight the need of overcoming institutional definitions of political participation, the relation between analyses of participation and the processes of change that are shaping the citizen-politics relation in our societies and the importance of continue studying the meanings of participation in social life and politics for young people, but not as isolated events, but as a component more of life-experience.

The articles in this monographic issue can be divided into four main blocks: the articles by Benedicto and Muxel analyze the great changes in the relation between young people and politics in general terms. As an introduction to the thematic field of this issue Benedicto uses different empirical evidences to prove that usual negative opinions about the political life of young people are not always right, and that reality is much more complex. An unstable and hybrid character with references to different political worlds characterizes political identities of young people in second modernity. On the other side, Anne Muxel examines the elements of continuity and the signs of break in the relation of new European generations to politics in comparison to older generations. The necessity of experiencing with new forms of relation to politics by young people contrasts with the weight of family and political cleavages.

The second block focuses on the analysis of political participation of young Europeans, specifically as to why they decide to participate or not, and how

they do it. Reingard Spannring, a member of the research team of EUYOUNGART, uses qualitative and quantitative results of the comparative research to explain low levels of political participation among young Europeans through the changes of the structural conditions of the political context. According to his analysis, apparent apathy of young people reflects the frustration with regard to how the political system works, where young people do not find the answers to their needs in a context with less risks and more security. In his article, Antonio Jaime compares differences in the patterns of participation of young people for the last three decades in Europe and the evolution of the trajectories of each of these generations using data of three waves of the EVS. He reaches the conclusion that the life-cycle effect has more impact on participation than the generational effect. He also highlights the changes that seem to be taking place in non-conventional participation, which is no longer limited exclusively to young people, as it was the case in the 1970's, but also older generation make use of this form of participation.

The third block includes the analysis of national cases, specifically the United Kingdom, Italy and Spain. Martha Wörsching presents the British debate about young people's political participation, highlighting the growing concerns regarding youth and, specifically, regarding their low levels of interest in formal politics and the low voter participation. Wörsching focuses on the unfavourable situation of young British people in the social and political system, their experiences of inequality and social exclusion, as well as the lack of capacity in the field of public decision-making. Regarding Italy, Marco Bontempi tries to explain the permanence of significant levels of participation among young Italians, as well as the transformation of meanings and predominant forms of participation. Young people's participation can be explained through the loss of centrality of the political system in social life and the changes in the meanings of political categories. Lastly, Gema Garcia Albacete studies the engagement of young Spanish people in comparison to adults and throughout time, using empirical evidences provided by studies carried out by the Spanish Centre for Sociological Researches. The repeated thesis of the political apathy of young Spanish people is not confirmed or, at least, we can say young people are as apathetic as the adults. On the other side, new generations socialized during democracy do not participate more than previous generations, which would prove, as stated by the author, that democracy does not promote participation and engagement by itself, institutions should find instruments to promote a more active citizenship.

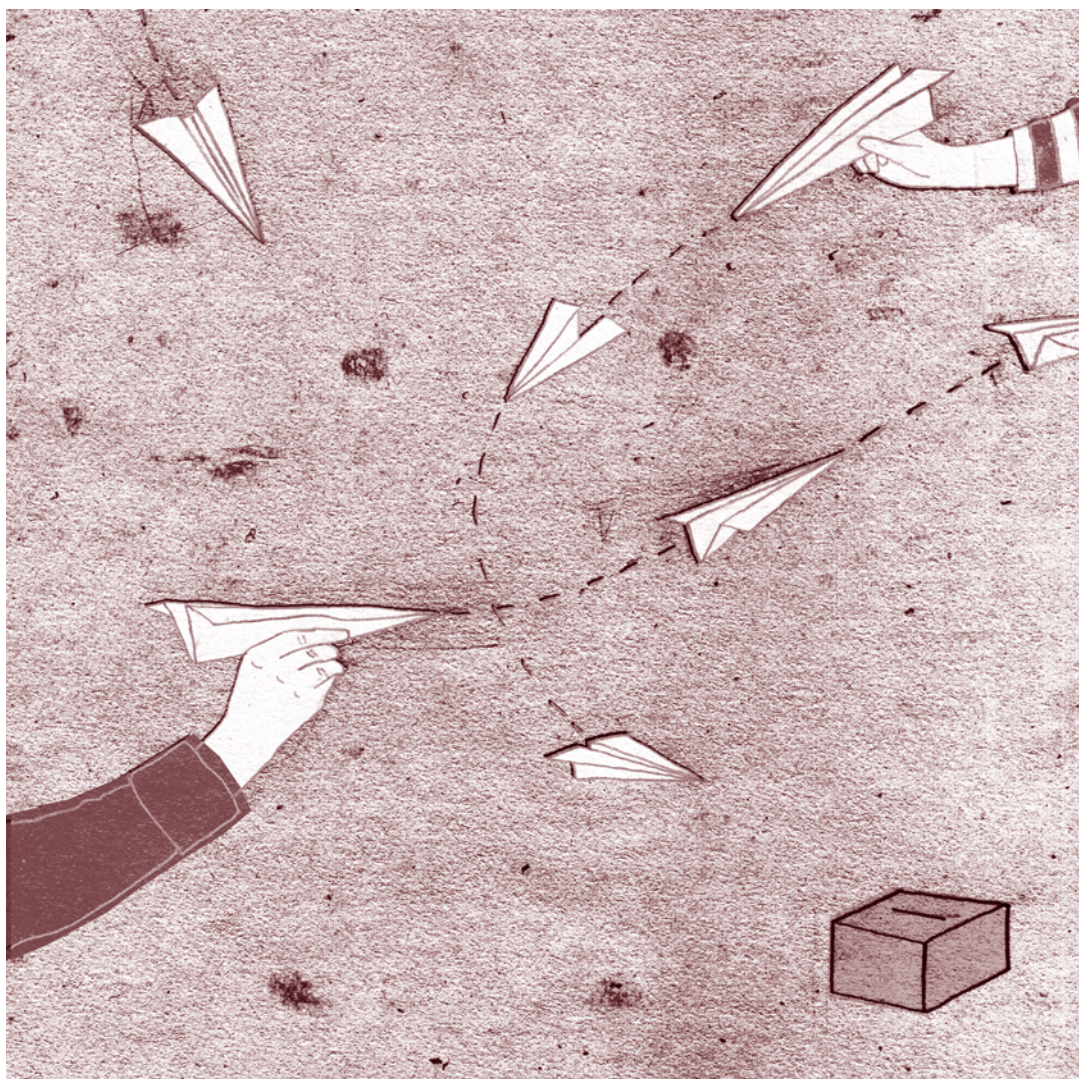
The fourth block focuses on the relation between young people and the European Union. Researchers of the German Youth Institute analyze the attitudes of young Germans towards Europe, showing the generalized importance of the European experiment and the growing repercussions of Europe on young people's life. But the most interesting result of this analysis is the existing relation between the personal situation of young people and the development of a European conscience: situations of disadvantage negatively affect the image of Europe among young people. Araceli Serrano's article focuses on a specific form of political participation: voter participation in European Parliament elections, a process where young Europeans explicitly express their belonging to a common political community. The feeling of belonging and the pride of being a European

citizen are the best variables to explain young people's participation in the 2004 elections.

The last article, by Andreu López Blasco, analyzes a specific segment of the youth population in European societies: the group of young immigrants. Using the results of a German research that compares political orientations of young Germans and young immigrants, the author highlights the similarities regarding opinions about democracy, trust in institutions and even forms of participation of young adults, independently of their origin. However, differences are also very high, mainly due to the deficits in terms of education and labour situation of young people with immigrant origin.

The monographic issue ends with a methodological note that explains the characteristics of the German Youth Survey and the interesting possibilities of the use of replication strategies to analyze the resources, opinions and behaviours of young people in the context of the social changes of the last decades.

Jorge Benedicto
Andreu López Blasco



Young people and politics: disconnected, sceptical, an alternative, or all of it at the same time? ⁽¹⁾

This article discusses the need of overcoming the wide-spread simplistic notions about political life of young people in our societies, introducing a more complex view of the situation, taking into account new conditions of youth's life and the plurality of meanings that converge in their political universes. Therefore, after critically reviewing some theoretical and analytical assumptions on which negative diagnoses are based, we will reflect on what it means to be young in late modernity and how life experiences develop within the dialectics of integration and autonomy that dominate social dynamics of youth. Some empirical evidences about political attitudes of young people, Spanish and European, show the varied relations between different groups of young people in the field of politics and, as a consequence, the complexity of young people's political life, which does not allow for one-dimensional lines of argument (be they favourable or unfavourable for the young people themselves). Instead of arguing about whether today's youth is disconnected, sceptical, or, on the contrary, is an alternative, we should start thinking that most of the young people are those three things at a time.

Key words: relation between youth and politics, social dynamics of young people, political universes, political attitudes.

Usual negative perception of youth's political life

We seem to be obliged to start analyses about young people and politics again and again mentioning the usual negative view of the relation of young people, at least during the last three or four decades, to politics. The conception of uninterested and passive young people in terms of their relation to politics has become predominant in the social discourse, as far as becoming one of hallmarks of today's youth identities. This perception sometimes seems unanimous among the public opinion, and also has its counterpart in the field of academic researches, where analyses about disaffection and lack of interest of the young people or about their low readiness to participate in political life in democratic societies by using the instruments designed in order to fulfil that task are predominant. However, if we ask ourselves about the assumptions sometimes taken as a fact and the types of analysis carried out, we should not be willing to accept the conclusions as something evident, some of these ideas may be doubted.

For the last few years, sociology of youth, especially after the popularization of post-structuralism, has insisted on the pluralization of the routes that lead young people to adult life and on the internal diversity that characterizes youth in today's society. However, both characteristics are not present in most explanations developed to understand political life of young people, their discourses, interests, behaviours, etc. Whatever element is emphasized,

(1) This text was prepared for the conferences "Jóvenes y compromiso ciudadano en homenaje a Carlos Martínez Cobo", organized by the Foundation Pablo Iglesias. My thanks to the Foundation for authorizing the publication of this text in the monographic issue.

the main arguments are usually common. Most of the young people seem to relate to the world of politics in a uniform way, distant and distrustful, surrounded by a tangle of structural and institutional factors out of reach for their own decision-making. Researchers repeatedly use a metaphor to refer to young people at the beginning of the 21. Century: They are sailors in sea of uncertainty, negotiating their own way through the storm, surrounded by opportunities and risks; When it comes to politics this metaphor is substituted by the view of young men and women passively assuming a political universe filled with negative and pessimistic meanings. Only a small minority escapes this scenario, only because they are exposed to very specific processes of socialization.

Therefore, there is a clear predominance of generic assumptions, where the main factor of inner differentiation is age, understood as a stage of the life cycle in evolutionary terms, or as generational criteria. In both cases, social, cultural or ideological heterogeneity of young people and the processes to become a full member of society play a secondary role as an explaining factor for political positions of the new generations, which tend to be assessed from a moral point of view, more than form a socio-political perspective. In this sense, it is also important to highlight the usual absence of an intergenerational perspective that would help understanding the characteristics of young people's political life in relation to what citizens of the rest of generations think and do. Young people are not isolated from the social and political context where relations between different generations are developed.

Further review of the mentioned assumptions tells us that in order to understand many academic explanations about political positions of young people; we should focus on three aspects that are considered fundamental. First, numerous approaches of the researches in this field are based on a conception of politization with individualistic roots that conceives youth as a stage of instability and undefined biographies; and politics as the field of expression of individual interests. From this point of view, youth's lack of interest regarding political issues is justified to a certain extent, as forced consequence of their peripheral situation in the social network. As the young people carry out their transitions to adult life and socially integrate they will gradually become more interested in politics, as decisions taken there will start to affect their interests. Lastly, politization is interpreted as a basically individual phenomenon, influenced by a series of external factors that translate into a series of explicit behaviours (Benedicto 2004a). Regarding this position, main worries of experts are directed to quantify the activities that are carried out instead of focusing on the contents and meanings of political participation of young people.

Second, in too many occasions we forget the context of transformation of political attitudes in developed societies; logically, this context affects all generations, adults as well as young people. Citizens of democratic societies relate to each other in politics with very different premises in comparison to the predominant premises of previous decades. During the 50's and 60's trust in representative institutions and in the corresponding authorities was very high, but decades later all modern democracies face the deterioration of trust in political leaders and parties, together with more scepticism towards the results of the political system, all of which is on the basis of political disaffection that characterizes today's situation (Pharr & Putnam, 2000).

The need to take into account new social, institutional and cultural conditions where political life develops is also present in the third of the aspects I want to highlight. Citizens, in general, and particularly new generations face experiences with regard to politics that question traditional meanings and expressions, while new forms of relation appear; these new forms of relations are sometimes wrongly interpreted as rejecting or abandoning collective commitments. The transformation of the predominant model of young people's political commitment can be a good example of how forms of politization change in accordance to the changes that also affect social and collective experiences of young people. The crisis of the model of militant activism based on political parties and its substitution by very different forms of commitment, very specific and sporadic forms, in multiple fields (from traditional forms of political activity to forms linked to civic solidarity or other forms related to new spaces of youth expression), reflects cultural characteristics of young people in the present (individualism, orientation towards consumption), as well as their tight relations to their everyday experiences and interests (Funes, 2006).

Therefore, before going on with the analysis, we should briefly think about what it means to be young in late modernity and about the dynamic processes that affect life experiences and promote different routes towards adulthood. Only by knowing more about how young people experience their youth, we will be able to start understanding a little bit more about how they shape their relation to the world of political meanings and expressions.

Social dynamics of youth: between integration and autonomy

The traditional interpretation of youth as a period of transition where a complex process of changes takes place that allows young people to acquire the status of adults has accustomed us to understand youth from a lineal and evolutionary perspective, with a beginning defined by negative terms and an end defined by positive terms. The beginning of the transition would be the situation of a child or teenager, dependent in all aspects of his family and/or the social institutions. The end would correspond, on the contrary, to young emancipated men and women that have become adults thanks to the economic, residential and affective independence they have acquired. In much more conventional terms, we could describe transition to adulthood as the process in which young people leave their parents' home and create a new home; thanks to their participation in the labour market they obtain enough income to lead an independent life and start more or less stable couple relationships, creating a new family unit.

In this lineal and evolutionary view, which according to Bontempi (2003) corresponds to the youth condition that characterizes first modernity, emancipation represents the culmination of the transition to adulthood, social acknowledgement as free individuals, able to manage life projects and assume responsibilities as members of society. Through emancipation, young people leave youth in order to socially become adults and citizens, two terms that become equivalents.

Many sociologists emphasize the events that define youth emancipation, such as having a paid job, an own house, a new family relation, and even having children, which hides, or at least makes it difficult to aim for the true objective of these processes, which is nothing else but achieving integration

of people into a social organization, establishing a social position from where to develop their biographical project. From this point of view, original dependences are not significant, what is significant is where they will arrive and how they do it. Therefore, youth can be interpreted as the process of acquisition of the resources needed to integrate into a social organization and assume new dependences and responsibilities. According to Garrido and Requena (1996: 15), “socially, and always from this perspective, the behaviour of young people can be interpreted as access to or integration into forms of life that precede them and require adaptation or adjustment (...) When a young person integrates, he is no longer a young person. But at the same time, he assumes new commitments that are as strong as or even stronger than what he knew from the situation in his family of origin”.

This change of emphasis from emancipation towards integration in my opinion means to redirect the debate from concerns about the moment in time of youth emancipation to the conditions of integration into the world of adults for young people. In Spain, for example, as well as in other European countries, above all southern European countries, there are frequent debates about the age when young people leave the family home, and the social and political repercussions of this fact. It is also true that, according to Eurostat, in countries like Spain and Italy, we have to wait until the age of 30 and 31, respectively, to be able to say that 50% of the males no longer live in their parent's home; on the contrary, in Great Britain, Germany or France the age when they leave their parent's home is around 24.

However, the fact that young people leave the family home sooner or later tells us little about the difficulties to carry out successful transitions, the strategic character of staying at the parent's home for many young people as a way to accumulate social capital or about the problems of leaving the family home too early for certain social groups - especially females with low qualifications. The new dynamics of youth in late modernity, with temporary processes and a growth of uncertainty and risks, requires reducing the centrality of emancipation, understood as the independence from external demands and obligations, if we want to avoid, as López Blasco (2005) warns, the risk of many young people, and especially the more disadvantaged people, being left behind by the social institutions. Therefore, the most important thing will be to study how structural conditions influence the processes of emancipation, the different decisions they adopt and the type of social integration they achieve.

To sum it up, one of the ways of thinking of young people is from the point of view of integration into the world of adults, the adaptation to the demands of a social organization where young people look for a social position, assuming a series of personal and collective responsibilities. In spite of the growing importance of youth in the development of an individual's biography and the fact that we tend to think about the world of youth and the world of adults as two opposing moments of life, we cannot forget that the pressure to achieve one form or another of integration into the world of adults is always present in the decisions and behaviours of the new generations in several different fields of life: In the field of labour, as well as in terms of affective relationships, or in politics, it is possible to identify this trend that forces them to adapt to the obligations of the social order in order to integrate in the best conditions possible, becoming a regular member of the community.

But the need to integrate into the world of adults is nothing more than one of the faces of youth; the other face is achieving autonomy, the capacity and the competences needed to manage their life projects. The transformations initiated during the 80's and developed since then have shown the necessity of integrating a more complex view of youth, where structure and agency influence each other. As graphically shown by Evans and Furlong (1997), the metaphor of the niches, the routes or the trajectories used to designate the processes of transition to adult roles have been replaced by the metaphor of the navigation during the 90's. This new metaphor refers to the need of individuals of making an assessment of the existing risks and opportunities in order to achieve the capability of negotiating their own way through a sea full of uncertainty. The relation between structural and individual factors becomes the key to understand how biographical trajectories of young people develop, as well as their deep diversity.

The break of linearity in transitions and its substitution through uncertain paths, vulnerable and reversible (Walter et al.), together with the longer periods needed to achieve definite integration into the adult world, has transformed the conditions of youth. Instead of talking about a temporary period, with clearly defined objectives, youth becomes a life condition, a fundamental change in the development of individual's biographies, where experiences are collected and new types of relation experienced, and new assessment structures and new behaviour are tried out, in the personal, as well as in the collective field. Again referring to Marco Bontempi (2003: 31), we can say that "more than a state of moratorium, typical for transition processes, now youth assumes, which in a certain way is paradoxical, the characteristics of a phenomenon that finds the assumptions for their own development and definition in itself".

The new conditions in which young people live their life and their processes of transition have allowed establishing a key distinction between independence (understood in terms of the material situation) and autonomy (understood in terms of competence and capacity). There are two different processes that currently follow two also different logics. The step from economic dependence to economic independence that in the past constituted the previous step to achieve individual autonomy is currently not a requisite to live as an autonomous individual, capable of taking decisions and making the most adequate choices for the future. On the contrary, the uncertain environment where young people live today creates situations of semi-dependence, in other cases economic independence is temporary and reversible due to constant entries and exits of the labour market and, lastly, we also encounter many young people that, although being economically dependent of their family of origin, have conquered high levels of autonomy and individual freedom in significant fields of their life, such as affective relationships, consumption patterns, life-styles or collective behaviours, etc.

Building and achieving autonomy, understood as the capacity of dealing with life-projects, therefore becomes the main objective of this long period of life. The young people themselves corroborate this fact; according to different researches (Arnett, 1997; Westberg, 2004), they consider that becoming an adult is linked to acquiring responsibilities regarding their own decisions and not to having completed the different transitions (labour, housing, family), except when they have their own children. But what really is the most important thing to understand is that this process to achieve autonomy is currently carried out in a context of relations of dependence in which young

people develop their life and which is, undoubtedly, conditioned by structural factors that can turn opportunities into risks, or vice versa. The importance of this struggle for autonomy in the young people's life also turns youth into a period of frequent experimentation. Longer periods of family dependence, relative lack of responsibilities and, above all, the plurality of life situations young people face leads them to try out and develop new forms of social relations, new approaches and patterns in several fields of life, such as consumption, work, politics, or family life. This experimentation, in many occasions, doesn't result in significant events, being limited to be a distinctive characteristic of a minority of young people; but in other occasions it constitutes the seed of important processes of change that explain some of the deepest transformations of social life during the last years. New forms of family coexistence, active acceptance of behaviours such as homosexuality, different forms of political consumption or massive use of information technologies (IT) as an instrument for interpersonal relations are some of the examples of phenomena that started as distinctive elements of a minority youth sub-culture –most of them were transgressors in one way or the other of majority's social norms– to later spread around society, creating a deep reformulation of the system of values and the predominant behaviour patterns in our societies.

Therefore, integration and autonomy constitute two essential dimensions to understand the social dynamics of youth, in general terms, as well as in different fields of young people's life. The analysis of the dialectic relation of both elements in every historical moment, the factors that act to favour relative importance of one or the other element, and how they interact with each other in different social, cultural and political contexts provides fundamental information on how to understand what it means to be young under certain circumstances and to identify the rhythm of change of the condition of youth.

Political attitudes of young (Spanish) people

As should be clear by now, this double perspective of integration and autonomy is also very useful to analyze political life of young people. The pressure to achieve integration in the adults' world of politics, together with the search for new political expressions, appropriate to the contexts of experience and participation of young people, form framework of multiple layers where different relations of different groups of young people with politics gain sense (Muxel, 2001).

It is precisely in this field of persistence and change where we have to locate the young people's attitudes with regard to political activities carried out in accordance to institutionally established procedures and their attitudes regarding that other type of political activities that use different instruments, albeit not institutionally regulated, but after many years of use “normalized” expression of the presence of young people in the field of public decisions, as well as their preferences and demands. Unlike what it would seem at first glance, when we start to analyze available evidences we see that political attitudes of young people are not controlled by a single pattern that leads to rejection and lack of interest towards the institutions and the authorities, and we can't speak of depolitization as an unmistakable characteristic of today's youth. Without a doubt the situation is quite a lot more complex than what some people want us to believe through superficial analyses of the results of

the surveys. According to several experts (Norris, 2002), we are facing lower levels of formal political commitment of young people; but, however, these low levels are balanced out through significant growth of their presence in other types of non conventional activities that are more in accordance with their way of experiencing collective life, such as protest movements, participation in volunteering, use of internet as an instrument of political activation, etc. Nevertheless, we have to admit that political issues tend to take a secondary position when it comes to young people's concerns, as it corresponds to this stage of modernity, characterized by intense processes of individualization and by the decline of the main socialization institutions.

They cannot let themselves be pushed around by appearance, and admitting the complexity of the situation seems evident, but we need to confirm it with statistical information. The case of Spain is a good example of this complexity and of the uselessness of simplified interpretations when it comes to assess political life of young people. Although I'm well aware of the fact that political opinions of young people in surveys are not much more than a thin, simplified reflection of their complex political life, and underlining that it is not my intention to carry out a deep analysis of the political attitudes of young Spanish people, I will now highlight some of the characteristics that are more distinctive in order to empirically prove the previous statement on the inexistence of a single or predominant pattern of rejection towards politics, as part of the media and several opinion leaders want us to believe.

Every analysis about this issue, be it as shallow as it may be, should take the context where these attitudes gain meaning into account. On the one hand, we refer to the first generations that were completely socialized in democracy. They are young people that start to access politics in a time when the democratic system has already achieved a considerable level of stability, the system of political parties revolves around two main parties, the conservatives and the social-democrats, as it is the case in other European countries; and the welfare system, developed during the 80's, begins to show evident results (social benefits, universal education and comprehensive health care system). But on the other hand, this generation of young people has been socialized in a political culture with high levels of political disaffection and where participation has not enough incentives to break up with the tradition of passivity and anti-political feeling inherited through the dictatorship. Also, for the last ten years, Spanish political life has faced difficult moments due to scandals of corruption in the mid 90's, territorial conflicts and high levels of political confrontation during the last years of the conservative government and the today's socialist government. (Benedicto, 2004b); Morán, 1997)

Together with these circumstances that are specifically derived from history and Spanish politics, we cannot forget the importance of cultural meanings for young people's political life in Western democracies. If something defines the Spanish case that is its fast access to the predominant ideological and cultural trends in Western Europe. When we compare information about young Spanish people, as well as Spanish adults, with information of neighbouring countries, logically, some specific differences appear with regard to certain aspects, but similarities are much more common (Bonet, Martín & Montero, 2006). Young Spanish people can show less interest for certain topics than most Europeans, or express more liberal opinions regarding the existing social order; but, generally, we can say they

experience politics in very much the same way as the rest of young people of other European countries (Bettin, 2001).

To sum it up, we can highlight four basic characteristics of the political attitudes of young Spanish people, in accordance to the data of different surveys carried out by the Spanish Youth Institute and the Centre for Sociological Researches (2). In order to prove similarities and differences in comparison with other European countries we will use statistical information provided by the international comparative research EUYOUNPART (Political Participation of Young People in Europe - Development of Indicators for Comparative Research in the European Union) (3). This research surveyed around 8,000 young people between 15 and 24 years old from eight countries of the European Union. Spain was not among them.

The first of these characteristics refers to the centrality and legitimacy of democracy in the political universe of young people. In spite of the deficiencies of how the political system works and the problems that have been appearing -which I mentioned earlier- democracy as a governmental system shows a high level of legitimacy among young people: 8 out of 10 of the young people between 15 and 29 consider democracy better than any other form of government, only 5% admits authoritarian solutions (constant through all age groups) and 11% expresses indifference. Most interesting is the low importance of authoritarian solutions not only among young people in the present, but also among previous generations. Since the beginning of the 90's, the distribution of opinions doesn't show significant variations, with a similar distribution among the adult population and young people (del Moral, 2003). Also, according to several researches carried out, the legitimacy of democracy is not linked to the social position of the interviewee or the satisfaction with regard to how democracy works. This last fact is especially relevant, as one of the most frequent concerns among experts when they study regimes that had to face a process of transition is the possible lack of legitimacy of the democratic system as a consequence of increasing social discontent. We can also add other indicators that refer to the legitimacy of different components of the democratic system, such as political parties, the importance given to the parliament or the consideration of voting as a civic obligation. In every one of these cases, favourable opinions do not prevent from fierce criticism when it comes to how these institutions work. Precisely the distance between these two levels is one of the characteristics of Spanish political culture and can be partially explained through the cultural roots that support democracy in Spain.

However, the main concern is the indifference of certain groups of young people, specially the under-ages; they are indifferent about democracy, and about other aspects of political life. Therefore, 3 out of 10 minors are indifferent to or don't give an answer when asked about their preferred form of government. It is true that this is an evident effect of the life cycle, which makes people between 15 and 17 years old the most uninterested in terms of what happens in the public sphere (this percentage decreases to 18% among people between 21 and 24 and to 10% among people between 25 and 29). On first look, it seems that the age of 18 still works as a rite that activates mechanisms that make politization possible. However, we should think more about this topic because of its repercussions for issues such as civic learning or strategies of socialization. As youth is now a longer period of time, the access to adulthood is delayed and, as a consequence, minors progressively

(2)

Most of the data used for this article was taken from a survey carried out by the Youth Institute in collaboration with the CIS (Centre for Sociological Researches) during the first trimester of 2005 and entitled "Participación y Cultura Política" (marginal data of the survey and a summary of the conclusions can be found online at:

<http://www.injuve.mtas.es/>).

For data on general population, and mainly to make comparisons, we used Study 2575 by CIS carried out in 2004 and entitled "Ciudadanía y Participación" (CIS, 2004).

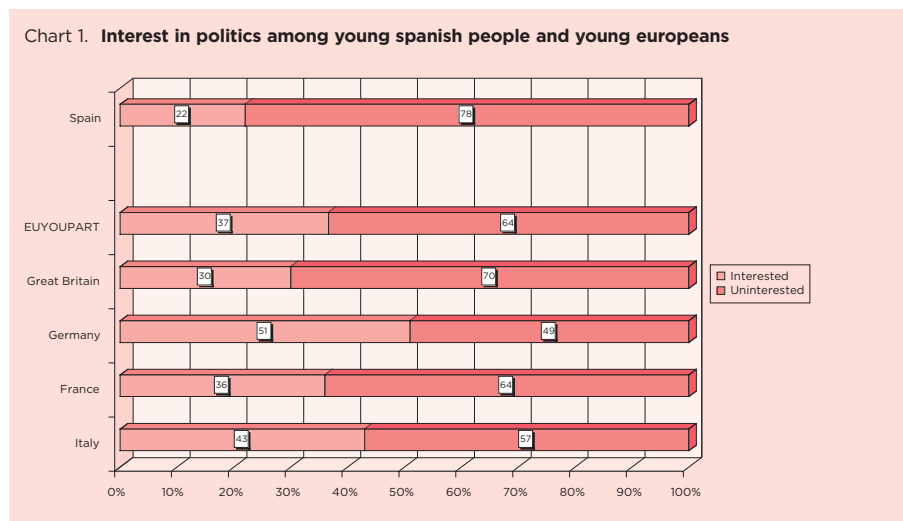
(3)

Detailed information on the project, as well as the main results can be found at: <http://www.sora.at/EUYOUNPART>.

feel pressured towards a position that is closer to the subordination of childhood than to the transition that defines youth.

The second characteristic to highlight refers to the importance of political disaffection among the Spanish youth. When I say disaffection I mean the prevalence of an attitude of cognitive and affective distancing with regard to everything that is explicitly described as political or that has this meaning for the young people. This attitude is expressed through multiple symptoms, like lack of interest, inefficiency or impotence. Therefore, young Spanish people show high levels of political disaffection, way above the European average.

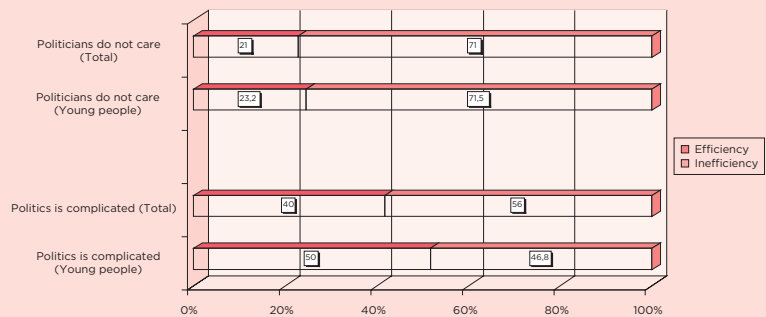
For example, if we focus on the most usual indicator, political interest, the new generations of Spanish people distinguish themselves for their low level of interest in politics or political issues (Chart 1). Only 22% of the interviewees say they are very interested or interested in this kind of topics, while the European average of the countries participating in EUYOUNG is 37%, and even in a country like Great Britain, where indicators regarding youth politization are surprisingly low, the percentage of people who are interested in politics is 30%.



As was to be expected, these low rates of political interest seem to be related to the life cycle; however, the improvement among groups of older people is not spectacular, as the interest among young people between 21 and 24 is still only 28%. Therefore, the explanation goes beyond the life cycle as according to the data of a recent survey by the CIS 32% of the young people over 18 say they are very interested or interested in politics. It is evident that politics –at least as defined socially– does not personally interest many young people, as shown by the fact that only a small minority tries to politically persuade or convince their most immediate acquaintances. The comparisons with Italy and France are very significant. If more than a half of young Italians and 36% of the French try to politically convince their friends or family, less than a third of the Spanish people say they try frequently or sometime, 47% never does it. The secondary position of political issues in the life of a majority of young Spanish people seems pretty evident.

This lack of interest seems to be linked to the low receptivity of political institutions and politicians felt by young people. The institutions, as well as their representatives are not able, as many young people say, to cope with the needs and demands of citizens in general, and particularly not with young people's specific situation: approximately 30% of them say that "no political party protects the interests of young people". Again differences with the rest of the population are not significant. Chart 2 shows that a similar percentage of young people and adults say "politicians don't worry about what the people think", which proves that external political inefficiency is related to a diversity of factors, such as having lived in a dictatorship, or how politics and political processes work after a transition, and the democratic practices developed during the years. On the other side, when we study internal political efficiency, which is linked to the political competence and capacity individuals attribute to themselves, there are differences, but this time favourable to the new generations (Chart 2). This is one of the only attitudinal indicators where young people show higher levels of politization than adults. This result also confirms evidences that were coming up again and again during the last years: while democratic culture settles down and develops, citizens value their capacity as political actors more and more, especially among new generations.

Chart 2. **Political efficiency of young people and adults**



Source: Young people between 15 and 29 years of age: INJUVE; Total population: CIS 2004

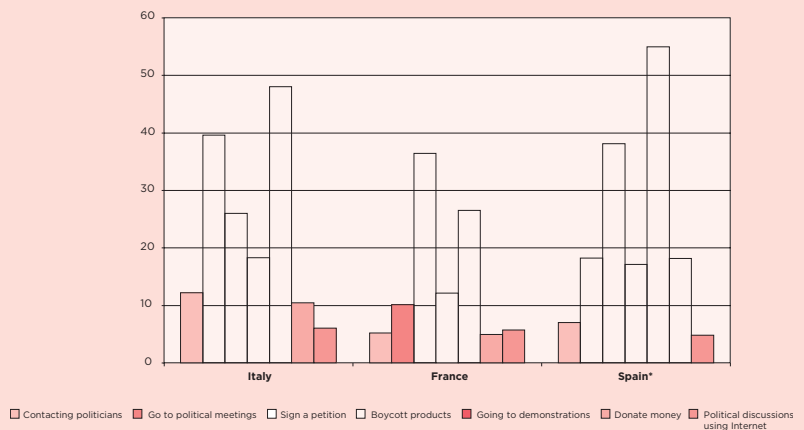
The third characteristic I want to mention is related to participation and transformations of the repertoire of political activities of young people. Traditionally, one of the most distinctive characteristics of the Spanish case in comparison to other European countries was the low level of political commitment of Spanish people, which translated into a very low level of participation in political activities (Benedicto, 2004b). The limited view of participation in Spanish political culture and little space for participation of citizens in the institutional structure has until now explained limited political activism of the Spanish society (Morán, 1997). However, during the last years there has been a spectacular growth of what was traditionally called non-conventional participation and, above all, of those activities that incorporate an element of protest, up to a point where, according to the European Social Survey (2002-2003) Spanish people are -after Luxembourgian people- the Europeans that go to more demonstrations (Ferrer, 2005).

This transformation is especially significant among the new generations. If we compare the data obtained through the Youth Study Spain 2004 with

the results provided by the European Social Survey, young people between 15 and 29 carry out more political protest activities than the population as a whole and adults only exceed them when it comes to conventional activities such as contacting a politician. But when we can really see the size of political activism is when we compare it to other cases; for example, to France or Italy, two countries that show higher levels in practically every indicator related to politization. The information in Chart 3 speaks for itself: more than half of the Spanish young people say they have participated in demonstrations and around 40% have signed a petition, while less than 10% has contacted with a politician. Young Italians, on their side, show a greater balance in terms of their repertoire of political activities. Protest activities and more conventional activities like participating in political meetings are on the same level. When it comes to France, and contrary to what we might think, French people show lower levels of political activism.

This new type of activism in the Spanish political life, however, means a lot of new questions that researchers will have to answer. In this sense, it is fundamental to analyze the motivations of young people as to why they prefer this type of participation and not other kind of activities that enjoy higher levels of social acceptance. It will be necessary to assess to what extent protest activities, as they have spread lately, constitute an expressive instrument used by young people to show their commitment towards the community they live in, and at the same time to develop their role as citizens. We cannot forget that, as often stated by Salvador Giner, “frequent citizen protests against governmental decisions are a great mobilizing factor, but are not formed by active citizens in a strict sense (2005, p.19).

Chart 3. **Political activism of young people in Spain and Europe**



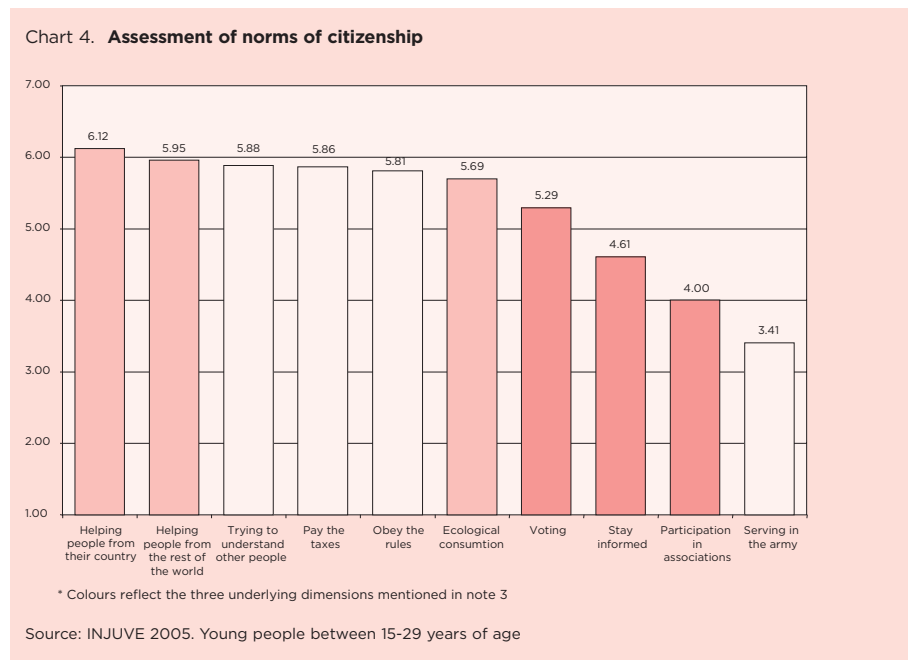
Source: Spain (INJUVE 2005); other countries (EUYOUPART 2005). Young people between 15-24 years of age

The fourth characteristic I want to highlight refers to the prevalence of a conception of citizenship that tries to stay far away from politization, where meanings that are explicitly political are substituted by a more diffused conception of solidarity and the observance of norms is the basis for civic life. A qualitative research with young people between 16 and 18

years old carried out at the beginning of this decade already clearly pointed at this direction (Morán & Benedicto, 2003); qualitative data of this survey serves to prove this trend. When asked to assess the importance of different behaviours “in order to be a good citizen”, young people between 15 and 29 years old valued those behaviours very highly that referred to solidarity with people in the own country and the rest of the world, followed by those behaviours that were related to obeying established rules (no tax evasion or breaking the law). Between one type of behaviour and the other there is also “trying to understand other people”, an attitude that, as confirmed by later analyses, is influenced by solidarity, as well as by a political dimension that is the basis for democratic coexistence. On a second level we can find obligations with more explicit political content and, among them, vote is considered more important than participation in associations (Chart 4) (4).

If we continue with the analysis and compare statistical information of young people with the whole Spanish population, there appear important differences, as adults in general give more importance to fulfil the norms than to solidarity and, at the same time, political obligations are also more important for them, above all voting. Although there is not enough information to know if there is a true generational change, we can say that today’s young people and adults seem to have different premises when they think about the nature of civic life: adults and social order, young people and solidarity. Among the new generations political obligations as a privileged field of expression of the condition of citizen have lost its strength, bonds of solidarity with other members of the community are what matters to them. Although being a bit too simplistic, we could say that, in the past, being a citizen meant respecting the order and participating politically, now, for the young people, above all, it means showing solidarity towards others.

(4)
 According to the results of a factorial analysis carried out it is possible to distinguish three dimensions, depending on the assessment by young people of the different behaviours: the dimension of solidarity, with items that specifically refer to this topic, and environmental consumption; the dimension of social order, where items included refer to the respect for norms and the military obligation if needed; and lastly, the political dimension, where items that refer to voting, participation in associations and staying informed are included. The item that refers to understanding the position of others is part of the dimension of solidarity, as well as the political dimension.



Complex political universes of young people

The most immediate question is: do these results prove our initial argumentations about how inadequate negative diagnoses are, therefore highlighting the complexity of young people's political life? The answer seems to be positive, if we consider the fact that each of the chosen characteristics points towards a different direction, which, at least, confirms the need of abandoning the traditional view of youth as mainly uninterested people about what happens around them, as if all what goes beyond their limited range of immediate individual interests would be considered none of their concern. As proven by the Spanish data, and by surveys carried out in other European countries, young people worry about many collective issues that constitute the basis of public discussions (O'Toole, Marsch & Jones, 2003; Muxel, 2001). However, this position is also compatible with the fact that there is a high level of rejection sometimes, and sometimes scepticism regarding conventional discourses and political instruments, that is, institutionalized politics, that focus around the media and opinion polls (Megías, 2005). Depending on where we put the emphasis, we will develop a certain view of young people's political life: we can insist on the evidences of apathy and lack of interest for political activities, this way proving the thesis of growing depolitization of young people and pessimistic predictions about the lack of collective commitment; but it is also possible to highlight the similarities of sceptical positions between young people and adults, in this case offering a more normalized view of today's youth; or, on the contrary, we can underline the signs that tell us that young people experience politics in a different way than adults, focusing on new topics and using new instruments to express their interests and concerns (Benedicto & Luque, 2006).

Each discursive position we refer to is linked to the debate between those who think that young people, with their life styles and attitudes regarding the world that surrounds them, are becoming an unconcerned generation, disconnected of the collective, and those who, on the contrary, think that young people now have a different type of politization, an alternative to the politization of previous generations. This debate is at risk of becoming one of those sterile conflicts so common in the context of the social sciences. There are many aspects being discussed: methodological questions about how to collect the data, opposing approaches on how our democratic system works, or different assessments of young people's attitudes and behaviours. However, it is very difficult to completely take one side on this debate, as each one of them reflects a part of the complex reality of youth. In all dimensions we are able to analyze it is possible to find evidences in one sense or the other, which also reflects those previously mentioned trends towards integration or autonomy and which are linked to the political life of young people.

This analytical strategy of comparing different views or creating typologies of young people depending on the predominant form of how they face political issues doesn't lead us anywhere, because in the first case we forget the complexity of empirical evidences (as we proved for the case of Spain), which prevents a clear diagnosis in one sense or the other, and in the second case differences are so extreme between one type of young people and the other types that we forget homogenizing cultural trends that affect youth in contemporary societies.

From my point of view, it is more useful to think about these positions as political cultures of the new generations within European democracies (apathy and political cynicism, democratic scepticism and the redefinition of politics). Some political cultures, in spite of reminding us of significant structures that sometimes are in opposition to each other coexist in the contexts of experience and activity of the citizens. And it is the citizens themselves, in this case the young people, who combine its meanings and use them to understand events and act in the public sphere. While in modern societies, the access of young people to society followed well-established institutional patterns and identities reproduced the cleavages of the adult political society, in this second modernity, where transitions have lost previous certainties, the situation is very different. An unstable and hybrid character where references of different political worlds are mixed up, even among those with defined identities, characterizes political identities of young people. This way, it is usual among young activists to find a discourse of negation of the political character of their activity, among young militants of political parties it is normal to see intense criticism regarding institutional activity of adults, or demands of civic competence by young people among those uninterested or apathetic with regard to collective issues.

To understand the idea of political universes with different meanings, symbols, discourses of different political cultures, we have to leave the mentalist conception of private beliefs and internalized values that explain opinions and behaviours of individuals behind. On the contrary, we have to take into account, as stated by Lichterman and Cefaï (2006: 393), that “culture structures the form in which actors create their strategies, how they feel their action field and define their identities and solidarities”. Instead of exclusively referring to values, attitudes and opinions we have to refer to shared representations of the political society, natural codes that organize public discourses, political vocabulary, narrations, as well as everyday practices of the actors in the collective world.

But the actions of political cultures do not happen in a social vacuum, but in concrete places and moments, in political and social scenarios that shape them and make them unique. That is why when we speak about political cultures of young people we cannot stop thinking about the influence of young people’s life-conditions, their search for integration and autonomy, about how they define, oppose or redefine what they conceive as political.

To sum it up, young people develop experiences, shape their opinions and carry out different types of actions around these different groups of political meanings depending on their life circumstances. We cannot forget that young people usually live in several worlds at a time, with different logics, and they combine these logics in a singular way to form their own political universe, in order to explain, argue and justify their relation with politics. Instead of keep discussing about whether youth today is disconnected, sceptical or, on the contrary, is an alternative, we should start thinking that most of the young people are all three things at a time.

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Continuity and cleavage in the political experience of young people

In order to define the relationship of European youth with politics today, it is necessary to explain the effects of age, in the sense of one's location in the life cycle; the effects of the period in which they live, linked to the historical and political context that affects all age groups; generational effects, that define a specific attitude and political behaviour of youth and, lastly, the effects of the national cultures of each country.

The aim of the present article is to examine the similarities and differences that exist between the younger generations and their elders, as well as to identify the most characteristic features of their relationship with politics. It is possible to identify certain elements of continuity and certain signs of cleavage in the generational dynamics; with respect to continuity we must point out the decisive weight of the family's political anchoring, a certain permanence in the political disposition of youth as well as of their elders and a relatively stable level of interest in politics, as well as an identical distrust of the political class and a persistent adhesion to the values and mechanisms of representational democracy. In relation to changes, there is a meaningful decrease in party identification, a more problematic attitude towards voting, a greater mobility of political and electoral options and, finally, an inclination towards protesting, especially through the use of demonstrations.

Faced simultaneously with the need to identify with their elders and to innovate, the relationship of young people with politics is built through an identity tension between heritage and experimentation. Heritage prioritizes the logic of identification and transmits the references and signs used up to now, but also the recognition of a political affiliation and, therefore, an intergenerational continuity. Experimentation, on the other hand, introduces the possibility of breaking with one's heritage and models knowledge as political practices from the singularity of each generation and each individual. This interaction gives rise to learning experiences, which make it possible to articulate one's opinions, as well as one's electoral and party options. To this we have to add the role of the political and historical context, and the national cultural specificities in which all political socialization takes place.

In all of Europe and, in general, in the advanced industrial societies, the political participation of young people tends to be questioned and is suspicious of being lacking, insufficient and even flawed in comparison with the behaviour of previous generations. Often young people are referred to, not necessarily as bad citizens, but at least as citizens that are more problematic than their forefathers. Their relationship with politics is a recurrent topic of debate and is often a source of concern, and even gives

rise to alarming and relatively pessimistic diagnoses about the health of Western democracies. The constant increase in abstention, especially in young people, as well as a meaningful decrease in their party identification feeds the idea of a certain de-politization of youth and, in the future, a menace to the political institutions that guarantee a representative democracy. But to what extent is this true? How should we interpret the relationship of today's youth with politics? Do the different generations continue to share the same elements and the references that constitute a common political culture? Or rather, does the political attitude of today's youth obey other models, or other forms of expression different to those inherited from their elders? And how much weight do national cultures have?

1. A family heritage alive at all moments

Not all families have necessarily the same capacity to organize a transmission; political socialization may provide a shortcut, as it is built out of the logic of opposition or as a reaction, or even through references that are not explicitly political. The family, however, supplies the first references (or the first lack of them) and, therefore, plays a decisive role in the forming of later political options. This decisive influence may seem paradoxical, as we see on one hand a real individualization of family life (de Singly, 1996) and, on the other, a relatively profound crisis in political representation (Perrineau, 2003). We need, however, to accept the evidence that politics is still the most resilient factor in the realm of value transmission between generations.

In France, the division between left and right continues to structure ideological alignment. One out of two young persons (49%) recognises that they continue the left or right tradition transmitted by their parents. If we add to that number 22% of people who define themselves as apolitical, reproducing the same absence of choice as their parents, that are neither left nor right, we can conclude that almost three fourths of the young people (71%) can be considered political inheritors (Muxel, 2001).

From a European perspective, these proportions vary in each country; however, affiliation with the left or right wing is not, in general, as marked as in France. Only a third (33%) of the European youth interviewed in eight countries of the Union claimed to belong to the same political area of right or left as their parents, while nearly half of them (47%) define themselves as neither right nor left, like their parents. This means that, in all, close to seven out of ten young people (70%) tend towards an intergenerational political continuity. (1)

In all countries we observe a close relationship between the degree of political involvement of the parents and that of their children. The higher the parents' political involvement, the more involved the young people are; the lower, the less politically involved their children are, as well.

Among the young people who have grown up in a politicized family context, we observe more positive attitudes towards politics: 80% of them declare to be interested in politics (while, in the case of the young people whose parents present a low level of political involvement, this proportion is only 14%) and 29% claim to be close to a political party (7% in the case of low parental involvement in politics). Their opinion with respect to the efficiency

(1)
The survey EUYOUNGPART financed by the European Commission in 2004 about the political participation of young people in ages between 15 and 25 years of age (n=8,000); young people from eight countries were interviewed (France, Germany, United Kingdom, Italy, Finland, Austria, Eslovakia and Estonia). The results of the study are available at the website EUYOUNGPART.

of political action is more favourable (40% compared to 16%) and they are more trusting with respect to political institutions (21% have trust in them, compared to 9% amongst those whose parents show a weak political involvement).

The family environment establishes, therefore, a series of political predispositions whose impact is verified in the behaviours that will be adopted. Thus, 83% of the young people whose parents are politically involved exercise their right to vote (a percentage that only reaches 37% in the case of parents with a lower level of political involvement). This effect is also verifiable in the case of non-conventional political participation: 36% of youth whose parents are politically involved have already taken part in a demonstration, whereas only 7% of those whose parents have scarce political involvement have done so.

Table 1. **Types of political affiliation and political relation (%)**

	Very interested in politics	Close to a party	Has voted	Participated in a demonstration	Member of an association	Thinks political action is very efficient	Very confident in political institutions
Right wing party	52	37	75	17	54	30	26
Left wing party	57	31	74	40	56	38	16
Apolitical affiliation (neither left nor right)	25	8	50	10	42	19	11
Total	37	17	59	19	48	25	14

Source: survey EUYOUNG (2004).

Depending on the parents' ideological orientation and on the different types of political affiliation, we observe differences in the attitudes as well as in the political behaviour of young people. The political profile of those who inherit left or right wing tendencies is not the same as those who do not present an ideological continuity. The first group presents more structured political options and more settled behaviours, while the second seems to be more distant, less interested in politics, less involved. 52% of the young people who declare themselves as right-wing and 57% of those who express left-wing tendencies manifest that they are interested in politics. In the case of those who declare themselves as neither belonging to the right nor the left, like their parents, this percentage drops to 25%. Moreover, a political affiliation with the left or the right guarantees the conditions for a firmer political participation: 75% of those who claim to be on the right and 74% of those who claim to be on the left, like their parents, participate in the elections, while this proportion decreases to 50% in the case of those who declare themselves to be apolitical. Young left-wing inheritors are carriers of a protesting culture that is clearly more established than that of young right-wing inheritors: 40% of them have already participated in a demonstration (while this percentage is 17% in the case of young people with right-wing affiliation and 19% in the total of those interviewed). The former are always more anti-establishment and tend to believe in political activism, while the latter seem to be more conformist and have more confidence in political institutions.

2. The need to experiment

In Europe, in general, the political context has experimented a profound change. Numerous references and models have appeared; young people are confronted with the insufficiencies of the political systems, at the core of which their affiliations and identification are more random, less firm.

The meanings associated with the right or the left have had the opportunity to be re-established throughout the evolution experienced by the political situation; moreover, the challenges or expectations that exist in the interval of one generation, that separates the young from their parents, do not necessarily coincide. But, above all, what can be observed today is a generalized weakening of political, ideological and party identification. In France, as in many other European countries, the division between the right and the left is getting weaker and weaker, even though it still structures many challenges that form part of the social and political debate (such as the orientation of the electoral options). According to the figures in the second wave of the French Political Barometer (September of 2006), 34% of the French (and 39% of young people between the ages of 18 and 30) do not claim an affiliation with the left nor with the right. (2) And this weakening can be observed throughout a large percentage of European countries. Among the young Europeans between the ages of 15 and 25 that were interviewed in the eight countries included in the Euyoupart survey, more than half (55%) claimed to be politically neither on the left nor on the right. (3)

At present, only half of the Europeans of the Union declare themselves close to a political party (50%, and the percentage goes down to 41% in the case of the young between 18 and 24 years of age). (4) For an ever-increasing number of people, the references that allow one to select options (mainly electoral ones) are not related to an affiliation or to the recognition of a common ground, but rather as an opposition or as an expression of a will of political separation. Electoral options tend to arise from this sort of “negative political attitude”, although the reach and consequences of this fact vary in the different generations.

The adult age groups and, particularly, those in which the parents of today's youth belong, learned their first political lessons in a universe where the ideological markers, the separation between the left and the right and the great references of the relation of political forces on an international scale were clearly established. This is not so in the case of young people. In this sense, political experimentation prevails. Contrary to the experience of their elders (who, while leaning more and more towards autonomous and spontaneous forms of protesting, keep the memory of the traditional forms of action and commitment), they take their first political steps and vote in their first elections without the help of references that they can easily use. Their political socialization becomes, in fact, more experimental; they strive to escape from the schemes of political parties and trade unions, concentrating more on specific, concrete and determined actions. On the other hand, a series of values that defined political families as either being left wing or right wing have become a shared heritage. Human rights, solidarity, democracy, market economy, the struggle against unemployment or even security issues, for example, are at present cross references and topics used by most of political forces to mobilize their followers.

So, today's youth experiments the need to undertake a transition between diverse reference universes, different political cultures. They face a great

(2)
Barometro political developed by CEVIPOF, from March 2006 to February 2007. The results of the study are available on the website of CEVIPOF.

(3)
Op.cit

(4)
Survey after the European elections in 2004, Eurobarometre, European Commission, July 2004.

variety of parameters and reading lists for deciphering their environment, which results from an enormously complex political and social world.

3. An increasingly critical relationship with politics

If analyzed on a European scale, the relationship of youth with politics shows, in comparison with that of their parents, the impact of national differences and specificities more than the distance existing between both generations. In front of such a mirror, the attitudes of young people, frequently, merely amplify the features that characterize the relationship of Europeans with their institutions and political organizations, and also with respect to the field of political activity in general.

It is true that their interest in politics continues to be relatively weak, although in many countries the differences are slight. Likewise, party links seem relaxed and, with the exception of Sweden, the number of young people that declare themselves as close to a political party has decreased. Between young people and their parents there is a gap of, at least, an average of ten points. And it is evident that party identification is notably weaker in the younger generations. However, the relative similarity of feeling politically competent is surprising, as it seems that in most cases this feeling is even stronger in young people than in older groups. In many cases, the political mistrust is perfectly comparable, and the observed variations are more due to national contexts than to the existence of an authentic generation gap.

Table 2. **Relation with politics**

	Germany	Spain	France	United Kingdom	Italy	Netherlands	Poland	Suecia
Is very or quite interested in politics								
18-30 years	51	20	31	46	23	65	30	55
Total	64	21	40	52	33	66	40	57
Diference	-13	-1	-9	-6	-10	-1	-10	-2
Thinks often that politics is too complicated								
18-30 years	29	38	43	43	37	30	43	34
Total	26	43	44	41	40	32	44	27
Diference	+3	-5	-1	+2	-3	-2	-1	+7
Does not trust the politicians:								
18-30 years	33	46	27	22	29	10	49	13
Total	32	38	32	28	31	12	48	15
Diference	+1	+8	-5	-6	-2	-2	+1	-2
Feels close to a political party								
18-30 years	33	35	37	33	37	49	16	70
Total	48	50	50	48	45	58	29	69
Diference	-15	-15	-13	-15	-8	-9	-13	+1

Source: ESS 2003.

Depending on the country, however, certain differences show up more flagrant that remind us of the weight of historical or national contexts on the relationship that individuals may establish with politics. A clear difference

can be observed between the countries in the north and those in the south of Europe. This division reflects specificities due to the religious cultures of these European regions, Protestantism in the north and Catholicism in the south, whose powerful influence affects their political cultures. In the northern countries of Europe, the level of political involvement is higher and the political participation of citizens is more intense. In the southern countries, on the other hand, politics seems more remote from the population, who grant it less legitimacy. Thus, the level of interest in politics is clearly higher in the Netherlands, Sweden and Germany, while the lowest values are in Spain and Italy. France occupies an intermediate position and does not stand out for its particularly high participation. Four Frenchmen out of each ten (40%) claim to be interested in politics, while the percentage declines to three out of every ten (31%) in the case of the young. The great majority expresses, therefore, a relative lack of interest. Equally, the feeling of political competence is again more positive in the three previously quoted countries (Germany, Netherlands and Sweden), where citizen and political education have been significantly developed, not only precociously in the school environment but also through mechanisms oriented towards the entire population.

The countries where the level of trust in politicians seems to be highest are the Netherlands and Sweden. In Poland, a country that during many years has suffered from important political crisis, but also in Spain, mistrust reaches maximum levels, among the young as well as among the population in general. Again, French politicians are subjected to an intermediate level of mistrust within the overall European panorama. Finally, party identification seems clearly more solid in the countries that also register a high level of political involvement, as well as competence and political trust. In the Netherlands and, mainly, in Sweden, a wide majority of the citizens declare themselves to be close to a political party (58% and 69%, respectively). In Sweden, even, there is no regression whatsoever of the party links in the younger generations. We are dealing, no doubt, with a rare case in Europe: seven out of ten young Swedes declare themselves close to a political party. In the case of the young French, this proportion is barely over a third of the total (37%).

4. The young, in front of political decisions

In the particular period of the years of youth, the entrance into politics cannot be described other than as a phase of identity construction and of transition. This specific phase of political socialization is often subjected to the conditions of acquiring the status and social roles of adults. From Latin *morituri*, which means to agree on a time limit, the idea of a moratorium responds very accurately to the characteristics of this process. Thus, it takes longer to reach a permanent professional status, and much greater difficulties must be dealt with; today's youth begin marital life and paternity/maternity at an age closer to the thirties than the twenties and they live at their parents' home longer. The delay and disconnection at the threshold of adult life have consequences on political attitudes and behaviours, and there is an observable delay in the initial stages of young people's electoral participation. The specificity of this *electoral moratorium* during early adulthood can be explained by the fact that the individual is going through a tremendous density of experiences, arbitrations and negotiations (Muxel, 2001). The gap between acquiring an objective right at the age of 18 and actually exercising

that right results from the adjustment work and the identity negotiation between the influence of one's heritage and early education (especially in the family environment) and the experimentation that characterises one's first steps in adulthood as well as in politics.

Depending on the individual's biographical circumstances and timetable of professional insertion, this moratorium may end up being more or less accentuated, and the "off-side" situation of electoral decisions does not have the same meaning. Unemployed youth present the greatest delay, and their abstaining is tightly related to the sociological factors corresponding to their situation. On the other hand, the level of political integration of young adult students is still higher, although there is a growing intermittence in their voting habits, which varies depending on their objective availability, but also on their political ideas.

The effects of any specific political situation accentuate and modulate to a greater or lesser degree, according to election results, the length of this delay. At present, the strictly political motives for abstention are more and more relevant, reflecting a difficulty in recognising and accepting what the political parties are offering. Political abstention, be it because of a lack of identification, opposition to the electoral options or as an expression of discontent, has meaningfully increased in the last years, especially among young voters. Frequently, young voters have proven to be doubtful until the very last moment and are more volatile in their opinions.

Table 3. **Voting and abstention in the European elections of 2004 (%)**

	Voted		Did not vote	
	Voted always this way	Decided the vote a few days prior or on the same voting day	Never votes	Decided the vote a few days prior or on the same voting day
18-24 years	35	31	30	39
25-39 years	48	23	21	31
40-54 years	51	17	16	37
55 years and above	60	15	18	32
Total	52	19	21	38

Sources: survey after the European elections of 2004, Flash Eurobarometre 162, produced by EOS Gallup Europe, June 2004

The electoral decision, whether it results in voting or abstention is subjected, therefore, to contingencies that are more and more difficult to foresee and control. In generational dynamics, there appears to be a new model of electoral behaviour that is characterized by a great volatility. The analysis throughout Europe of participation in European elections shows significant differences between young people and their elders. Whereas 60% of the voters 55 years of age or older recognise a loyalty to their previous votes, this percentage drops to 35% among young people between 18 and 24 years of age and to 48% among voters between 25 and 34 years of age. Young

voters appear perplexed: while 15% of voters aged 55 and older recognise they had decided their vote a few days before the elections or on the election day itself, this number is more than doubled (31%) in the case of young people between 18 to 24 years of age (Muxel, 2005). In the dynamics of generation, the profile of electoral decisions and of democratic expression in general is modelled by other uses and customs.

The study of voting patterns and electoral participation among young people in Europe shows important intergenerational differences.

The young differentiate themselves by holding leftist positions that are clearly stronger than their elders', and by electoral options that often favour the more moderate left. Therefore, an important part of European youth is more inclined towards leftist political options. Even though a wide majority of the younger generations assign great importance to voting in their description of a good citizen, the percentage is still smaller than in the rest of the population. Finally, the participation of youth in the last legislative elections was, again, inferior to the rest of the voters. In certain cases, the differences are particularly important like, for example, in Spain and Greta Britain, countries where only 45% of young people voted (as compared to 72% and 67% of the general voters, respectively). In France, the difference in participation between youth and their elders is also important (-17 points), even though a great majority of the young people between 18 and 30 years voted (58%).

Table 4. **Political options relations to vote**

	Germany	Spain	France	United Kingdom	Italy	Netherlands	Poland	Suecia
Political positioning to the left:								
18-30 years	69	79	68	46	56	47	49	60
Total	62	67	58	44	54	42	49	53
Diference	+7	+12	+10	+2	+2	+5	-	+7
It is important to vote to be a good citizen:								
18-30 years	64	41	77	54	61	72	65	83
Total	73	55	83	67	72	75	73	85
Diference	-9	-14	-6	-13	-11	-3	-8	-2
Voted in the last national elections:								
18-30 years	65	45	58	45	71	74	48	77
Total	78	72	75	67	85	81	62	82
Diference	-13	-27	-17	-22	-14	-7	-14	-5
Voted moderated left in the last national elections:								
18-30 years	61	49	69	77	30	42	61	57
Total	54	50	58	70	33	39	69	57
Diference	+7	-1	+11	+7	-3	+3	-8	-

Sources: ESS 2003.

To these generational differences we have to add the specific aspects of each country, which interfere with the relationship that young people establish with the elections.

France and Spain, and to a lesser degree, Germany and Sweden, are the countries in which a more marked orientation towards the left shows up

among the younger generations. In Spain we can observe a strong anchoring in that sense, which defines the ideas of almost eight out of every ten young people (79%).

Sweden is the country where young people most often associate voting with the exercise of citizenship: 83% of young Swedes consider that it is important to vote in order to be a good citizen. France ranks in second place, as 77% of young Frenchmen share the same opinion. Voting, therefore, continues to be at the heart of the French concept of citizenship.

On the other hand, the importance given to voting appears notably diminished in Spain: only 55% of Spaniards (and, of these, 41% of the youngest) consider that a good citizen should vote. Finally, Poland and Great Britain differentiate themselves by a weak participation level in legislative elections whereas the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany and Italy register high participation rates even among young voters. The electoral participation of the French youth is lower, but not as low as the levels seen in British and Spanish youth.

5. The use of the protest

In spite of the fact that voting has always been widely considered a useful and efficient tool among the younger generations, it is not the only means of democratic expression. Research on other forms of participation have shown a broadening in civic and citizen uses, as well as a growing legitimacy of protest mechanisms.

Non-conventional political participation is increasing in all European countries. While only 17% of Europeans had the opportunity to participate in at least two protest actions in 1981, in 1999 this proportion raised to 28% (Bréchon, 2005). This phenomenon is, above all, generational: the oldest generations are the least likely to protest, the baby boomers are more apt to, and those who are reaching adulthood now confirm this tendency. In France, one out of every two young people has participated in a demonstration in the street. Between the two rounds of presidential elections in 2002, one fourth of French youth went out into the streets to protest the presence of Jean-Marie Le Pen in the second round of voting (25% compared to 9% of the general population) (Muxel, 2002).

With the individualization of practices and norms, political behaviours today are made up from a repertory of wider and more diversified actions, at the centre of which participation in protest actions occupies a more and more important space and acquires, at the same time a growing legitimacy. This redefinition of political participation is particularly visible in the case of the younger generations. In France, participation in demonstrations is more common among younger people: 68% of youth between the ages of 18 and 24 (compared to 48% of the people 65 years old and above) declare that for democracy it is extremely or very important for people to demonstrate. Slightly more than a third of the people over 50 years of age (34%) grant the same importance to these two forms of democratic expression (Grunberg, Muxel, 2002).

Through protest, young adults exercise an authentic political activism (Becquest, Linares, 2005). The variety of issues that motivate collective mobilizations show that, far from being indifferent or centring around their own concerns, young people get involved in numerous problems that concern

the functioning and organization of society. The struggle against racism, the support of immigrants and illegal aliens, demonstrations against the National Front... there is no lack of occasions to go out into the streets, and young people often take the initiative for actions in their companies. For the last twenty years, student movements have opposed the majority of the attempts to reform the educational system and the dispositions linked to employment that have emanated from left-wing as well as right-wing governments, achieving always the withdrawal of the governmental proposals.

Far from opposing one another, conventional participation (voting) and non-conventional participation (demonstrations) are closely related and, often, reinforce each other.

The development of non-conventional participation in European societies, in general of a protesting nature, should not be considered a political means of participation that is contrary to electoral participation. A sort of opposition between representative democracy and participatory democracy might be feared, particularly when the latter is full of protesting connotations. This is not the case: citizens value the protesting participation as well as the conventional one, although there are significant differences between the various European countries.

Table 5. Implications and forms of participation in politics

	Germany	Spain	France	United Kingdom	Italy	Netherlands	Poland	Suecia
Has participated in a demonstration in the last 12 months:								
18-30 years	18	25	25	6	18	3	2	8
Total	11	17	18	4	11	3	1	6
Diference	+7	+8	+7	+2	+7	-	+1	+2
Could participate in a political group:								
18-30 years	28	12	13	30	14	21	21	36
Total	28	10	15	27	16	20	19	34
Diference	-	+2	-2	+3	-2	+1	+2	+2
Is or has been a member of an association:								
18-30 years	16	19	16	6	9	18	6	22
Total	18	18	18	9	8	23	6	25
Diference	-2	-3	-2	-3	-2	-5	-	-3
Has signed a petition in the last 12 months:								
18-30 years	32	33	40	43	15	22	8	45
Total	31	24	35	40	17	23	7	41
Diference	+1	+9	+5	+3	-2	-1	-1	+4
Has boycotted certain products in the last 12 months:								
18-30 years	26	10	30	19	5	10	5	39
Total	26	8	27	26	8	10	4	33
Diference	-	+2	+3	-7	-3	-	+1	+6

Sources: ESS 2003.

The younger generations' impulse towards protest is not the same in all European countries. In southern European countries, France, Italy and Spain, as well as in Germany, we observe the most significant differences between

the younger age groups and the rest of the population (+7 and +8 points). But France and Spain are the countries where the use of demonstrations enjoys the highest popularity. A quarter of the young Spaniards and an identical proportion of the French declare having participated in a demonstration in the street during the last 12 months. In other places, such as Poland or the Netherlands, the protest culture is scarcest (if not to say inexistent) and the young do not adopt specific behaviours.

Petition signing and the boycotting of specific products involve mainly the younger population. The young people who sign the largest amount of petitions are the Swedish (45%); in Great Britain and France, a considerable number of young people practice this type of political action also (43% and 40%, respectively). On the other hand, only 8% of Polish youth are in the same case. Lastly, boycotts are a political practice that has a wide following in France in comparison with neighbouring countries: 30% of the young French claim to have boycotted certain products throughout the last year. But it is the young Swedes who most use this form of protest (39%), while the Italians and the Polish almost never use this form of political expression (5% in both cases).

Other forms of participation or political involvement do not register significant differences between the young and their elders. Involvement in political organizations or associations affects only a minority of young people, but involvement is not higher in the older age groups either. The membership of political parties, as well as of trade unions, has suffered an important erosion throughout the last two decades. In many countries the proportion of the population that belongs to a political party or to a trade union is less than 5% or 6%. Whereas twenty years ago, a quarter (around 25%) of the active working population of France was involved in trade unions, at present the percentage has decreased to 8% of said population. And membership numbers are even lower among young employees. The number of political party members has always been relatively low (in France, around 4-5%), and the proportion of young people in both fields is very low (between 1% and 2%). Beyond the membership numbers (often very low) of this type of organizations, we observe a progressive disappearance of the figure of the emblematic member, especially in leftist organizations (Ion, Franguiadakis, Viot, 2005); young people have a relatively negative image of these organizations, which does not drive to become affiliated. In Sweden, Great Britain and Germany we see a greater disposition to get involved in political groups, whereas in France this disposition remains weak: only about 13% of young people declare that they could participate in a group of this type.

On the other hand, associations that have a character of social or political involvement and organize the requests of those "without" (without a home, without papers, without a job), or associations that focalize the attention of public powers on human rights and humanitarian issues are more attractive and enjoy higher levels of confidence. Associations can respond better than parties to the need to carry out concrete actions, as well as to the request for efficiency and results and, therefore, to the expectations that today's younger generations may have in matters of commitment. However, very few actually get actively involved, especially in a lasting way. Belonging to an association is, in general terms, a little extended practice. In Great Britain, Italy and Spain very few individuals are involved in associations. In France, the level of involvement appears similar to that registered in Germany and Spain.

Therefore, political mediation is in crisis, which reinforces the demand for direct democracy and expressions of citizen protest; this phenomenon is observed in more manifest way among the young generations.

Having reached the end of our look at the horizon of young people's relationship with politics in France and in Europe, and of the transformations in their form of political participation, we may identify a series of elements of continuity and certain signs of cleavage in the generational dynamics. With respect to continuity, we would have to point out the decisive weight of the family's political anchoring, a certain permanence in the political disposition of the young as well as of their elders, and a level of relatively stable political situation, plus an identical distrust towards the political class and a persistence in adhering to the values and mechanisms of representative democracy. With respect to change, we can point out a meaningful decrease in party identification, a more problematic relationship with voting, a greater mobility of political and electoral opinions and, finally, a propensity towards protest, above all through the use of demonstrations.

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“We vote and then we suffer.” Survey results in the light of young people’s views on participation (1)

This article presents and discusses qualitative and quantitative findings of the EU-funded comparative study “EUYOUPART: Political Participation of Young People in Europe - Development of Indicators for Comparative Research in the European Union” which was carried out between 2002 and 2005. It sets out to interpret the survey data on the basis of the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions of the 15 to 25 year old respondents in Austria, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Slovakia and the UK. The institution-oriented perspective of a considerable part of mainstream participation research is thus challenged by introducing the young people’s own perceptions of politics and participation. The results demonstrate that the reasons for non-participation are very complex and cannot simply be attributed to political alienation. Rather, they mirror the conditions of the political in late modernity which are characterised by an economisation of politics, dissolution of the traditional boundaries of politics with respect to territory, issues, targets and methods, as well as a deconstruction of traditional ideologies and de-politicisation of the public.

Introduction

Young people generally have a negative image in our society. Often, they are seen as the source of troubles or the carriers of problems or deficits. In particular, young people are seen as lazy, apathetic and egocentric. In the context of democratic participation they are charged with a lack of social and political commitment. A number of authors have stressed the fact that young people are fed up with politics, that they find politics irrelevant and boring and have little knowledge of political institutions and processes. In participation research, the perceived decline in political support and political participation during the past decades has to a large extent been attributed to generational change (e.g. Putnam, 2000) which implies the replacement of old values and behaviours by new ones as generations succeed each other. Policy documents echo the concern that this development may endanger the future of democracy and programmes have been started to improve citizenship education and foster young people’s involvement in communities. (2)

However, research evidence and interpretations are controversial. The results of empirical studies are obviously strongly influenced by the definition of political participation. Political participation is commonly categorised into representative-democratic (voting, membership in

(1)
This chapter is a summary of two chapters of the book “Youth and Politics in Europe”, edited by Spannring, R.; Ogris, G.; Gaiser, W. (2008) Opladen: Barbara Budrich

(2)
For example the Council of Europe (http://www.coe.int/t/e/cultural_co-operation/youth/2_Priorities/participation.asp#TopOfPage) and the European Commission (http://ec.europa.eu/youth/policies/active_en.html) [accessed 15th Oct 2007]

political organisations) and direct-democratic forms (citizens initiatives, petitions etc.). They may further be differentiated according to their degree of institutionalisation, their legal status and their public recognition (Schultze, 1998). The latter criterion is expressed in the notions of conventional and unconventional participation or old and new politics. The past decades have seen considerable changes with respect to political behaviour in Western democracies. Most notably, traditional forms of political participation have declined, while unconventional, elite-challenging forms have gained ground. While some authors tend to support a general decline thesis (e.g. Norris, 1999; Pharr/Putnam, 2000), others (e.g. Stolle/Hooghe, 2005) have criticised the exclusive focus on traditional forms of participation of these accounts which conceals much of the new methods of participation, styles of political expression, new political issues and political targets. Especially in youth research attention has been drawn to the numerous forms of participation of young people (Roker/Player/Coleman, 1999). They are involved in single issues such as animal protection (Wilkinson, 1996), activities on the local level (Riepl/Wintersberger, 1999), in spontaneous direct actions, voluntary work (Hackett, 1997) and new forms of political protest such as “street-party-protest” (Brünzel, 2000) which interweave politics and culture. Increasingly, the analytical and empirical separation of the political and the social sphere is given up in order to capture a more encompassing picture of participation. Participation then means the capability to commonly create and shape the social environment. Obviously, this definition –while usefully allowing for the inclusion of many marginal, emerging or subversive forms of participation in qualitative studies- poses a problem for survey research in that it extends and blurs the boundaries of political participation so that an analytical demarcation becomes virtually impossible and risks resulting in empirical data with no meaningful statistical distribution.

Concepts and evaluations of political participation are dependent on different understandings of democracy and explanatory models for attitudes and behaviour. The empirical understanding of democracy is based on representativity and democratic elite rule: it is not the rule of the people but the rule of politicians with the consent of the people. Accordingly, voting is the crucial form of citizens' participation and serves to install a functioning government. Political participation is restricted to legal activities of citizens which “are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take” (Verba/Nie/Kim, 1978:46). The empirical approach sees the citizens more as spectators and consumers of politics and fears damage to the functioning and stability of the system through too much participation by the masses. The normative approach to democracy, by contrast, considers participation as an aim and a value in itself. It is not so much the functioning of the system and its institutions that is in the foreground but decision-making processes which involve the people so that their needs and interests are the focus of the decisions. Therefore a strengthening of direct forms of democracy is desirable. Active participation involves discussions, decision-making and common action (Barber, 1984). Moreover, the effects of political participation go beyond the political sphere by increasing citizens' self-confidence, social and political skills as well as their social and political integration (Schultze, 1995; quoted in Hoecker, 2006). In this approach, the dangers for democracy are spotted in a

hiving-off of elected politicians and –as a consequence– an increase in political disaffection (ibid.).

Differences are also found with respect to models explaining political participation. Form and extent of political participation is influenced by a wide range of factors located in the tension field between structure and agency. The socio-economic standard model (Verba/Nie, 1972) maintains that on the individual level education, occupational status and income are resources that foster conventional political participation. The unequal distribution of these resources in society implies a marginalisation of individuals with a low socio-economic status in the political processes. Similarly, it has been argued that subjective attitudes towards politics reflect the feeling of political competence and internal efficacy and determine the perception of individual action space, which is a precondition for participation. Internal efficacy largely depends on knowledge and information which is more difficult to access by individuals with a low socio-economic status.

Participation is further framed by institutional structures and the opportunities for participation inherent in the political system. Among them are situative factors, such as events which give rise to public concern and action. The oil spill at the Spanish coast in November 2002 and the subsequent “impassioned response from the public at large” (3) are one example. Institutionalised opportunity structures as, for example, youth organisations, youth parliaments and youth councils, further foster or limit participation depending on their accessibility and quality (Riepl/Wintersberger, 1999). The lack of responsiveness of the political system to the needs and articulated interests of citizens leads to a deficit in external efficacy which is associated with political disaffection (Almond/Verba, 1963; Montero/Gunther/Torcal, 1997).

Longer term perspectives on participation bring into view the influence of changing economic, social and political conditions and consequently changing attitudes and expectations towards political institutions. Inglehart (1977, 1997) argues that the sustained experience of economic growth and relative peace in Europe after World War II as well as rising educational levels have led to the new forms of political participation via the development of postmaterialist values and attitudes. The postwar period, in which basic material needs were generally met, allowed for a stronger focus on issues like self-realisation, quality of life, lifestyle choice and participation that were carried into the political sphere. Postmaterialists are critical of the hierarchic and structured nature of contemporary representative democracy, are more willing to articulate their feelings through protests and other forms of direct action and favour participatory political structures, collective decision-making and consensus-building processes. Moreover, they express more confidence in institutions that stress participation and the representation of public interests. The source of legitimacy is inclusion and participation rather than hierarchic authority (Dalton, 2004). The value change expanded the boundaries of politics by introducing new issues such as women’s liberation and environmental protection and by broadening the range of political instruments used by citizens.

(3)

World Wild Life Fund:
[http://www.panda.org/
news_facts/newsroom/
crisis/spain_oil_spill/index.cfm](http://www.panda.org/news_facts/newsroom/crisis/spain_oil_spill/index.cfm)
(accessed 24 September 2007)

Processes of globalisation and de-traditionalisation have further changed the context within which politics takes place. Globalisation destructs traditional structures and reconstructs new ones with the effect that traditions are no

longer accepted as legitimate per se, but have to be explained, disputed and justified. There is no longer a pre-given alignment with interest groups or 'natural' trust in political institutions. While the legitimacy of the political institutions used to be partly produced by tradition, these institutions are now open to public scrutiny and criticism (Giddens, 2004: 94). At the same time risk and uncertainties such as global warming, pollution of the environment, overpopulation, food-related diseases and problems of the global economy are increasingly produced that do not respond to traditional problem-solving means and mechanisms of single nation-states (ibid: 78f). As a result, conventional national politics tends to cover only some of the citizens' concerns and anxieties, while it seems helpless in the face of many other global issues. Global movements and local activities, loosely structured networks and individualistic behaviour can be seen as an answer to this shortcoming of national political bodies by opening up 'spaces for public dialogues' and putting pressure on conventional politics as well as social and economic practices (ibid: 111).

The economic rationalisation and globalisation processes manoeuvre the nation-state into a dilemma between its industrial location policy and its fiscal crisis. This dilemma impinges on the ability of the welfare state to use resources for constructing and shaping society, in particular for ensuring the integration of all citizens, and leads to a steering and legitimisation crisis (Habermas, 1973). The seemingly unescapable crises of the economy, which the welfare state can no longer cushion, contribute to a global de-politicisation where political influence on social conditions seems no longer possible (Felgitsch, 2006).

Most of the large-scale comparative studies tackle the question of political participation through the eyes of political institutions and the needs of the democratic system and set it in the framework of the individualisation thesis. By contrast, this chapter will interpret the results of a quantitative study on the basis of the meaning of politics and participation revealed by the young people's own discourses and images.

The data presented in the following were generated by the research project "EUYOUPART: Political participation of Young People in Europe - Development of indicators for Comparative Research in the European Union" which was carried out between 2003 and 2005 and funded under the 5th framework programme of the European Commission. (4) In the course of the research project a total of 41 qualitative, individual interviews with politically active young people and 225 non-active young people in 38 focus groups were carried out in eight European countries (Austria, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Slovakia and the UK) as well as a comparative survey with a total of 8030 young people aged 18 to 25.

Although the survey data do generally show low participation rates, the qualitative findings do not support the common wisdom that young people are simply too egocentric and disinterested. Rather, they show how their participation patterns mirror the complex and difficult conditions of contemporary politics.

Young people's picture of and relationship with politics

Before we turn to the young people's participation and their views on it we will take a general look at their relationship with politics. This relationship

(4)
www.sora.at/euyoupart;
(accessed 24 September 2007)

can roughly be characterised by three dimensions: external efficacy, internal efficacy and political culture. The first category, external efficacy, refers to convictions about the responsiveness of political authorities and institutions to citizens' needs (Almond/Verba, 1963; Gabriel, 1995; Montero/Gunther/ Torcal, 1997). Second, internal efficacy includes the subjective perception of the individual that it does not know enough about the matter and that it cannot access and process the right information. Internal efficacy is also influenced by the lack of positive experiences with participation which would convey the feeling of empowerment, the competence to actually participate in politics. Thirdly, comments on the lack of political culture reveal dissatisfaction with the efficiency of the political system.

Only a few politically engaged young citizens comment on concrete government activities, while most young people provide a vague evaluation of the system on the basis of their perception of political processes which is disseminated by media. The most frequently articulated criticism of the interviewees concerns the lack of external efficacy. The young people bemoan the distance between the politicians and the electorate. Politicians do not seem to know or care to know the real needs of the citizens. Issues arise and decisions are taken within a power structure that excludes the man in the street. Those who gain from this power structure are not only the politicians themselves but party clientele and lobbies in the economy. In addition, young people perceive a particular disadvantage in that the issues addressed by the (adult) politicians have nothing to do with the young people's lives, problems and ideals: *"They are a long way from our needs"*.

Another dimension of external efficacy is the evaluation of the impact the individual is able to make on political processes. For all forms of participation discussed below, the efficiency is rated very low. Even voting as a relatively efficient form (5) in the eyes of the young people is regarded with scepticism: *"And in the end all look stupid, because it turned out very different from what they [the politicians, R. Sp.] had promised"*. This feeling is not only harboured by non-active young people but shared by the politically active young people who are considerably disillusioned in this respect.

The feeling of distance and distrust is exacerbated by a lack of internal efficacy. Many young interviewees express their lack of understanding and unfamiliarity with respect to political institutions and processes. Some put their deficit down to the inadequate content and method of citizenship education at school or the lack of opportunities for co-determination at school. In the context of political information, many young people criticise the media for being rather superficial in their reports and not objective. There is doubt about the reliability of media information and suspicion that the media are political players with their own interests (Muxel/Riou, 2004). On the one hand, lack of information is a consequence of a lack of media competence and political knowledge which is necessary to access, process, understand and judge political news. Especially those young people who have a low educational level and a poor socio-cultural background are disadvantaged with respect to political information. Thus, part of this problem can certainly be mitigated through improved youth information, political education and real participation possibilities for young people. On the other hand, part of the problem is caused by politicians themselves who

(5)
The survey data show that voting in elections has the highest effectivity rates of all forms of participation: they range between 65% in Germany and 37% in Estonia (Spanning/Ogris/Gaiser, 2008)

give vague or partial answers which fit their competition strategies rather than supplying the voters with comprehensive information on their political aims and methods.

The young people's criticism of the prevailing political culture is largely based on the perception of a lack of efficiency in solving problems. Decision-making processes are characterised by competition, power games and quarrelling rather than by cooperation and constructive problem solving. The potentially productive element in political conflicts cannot be recognised and disappears behind the desire for peaceful, harmonious political processes. One of the reasons for this conflict-avoidance might lie in the visibility of political argy-bargy and –by contrast– the lack of clear political positions on relevant issues. This is in fact touched upon by those young people who criticise the lack of socio-political ideals and visions in politics or their sacrifice for power. One young Austrian Green activist, for example, referred to the German Green Party's decision to support the war in Afghanistan which was totally against their initial position and offended their grassroots level including the young interviewee himself. Authenticity and faithfulness to one's principles is of uppermost importance for the young citizens and the most eminent criterion for evaluating politicians. In real politics the young people's expectation of idealism and reliability is constantly frustrated. As a consequence, the trustworthiness of politicians is generally rated very low.

An issue which runs through almost all forms of political participation like a red thread is the young people's "generalised doubt". It consists in the refusal to take sides for a political idea or ideology without a critical distance. Young people recognise the fact that people and ideas cannot be categorised in "good" and "bad" and the world cannot be seen as black or white (Paakkunainen, 2004). Political arguments and ideas always call for counter-arguments or counter-views. Ideologies and political truths are discredited and suspected to attempt the legitimisation of dominance, intolerance and violence. This generalised doubt often causes an inability to take or support any political decision, for even if the counter-argument is not known to the individual there is an expectation that there is a "yes, but...". Caught in this negative relativism the possibility of a positive reconstruction of politics that is not based on universal truth but on the participation of individuals in a common process of social and political construction (Felgitsch, 2006) is not at disposition.

Young people's political participation

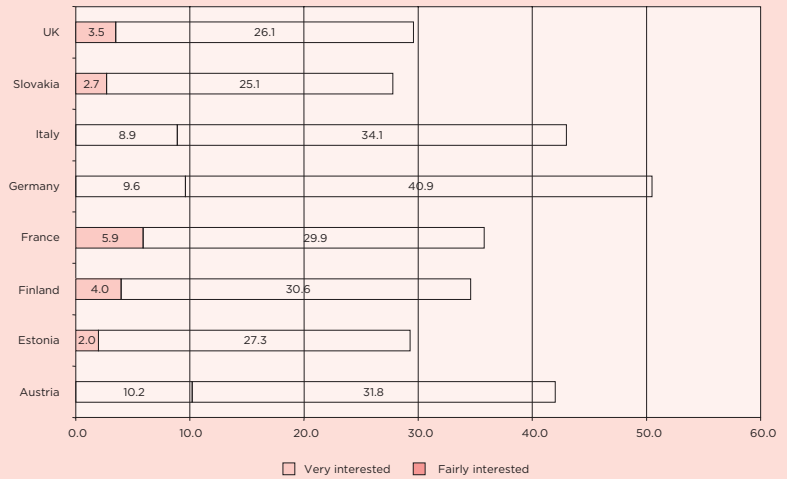
In this section the results of the EUYOUNG survey shall be presented and interpreted in the light of the young people's accounts of participation. The forms of participation that are dealt with are those commonly used in participation research: political engagement, voting, participation in traditional political organisations and in new social movements, political communication and protest as well as political consumerism.

Political engagement

Political engagement is commonly measured by "interest in politics", "following politics in the media" and "discussing politics" with friends and

family. The highest levels of interest in politics (very interested and fairly interested) are found in Germany (50.5%), Italy (43%) and Austria (42%); the lowest levels in the UK (29.6%), Estonia (29.3%) and Slovakia (27.8%) (see figure 1).

Figure 1: Interest in politics by country in percent



Source: euyoupart 2004

Following politics in the media daily or nearly daily is widespread in Germany (66, 3%) and Italy (64,9%). Estonia also shows a relatively high percentage of media consumption (55,5%). Young people in the UK are the least interested in political news (24,8%).

The highest rates of discussing politics are again found in Italy, followed by Germany and Austria. 60% of the young Italians discuss politics with their fathers at least sometimes, 43% with their mothers. Friends (62%) and colleagues (55%) are also frequent partners in political discussions. In Germany and Austria, the most important partners are friends, colleagues as well as teachers. In Estonia, teachers play a prominent role as discussants: They are even more important than friends and colleagues.

The complexity of young people's political engagement cannot be grasped by simple statistical distributions and correlation coefficients for age, gender, education or values. Indeed, the clarity with which the figures reflect the actual condition of the political system is usually underestimated and shall therefore be highlighted in the following.

Among the politically non-active focus group discussants' interest in politics is rather low. For most it is something abstract and unfamiliar, loaded with a negative image which arouses anxieties when put forward as a topic for discussion. This points to a lack of knowledge about the political system and practice in reflecting on and talking about politics. However, interest also depends on young people's perception that politics matters. Conversely, disinterest reflects the gap the young people feel between their everyday experiences and the issues that are brought up in politics: *"I feel rather little*

of any party or government." This does not mean that young people are impervious to social and political problems.

They do recognise injustice and unfairness, but often find it difficult to express their feelings and perceptions or they fail to see them as belonging to the political sphere, connecting them with the possibility of political solutions. One young secretary, for example, complains about the fact that her lunch break at work is too short to have a proper meal so that she has to resort to unhealthy fast food. Public debate does not give her the tools to think in a more general way about labour conditions and how they might be changed. The lack of public articulation and discussion of conflicting interests makes society seem to be given rather than the product of socio-political processes. Thus, the problem remains on the individual level (cf. Evers/Nowotny, 1987; Böhnisch, 2006).

What is visible is a passionless "management politics" which predominantly deals with tax reforms, fiscal management and cuts in social programmes. The 'big issues' presented by politicians are often not perceived as such by the young people: *"... on the whole, the news of politics, which you hear, is really irrelevant for yourself personally. For example the cuts in pensions. Why do they all cry out like that? On the one hand, I can understand, but on the other hand, it is not such a big change. I don't know how much they get less, I think it's €40,- per year or so. That's not so much."* By comparison, many young people express strong feelings towards broad issues such as civil rights, anti-racism, environmental protection and peace. They are driven by a deeply rooted ethical belief (IARD, 2004): *"A sort of ethical spur, ethical motivation – it comes from the fact, I think, that the world you have in front of yourself does not stick to the way things should go. To change a reality essentially unfair and wrong ... not equal."*

While for the less politically skilled young people the absence of a socio-political debate which could give their vague sentiments a home, a means to give them a voice, seems a decisive factor for political disinterest, some of the more politically interested and active young people stumble over the lack of efficiency. They express their helplessness and resignation over the fact that politics has such a strong impact while they themselves have no possibility to influence the decision-making process. This leads to enormous frustration and in some cases to withdrawal: *"... there'll be at least ten topics I can't accept at all, from tuition fees to genetic engineering and God knows what else, the war in Iraq, for example, but I don't think I can change anything, well, I mean there'd be enough topics but I've simply given up, yes, that's how I see it."*

Participation within the representative democratic system

Participation in elections

Voting is generally seen as the foremost political activity of citizens in a democratic political system. It is also mentioned most frequently as the manifestation of good citizenship by the young people. However, although voting is seen as a moral duty by many young people, other factors weigh more heavily for the decision to vote. The young people articulate a number of dilemmas, which arise in the context of the

dissatisfaction and disaffection discussed above. With respect to internal efficacy a dilemma exists between the demand of being an informed voter and the lack of knowledge and information: Many young people do not feel sufficiently informed in order to participate, but without the appropriate knowledge the choices have no meaning so that the lack of information seems to disqualify the young for participation (Waechter/Riegel, 2004): *“Before I’m forced to put a cross next to any old thing, I prefer not to vote at all.”*

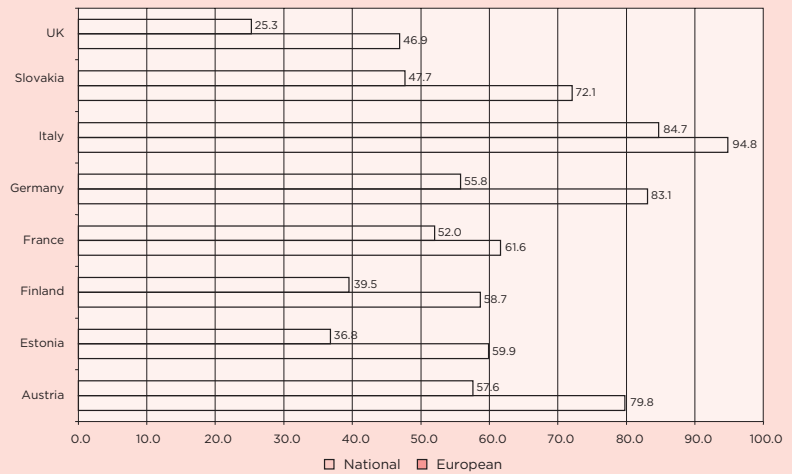
The effect of the lack of political knowledge on the young people’s participation in elections which is so conspicuous in the narratives of the young citizens may be explained by a diminishing impact of other motivating factors such as civic duty, partisanship and integration in formal social structures. Howe (2006) finds empirical evidence that even those who lack familiarity with political affairs tend to vote if they have a sense of civic duty because they feel the obligation to cast a ballot. The lower this sense of civic duty the more the decision to participate in the election is made dependent on internal political efficacy.

Another dilemma is voiced by the young with respect to external efficacy. In the context of elections external efficacy refers to a lack of recognisable choices, often meaning too little polarisation between the parties, lack of appealing issues brought up by the politicians and lack of accountability of the politicians after the elections. For these reasons, voting is often seen as merely playing by the rules of the democratic game or even as an annoying chore (Sloam, 2004) rather than an opportunity to actually influence the political course. The reaction of some young people is to vote for extreme parties as a protest vote or to consciously abstain from voting: *“Abstention is a way of voting, it is understood as a vote for something else; this is to show that nobody interests us”.*

Thus, casting an invalid vote and not voting out of protest are forms of political expression. Although the figures are generally very low, the two strategies seem to be taken up by the young Austrians, French and Italians more often than by their peers in other countries: 12% of the young French, 8% of the young Italians and 7% of the young Austrians have already cast an invalid vote. With respect to not voting as a form of protest the proportions are 8%, 5% and 9% respectively.

Actual participation in national general elections ranges between 95% (Italy), 83% (Germany), 80% (Austria) and 72% (Slovakia) at the high end and 47% (UK) at the low end. In every country, participation on the European level is markedly lower than on the national level. Participation in the elections for the European Parliament in 2004 is relatively high in Italy (85%), Austria (58%), Germany (56%) and France (52%) and lowest in the UK (25%) (see figure 2).

Figure 2: **Proportion of people eligible to vote who actually took part in the last general national elections and the election for the European Parliament in 2004**



Source: euyoupart 2004.

The reasons for non-participation given above are even more acute on the European level. The complexity of the political system, the lack of clarity concerning European (election) issues as well as the power structure which makes citizens' participation and real influence an illusion weaken the cognitive and motivational resources for participation: "*We elect the [national] governments and they go to the meetings of the ministers. And there is the Commission which is somehow there and decides on pretty much everything. But we have very little say in it. Apart from electing the EU Parliament every four years, which in principle has very few competences. They can talk a little bit...*" (6). The politicisation of the European Union as a precondition for identification and mobilisation is demanded not only by academics (e.g. Magnette, 2003) but also by the active young European citizens. They call for a Europeanisation of the media and political institutions such as parties and trade unions as well as the development and public discussion of "European" issues. The generation of public interest and political mobilisation thus hinges on a clear deliberation of issues based on the acknowledgement of social and political conflict: "*I do hope that if, for example, there is a massive loss of jobs, people start networking more, I mean a real European network, so that people learn to fight together for their rights and thereby develop a political consciousness, that this is their story.*" (7) Of course, the bottom-up development of an active European civil society can be fostered by open and inclusive political processes in which different problem definitions, ideological approaches and strategic options are made visible and accessible for larger parts of the citizenry.

(6)
Quoted in Spannring/Wallace/
Datler, 2004

(7)
Quoted in Spannring/Wallace/
Datler, 2004

Party membership

Party membership is generally seen, apart from voting, as one of the most important forms of political participation, since it provides one of the major channels of integrating interests into the formal decisions-making processes.

Ideas and views that are not voiced through these formal structures are hardly heard and considered. The lack of acceptance and use of political parties and their youth sections leaves politicians at a loss over the question how to empower the young politically in a sustainable way. Alternative forms of political participation such as demonstrations, boycotts or youth cultural expressions may have some influence on political decision-making or social change, but they do not provide comparable political rights to influence and shape policy making as party membership does, since they are based on the special position of political parties within the constitutions and the structure of political authorities. Via their party membership citizens have an influence on the selection of the political elite on all levels and the content of party programmes (Wiesendahl, 2006). However, it is precisely the party structures and processes within and between parties that discourage young people from getting involved. Most of the interviewees, including politically active young people, formulate a range of arguments against joining a political party.

The main reason for not joining is that the young people have not made up their mind as to which is their favourite party or they refuse to make a definite decision. Often, they do not vote for the same party at every election, so that joining one makes even less sense: *“Well, parties, ... and issues, I mean every party has more or less issues which are appealing somehow. Why should I be fixed on one?”* Young people like to remain flexible and autonomous to be able to give and withdraw support whenever they feel it necessary. Even if they feel close to one party they keep a critical distance. Political issues are not black and white, but there are always several perspectives on any one problem. This ambivalent attitude toward parties and ideologies, or ‘objectivity’, is based on the acknowledgement that there is not one infallible truth. Clear cut categories for enemies and “either-or” thinking are no longer credible (Paakkunainen, 2004).

Many young people refuse to support a party unless they fully agree with it. They fear that their opinion is not duly considered and gets lost in the group process of opinion formation or that they have to comply with the party discipline. In both instances they have no control over the party’s activities. The result may violate their principle of loyalty with one’s own values and responsibility for one’s activities and opinions.

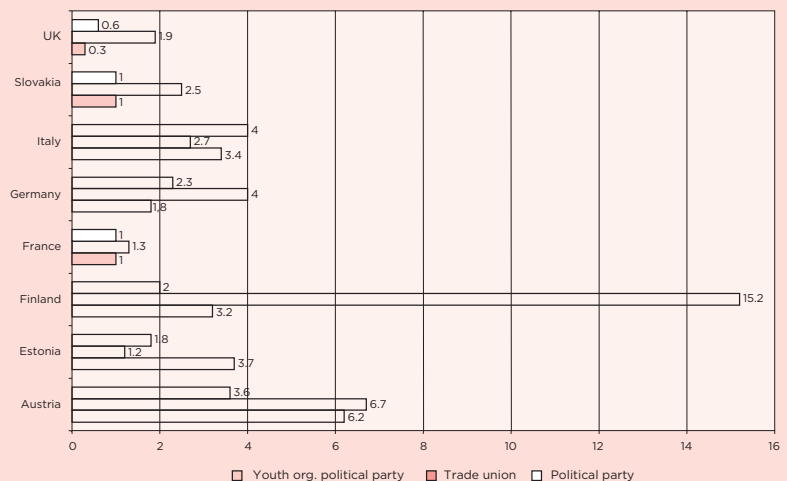
Party membership is further seen as hampering open communication with members of other parties, because political parties are more involved in strategic behaviour and power games than in solving problems. Most young people do not see party membership as an adequate means to achieve something in a community: *“It is rather in the way... when you want to do something together, as for example building the skater park. If I had gone to a political party, then maybe the other party would have been against it because I am member of this party.”*

Another reservation mentioned by non-active interviewees is the (anticipated) difficulty to get access to an organisation and to be integrated in the organisation on equal terms with adults and not just as slaves for distributing flyers or sticking posters. Conversely, a number of politically active young people stress how important it was for them to be recognised as equal partners by the adult members of the organisation. Young people’s expectations can thus no longer be satisfied by mass political organisations which use their members as party soldiers to execute tasks, programmes and aims dictated by the party leadership (cf. Inglehart, 1977). Neither can they

find a home for their drive for action in parties that are more and more professionalized and have difficulties in meaningfully integrating young people in their political processes (Hooghe, 2003). Young politically active people openly express their disappointment over the frustration of their demands and their experiences of ineffectivity, while non-active young people often cite the anticipation of this frustration as a reason for non-involvement.

These reservations are the background of the low membership rates of young people in traditional political organisations. Membership in youth organisations linked to political parties ranges between 6% in Austria and 0.3% in the UK. Membership in political parties is somewhat lower and lies between 4% (Austria and Italy) and 1% (France, Slovakia, UK). Trade Unions enjoy a similar membership rate as the political parties, except for Germany, where trade union membership is twice as high (4%) and Finland where it is three times as high (15%) (see figure 3). Membership in professional organisations is below 2% in all countries (not included in figure). This particularly low level probably relates to the fact that most of the young people have not reached a professional status in their work career yet, which would render integration in a professional association more meaningful.

Figure 3: Membership in “traditional” political organisations by country, in percent



Source: euyoupart 2004

Participation in the political youth organisation’s activities and volunteering show somewhat lower rates than membership. On the one hand, this points to passive kind of membership. On the other hand, it may suggest that it is nearly impossible to be active or volunteering without being a member. For political parties the finding is the same, while for trade unions the activity and volunteering rates are still much lower than the membership rate.

With respect to party work supporting an election campaign is not common among young people. The highest proportion of these party political activists is in Italy (13%), Finland (11%) and Slovakia (10%). It is lowest in the UK (3%). Trying to convince others to vote for a candidate or a party is much more widespread by comparison, especially in Italy (34%), Germany (26%), Finland (25%) and Austria (25%). Again, the UK yields the lowest percentage (5%).

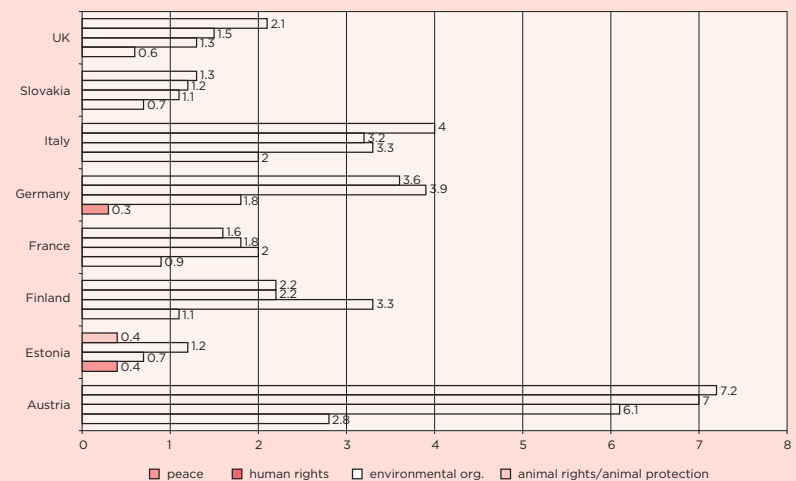
Altogether, in terms of party work, there is first the UK, with an overall low level of party campaign support as well as convincing effort. Estonia and France seem to show the same pattern, but less pronounced. Second, there are countries with a high rate of active young people in both dimensions of party work, like Italy and Finland. Third, there are Austria and Germany, where party work does not take place too often via campaign support, but rather via more or less informal convincing effort. Fourth, the pattern for Slovakia seems to be inverted: there is a relatively high level of campaign support, but only a mediocre convincing effort.

Membership in NGOs

While many young people with a low level of education do not consider NGOs as possible political players, they are recognised and welcomed as such by better educated and/or politically active young people. However, the same scepticism as in the case of political parties is expressed in the case of NGOs, that is, the lack of information and lack of control over the organisation's movements. Also, structures and group dynamic processes are criticised, in which the individual's views and activities are too much constrained: *"I left certain groups because I realised that in the microcosm of students' collectives, associations, social centres, there was a trend to recreate a structure that actually belongs to another tradition, say that of the Stalinist party, in a vertical sense ... while in fact the intention was to create a horizontal situation of collective participation."*

These problems are reflected in the low membership rates. Membership in peace organisations ranges between 0.3% in Germany and 2.8% in Austria. Human rights and humanitarian aid organisations attract between 1% (Slovakia) and 6% (Austria) of the respondents. Similarly, environmental organisations as well as animal rights/animal protection groups fare between 1% (Slovakia) and 7% (Austria) (see figure 4).

Figure 4: Membership in "new" political organisations



Source: euyoupart 2004.

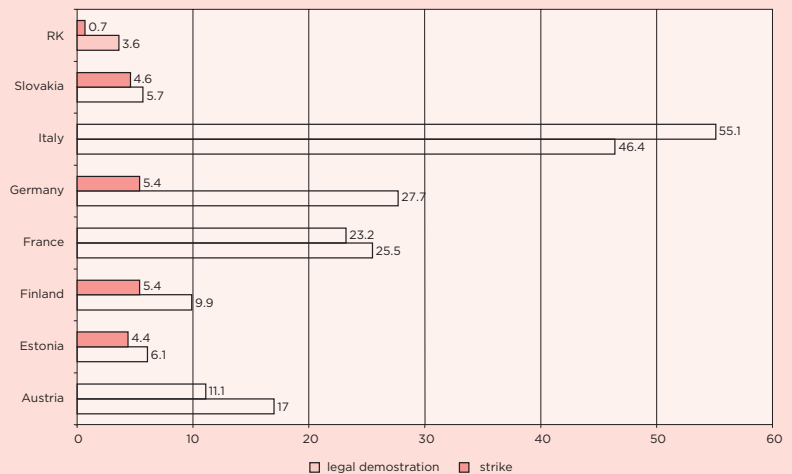
Interestingly, the rates for participation in the organisation's activity and volunteering are not always lower than membership rates. This depends on the country and type of organisation. In Austria, for example, these rates are always lower than the membership rate. By contrast, young people in Finland, Germany, Italy and Slovakia tend to be active rather than just members, especially in peace, human rights and environmental organisations. This finding suggests different organisational structures, with some opening possibilities for getting active spontaneously rather than using members' contributions to have professionals act.

Political communication, action and protest

From the young people's reservations towards traditional forms of participation it is not surprising that spontaneous, single acts of political expression and communication partly achieve higher rates among the young people than continuous involvement in political organisations and social movements. In Austria, Finland, Germany and Italy, for example, around 10% of the respondents have already contacted a politician. In all countries apart from Estonia and the UK, 5 and more percent have already collected signatures or donated money. Young Austrians (11%), Estonians (17%), Finns (16%) and Germans (11%) have contributed to a political internet discussion and around 11% of the respondents in Austria, Finland, France, Germany and Italy have written a letter or an email with a political content.

Participation in legal demonstrations has a very large range across the countries varying between 4% and 46%, as does participation in strikes (1% to 55%). These differences seem to be linked to national political cultures. Italy is the outstanding example for political protest with 46 and 55% of the young respondents taking part in demonstrations and strikes. French young people are also relatively likely to take part in demonstrations and strikes (26% and 23% respectively), while their German peers join in demonstrations (28%) but not strikes (5%). The lowest participation rates are found in Estonia and Slovakia as well as in the UK (see figure 5).

Figure 5: **Legal protest**



Source: euyoupart 2004.

Illegal and violent forms of participation such as writing graffiti on walls, participation in a political event where property is damaged, violent confrontation with the police or with political opponents, occupation of buildings and blocking streets or railways are very rare, indeed. None of these activities reaches more than 5%. The only exception is Italy, where rates are around 5%.

Spontaneous acts of political protest are more in line with young people's principles and their 'yes-but' attitude. They express the young people's political and moral feelings and their sincerity. They do not require any commitment to other persons or to an organisation, while still offering some group experience with like-minded people. They permit engagement for a universal value without selling 'whole ideological packages' (IARD, 2004): *"I mean, it's not a problem for me to go to a march, whereas, say, joining a party can be more complex."*

However, even demonstrations contain the danger that principles are violated. A good cause can be abused by false motivations. To some extent the young people express fears which echo the adults' reservations against demonstrations and, in particular, young people's participation in them (cf. Theiss-Morse/Hibbing, 2005). They question the sincerity of young people's engagement by suspecting that many *"go to the demonstration because they want to miss school and have a good time instead"*. However, the most frequent concern regards the organisation of demonstrations by extreme groups and their attempt to abuse the event for their own propaganda thereby betraying the original ideal or political aim behind the demonstration.

The use of violence is generally seen as unacceptable for the young people, since it is incompatible with their principle of tolerance. However, as Ann Muxel and Cecile Riou observed for France, the approach differs between the higher qualified young people and those with a low level of education. For the disempowered latter group demonstrations may be legitimised as the only way of talking to decision-makers. Students, on the other hand, place more value on dialogue which hints at their potentially easier access to and communication with political authorities (Muxel/Riou, 2004).

There is unanimity among the young people about the ineffectiveness of demonstrations, but also of petitions and referenda. While for some this is a reason not to participate, it does not deter others, since it is more a matter of self-expression, self-determination and loyalty to one's moral convictions: *"It is not a demonstration that will stop the war; it was to show that we didn't agree"*.

Political consumerism

According to Giddens (1994) life politics concerns the defence of life styles. Life politics can be individualistic in its aim, claiming respect from the others for one's ideals and attempting to assert oneself against normative conceptions of the environment. Life politics can also relate to more universal values and issues such as environmental protection or social equality which are expressed in everyday practice: *"What is personal is political ..."*. In a "yes-but" world, a world without ultimate truths, where ideologies and mass mobilisation are suspect and conventional forms of participation ineffective, the desire to "save the

world” boils down to personal activities aimed at living up to one’s own private ideals. At most, attempts are made to influence the immediate social environment.

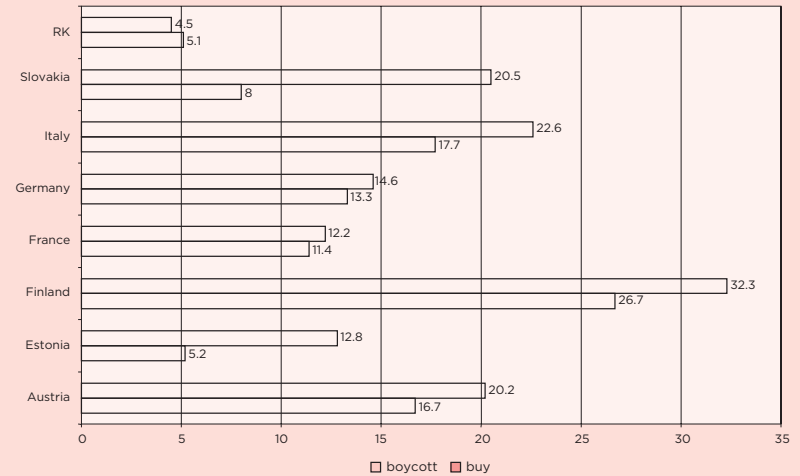
Today many political protesters do not show their disapproval by participating in demonstrations and many a protest is not even aimed at political authorities within the national context but at business corporations or foreign or international political institutions. This protest often takes the form of consumer boycott campaigns, as for example, the boycotts of Shell and Nike products or the boycott of French products by Americans after the French government had opposed the UN Security Council resolution in favour of military force in the Iraq conflict. In boycotts and buycotts citizens use their purchasing power in order to influence institutional or market practices that are considered unfair. Along with other forms of political participation boycotts have increasingly been used as a political tool and examples of the past such as Nestlé show that they can be successful (Stolle/Hooghe/Micheletti, 2005).

While it seems fruitful to shift attention to forms of participation which do not conform to the traditional picture of representative democracy within the limits of a nation-state, there are methodological problems attached to the problem of measurement, in particular the question of how to distinguish between regular boycotters who act for political or ethical reasons and those who do not. A qualitative study of consumers of organically grown food shows that motives and the concepts of politics involved can vary greatly. The motives of these boycotters and buycotters range from egocentrism, exocentrism, reflexive intervention and ambivalence, while the span of attitudes to the political sphere includes indifference, opportunism, fundamentalism and reform orientation (Lorenz, 2006). Thus, the relationship between issues of life style and the issue of the power of international business corporations remains diffuse as does the relationship between social critique and consumption critique (Lamla, 2006).

Despite these difficulties participation in boycotts and buycotts has been added to the list of forms of participation routinely used in survey research (e.g. World Value Survey and European Social Survey) where they serve as a gauge for political consumerism. Within the scope of the EUYOUNG survey it was not possible to go into so much depth concerning the behaviour, motivation and frequency as Stolle, Hooghe and Micheletti (2005) suggest, but the wording of the two questions attempted to capture the political content: “During the last 12 months, how often have you boycotted/bought certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons?”

The data reveal that in most countries, political consumerism is more widespread than demonstrations and strikes. The highest rates for boycotts and buycotts are in Finland with 27% and 32% respectively, followed by Italy (18% and 23%), Austria (17% and 20%), Germany (13% and 15%) and France (11% and 12%). In Estonia and Slovakia the proportion of young people who boycott products is below 10%, while the proportion of those who consciously buy certain products is higher (13% in Estonia and 21% in Slovakia). Young people in the UK are least attracted by these activities (see figure 6).

Figure 6: **political consumerism**



Source: euyoupart 2004.

In the qualitative interviews of EUYOUNGPART boycotts are mentioned by those who are at least politically interested and have a strong social and political conscience: *“I think as an individual I cannot change the world, but for myself. The simplest example is aluminium. For the household I never buy aluminium foil ... or aluminium cans. I certainly do not buy them. Even if it does not affect anything, I have a clear conscience.”*

Conclusion

Most quantitative studies in participation research focus on the impact of age, education, gender, generation, social capital, and values. These factors have all been shown to influence participation, and by pointing to the deficits some (groups of) individuals may have the results are highly policy relevant since they open up possibilities to mitigate these deficits: political knowledge can be increased by improved citizenship education, social capital can be strengthened by supporting youth organisations and youth programmes, political skills can be fostered through more local youth participation projects. While the merit of these efforts shall not be denied here, the mere fact that empirical analyses show only moderate relationships (e.g. Dalton, 2004) suggests that political disaffection and lack of participation have a deeper reason. This hypothesis is strengthened by the qualitative findings presented above. Whatever “deficits” young people may have, their perspectives on the political system and the possibilities of participation reflect the power structure both, between the economy and the nation-state, and between the political system and the citizens.

Whether the young people’s expectations towards the democratic system come close to an empirical or a normative understanding of democracy, they are frustrated in both cases. A considerable proportion of the young people, especially the lower educated, would actually like to see the political elite taking responsibility for the people’s welfare so that the citizens are

safeguarded from the risks and uncertainties of late modern living conditions with their material and socio-psychological insecurities. However, this desire cannot be fulfilled by welfare states that are caught between the demands of the internationalised economy and their own fiscal crisis. They are unable to develop and realise social and political visions and to articulate and integrate social and political cleavages. Thus, deeply rooted lines of conflict remain excluded from the public debate (Böhnisch, 2006) while the ongoing bickering around political trifles which is so prominent in the media does not answer to the needs of the citizens. The perceived gap between citizens and politicians and the inefficiency of political processes leads to political disaffection which has its obvious effects on participation.

Those young people with a strong ethical consciousness or political identity espouse more elements of a normative understanding of democracy with participation as a means of controlling and reducing power relationships and as a vehicle for citizens' self-determination and self-realisation. Their expectations of co-determination are frustrated primarily because of the lack of efficacy of their own activities and efforts, while their hope for a socio-political will to form society according to ethical and social criteria is dashed in the face of a depoliticised public and management politics: *"I find it outrageous when adults say young people are apathetic. The point is, I am not apathetic. Because if the election campaign is only about faces and everybody accepts the framework and nobody dares [to initiate changes, RS] then I am not fed up with politics but fed up with what is happening."* (8)

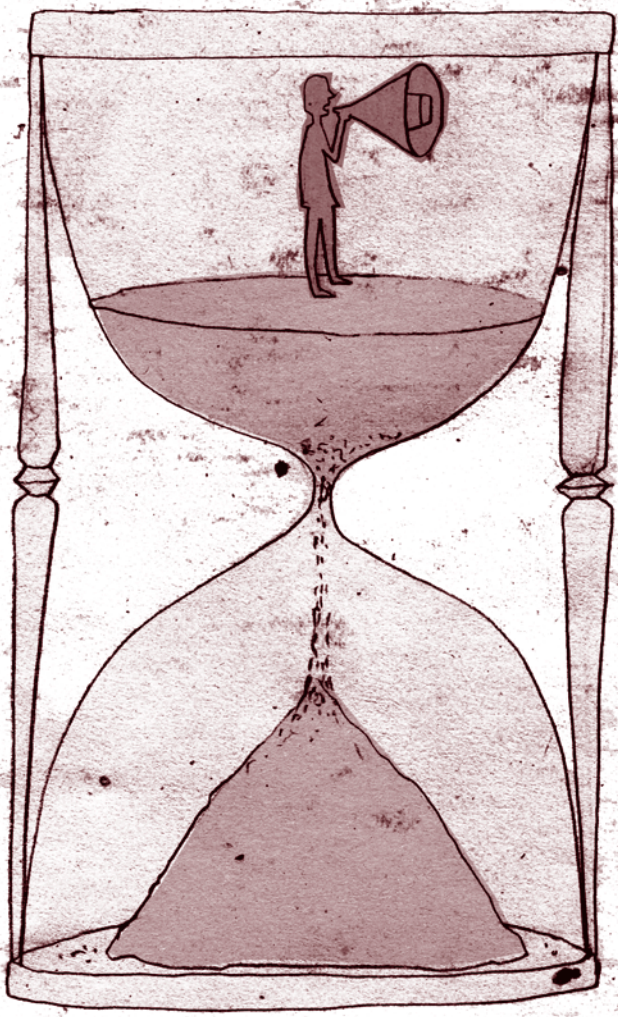
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Young people's trajectories of political participation in Europe: Cohort effects of life-cycle effects?

Different patterns of young people's and adult's political participation depend on two types of causal factors (Bennet, 1997). On the one hand, there is a cohort effect that reflects different contexts in which the process of political socialization of each generation takes place. And therefore, there is a trend that explains stable differences between generations. On the other hand, there is also a life-cycle effect, and depending on this factor political participation patterns change as time passes, which leads to a convergence between generations. However, on an empirical level, it is very complex to distinguish the size of both effects when it comes to explaining differences in participation of young people and adults at a certain moment in time. This article makes a comparison using three waves of the EVS (European Value Survey) in 1980, 1990 and 2000. There are two objectives: First, comparing differences in patterns of participation of young people during the last three decades in Europe (cohort effect). In the second place, study evolution of the trajectories of political participation of young people in the three cohorts throughout time (life-cycle effect). Comparisons of these results will allow us to identify to what extent differences between cohorts are persistent (in which case, we will have to find the explanations in different contexts of political socialization) or, on the contrary, if there is convergence between cohorts (in that case, explaining factors will be found in the processes of transition from youth to adulthood).

Key words: political participation, socialization, young people, cohorts, life cycle.

Introduction

There seems to be the commonly accepted idea that there is a crisis of political participation in Europe, mainly attributed to the lack of participation of the young people (Bennet, 1997; Delli Carpini, 2000; Putnam, 2000). But at the same time, numerous empirical studies point in a different direction, underlining that levels of political participation of young people have not experienced a significant decrease in the last decades, instead there has been a transformation of the patterns of participation (Funes, 2006; Morales, 2005; Stolle & Hooghe, 2005). The key to this issue lies in two implicit problems of this debate. First, what do we understand as political participation? And second, who can we compare young generations to in order to assess levels of political participation? A possible analytical strategy would be comparing levels of participation of today's young people with older cohorts. However, this comparison is only of limited utility, as differences between cohorts at a certain moment in time could be caused by other factors than age, because today's youth differs in multiple variables linked to age from contemporary adults. Another analytical strategy could be comparing levels of participation of today's young people to levels of participation of young people from other periods of time. This alternative has its advantages with regard to other strategies, as we compare individuals of the same age stages. However, there are also problems; because young

people from different historical periods can show different characteristics and the historical contexts are not homogeneous.

This article is based on the idea that individuals follow participation trajectories throughout their life, and thus patterns of participation at a certain moment in time are the product of generational factors (depending on the historical context) and life-cycle factors. Therefore, we try to analyze three different generations of young Europeans in order to compare the evolution of their patterns of political participation throughout time. With this in mind, we use a specific definition of political participation focused on non-conventional political participation, where young people have significantly more presence, as shown by numerous studies (Norris, 2003; Stolle & Hooghe, 2005). This study will allow us to gather important information about the factors that influence decisions regarding political participation of different cohorts throughout time. This approach is essentially comparative and its frameworks are the European countries, although we will especially focus on the Spanish case.

Analyzed data refutes that there is a crisis of youth's political participation in Europe: if we take a closer look at political participation from a general point of view, not only limited to traditional participation this becomes clear. European youth has lowered engagement with regard to traditional forms of political participation or what Inglehart and Catterberg (2002) call participation controlled by the elites. However, young people's political participation is directed towards so-called "non-conventional" forms that will be the central object of analysis in this paper. In the following, this article will be organized as follows: the next section presents a view of the debate about the evolution of political participation in Western societies during the last decades, making special reference to the evolution of youth's political participation. The third section is focused on the description of the analytical methodology used for this work. Then we will analyze the main results of the study. The following section is focused on the analysis of different generations of young Spanish people, where we will examine the specific circumstances of the evolution of youth's political participation in Spain, in the background of the process of transition and consolidation of democracy. And lastly, the article ends with some general conclusions.

Young people and political participation. The thesis of youth's political alienation

As mentioned before, it is a common place to think that young people are alienated from politics and that political participation decreases as generational replacement takes place in Western societies. However, this statement leaves many queries unanswered. The first thing to do is to precisely define the concept of political participation itself. In spite of being one of the central concepts of Sociology and Political Science, diverse authors give pretty different definitions of the concept. In an already classic definition Verba and Nie (1972) stated that political participation refers to "legal" acts by private citizens directed to influence on the election of their governments and the actions these take. This definition seems excessively narrow from today's point of view, as it excludes non-legal participation (for example, protest actions) and passive forms of participation (for example, civil disobedience). Barnes and Kaase (1997) come up with a wider definition of political participation. This definition included volunteering activities of

individual citizens directed to directly or indirectly influence on political decisions at different levels of the system. Barnes and Kaase explicitly included protest actions as political participation in their definition. They called them non-conventional participation.

However, and at the same time as the previous authors, Booth and Seligson (1978) came up with a more extensive definition of political participation that covered all those behaviours that affect or try to influence on the distribution of public goods. Public goods are mainly, although not exclusively, the product of the government's actions. Therefore, and in opposition to Barnes and Kaase, Booth and Seligson do not limit political participation to actions directed to authorities of the political system, and they also get rid of the requisite of political intentionality for participation. Their concept includes all those actions (or inactions) that show an impact on the social organization. For example, Booth and Seligson consider strikes by workers as political participation, while Barnes and Kaase do not. Developing the previous definitions, Conge (1988) suggests the following definition: "political participation is any kind of action (or inaction) of an individual or a group of individuals that intentionally or unintentionally oppose, support, or change any or some characteristics of a government or a community" (Conge, 1988: 246).

The problem of the definition of political participation is not exclusively a problem of terminology, as the concept has historical dimensions that vary from one socio-political context to the next. Typical forms of political participation evolve from one stage to the other and, as a consequence, different generations can use different methods of participation as a way of political expression, also depending on the available alternatives. In this sense, Norris (2003) points out that in today's societies multiple forms of civic engagement emerge and substitute those used by traditional societies. Political participation seems to have evolved and diversified throughout time, in terms of the agents of collective actions, the forms of expression, as well as the addressees of political participation (those they try to influence).

Most studies that show the decline of youth's political participation are focused on traditional forms of participation or what Inglehart (1996) calls "participation controlled by the elites", such as affiliation to political parties. However, this does not necessarily imply a decline of other forms of political participation. Inglehart specifically denies that the erosion of trust in traditional political institutions is part of a wider phenomenon of political alienation. He states that those defending such positions exclusively focus on conventional participation, like for example, the decrease of participation in elections. In Inglehart's opinion, we cannot speak of a decrease of political participation in Western societies during the last decades. In contrast, Western public opinions are now stronger involved in non-conventional participation and directly challenge the elites. According to Inglehart, Western societies have abandoned political party bureaucracies and other forms of political participation that were associated to oligarchic structures, which had a central role in political mass movements during modernity. The process of individualization leads to an erosion of the respect towards authority among the citizenship but, at the same time, creates more support for democracy as form of government. In many cases we can see a contradiction between the dynamism of participation of the society, and the apathy and distrust towards traditional political institutions (Benedicto, 2004).

As pointed out by Dalton (1988; 2000), post-industrial societies are characterized by the availability of political information, which translates into better cognitive and ideological abilities of the citizens. The consequence is a transformation of the forms of political mobilization and, therefore, former mobilization agents (mainly political parties) become less important and start to be substituted by autonomous or non-directed mobilization. This is fundamentally the product of an increase of the levels of education of the population, which makes a higher proportion of citizens capable of developing an independent political opinion without the functional need of resorting to political parties to help them orientate their decisions. The theses by Inglehart and Dalton share some aspects, like highlighting a positive relation between economic development and political participation. Higher levels of development mean abundance of cognitive and economic resources that increase political participation, although said participation is completely autonomous. This makes the distinction between conventional and non-conventional participation less useful in the current context, as non-conventional forms are now very common in most Western countries (Morales, 2005). This is why this paper focuses on "non-conventional" participation, in order to analyze to what extent there is a change of the strategies of participation of European youth.

Van Deth (2000) makes a different interpretation and states that economic development does not lead to a general increase of political participation. According to Van Deth, an increase of the resources simultaneously produces an increase of the available alternatives of action. Today's youth has more cognitive resources available to understand politics than any previous generation, but that does not necessarily mean that they give more importance to politics. These cognitive abilities can be used differently and, therefore, political mobilization can decrease. For Van Deth, this precisely is a sign of complete democratization. As long as there are no serious political conflicts in contemporary societies, people can spend their time with more desirable activities. In fact, Van Deth's argument implies going beyond Inglehart's definition. According to Inglehart, the transition to rich Western societies makes people less worried about material questions and more concerned about political problems (post-materialistic values). Van Deth suggests that there is a "post-political" stage where politics become of no relevance. This does not imply a crisis of democracy, but it is precisely the consequence of the success of democracy for the solution of political problems.

Another important aspect is related to what youth understands as politics. Henn, Weinstein and Wring (2002) argue that the idea of the lack of political participation of young people is rooted in the narrow conception of politics, which affects the general population, as well as the social researchers themselves. Activities that are usually not considered as political participation can have a political meaning and political orientations (Funes, 2006). Bhavnani (1994) highlights that most published studies about youth's political participation contribute to spread a concept of politics that is excessively linked to electoral behaviour. His empirical research shows that youth takes part in numerous types of political activities, in spite of these activities being branded as non-political by researchers and society itself. White et al. (2000) underline the fact that when asked to talk about politics in their own terms (therefore widening

the conception of politics), young people seem to be more interested in politics than reflected by qualitative studies.

On the other hand, data shows that participation of young generations in certain forms of political action is higher than adult's participation. Works by Perry, Moser and Day (1992) highlight that young British people between 18 and 29 years of age participate more than older generations in demonstrations, although this relation is the other way around for other forms of participation. And Caínzos (2006) reaches the same conclusion for the case of young Spanish people. Recently, a comparative study in several Western countries by Norris (2003) also found more presence of young generations in what he calls actions directed towards specific causes, that is, those that interest the youngest cohorts more.

Norris (2003) interprets these changes of young people's political participation through two basic dimensions: the repertoire of available actions and the agencies through which participation happens. With regard to the repertoire of actions, Norris distinguishes between actions directed towards the citizen and actions directed towards specific causes. Actions directed towards the citizen are those in which individuals use instruments of participation of representative democracies in nation-states. Typical examples are electoral participation or collaboration with political parties. They all have in common their objective of influencing the political system from a general point of view. For the last decades these participation activities have still been important, but new types of action directed towards specific causes have appeared. The objectives of these actions are specific issues in the political agenda. A typical example would be protest actions or demonstrations. This is a new form of political participation, more spontaneous, and with more emotional engagement.

An important aspect of these new forms of participation, according to Norris (2003), is that the political object around which mobilization takes place is considerably wider, thus breaking the limits between what is social and what is political; and between public and private. Bang and Sorensen (2001), among others, have called this the "informalization" of politics. New forms of participation are directed towards traditional political actors, such as the government, the parliaments or the political parties, but also towards other actors of the public or private sector, frequently overflowing the limits of state-nations. At the same time, there has been a change of the repertoire of political actions; also the agents have changed, as well as the forms of organization of political participation. Traditional agencies of political participation, such as unions or political parties were part of the Weberian model of bureaucratic organization, with centralized structures and more or less defined limits. On the contrary, new agencies of participation, such as the new social movements, are characterized by fluid and diffuse limits and a more decentralized organization. Norris (2003) also highlights the fact that the addressees and the objectives of participation have changed. Political participation is directed to influence political representatives in the framework of state-nations. However, today's trends towards globalization and decentralization make addressees of political participation more numerous. For example, human rights organizations and anti-globalization movements.

Empirical analyses suggest that this change, in terms of the type of activities, as well as in terms of agencies of participation and the addressees

of the actions, is fundamentally a consequence of new strategies of participation of young generations. We can make a distinction that says that older generations are more represented in forms of participation directed towards the citizen and through traditional agencies, while young generations participate through actions directed towards specific causes and through new social movements. However, there are several problems when it comes to analyze empirical relations between age and political participation. Basically, we can distinguish two types of effect: “generational effects” and “life cycle effects”. But when we also have to compare data from different moments in time, an additional effect, known as “period effect”, can be identified: observed differences can be the consequence of the political context in which the data is collected. Episodic moments of political confrontation can increase participation among all ages or among a certain age group. Each one of these effects logically shows different implications to understand and explain social and political change (Norris, 2003).

The first effect, the “generational effect”, is based on the idea that primary political socialization exerts differential influence on each generation. The generational approach has been known for a long time now in sociology (Funes, 2005). According to Mannheim (1952), experiences of political events are measured by the social structure, and that is why the same event will have different meanings for different generations. Therefore, the “generational effect” is due to shared experiences of a group that is born in a certain moment in time (Mannheim, 1952). Evidences gained since the 1950’s suggest that conditions of the social and political context in which different generations socialize affect patterns of political participation. This is fundamentally a consequence of the great relevance attributed to the process of primary political socialization during childhood and adolescence (the impressionable years, according to Mannheim). Traditional theories about political socialization suggest that basic political attitudes are developed at relatively early ages (mainly in family and school), and these habits and attitudes tend to solidify as time passes, creating persistent differences between generations. In spite of the fact that beliefs acquired during the primary socialization are not unchangeable, different studies about political socialization reveal that attitudes acquired at early ages are relatively stable even after becoming an adult.

Although the differentiating effect of socialization of each political generation is something commonly accepted by the literature about political participation, the main problem is to identify the specific conditions that make some generations participate more than others. Inglehart (1990) thinks that social and political change is the consequence of economic changes. As the level of economic development increases, materialistic values are substituted by post-materialistic values. And according to Inglehart, post-materialistic values are the direct cause for the increase of forms of non-conventional political participation. However, Jackman and Miller (1996), among others, have criticized Inglehart’s approach, calling it economic-cultural determinism and concluding that causal links established by Inglehart are the product of “ad hoc” assumptions and inherent methodological weaknesses. From the point of view of culturalist approaches, other authors also do not think that the trend towards individualistic values in Western societies will have an effect of social atomization, causing a decrease of political participation (Henn, Weinstein & Wring, 2002).

On the other side, Osgerby (1998) points out that the economic crisis of the 70's and 80's branded youth with labour precariousness and economic insecurity. At the same time, family structures and community networks are weaker (Henn, Weinstein & Wring, 2002) and today's young people's life is characterized by a combination of risks and uncertainties with regard to numerous life decisions. The consequence is that transition from youth to adulthood is now a greater problem (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997), longer and individualized (Miles, 2000). Henn, Weinstein and Wring (2002) and Williamson (1997) state that fundamental concerns of today's young people in European societies are related to problems of insecurity in the short term, and the immediacy that characterizes youth's life makes the time available for politics very limited. In this sense, Megias (2005) states that today's youth faces a long period characterized by the lack of definition. The time between childhood and adulthood is now considerably longer and young people are obliged to play conflictive roles as children and adults. Politics, as something characteristic of adults, is left out of the young people's world.

Other authors have focused on some other possible explanations to interpret intergenerational differences in the field of political participation. Goerres (2006) understands shared social attributes by a cohort as the shared probability by the members of a generation of acquiring certain characteristics. Therefore, a political generation would not only be determined by shared political history, but also by social and economic trends. A typical example is education. The probability of reaching higher or lower levels of education depends on the generation the individuals belong to. Or better, depends on structure of opportunities in each historical period. Thus, accepting that there is a correlation between education and political participation, the extension of education during the last decades should lead to an increase of participation of the last young generations (Leighly, 1995).

The explanation of the "life-cycle" is based on the idea that people acquire experience in the field of participation throughout time. An already classic study by Milbrath and Goel (1977) stated that there is a relation between age and political participation: political participation increases with age and reaches a maximum at the adult age, later gradually decreasing with older ages. However, participation in protest actions seems to be essentially something of young people, and after youth these kind of political actions are not common among the adult and old population. As individuals play different social roles, they acquire resources of participation (Steckenrider & Cutler, 1989). Especially important are life transitions, as they are linked to important changes in terms of the individual's social network. For example, aspects like marriage or accessing the labour market have been identified as factors that positively affect political participation. In general, the increase and diversification of social networks, which typically takes places during intermediate maturity, are linked to higher levels of political participation. After that, at older ages there is a trend towards disruption of pre-existing social networks, which would explain the decrease of political participation of these age groups.

Although this approach of transitions between social networks seems to have been dominant regarding the interpretation of the effects of the "life-cycle", it is also important to take into account that social roles linked to the life-cycle are not the same for all individuals (Goerres, 2006). For example, not everyone gets married or finds a job or does this at the same age. In any case, there are regularities in the process of becoming an adult that would

explain differences between age groups. The consequence is that “life-cycle” effects are stable and persistent, more than cohort effects. However, “life-cycle” effects can also change with time, from one generation to the next generation. Demographic changes in Western societies during the last decades (decrease of birth rates, increase of life expectancy...) have had important effects on life styles. Therefore, patterns of political participation during the life cycle can change, which adds an additional difficulty to the analysis.

Methodology

On empirical levels, there is an additional problem when we try to compare the evolution of the forms of political participation, as relevant variables are not always available for all periods of the analysis. This paper analyzes forms of non-conventional political participation, according to the classic classification by Barnes and Kaase (1979). The starting hypothesis is that a “conventionalization” of non-conventional political participation was fundamentally promoted by the political engagement of young generations. The analyzed data are provided by the EVS (European Value Study), a comparative study about values of European people that started in the 1970's and has since then been repeated in different editions. This study is interesting in terms of the comparative dimension, as well as in terms of the temporal range of the variables. In spite of the fact that the dates of recollection are not always the same from one country to the others, there is information available for the beginning of the 1980's, the beginning of the 1990's and for around the year 2000. So, there are three replication studies with a ten-year periodicity for Europe as a whole. Although most authors establish intervals of fifteen years between generations, this is not an essential problem, as our objective is not to identify generational differences in absolute terms, but to study differential patterns of participation between successive cohorts.

The analysis focuses on the following variables: signing petitions, participating in legal demonstrations, strikes, boycotts, or occupying buildings or factories. We have discarded electoral participation, as it is a traditional form of participation where participation rates are notably higher in general terms. At the same time, we have not considered participation in different types of organizations because our approach focuses on specific political actions. Another important aspect refers to how information is coded. The original questionnaire of the survey includes questions regarding participation in the aforementioned political actions, also asking the interviewees if they could do it, or would never do it. The second option (could do it) highlights a certain level of intentionality, but is still “no participation”. Therefore, when we speak of young people's political participation, we will exclusively be referring to those that have really participated, bringing together those who could do it but never did and those who never would do it in the group of non-participants.

With the objective of proving the previously outlined hypothesis we use an aggregated approach on the dataset of all three editions of the EVS. Dependent variables are participation in each one of the non-conventional political actions mentioned before. We will use binary logistic regression to calculate the impact of every explicative variable on the probability of participation in political actions. However, as there are numerous actions to

be analyzed, we will also use a summary measure: total actions by a specific individual. In order to calculate the impact of explicative variables on the number of actions by one individual we will use the Poisson regression. In any case, and in spite of the apparent complexity of these techniques, the interpretation of the results shows apprehensible and intuitive results.

The essential methodological problem in order to study the differences of political participation depending on age is to distinguish between differences due to the life cycle, generational differences, and differences due to period effects (that is, differences depending on the specific context of the data). This methodology is based on the comparison between cohorts and age groups. Analytically, every observation corresponds to one individual belonging to a certain age group and a certain generation at a certain moment in time. How can we measure the impact of each of these variables on participation on the individual level? We introduce three groups of variables. The first group measures the fact that observations belong to one of the waves of the survey (1980, 1990, 2000), with the 1980 edition as the reference category. These variables measure the period effect. For example, if the period effect in 1990 is positive (in statistical terms), this can be interpreted as higher levels of political participation in 1990 than in 1980 for all age groups.

The second group of variables reflects belonging to a specific age group (age groups are defined by five-year intervals), taking the interval from 15 to 20 years as the reference. This group of variables measures the “life-cycle” effect. If the effect of belonging to a certain age group is statistically positive, that means that people belonging to that age group show higher level of political participation than the group of 15 to 20 years of age. By combining these two groups of variables we create the third group of variables (period effect and belonging to a certain age group), representing the multiplicative effect of the age group and the period. In purely statistical terms, this allows us to compare participation of a specific age group to the same age group in the edition of 1980. Therefore, the generational effect is a residual effect obtained through deducting the period effect and the life cycle effect. In different words, the probability that an individual participates in a certain political action depends on the influence of the moment in time (period effect), the effect of belonging to a certain age group (life cycle effect), and the effect of belonging to a certain age group at a specific moment in time (generational effect). Apart from these three groups of variables we include a fourth group that is related to the influence of countries. Although living in one or another country should not have an impact on the effects of age on political participation, differences in participation in different countries are noticeable, and therefore it is important to take into account the potential effect of countries on participation rates.

However, the described methodology does not allow identifying the reasons for observed differences. In other words, the fact that differences in participation between younger generations and older generations are (hypothetically) due to the effect of the life cycle does not mean that we can identify or directly know which are the relevant events within the life cycle that could explain these differences. That is why, in a second stage, we add new explicative variables with the objective of obtaining an explanation of the differences between generations and between different periods of the life cycle. A series of variables that take into account the impact of life

transitions are included as explicative factors, as well as other control variables, with the aim of avoiding deceitful causal relations. Two variables are particularly important: the position in the labour market and the marital status. As a starting hypothesis we hope to find out that political participation increases with access to the labour market and marriage, as typical forms of emancipation in Western societies. We also include education as an explicative variable, as we hope to prove that cognitive political activities are related to the level of education. Also other variables were included that will be mentioned in following sections.

The last question refers to inherent limitations of our analytical approach. First, analysed data does not imply a continuous sample functions. Thus, interviewees in each edition of the survey are not the same ones. Therefore, there is the possibility that differences in participation in different periods are due to different characteristics of these individuals. However, we can say that this is a relatively minor problem, as individuals in different samples have been selected using equivalent criteria, and so they should share similar characteristics from the point of view of the sample. The second objection refers to the importance of the specific moment or situation in time when data was obtained. From a quantitative point of view, it is difficult to specify if the period effect, as defined in this article, measures a generalized context of more or less political activity or may be reflecting the presence of political mobilizations in relation to very specific events. If such events affect an age group more than others it could be possible that the generational effect is polluted by episodic variations of political participation in that age group.

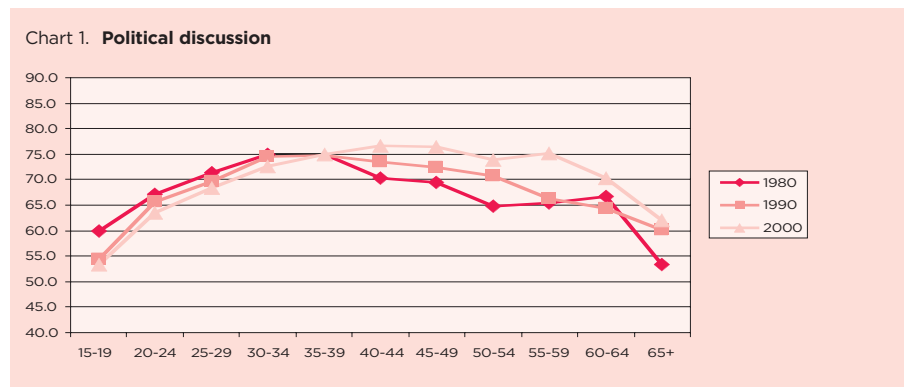
Lastly, the interpretation of the “generational effect” is not necessarily univocal. Although said effect refers to differences between individuals belonging to the same age group at different moments in time (deducting the period effect), the definition of the concept itself also reflects differences between individuals belonging to different age groups at the same moment in time (deducting the life-cycle effect). That is, the generational effect could also be interpreted as a variation of the life-cycle patterns between different moments in time. However, as already mentioned, we can reasonably assume that the social development of the life cycle is more stable than other differences that surface from one generation to the next, in spite of the fact that specific cases will be analyzed where answers are not always clear. To sum it up, and in spite of these methodological limitations (limitations that are, on the other side, inherent to any process of investigation) this approach is still very useful to identify period effects, life-cycle effects and generational effects.

Trajectories of political participation of the European youth

Before we start discussing the issue of political participation we have to pay attention to the level of political engagement. Therefore, we will specifically consider two variables: the level of interest in politics and frequency of political discussion. The variable of interest in politics distinguishes between those interested (very or pretty interested) and those who are not (not at all or little). The variable of frequency of political discussion distinguishes between those who discuss about politics (frequently or sporadically) and those who do not discuss about political

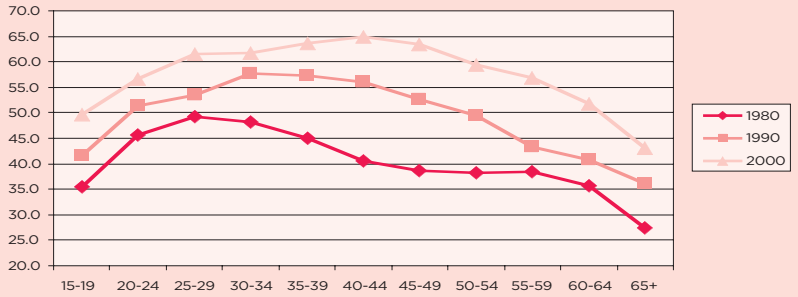
issues (never or almost never). Using the same methodological approach that was developed in the previous section we can reach a series of conclusions with regard to the evolution of political engagement during the last three decades. Results are presented in Table 1. Although we could expect a similar evolution of both variables throughout time, analyses reveal some important differences between interest in politics and frequency of political discussion.

In general terms, there is a negative period effect for the frequency of political discussion, as we can see a negative sign in 1990 and 2000 (with respect to 1980). However, only the last one is significant. That means that there is a trend towards lower levels of frequency of discussion, but the decrease is only significant in the last decade. Although the frequency of political discussion has decreased in general terms, interest in politics shows the opposite pattern. The data for this variable is only available for 1990 and 2000, but the period effect between both decades is positive.



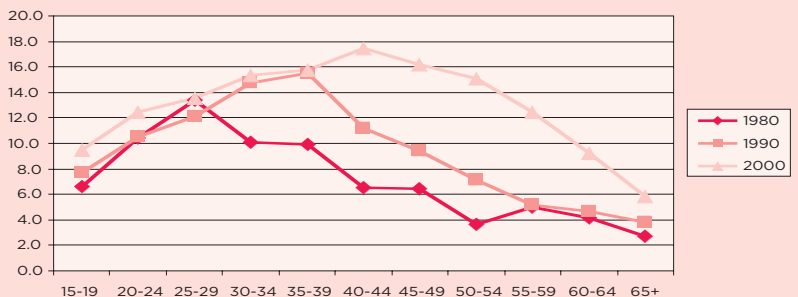
When analyzing the influence of the life cycle on interest in politics and frequency of discussion, the different evolution of both variables tends to disappear. In both cases we can see that the youngest group (young people between 15 and 19 years of age) is the group with the least interest in politics and the group that speaks less about politics. Any other age groups show positive effects of both variables. There is only one exception: people over 65 discuss less about politics than the young people between 15 and 19 years of age. However, this does not mean that the increase of interest in politics is linear with age. The fact that the comparison group is the one of the youngest people (for technical reason) makes differences in participation refer to this group. But the value of estimated coefficients shows that the relation between interest in politics and life cycle is curved, as revealed by previous studies (Milbrath & Goel, 1977). For example, and according to the analyzed data, frequency of political discussion among 20 to 24 year olds is similar to the frequency among 45 to 49 year olds and higher than among all other groups of older ages. In the case of interest in politics, the relation with age does not show such a clear curved form, but presents the same life-cycle effect. Younger generations show lower levels of interest in comparison to mature generations, but interest is even lower among the oldest generations.

Chart 2. **Signing petition**



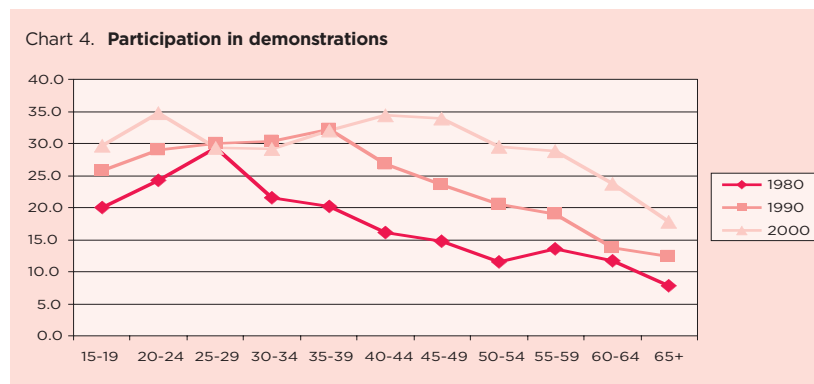
There are also generational effects regarding the frequency of discussion about political issues, and regarding interest in politics, although not as obvious. Those around 40 years of age in 1990 and in 2000 (with some exceptions) tend to discuss more about politics than people of that age in 1980. In most cases the increase is significant. However, curiously, there are no significant differences between the younger groups in 1980, 1990 and 2000. How can we interpret these data? First, it is clear that interest and frequency among young people have not changed substantially during the last decades. There has been a general decrease of political discussion, but not due (at least not exclusively) to the new young generations. Second, generational effects among people over 40 in 1990 and 2000 with regard to 1980 seem arguable. A more plausible interpretation is that the life cycle of political discussion has slightly changed since 1980. While in 1980 the maximum of political discussion was found at early ages, as time passes the maximum is delayed to older ages. With regard to interest in politics, the pattern is even more confusing. The generational effect is also present among older people in 2000, but the trend is not homogeneous, as proven by the presence of positive and negative signs. What seems plausible is that there is an evolution of the life-cycle pattern of interest in politics.

Chart 3. **Participation in boycotts**



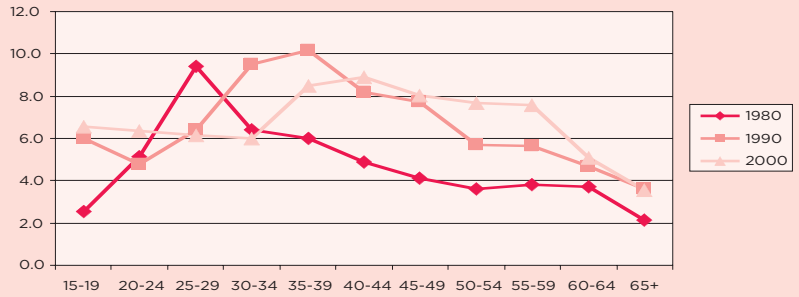
When faced with these data, the first question we have to ask ourselves is to what extent differences regarding interest in politics also turn into different patterns of political participation and, specifically, non-conventional political participation.

In principle, given the correlation between interest and participation, the age groups that show more interest in politics should be the ones that participate more. However, the analysis of the data reveals that there are important differences depending on the type of political action. Also, and in spite of the trend towards a general decrease of the frequency of political discussion, there are common elements to all actions of political participation, as the period effect is positive and significant, although the trend is not as clear in the case of the occupation of buildings and factories. That means that non-conventional political participation increases for the whole of the population between 1980 and 2000, which confirms Inglehart's and Catterberg's thesis (2002). According to them, more than a crisis of political participation, we are facing a change of the strategies of participation, from participation directed by elites to a new type of autonomous participation, even challenging the elites. As we can see, also the average number of non-conventional actions increases significantly during this period.



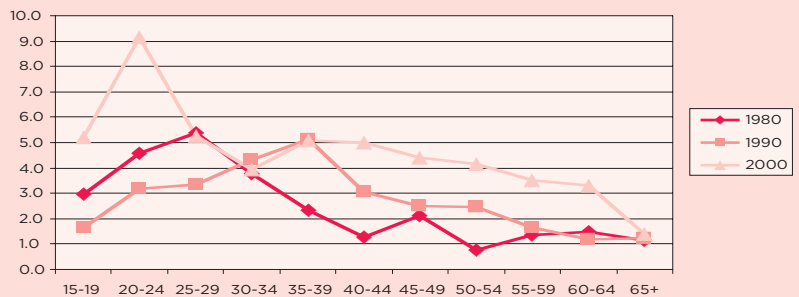
On the other side, all cases show a “life-cycle” effect that creates a clear pattern of participation in non-conventional actions throughout life: more participation in early maturity and less participation in first youth and advanced maturity. In any case, if we compare the life cycle of political participation to the interest in politics we can clearly see that younger generations participate more in non-conventional actions than what shows their level of political discussion, which again makes us think about the definition of what young people consider politics or not. But maximum levels of participation depending on age notably vary from one kind of action to others. Signing petitions is a relatively stable action during the whole life. It is true that those who participate more in this form of action are young people between 20 and 34 years of age, but differences with older age groups are relatively small. But it is also true that young people between 15 and 19 years of age are the ones that participate less in this type of action. It is also interesting that participation in strikes grows from the youngest group until the group between 45 and 49 years of age, but from that age on, participation is similar to the participation of young people between 15 and 19 years of age. Logically, higher levels of participation in this type of activity are a consequence of being in the labour market, although the most active group is the one between 25 and 29 years of age.

Chart 5. **Participation in strikes**



On the contrary, participation in boycotts, demonstrations, and the occupation of buildings or factories (although this last political action is less frequent) are actions typically carried out by young people. Young people between 20 and 30 years of age are the ones that participate more in these types of actions, which does not include people between 15 and 19. But participation does not decrease drastically among people over 30. This type of “non-conventional” actions has very short life cycles, where participation reaches a maximum at early ages. And from then on participation decreases drastically among mature and older generations. Therefore, these are not conventional actions with typical life cycles, where participation reaches the maximum among mature generations to decrease among the oldest generations, but forms of participation that are typical for young people. They were in the 70’s and 80’s, but still are today. This also reflects in the number of “non-conventional” actions of specific individuals. Participation is higher between 15 and 39 years of age, and the most active group is the one of 25 to 29 year olds. Thus, highest levels of “non-conventional” political participation are reached at the time of what could be called the limits of youth, at the beginning of the transition to adulthood.

Chart 6. **Occupation of buildings or factories**



But well, we could also ask ourselves if young people’s participation increases or decreases with time. The analysis of estimated coefficients shows that generational differences are not consistent in any of the cases. Non-conventional participation rates have not changed substantially as a

consequence of generational replacement. There is only one exception, which is “going to demonstrations”. As well as in the analysis by Caínzos (2006) we are able to see that young people go to demonstrations more than any other age group. But also the group of people between 40 and 54 years of age tend to increase their participation in demonstrations between 1980 and 2000. In this case, can we speak of generational effects? It does not seem probable. Plausible is, as was the case with interest in politics, that the life cycle of participation in this type of events is being prolonged. Those who started going to demonstrations in the 70’s and 80’s still go today. Statistically, the number of political actions carried out, as going to demonstrations is the most common non-conventional action, proves this pattern.

Another important issue to be analyzed are the differences between countries. Although the perspective of this work is very general, we should highlight that the European situation regarding young people’s participation is far from being homogeneous. In the first place, young people’s interest in politics is higher in northern and central European countries. In countries like Norway or Germany the proportion of young people that are interested in politics is around 80%. On the contrary, interest is notably lower in southern European countries. In countries like Spain and France the proportion of young people of the same age that are interested in politics not even exceeds 50%.

This corresponds to the common pattern of differences for the whole population, and therefore lower levels of interest in politics in southern European countries are not a big surprise. This pattern repeats when analyzing forms of political participation, with clearly higher levels of participation in northern European countries. In spite of these significant differences when carrying out a comparative analysis, these general patterns correspond to what happens in specific countries with regard to the primacy of the life-cycle effect over the generational effect. Data of different analyzed countries show that for Europe as a whole we cannot, in any case, refer to a decrease of non-conventional political participation between the young generations in 1980 and today. It’s even the opposite; there is an increase of participation in this type of actions by the population in general, which also affects young people.

Once proven that life-cycle effects are the main explanation of changes in the levels of political participation throughout life, I will now start to discuss specific events of the life cycle that are somehow related to the levels of participation. The models discussed up until now will be slightly more complicated as we will add another group of variables with the aim of capturing the impact of transitions from youth to adulthood. The results of the estimation can be seen in Table 2. Age is also a continuous variable due to technical reasons (in order to avoid an excessive number of variables), but we add an additional term: square age, precisely to capture the curved relation between age and political participation. In any case, interpretation of the effects has the same intuitive meaning.

A first reading of the results shows that life transitions have an impact on interest in politics and non-conventional political participation, although this impact is not always as awaited. The first of these transitions is the access to the labour market. Taking the group of those who work full-time as a reference, retired workers, housewives and unemployed people are less

interested in politics and discuss less about public issues. On the contrary, students are the most interested group in politics, even discounting the effects of the variable age, which is also included in the model. Correlatively, a variable that does positively affect interest in politics is education. The more years someone spends in the education system, the more he/she is interested in politics and political discussions. However, insertion into the labour market is not a variable that necessarily increases the interest in political issues, at least not when compared to the situation of students. But any other situation (retirement, unemployment...) that leaves people outside the labour market does weaken interest in politics. In this sense, Morán and Benedicto (2003; 2007) highlight the difficulty of becoming citizens experienced by today's young people in Europe. This is fundamentally due to the obstacles to reach personal autonomy through the access to the labour market, which was the usual emancipation trajectory in Western societies. The consequence is a coexistence of economic family dependence and forms of social and cultural autonomy in the field of life-styles. Therefore, work is no longer the central aspect for the development of youth's citizenship.

Another important life transition for young people is marriage or the creation of an independent family. Data reflect, however, that the effect of this variable is very relative. We cannot say that singles show less interest in politics than those married or having a couple-relationship, although it is true that widowers, divorcees and separated people show less interest in politics and discuss less about political issues than those married or with a stable relationship. Therefore, it is not possible to say that the process of emancipation, through the creation of an own family, is a decisive factor to increase interest in political issues. However, leading an autonomous life is an important factor. Those living with their parents are less interested in politics and discuss less about it.

In the field of participation, causal relations follow a similar pattern as political interest. Although effects can vary from one action to the other, in general terms we can say that the situation in the labour market is a relevant variable for political participation. Especially housewives (and sometimes also retired people) show significantly lower rates of participation than those who work full-time. However, the main difference appears in relation to students, who stand out in all cases as the segment of population with the highest levels of participation. Autonomy and independence are factors that favour all types of political participation. Those living in their parent's home participate less in all kind of non-conventional political activities. On the other side, marital status is again an ambiguous variable. Even more, according to the data, singles participate in significantly more activities than married people. The conclusion of this situation is that transitions to adulthood not only favour non-conventional participation, but can also weaken participation. Being a student, a typical condition of young people, seems to be the most constant (and positive) factor for the different forms of participation, although it is true that personal autonomy also favours participation.

The evolution of political participation of the Spanish youth throughout time

As already mentioned, beyond similarities in the patterns of young people's political participation in Europe, there are also notable differences in terms

of the levels of participation in the different countries. The Spanish case is especially striking regarding the analysis of differences between recent generations and political participation. The first analyzed generation to reach political maturity in 1980 is a generation that experienced childhood and adolescence under a dictatorship and lived through a process of political transition to democracy. The second generation was born at the end of the Franco regime and lived their childhood experiences during the process of political transition, although it is possible that these events had limited impact on this generation. Lastly, the generation of young people in the year 2000 is a generation that was already born in democracy and, therefore, has no direct memories of the dictatorship. The comparison between these three cohorts allows us to understand how patterns of political participation have evolved from a non-democratic context to a full democracy. In this sense, there are numerous studies that try to study to what extent the evolution of the patterns of political participation in Spain can be explained through more or less general factors typical of the Western context or through idiosyncratic reasons (Ferrer, Medina y Torcal, 2006; Montero y Torcal, 1998; Morales, 2005; Torcal y Montero, 1999). In this section we will try to clarify this issue with regard to the specific case of “non-conventional” participation.

As a starting point, we can refer to two alternative hypotheses. On the one side, it is possible to think that political participation is lower among the generation of the political transition, as their primary political socialization happened in a context where the main forms of political participation were not allowed. For this reason, participation should be higher among later generations, as they were socialized in an open political context. Morales (2005) also underlines that participation could increase due to the development of democracy by promoting learning and internalization of the new forms of political participation. However, the opposite interpretation is also plausible. Young people could participate more in non-conventional terms, as conventional participation was not possible during the dictatorship. From this point of view, youth’s participation should decrease among later generations, as for the new generations other forms of participation are available through institutionalized instruments.

The methodology used to prove one or the other hypothesis is the same as the one we explained in section three, with the difference that the data exclusively refers to the Spanish case. The results are presented in Table 3. The first conclusion of the analysis of the data is that the evolution of interest in politics among young Spanish people since the 1970’s is similar to the evolution in Europe as a whole. In Spain there has also been a decrease of the frequency of political discussion, but not of interest in politics. Also differences depending on age with regard to interest and discussion can fundamentally be explained through the life-cycle effect. Interest increases during youth and reaches a maximum at maturity, and starts to fall again among older people.

The comparison between patterns of evolution of political participation of the Spanish youth is slightly different to the evolution of Europe as a whole. In opposition to what happened in Europe, where “non-conventional” participation experienced increases during the last three decades, in Spain there are no such signs of growth: the period effect is not significant in most of the actions. But Spanish people do share similar patterns with Europeans with regard to the importance of the life cycle to explain different levels of

participation depending on age. Non-conventional participation is higher during youth, and specifically towards the end of youth. From then on, this type of participation tends to decrease. However, differences between age groups tend to be small in the Spanish case and not always significant. This could be a consequence of smaller samples for the Spanish case. Even more confusing is the impact of generational replacement. According to the results there are no remarkable generational differences as most effects linked to the generations are not significant.

With regard to the variables of life trajectories that influence on political participation we can also say that their effects are not significant in the case of Spain, as can be seen in Table 4. Education is a variable with a positive effect on interest, as well as on participation. However, the situation in the labour market and the marital status has a weak impact on participation. In some cases, being a student significantly affects the probability of participation, but not all forms of participation are affected. The marital status also does not affect participation, although living in the parent's home discourages non-conventional participation.

To sum it up, we can say that the patterns of the evolution of young people's participation in Spain follow the evolution of the rest of European countries, up to a certain point. The most important difference is that in Spain there has not been a general increase of non-conventional political participation, even though levels of participation are already low if compared to Europe. During the political transition there was an increase of the interest in politics, but since then this interest has not grown much and has not become a boost for political participation among new generations of young people after the transition. On the other side, data reveal that generational differences are relatively small, as shown by previous studies (Ferrer, 2006; Morales, 2005). This is especially striking, as the country has undergone a process of social, economic and political change in these three decades.

But the data suggest that there have been pretty constant levels of non-conventional political participation in Spain, which cannot lead us to think of a general homogeneity between generations. In spite of the fact that the "number" of non-conventional actions has not increased throughout this period of time, it seems logical to think that the meaning given to participation by the actors themselves is different. Morales (2005) states that there are two "civic generations": one of the 1960's and one of 1970's. The first one focuses on conventional participation, the second one on non-conventional participation. In any case, the most plausible conclusion is that the evolution of patterns of participation among young people in Spain is the same than in Europe and in Western societies in general. In a certain way, this could be a reflection of social, economic and political convergence in the country during the last three decades. Even so, differences between countries in the level of participation tend to be constant, with Spain, and other southern European countries, showing lower levels of participation.

Conclusions

The objective of this article was to analyze variations of participation rates of young Europeans during the last three decades, trying to differentiate between changes due to generational replacement and changes due to the life cycle. The first conclusion is that we cannot speak of a decline of young people's political participation, at least not in terms of non-conventional

participation. On the contrary, the data show trends towards increase of non-conventional participation in Europe, in spite of the fact that interest in politics and frequency of political discussions has decreased. Some authors refer to a process of informalization of the patterns of political participation. There is a change from participation through traditional institutions, such as political parties, to a more flexible and individualized political engagement (Band y Sorensen, 2001; Stolle y Hooghe, 2005, Topf, 1995).

The second main conclusion of this analysis is that differences in participation depending on age groups are fundamentally a consequence of the life-cycle effect, in comparison to the generational effect. Participation increases throughout youth until maturity and then starts to decrease again. However, we have also proven that the cycle of non-conventional participation is pretty short. Highest levels of participation are reached at relatively young ages (towards the end of youth), and then start falling. At the same time, the data seem to indicate that the life cycle of participation slightly evolves throughout time. While non-conventional participation was almost exclusively limited to young people in the 1970s, those young generations (now adults) tend to extend the period of political participation. However, we were not able to find a clear pattern that allows us to explain the effects of the life cycle through young people's life-transitions. Being a student or leading an independent life seem to be factors that positively affect participation. On the other side, marital status has no defined effects on participation and, in some cases being married or having a stable relationship can even be a negative factor in relation to political participation.

With regard to the specific case of Spain, in general terms we can say that the patterns of evolution of young people's participation are similar to the ones described for Europe as a whole. Participation rates in Spain are considerably under the European average, as it is the case for other southern European countries. On the other hand, in Spain there is not a clear trend towards an increase of non-conventional participation and intergenerational differences are relatively small, in spite of the process of social and political change undergone by Spain. In any case, the factors that explain patterns of participation of young Spanish people do not seem very different when compared to the rest of Europe.

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Table 1. Life-cycle effects and cohort effects on political interest and participation in Europe

	Political discussion	Interest in politics	Signing petitions	Boycotts	Demonstrations	Strikes	Occupation of buildings	Total
15-19 years of age								
20-24 years of age	0.334***	0.37***	0.509***	0.534***	0.253**	0.716**	0.498*	0.322***
25-29 years of age	0.541***	0.438***	0.641***	0.782***	0.499***	1.359***	0.617**	0.476***
30-34 years of age	0.64***	0.53***	0.533***	0.423**	0.084	0.949***	0.347	0.3***
35-39 years of age	0.671***	0.607***	0.439***	0.389*	-0.002	0.835***	-0.17	0.228***
40-44 years of age	0.414***	0.553***	0.242*	-0.036	-0.286*	0.707**	-0.746*	0.042
45-49 years of age	0.395***	0.53***	0.189	-0.006	-0.424***	0.531*	-0.307	-0.01
50-54 years of age	0.203*	0.863***	0.178	-0.633**	-0.69***	0.321	-1.328**	-0.138*
55-59 years of age	0.25**	0.347***	0.134	-0.316	-0.503***	0.369	-0.808*	-0.067
60-64 years of age	0.188	0.797***	-0.027	-0.511*	-0.691***	0.426	-0.588	-0.17**
Over 65 years of age	-0.293***	0.655***	-0.43***	-0.937***	-1.094***	-0.263	-0.911**	-0.507***
1980								
1990	-0.12		0.518***	0.353	0.337**	1.078***	-0.511	0.306***
2000	-0.342***	0.302**	0.753***	0.584***	0.596***	1.13***	0.687**	0.509***
20-24 years of age - 1990	0.069		-0.167	-0.226	-0.077	-0.982***	0.197	-0.155*
20-24 years of age - 2000	0.115	-0.16	-0.135	-0.191	-0.104	-0.8**	-0.352	-0.174**
25-29 years of age - 1990	0.02		-0.248*	-0.321	-0.262*	-1.294***	0.152	-0.249***
25-29 years of age - 2000	0.125	-0.09	-0.127	-0.408*	-0.57***	-1.456***	-0.92**	-0.359***
30-34 years of age - 1990	0.133		0.034	0.246	0.212	-0.41	0.758*	0.035
30-34 years of age - 2000	0.237	-0.047	-0.038	0.088	-0.167	-1.053***	-0.896**	-0.184**
35-39 years of age - 1990	0.115		0.109	0.338	0.386**	-0.203	1.455***	0.127*
35-39 years of age - 2000	0.35**	0.067	0.13	0.15	0.071	-0.551	-0.031	-0.037
40-44 years of age - 1990	0.303*		0.214	0.368	0.396**	-0.366	1.465***	0.17*
40-44 years of age - 2000	0.659***	0.199	0.377**	0.699**	0.502***	-0.349	0.6	0.2**
45-49 years of age - 1990	0.293*		0.119	0.155	0.355*	-0.221	0.847*	0.13
45-49 years of age - 2000	0.683***	0.3*	0.379**	0.585*	0.609***	-0.281	-0.037	0.219**
50-54 years of age - 1990	0.367**		-0.013	0.504	0.413*	-0.332	1.838***	0.142
50-54 years of age - 2000	0.754***	-0.403***	0.204	1.097***	0.673***	-0.141	0.98*	0.266***
55-59 years of age - 1990	0.183		-0.207	-0.134	0.127	-0.426	0.841	-0.066
55-59 years of age - 2000	0.743***	0.585***	0.15	0.587*	0.468**	-0.118	0.403	0.156*
60-64 years of age - 1990	0.121		-0.19	-0.057	-0.053	-0.643	0.317	-0.1
60-64 years of age - 2000	0.622***	-0.494***	0.099	0.46	0.335*	-0.601	0.044	0.081
Over 65 years of age - 1990	0.366***		-0.051	0.142	0.252	-0.253	0.741	0.081
Over 65 years of age - 2000	0.717***	-0.427***	0.14	0.392	0.38*	-0.335	-0.46	0.157*
Constant	0.545***	-0.276**	-0.784***	-3.219***	-2.265***	-5.225***	-5.089***	-0.792***

Source: EVS (1980, 1990, 2000). Own elaboration.
Note: Values refer to estimated logit coefficients. Asterisks refer to the respective level of signification:
*** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05. Besides the variables included in the table, we also include the effect of countries in order to control their impact on participation.

Table 2. **Factors that have an impact on political participation in Europe**

	Political discussion	Interest in politics	Signing petitions	Boycotts	Demonstrations	Strikes	Occupation of buildings	Total
Age	0.076***	0.066***	0.044***	0.158***	0.075***	0.144***	0.142**	0.053***
Age2	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.002***	-0.001***	-0.002***	-0.002***	-0.001***
1980								
1990	-0.455	0.333*	0.164	1.327**	0.341	0.893	-0.455	0.294*
2000	-1.01***		0.138	1.086*	0.135	1.064*	1.056	0.343**
Age - 1990	0.006		0.01	-0.081**	-0.013	-0.039	0.001	-0.01
Age - 2000	0.024	0.002	0.021	-0.069*	-0.006	-0.055	-0.075	-0.011
Age2 - 1990	0		0	0.001**	0	0	0	0
Age2 - 2000	0	0	0	0.001**	0	0.001	0.001	0**
Males								
Females	-0.457***	-0.564***	-0.031	-0.271***	-0.263***	-0.56***	-0.459***	-0.138***
Living with parents								
Independent life	-0.189***	-0.147***	-0.256***	-0.443***	-0.292***	-0.143*	-0.362***	-0.168***
Marriage								
Widowers, separated, divorcees	-0.246***	-0.154***	0.024	0.134*	-0.005	0.197**	0.053	0.02
Singles	-0.016	0.023	0.046	0.303***	0.216***	0.128*	0.375***	0.095***
Years in education	0.111***	0.094***	0.078***	0.063***	0.068***	0.038***	0.043***	0.034***
Full-time job								
Part-time job	0.011	-0.051	0.058	0.086	0.052	-0.179*	0.073	0.025
Self-employed	0.075	0.053	-0.029	-0.037	-0.261***	-0.603***	-0.241*	-0.1***
Retired	-0.199***	-0.115**	-0.075	-0.013	-0.063	-0.063	0.369**	-0.009
Housewife	-0.432***	-0.336***	-0.472***	-0.46***	-0.829***	-0.658***	-0.821***	-0.403***
Student	0.167***	0.265***	0.198***	0.337***	0.296***	-0.08	0.48***	0.167***
Unemployed	-0.288***	-0.365***	-0.181***	0.026	-0.019	0.106	0.384***	-0.032
Others	-0.251**	-0.252**	-0.228**	-0.177	-0.238**	-0.161	0.306	-0.121**
Constant	-1.894***	-2.633***	-2.294***	-6.049***	-4.236***	-7.16***	-7.494***	-1.811***

Source: EVS (1980, 1990, 2000). Own elaboration.
 Note: Values refer to estimated logit coefficients. Asterisks refer to the respective level of signification: *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05. Besides the variables included in the table, we also include the effect of countries in order to control their impact on participation

Table 3. Life-cycle effects and cohort effects on political interest and participation in Spain

	Political discussion	Interest in politics	Signing petitions	Boycotts	Demonstrations	Strikes	Occupation of buildings	Total
15-19 years of age								
20-24 years of age	0.599*	1.006**	0.458	1.064*	0.209	0.37	0.945	0.374**
25-29 years of age	0.86***	0.594***	1.045***	1.722***	0.668**	0.793	1.23	0.728***
30-34 years of age	0.453	0.754***	0.304	0.83	-0.425	0.003	0.913	0.088
35-39 years of age	0.564*	0.65***	0.094	0.785	-0.515	-0.225	0.37	-0.026
40-44 years of age	0.192	1.435***	-0.016	0.714	-0.597*	-0.063	-0.499	-0.164
45-49 years of age	0.274	0.921**	0.288	0.761	-0.471	-0.194	0.147	-0.063
50-54 years of age	-0.34	0.158	0.212	0.534	-1.054***	-0.37	-0.535	-0.298
55-59 years of age	-0.209	1.148***	0.227	0.99	-0.405	-0.565	-0.347	-0.081
60-64 years of age	-0.149	-0.148	-0.011	0.256	-0.781*	-0.614	-0.141	-0.283
Over 65 years of age	-0.857***	-0.276	-0.775*	-0.153	-1.908***	-1.534**	0.048	-1.076***
1980								
1990	-0.938***		-0.235	-0.117	-0.174	0.048	-0.365	-0.172
2000	-1.052***	0.466	0.199	-0.099	-0.053	-0.03	-0.455	0.086
20-24 years of age - 1990	-0.261		0.051	-0.65	0.052	-0.718	0.166	-0.094
20-24 years of age - 2000	-0.08	-0.719	0.069	-0.409	0.038	0.276	-0.34	-0.075
25-29 years of age - 1990	-0.182		-0.21	-0.867	-0.388	-0.901	-0.325	-0.29
25-29 years of age - 2000	-0.093	0.248	-0.551	-1.548	-0.535	-0.363	-0.117	-0.537**
30-34 years of age - 1990	0.408		0.593	0.154	0.738*	0.53	0.291	0.46*
30-34 years of age - 2000	0.361	0.164	0.257	0.013	0.629	0.356	-0.087	0.177
35-39 years of age - 1990	0.14		0.663	0.471	0.814*	0.795	1.166	0.556**
35-39 years of age - 2000	0.13	0.434	0.475	0.433	0.755	0.677	0.339	0.369
40-44 years of age - 1990	0.212		0.292	-0.403	0.276	-0.107	1.533	0.185
40-44 years of age - 2000	0.838*	-1.017**	0.615	0.506	0.698	0.741	2.127	0.507*
45-49 years of age - 1990	0.174		-0.082	-0.187	0.108	0.015	-0.065	0.014
45-49 years of age - 2000	0.545	-0.606	0.006	-0.046	0.357	0.487	0.613	0.137
50-54 years of age - 1990	0.345		-0.523	-0.947	0.138	-0.92	0.671	-0.269
50-54 years of age - 2000	0.982**	0.864*	-0.478	-0.676	0.415	-0.519	-0.145	-0.118
55-59 years of age - 1990	0.106		-0.09	-1.206	-0.591	-0.123	0.244	-0.325
55-59 years of age - 2000	0.845*	-1.148**	-0.111	-0.894	0.126	0.627	1.322	0.003
60-64 years of age - 1990	-0.027		-0.639	-0.959	-0.338	-2.346*		-0.692**
60-64 years of age - 2000	0.308	0.899*	0.047	-0.35	0.238	0.062	1.266	0.011
Over 65 years of age - 1990								
	0.405		-0.072	-0.683	0.416	0.62	0.23	0.081
Over 65 years of age - 2000								
	0.627	0.628	0.202	-0.796	0.456	0.343	0.067	0.159
Constant	0.771***	-1.806***	-1.386***	-3.146***	-0.766***	-2.495***	-3.902***	-0.551***

Source: EVS (1980, 1990, 2000). Own elaboration.
 Note: Values refer to estimated logit coefficients. Asterisks refer to the respective level of signification:
 *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.

Table 4. **Factors that have an impact on political participation in Spain**

	Political discussion	Interest in politics	Signing petitions	Boycotts	Demonstrations	Strikes	Occupation of buildings	Total
Age	0.084	0.075***	0.21***	0.431***	0.184***	0.282**	1.198**	0.197***
Age2	-0.001*	-0.001***	-0.003***	-0.006***	-0.003***	-0.004**	-0.02**	-0.003***
1980								
1990	-1.13		1.689	3.605*	1.267	2.639	14.428**	1.51**
2000	-1.527	0.095	2.036*	3.739*	1.016	3.478*	13.923*	1.824***
Age - 1990	-0.018		-0.126*	-0.287**	-0.108	-0.226*	-1.088**	-0.126***
Age - 2000	-0.001	0.075***	-0.137*	-0.295**	-0.096	-0.249*	-1.085**	-0.138***
Age2 - 1990	0.001		0.002*	0.004**	0.002	0.003*	0.018**	0.002***
Age2 - 2000	0	0	0.002*	0.004**	0.002	0.003*	0.019**	0.002***
Males								
Females	-0.493***	-0.333***	-0.177*	-1.016***	-0.234**	-0.579***	-0.622***	-0.275***
Living with parents								
Independent life	-0.178	-0.287*	-0.268*	-0.386*	-0.323**	-0.407*	-0.76**	-0.256***
Marriage								
Widowers, separated, divorcees	-0.287**	-0.16	0.163	0.525*	0.101	0.444*	-0.207	0.141
Singles	-0.199	0.053	0.362**	0.226	0.251*	0.04	0.003	0.146*
Years in education	0.082***	0.075***	0.086***	0.081***	0.074***	0.066***	0.056***	0.046***
Full-time job								
Part-time job	0.219	-0.201	0.015	0.409	0.162	0.142	-0.092	0.056
Self-employed	0.03	-0.126	-0.092	0.145	-0.251*	-0.119	-0.324	-0.128*
Retired	-0.142	-0.244	-0.226	0.382	0.11	-0.089	0.586	-0.011
Housewife	-0.436***	-0.559***	-0.543***	-0.03	-0.631***	-0.727**	-1.387**	-0.564***
Student	-0.035	0.233	0.122	0.287	0.186	-0.122	0.637*	0.156**
Unemployed	-0.163	-0.375**	-0.037	0.215	0.174	0.338	0.773**	0.095
Others	-0.942**	-0.688	-0.411	0.409	-0.527	0	0	-0.571
Constant	-0.747	-3.549***	-5.827***	-10.07***	-4.543***	-6.924***	-20.2***	-3.849***

Source: EVS (1980, 1990, 2000). Own elaboration.
 Note: Values refer to estimated logit coefficients. Asterisks refer to the respective level of signification:
 *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.



Making a Difference? Political Participation of Young People in the UK

This paper discusses some more recent studies about young people's political participation in Britain, considering the reasons why there seems to be little interest in formal politics –much less than in many other European countries. The focus on politics in general is then evaluated in relation to a potentially fuller concept of political participation and citizenship. The chapter engages with discussions which critique the narrow definition of 'the political' which is seen to ignore young people's own social experiences and definitions of civil engagement. Research on young people's own understanding of citizenship and their widespread experience of exclusion from public decision-making is discussed in the context of social inequality, child poverty and levels of deprivation in contemporary Britain, where young people are all too often seen as objects of political intervention, instead of citizens in their own right.

Key words: Political participation, United Kingdom, qualitative research, social exclusion, social experiences of young people.

Introduction

In mainstream media discourses in Britain today, children and young people are often depicted as a highly problematic and socially disruptive group. There is a widespread moral panic about the young who appear in headlines mainly in the context of violent street crime, binge-drinking, drug-taking, teenage pregnancy and homelessness. Unease about young people in the UK and their relationship to the older generation is also reflected in a report published by the left-leaning think tank, the Institute for Public Policy Research. The IPPR's director, Nick Pearce, is quoted in the following way: '[Young people] are not learning how to behave –how to get on in life'. According to Pearce, there is an 'increasing disconnect' between adults and children in Britain, as the young are mainly socialized in their own peer groups, without positive interaction between the generations (BBC Online, 2006).

More recently, the UNICEF Report, 'Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries' (UNICEF 2007) has sparked off widespread debate in the media, as the report's findings seem to point to serious failure of past public policies:

The UK finished in the bottom third of 21 industrialised countries in five out of six categories –material well-being; health and safety; educational well-being; relationships; behaviour and risks; and subjective well-being– ending up overall last, after the United States. The Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark and Finland topped the standings. (Knight, 2007).

At the time of writing, this report seems to have shocked the Labour government under Gordon Brown into activity to devise plans intended to lead to 'fitter, happier and better educated' young people (Curtis, 2007). The concerns about British young people's relative lack of well-being on the one side, and their perceived disruptive behaviour on the other have also led to questions as to why this generation seems to be little engaged with politics or in how far they are prepared to play an active role as citizens (Henn, 2002; Henn and Weinstein, 2004; Kimberlee, 2002; O'Toole, Lister, Marsh, Jones, McDonagh, 2003; White, Bruce and Ritchie, 2000). The interest of young people in politics seems to be very low today, indeed, opinion polls suggest that in Britain, 'the term and word "politics" has an extremely off-putting effect for young people' (Make Space Youth Review, 2007: 92). Not surprisingly, the political class in Britain is seriously worried about the very low turn-out of young people in elections and their general low interest in conventional politics which is feared to undermine the legitimacy of the political system itself. As a study of young people's political participation says:

The government is ... concerned. In 1997 it commissioned the Crick Report, *Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools*, which recommended that citizenship education should be compulsory for secondary school pupils, in order to tackle problems of declining political and civic participation among young people' (O'Toole et al., 2003: 45).

Since then, the turn-out of young people in elections has further declined, while 'media speculation and academic debate have been increasingly exercised over the alienation of young people from British political life' (White et al., 2000:1).

This paper will look at a number of recent studies to consider the political participation of young people in the UK, how they define politics themselves, what the reasons are for their disengagement with formal politics and in how far their distrust of politicians and parties, but also their attitudes towards wider political issues may be seen as a form of civil commitment. It will consider further whether social inequality experienced by large numbers of young people and their feelings of public powerlessness and marginalisation are responsible for the perceived political alienation of the young.

Young People and Politics in the UK – A Special Case?

In international comparison, participation in elections, whether at national, local or European level, is relatively low in all age groups. According to the Electoral Commission, there is clear evidence that turn-out in elections in the UK is declining among the population as a whole. Thus for instance in the 2001 General Election, the numbers of abstainers outweighed the numbers of people who cast their vote for Labour, the party elected to form the government. In the 2005 General Election, only 61.4% of the electorate bothered to vote; this was slightly higher than in 2001, but it was 10% lower than in 1997, itself a post-war low at the time (Electoral Commission, 2005). However, according to the Electoral Commission, the participation figures for young people –aged between 18 and 24– were only half as high as those for older people; according to Mori, only 37% of young people voted in 2005, thus two percent less than in 2001 (Electoral Commission, 2005).

Researchers working for the Electoral Commission believe that 'non-voting is the product of a broader political disengagement and that a section of the electorate are sceptical about the efficacy of voting at any election' (ibid.). However, this disengagement with parliamentary politics seems to be particularly true for the young.

When one considers the much better turn-out of older age groups, one might hope that with increasing age, today's young people would also learn to become more interested in voting. However, researchers are less optimistic. They identify 'the apparent beginnings of a cohort effect with young age groups carrying forward the habit of non-voting into older age', and they assume that 'this suggests a very real risk that it will be even harder to mobilise turnout next time' (Electoral Commission, 2005). Thus, young people's low interest in the formal political process and their low turnout – as an indication of the growing irrelevance of 'politics' to increasingly larger groups of the British population – can certainly alarm all those who see the legitimacy of representative democracy being eroded.

There are also serious discussions as to whether lowering the voting age from 18 to 16 might instil a more active feeling of citizenship in young Britons, turning them not just into 'citizens in the making' (Marshall, 1950) but into 'citizens of today', leading to more active social and political participation. One might indeed ask why the young in Britain are deemed criminally responsible at the age of 10 – and there are calls in the tabloid media even to lower this – while they are sexually competent at the age of 16, but not politically responsible until 18 (Matthews et al., 1999). The broad range of academic discussion on political participation and citizenship of the young sheds light on the issue from a range of different perspectives, but it does not provide simple solutions for the political class who see the young as apathetic and elusive.

According to an international study which compared the political participation of young people in eight European countries – Austria, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Slovakia and the United Kingdom – the young in Britain seem to be more disengaged from institutional political life than any other age-group, but also more than the young in most other European countries (Institute for Social Research and Analysis, Vienna, 2005). This suggests that there may be particular factors affecting the young in Britain leading to especially high rates of disengagement.

The study, coordinated by the Institute for Social Research and Analysis at the University of Vienna, Austria, considered both participation *within* and *outside* the representative democratic system. It focused on attitudinal, behavioural and socio-demographic variables to identify the degree of and reasons for participation. Although the study underlines in its introduction that there are limits to comparability as a result of differences in terminology, opportunity structures and political culture in the eight different countries, it nevertheless identifies clear differences in political participation between the countries – and on the whole the UK does not compare well.

The study shows the politicisation of young people in graphs which plot Italy and Austria in the quadrant at the top left, corresponding to the most leftist and protest politicisation; in contrast to this, the UK is located at the opposite and is associated with a very low level of political participation and to a very weak politicisation (Institute for Social Research and Analysis, 2005: 106). Similarly, in relation to parental politicisation, the UK is seen 'by

far the country with the lowest level of politicisation. The same type of weak political socialisation and politicisation can also be observed with Estonia, Slovakia and Finland' (ibid., 109).

Asked about their trust in political organisations or institutions, the UK sample has a distinctively low level of trust in parties, namely only 6% seem to have trust, while 9% say they trust in politicians, 12% in the British government and the European parliament, followed by 18% for the UK parliament, 33% for Green Peace and 35% for Amnesty International. Thus, institutions of formal politics rate much worse than informal organisations. Compared to other European countries, the study shows that the lowest party trust rates are found in Slovakia and the UK (ibid., 130). Interestingly, at the European level, all countries show an overall higher trust in the European Commission than in their own national government, with the exception however of Italy and the UK where it is the other way round (ibid., 135). The study also says that in the UK, 'a remarkable number of young people does not make use of any mass media for political information' (ibid., 188), and it adds: 'Significantly more young people in the UK (61%), in Slovakia (53%), Italy (53%) and France (46%) feel that politics is too complicated to understand' (ibid., 229).

In the study's summary, it is highlighted that young people in Italy have the highest participation rate in elections, while the UK rate is lowest. It is also maintained here that '[t]he better educated young people are, the higher their voting rate and their perceived effectiveness of voting are' and adds that in 'Estonia and the UK membership as well as participation and volunteering are least common throughout all political organisations (ibid., 244).

The UK national report of this study highlights again that young people in Britain are little interested in institutional politics and are much more involved with environmental and animal rights groups rather than political parties and trade unions (Moore and Longhurst, 2005). In its summary the report concludes that fewer than 30% of young people in Britain take an interest in political issues, and the interest that does exist is directed mainly at national events, with least attention given to European/EU-level politics (Moore and Longhurst, 2005: 32). 'Over one third of young Britons (35%) felt politics is simply a game conducted by old men, with the vast majority of young people (75%) regarding "politics" as discussions conducted within parliament.' (ibid., 32). However, the authors see signs of optimism: 'Young people strongly believe that being politically active is important if the world is to become a better place, and very few believe that it is pointless to change the status quo.' (ibid., 32).

The low turn-out in elections and the rejection of mainstream politics is also discussed in many other studies (for instance Henn and Weinstein, 2004 or Kimberlee, 2002). A qualitative study by White et al. and supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation explores the political views and behaviour of young people, consulting a cross-section of people aged 14-24 who come from diverse backgrounds. As the authors say, their aim is not to provide statistical evidence, but to show how young people themselves assess their interest in politics. The study demonstrates that different groups of young people are not uniform in their attitude towards politics, and it discusses the factors why young people generally are turned off politics. According to the authors, the research shows that young people in Britain feel that firstly,

politics are not interesting and accessible, secondly, that politicians are not responsive to their needs, and thirdly that there are not enough opportunities for them to enter the political process.

More specifically, when asking the question: 'What turns young people off politics?', the authors find that this age group feels that 'politics lack relevance to their lives at present' and that politics are 'for older and more responsible people whose lives are affected by politics' (White et al., 2000: 15); they feel that they do not have enough understanding about politics, and that the very language used in politics turns them off. The study also confirms the lack of trust in politicians and the feeling among young people that politicians are not interested in the views and concerns of the young (ibid., 16).

The study is based on in-depth discussions with young people, and these show that they 'feel powerless and excluded from the political process' (ibid., 34). Generally, the interviewees noted that there were not enough opportunities for them to participate in the political process. Especially the younger ones believed that there were no ways of participating until they were old enough to vote.

Even where young people acknowledged there were opportunities to participate in the political process, either through conventional methods, such as voting or lobbying MPs, or less conventional methods, such as youth forums, they felt they lacked knowledge about the process of engagement. Underpinning this barrier was the perception that politics was a complex and alien subject, which they found hard to grasp and understand. (ibid., 35)

They also said that only the views of those with money and status were listened to, while their own were dismissed by politicians as childish and unrealistic (ibid., 35).

According to White et al., young people's reluctance to take part in elections was also due to their lack of trust in politicians and the fact that they felt ignored. Interestingly, other reasons why they felt that there was no point in voting was 'that a party was unlikely to win in a particular constituency where another party was dominant' and another reason was that 'there appeared to be so many similarities between the Conservative and Labour party; it was also believed that there was no opportunity to bring about change or make a difference to the way the country is governed' (ibid.: 39)

To be more responsive to the needs of young people, the interviewees felt that politicians would have to 'abandon the pomp and ceremony, removing the wigs and gowns' (ibid.: 42), and that they could represent young people much better if they were from a wider cross-section of society in terms of age, sex, ethnicity and class. There should be new opportunities for young people to participate more, by bringing them into contact with politicians who were less remote, by lowering the voting age and by empowering them to make their own decisions and give them more control over more aspects of their own lives, so that they could learn about civic responsibility by practising it. Some young people warned that the introduction of new youth forums might raise expectations among the young which, if they could not be met, would lead to even more cynicism and apathy.

White et al. suggest that young people might develop more interest in politics with increasing age and changing life circumstances, but they believe that 'the age at which this is activated is now delayed, as a result of the

changing social and economic environment in which young people now live' (ibid., 44).

According to White et al., issues that concern young people cover indeed a broad political agenda, even if they are not termed as such by them. The authors also believe that there is evidence that many of the young people already had engaged in a range activities which can be seen as political such as attending demonstrations and signing petitions, although they saw themselves being excluded from politics. It is suggested that an important factor discouraging more interest in politics is the narrow way in which young people conceive of politics as institutional and especially party politics. The teaching of citizenship at school is seen to be a step towards overcoming this, but the authors also feel that this would only work together with real empowerment in young people's everyday life, within the family, at school and in the local community, thus listening and responding to their own needs and allowing them to practise their role as citizens.

Many of the previous findings are echoed by the study by Mahendran and Cook, (2007) who say that 'young people in the UK report lower levels of political participation and engagement.' (5) compared to other European Union member states, and they are the least likely to vote in European Parliament elections. However, they maintain that young people who lived in rich households with adults with higher educational qualifications were most likely to be interested in politics. In addition, they believe that early exposure to talk about politics has an important influence on young people's eventual interest in the subject (Mahendran/Cook, 2007: 10). They also find that 'generally young people (15-24 year olds) claim to know less about the EU than older people. 43% state that they know nothing at all about it. ... When young people are asked specific questions which test their knowledge, this relative ignorance is born out. For example, in 2005 only 22% of 15-24 year olds knew that the UK was holding the European Presidency, compared to 62% of over 55 year olds.' (Mahendran and Cook, 2007: 15).

The Political System in the UK: A Turn-Off?

When comparing the political participation of young people in the UK with that in other European countries, it may not be too far-fetched to consider the particular institutional features of the political system and the political culture in which the individuals are socialised.

Despite more recent developments of devolution of political power to Scotland and Wales, Britain has been a highly centralised state where most decision-making comes from London. The Thatcher years have certainly meant a reduction of decision-making at the local level, and together with neo-liberal deregulation, the political accountability of democratically elected bodies has been greatly reduced.

The simple majority, first-past-the-post system for general elections works towards a two-party system, which means on the one hand that small parties have hardly any chance of influencing the democratic process, while on the other hand voters will be discouraged to vote for them, as this means wasting their vote. According to research by the Electoral Commission, there are strong associations between turnout and people's perceptions of the importance, or otherwise, of the election and whether their vote will make a difference in some way. Our research after the 2005 general election found

people reporting difficulties in deciding who to vote for, in part because of weakening political alignments but also because of the perceived similarities between the main parties. (Electoral Commission, 2005)

The feeling that casting one's vote will not make a difference may be particularly strong for young people who have not had any positive experience of having influenced any public matters. Also, in contrast to older people who may still identify with the fundamental ideological differences between the two main parties that existed in the past, the young today live in a culture where both Labour and the Conservatives exert themselves in scrambling for the political middle ground. A populist homogenisation of politics has taken place where both large parties try to 'modernise' themselves to gain the voters' attention. Blair's New Labour has certainly not left the Thatcherite neo-liberal path in terms of economic policy, while his successor as Labour prime-minister, Gordon Brown, found it necessary to express his admiration for Lady Thatcher soon after he became head of government. The party politics of the past seem to be turned upside down when the leader of the opposition, David Cameron, goes out of his way to show how 'touchy-feely', socially and environmentally conscious the Conservative Party has become.

In addition to the blurring of party-political ideologies, one reason why parties and individual politicians in the UK have become distrusted by the electoral in general is the fact that the two-party system has during the last few decades led to the long duration of, first, the Conservative government (1979-1997) and, then, the Labour government (1997 to date), thus providing ample potential for corruption and personal scandals.

It is not surprising that the electorate as a whole, but especially the young, are confused about their ability to bring about real political alternatives in a political culture dominated by populism, where politicians vie with each other to base their public statements on the results of opinion polls and focus groups. This trivialisation and personalisation of politics may be seen as a reaction to the tabloidisation of the media in Britain, but it is also actively engaged in by the politicians themselves and their media 'spin doctors'. Young people's low trust in parties and politicians may indeed be seen as a 'political' reaction, just as abstaining might be interpreted as a positive choice, especially when non-voters may still behave as active citizens by taking part in other political activities (Todd/Taylor, 2004).

If centralisation, the two-party system without real alternatives and the trivialisation of politics give young people the impression that they are remote from political decision-making, then this is also compounded by the fact that Britain has no written constitution which might make the distribution of political powers more accountable and transparent. Many of the procedures of life at Westminster are run according to arcane rules, and the 'pomp and circumstance' of the opening of parliament are re-constructions of feudal medieval pageants which have not much to do with expressions of democratic governance. It may not baffle only the young as to why 'Her Majesty's government' needs to publish its new set of policies via a speech read out by the Queen! And the more recent 'reforms' of the House of Lords have only led to highlight the anachronism and lack of democratic legitimacy of this institution which –just like the buildings of the Houses of Parliament– hark back to the 19th century. It is difficult to imagine that the compulsory introduction of citizenship studies at school, including

'work on British values and national identity' (Woodward,2007), has managed to convince the young in general that they could have a say within this institutional system.

The Young in British Society: Disinterested or Disempowered?

Thus, the young themselves do not seem to believe that their voice counts very much. Research into the views of first-time voters shows that they do not feel that they can influence the decision-making process (Henn and Weinstein, 2003; Henn, Weinstein and Hodgkinson, 2007; Make Space Youth Review, 2007). Other studies conclude that

there is a growing recognition that within the UK young people are not given the respect or listened to with the seriousness that they deserve. ... in contrast to Britain, in mainland Europe ... there is ample evidence of effective ombudswork, national frameworks for the coordination of young people's affairs and well-established participatory structures which operate at grass-roots level. At a broader international scale, too, there is evidence that the Articles of the UNCRC are reaching out to incorporate growing numbers of young people world-wide. We suggest that the UK has much to learn from these experiences and until this happens, young people will remain largely invisible in public-policy making at all levels. (Matthews, Limb and Taylor, 1999: 10-11)

So what is it that seems to exclude young people in this country more than in other countries? Before we consider this question further, it should be worthwhile hearing more about the perceptions the young themselves have about their role as citizens.

An empirical, three-year-long study of young people between the ages of 16-23 set out to explore the way in which they understand themselves as citizens (Lister et al, 2003). The participants were stratified according to 'insider' and 'outsider' status, representing on the one hand the young person on the path to graduate-type employment, and on the other the person with few or no qualifications and a record of unemployment (ibid., 236). The researchers identified five models of citizenship in the discussions:

- a) the universal status
- b) respectable economic independence
- c) constructive social participation
- d) social-contractual
- e) right to a voice

These models were not mutually exclusive. Overall, analysis showed that the 'universal' one dominated, but in the course of the study it became less important, while the 'respectable economic independence' and 'constructive social participation' types were emphasised more, 'with their invocation of economic and civic responsibility' (ibid., 239).

The discussions on the meanings of citizenship showed the participants as a highly responsible group. The authors conclude that

[the] young people found it much easier to talk about responsibilities than rights and when they did identify rights they were more likely to be civil than political or social rights. ... Few saw social security rights as unconditional. The young people also tended to place a high premium on constructive social participation in the local community. Such participation represented for many of them the essence of good citizenship and was one of two more responsibility-based models that emerged as prominent from general discussions of the meanings of citizenship. (ibid., 2003: 251) ... Liberal rights-based and civic republican political participation-based models did not figure prominently in their discussions. This suggests that they have taken on board political messages about active citizenship and about responsibilities over rights (though not the related social-contractual model propounded by New Labour) that have become increasingly dominant over the past couple of decades in the UK. Similarly, the young people's image of the first class citizen is redolent of the successful citizen promoted by Thatcherism and to a degree under New Labour: economically independent, with money, own home and a family. For some of those classified as 'outsiders', this meant that they themselves identified with the label of 'second class citizen', below everyone else. (ibid., 251).

According to Lister et al., the potentially divisive and exclusionary character of the economic independence model is in conflict with the more inclusive universal membership model: 'Instead of challenging class divisions, the respectable economic independence model of citizenship reinforces them. (ibid., 251).

Thus, many of the 'outsiders' see themselves as 'second class citizens' without a say in public life. It would perhaps be surprising if the young in Britain -whether they are brought up in more privileged or deprived areas, thus segregated into educational establishments reflecting their parents' privileged or deprived status (see for instance: Curtis, 2007a; Meickle, 2007; Palmer, 2007; Russell, 2007)- were immune to the dominant ideology where both success and failure are seen to be the result of 'individual rational choice', instead of structural advantages and disadvantages. The 'winners' on the way to respectable economic independence may thus also feel more empowered to express their political voice, while the 'losers' feel that they deserve to be excluded. As Louise Vincent puts it in a critique of the ideologies dominating education today: 'Individual consumer choice and satisfaction rather than the world of political ideas, communities and social relationships are the benchmark against which success is measured.' (Vincent, 2004: 106).

Thus, the participation in public decision-making is not something which the young in Britain experience very often in their everyday life in education, training and (un-)employment, and so it is not surprising that they see political decision-making as an elite role to which only few aspire (Todd and Taylor, 2004), especially as their experience of politics may be more likely to be that as objects of government policies.

Young People and Social Inequality in the UK

This would also suggest that the young people growing up in today's neo-liberal climate are aware of the divisive forces in this society where all too early the young are sorted into 'insiders' and 'outsiders', 'winners' and

'losers', and this mainly according to the social background into which they were born. Thus, research supported by the Sutton Trust reports:

International comparisons of intergenerational mobility show that Britain, like the United States, is at the lower end of international comparisons of mobility. Also intergenerational mobility has declined in Britain at a time of rising income inequality. The strength of the relationship between educational attainment and family income, especially for access to higher education, is at the heart of Britain's low mobility culture. (Blanden et al., 2005: 3)

A more recent report by the same team confirms again that bright children from poor backgrounds fall behind in their development within the first few years of their schooling (Curtis, 2007b). Since the 1990s, child poverty in Britain has tripled, and despite efforts of the Labour government to reverse the trend, this has not done much more than to stop the increase. Child poverty is measured as the proportion of children in households with incomes below 60 per cent of contemporary median income. Child poverty is clearly hampering the development of the child and of course reflects the poverty in which the child and young person grows up; it is in many cases a reflection of the mother's, i.e. women's poverty –or the fact that in a country with an eroding welfare state, having children means risking poverty for all but the more comfortably off. According to a recent summary report by Middleton and Sandu on child poverty, 'by 2000 the UK had the highest child poverty rate in the EU' (Middleton and Sandu, 2006). The authors also identify a clear correlation between child poverty and lack of educational achievement, i.e. the potential for educational and also social exclusion as a result of poverty.

Nonetheless, despite the fact that official statistics show that more than 3 million children are in poverty in Britain, research undertaken for the Department for Work and Pensions shows that the population as a whole believe that there is 'very little poverty', and the researchers find that there is a view that 'the poor have themselves to blame' (Wintour, 2007).

Thus, despite the clear evidence that Britain as a whole is a rich country, while a lot of its population –and many of them children and young adults– are deprived and marginalised, there is no general awareness of this. Many of the young people in this country have been poor all their lives, as they grow up in a society which is more unequal than most other EU countries. This is also reflected in the income inequality in Britain measured by the Gini Coefficient which shows that among EU countries, only Latvia, Lithuania, Poland –three former eastern bloc countries– and Portugal –a country still characterised by its lack of a developed secondary and tertiary economic sector– have an even greater income inequality than the rich, developed UK (Poverty Organisation, 2007). The government's own statistics show: 'Income inequality still remains high by historical standards –the large increase which took place in the second half of the 1980s has not been reversed.' (National Statistics Online, 2007) As a result of economic restructuring and neo-liberal policies since the 1980s, Britain has become a polarised society. The same source informs us:

The rate of male participation in the labour market has fallen, often in the households where there is no other earner. Conversely, there has been increased female participation among those with working partners. This has led to an increased polarisation between two-earner and zero-earner households (ibid.)

Deindustrialisation in Britain over the last three decades has certainly also led to a geographical polarisation between areas of thriving new service sector economies –mainly in the south-east around London but also in some other big cities– and declining areas of former industrial production where employment opportunities have become scarce. But there is also polarisation within urban areas, with high unemployment and lucrative jobs side-by-side in the big cities where poor migrants and poor British people live in housing conditions reminiscent of the 19th century. As the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) warns: “The pace of change in Britain over the last few years has unsettled many, and caused people to retreat into and reinforce narrower ethnic and religious ties. Bonds of solidarity across different groups have reduced and tensions between people have increased” (CRE Report, quoted in Travis, 2007).

Segregation between poor and rich communities is also a result of the housing policies of past governments, which are particularly problematic for the young. The extraordinarily steep increase in house prices over recent decades has led to overcrowding and homelessness for many families, especially for the young. In a country where home ownership was the norm for the majority of the population, young people in education and training are either forced to live with their parents or have to pay extortionate prices for sub-standard housing. Increasingly, it is middle-class young people at the beginning of their working life who are lucky enough to have parents prepared to share their housing wealth with them, while it is increasingly difficult for the young to get their foot on the ladder to home ownership (Sampson, 2007).

This social inequality is disempowering and marginalising many young people today, and if most of the research into political behaviour shows that better educated, more advantaged young people are more likely to take part in elections and believe that they can have a political voice, then this may reflect the fact that they can envisage the chance for a self-determined life within the existing system, as it allows them already the experience of agency, while the more marginalised groups cannot imagine how they could exert real political power within a system that constantly confronts them with their own powerlessness.

Policies for the Young?

So what can be done in an unequal society to overcome the ‘political apathy’ and the marginalisation of the young? The government during the last ten years certainly has been under pressure to devise policies aiming towards a greater social inclusion of the young to promote their transition to adult citizenship. However, as Alan France finds in an article focusing on more recent government policies towards the young, the debate is largely influenced by a media-led moral crusade which sees in the young the a single cause of panic for the adult population (France, 2007b). Core values such as self-reliance, economic independence, respect and civic responsibility are emphasised, with the aim to create ‘good citizens’ who are able to take responsibility for their families and communities (Home Office, 2006). A range of policy initiatives and programmes on education, training and employment have been introduced with the aim of targeting the most socially excluded young people. At the same time, New Labour has been keen to make benefits conditional on work, as part of a new ‘social contract’

(France, 2007b). The political climate determined by the right-wing media in which policies are shaped can be seen from an article in the *Sunday Telegraph*: Here, the authors comment on research commissioned by the Prince's Trust charity and carried out by the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics into the behaviour of young people who drop out of education, the so-called NEETs – 'Not in Education, Employment or Training'. The paper claims that 'this "lost generation" is costing the country £3.65 billion a year– enough to fund a 1p cut in income tax. Indeed, the Government's own figures estimate that each new NEET dropping out of education at 16 will cost the taxpayer an average of £97,000 during their lifetime. The worst will cost more than £300,000' (Henrie and Goslett, 2007). Thus the traditional political Right sees the young merely in terms of a danger to the public or cost to the tax-payer, but certainly not as present or future citizens with a voice of their own.

That the mainstream adult population expects youth policies to be instruments of controlling and disciplining the young also becomes clear in the way that the idea of volunteering and 'active citizenship' is discussed, for instance in the *Daily Mail* where specific government plans are welcomed in the following way: 'Premier Gordon Brown is keen to promote activities which encourage responsible citizenship, community service and volunteering and has already championed the spread of combined cadet forces to state schools.' (Clark, 2007).

Thus, according to France, New Labour policies aimed at overcoming exclusion are characterised by a strong moral agenda that is 'victim-blaming', while issues of structural inequality or lack of economic resources are ignored. 'Many of the risk factors identified as "causal" are related to failings by individuals, and therefore the problems are seen as being located in poor parenting, bad influences from peers, and lack of interest in school' (France, 2007b: 5). This individualising of problems also means that individuals, families and whole communities are pathologised and seen to be in need of coercive intervention. As France says, 'social policy in education therefore has taken a regulatory and disciplinary function for those defined outside the parameters of middle-class social acceptability.' (ibid., 7). This, together with New Labour's continued commitment to a hard line on Law and Order towards the young, has led to the expansion of juvenile secure units and giving courts new powers to lock up children under the age of fifteen, while courts have been given increased powers to create Detention and Training Orders for 12 to 17 year-olds (ibid.: 10-11). According to France, the government's policies to encourage greater social participation through volunteering, leisure and sports activities are based on an agenda oriented towards the *employability* of the young, with the aim of providing the labour market with suitable 'human capital'. Questioning the effectiveness of such policies to overcome exclusion, France maintains that 'historical evidence shows that participation in these areas of social life has always been shaped by inequalities between different classes, genders and ethnicities' (ibid., 14). The government's idea of 'good citizenship' is thus based on values reflecting a moral order which is white, male, Anglo-Saxon and middle-class. 'To be included, young people must not only accept and conform to such values, but be seen to act upon them. Acting outside of this "normality" is then constructed as a "problem"' (ibid., 15). Policies to promote forms of participation, while claiming to 'empower' young people, thus also have forms of social control built into them. As France maintains, the 'issue of

power either between adults and young people or policy, professional practice and young people is rarely considered in debates about participation' (ibid.: 17). The young remain the passive objects of policies, and it is not surprising that this objectification does not encourage them to experience their own political agency, fostering the feeling that their actions might *make a positive difference* in a public context that goes beyond their own, individual private life.

So what should be done? In a study which aims to understand why young people in Britain today are politically disengaged, the researchers look at the relative effects of socio-economic location and social capital, to consider the potential of policies which might increase social engagement (Henn et al., 2007). The research was based on a nation-wide survey of 'attainers', young people who were voting for the first time. The complex study which considered political engagement, support for the democratic process, political efficacy and perception of political parties and professional politicians, came to the conclusion that government policies to mobilise social capital may encourage more civic engagement, while measures to improve socio-economic factors in general seem to be what is needed to make a real difference in terms of participation. Indeed, the recommendations are surprisingly direct, if challenging for a government that tries to appease the *Daily Mail* readers:

Policy which succeeds in expanding educational participation, reducing social class differences and social exclusion, regenerating neighbourhoods and communities, strengthening local community networks and promoting social cohesion, and fostering volunteering and self-help, may contribute in helping to at least limit the drift towards political disengagement among youth in Britain (Henn et al., 2007: 475-6).

Conclusion

As this discussion of recent research has shown, British young people are less politicised than most other young people in the EU, they are reluctant to take part in elections, have relatively little trust in parties and individual politicians, are not very interested in the EU and generally sceptical about formal, institutional politics. However, they are more interested in general political issues and believe that being politically active is important if the world is to become a better place. Nevertheless, they don't seem to see how they themselves could *make a difference* in the political world.

Their alienation from the formal political process can be explained in terms of the system itself –with its archaic and absurd procedures and its lack of real alternatives– not encouraging the participation of the young for whom political decision-making is an elite occupation, but not part of their daily life where they could experience their own political agency and learn about democratic processes. The feeling of being ignored by the politicians is particularly acute among the more disadvantaged young in a society which is materially very unequal, and where a large part of the young have grown up in relative poverty. Past and present governments inspired by neo-liberal policies have also intensified the experience of alienation and powerlessness of the young, especially as government policies to tackle exclusion have been predicated on objectifying children and young people, with the clear agenda of containing, disciplining and controlling them.

It seems, therefore, that the problem does not lie with the young, but with those who are in power in this socio-economic reality. Empowering the young to participate more in politics is a difficult task in a society that is becoming increasingly fragmented and polarised.

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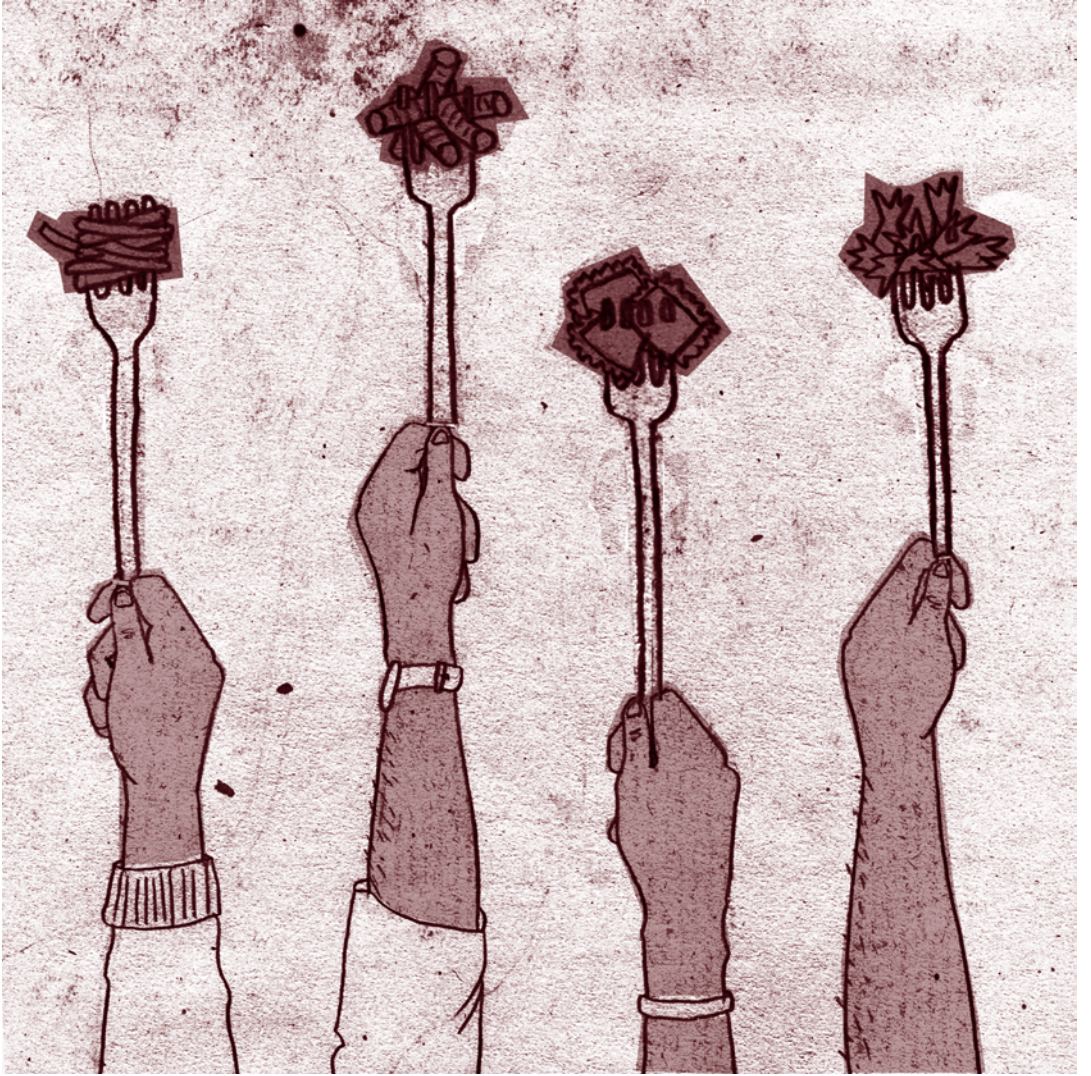
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Meanings and forms of political involvement of young people in Italy

The essay debates the conditions for change of political participation of young people in present Italy under the light of the research that has been made in the last years. In a context in which the political participation of the young people is characterized by meaningful levels, but at the same time by forms that do not have in its centre the policies of representative political institutions and traditional political actors, three seem to be the conditions that appear most significantly for the political participation of the young people. The first one is relative to the change of meanings of participation as a consequence to the cognitive mobilization. The second one is to the meanings of political categories and to their elaboration in a social context in which the centre is the relation of the private sphere (family members and peer group). The third is related to the form of participation that shows a permanent interest in politics, but at the same time the form and concept of politics does not correspond fully with that of the older generations.

Introduction

The transition trajectory to adulthood, in relation of which youth has been defined in the sociological literature during the last decade, is today undergoing profound changes that affect, in a substantial way, the form, until now consolidated, of the relation between adults and the juvenile condition. From a structural point of view, what in the past was a transition to adult life is more and more a variety of different forms of possible transitions: more plural trajectories that imply, from the individual's point of view, a individualization and privation process of the juvenile condition.

In this context two fundamental presuppositions of the traditional concept of youth are in crisis: that it was defined as the passing from the condition of dependency towards that of autonomy and from incompetence to competence. For both presuppositions the key element was the confrontation with the role of adults and as a consequence the definition of youth through the differences in relation to adults. In the last decade the changes of the youth condition have made this definition more and more inadequate, intensifying forms and trajectories in which different conditions cross and that were mutually incompatible in the past. In the present situation, «we can identify unceasing back and forth movements from one position to the other, and we are confronted by the proliferation of intermediate situations of semi-dependence ad semi-autonomy. The most immediate consequence of these phenomena is that the adult status is no longer useful for analysing the social incorporation of young people» (Benedicto - Morán, 2007: 604).

This change has important consequences for the sociology of the political culture of the young people. The area of politics expresses, sometimes without mediation, a logic of the intergenerational relations that maintains the asymmetry between the roles of adults and young people as one of the presuppositions of political action. The sociological analysis of the young people's political action therefore has to be rethink its conceptual categories through a change of focus from the roles and functions towards the meanings and forms of political action. The key issue is the study of the conditions of possibility from which the meanings and the forms of young people's political action can develop. Conditions that, according to an adequate constructivist perspective, can be analysed in the interrelations between the institutional processes, the construction of identities and social practices.

According to this perspective, recent research on young people's political participation make more and more evident the limits of traditional categories of analysis –as for example the distinction between conventional and non-conventional forms of political participation– and, at the same time, point at changes that can only be understood adequately if they are been looked at from a perspective that emphasises the analysis of the meanings and semantic presuppositions of juvenile political action.

The debate about these changes is open and is characterized by the different approaches. Some researchers have proposed an analysis of the political participation from the theory of social capital point of view. The interpretative possibilities of this approach are interesting even if they have significant theoretical limitations, as they exclude from the categorical fields the semantic study as well as relevant subjective dimensions, as is the case of the experience of political participation. A more systematic analysis, even respecting the limitations of space of a simple article, seems however necessary, given the relevance of the topic for the study of the forms of political participation of the young people.

Social capital, cognitive mobilization and political participation of young people

Social capital is an image with which sociological research makes references to dimensions of symbolic and value character, that are set in relation with the impulse towards behaviours considered as socially positive and desirable, where we can detect an efficient integration of the individual motivations and the collective ends, as for example in the forms of political participation. It is in this sense that some call the social capital also “social glue” (Van Deth, and others, 1999: XV), or as “lubricant of cooperation” (Putnam, 1993: 201), Coleman (1990) has define social capital as a set of qualitative characteristics of the social networks that become preconditions for individual action. According to this perspective social capital does not belong to the individual, but is available for the individual and to achieve his aims. According to the thesis of Bourdieu, Coleman underlines that the social capital has to do with the socio-structural resources that constitute the spectrum of possibilities of an individuals actions.

With a meaningful perspective change, Putnam (1993:196) has defined social capital as “the trust, the norms that regulate life, the networks of civic associations, elements that improve the efficiency of the social

organization promoting initiatives decided through common agreement". The definition by Putnam allows us to think of social capital either as a public good, in relation to the dimensions of obligation, trust and association level, or as a private good, because the benefits can also be enjoyed different subjects that those who invested in it. In particular, the structure of social relations is of especial importance for the configuration of the effects of the social capital. If Coleman explained the effects of social capital as positive when the social relations are multiple and generate the closing of the web of relations, Putnam (2000) has made evident that social capital may have positive effects or negative ones precisely depending on the structure of the social relations. The networks generate positive effects when they create a "bridging effect" (*bridging*) that establishes relations between individuals with different social and cultural characteristics, while the negative effects are greater in the case of networks that create links (*bonding*) between similar individuals; certainly we are not dealing with two opposing forms but more likely with different degrees of different intensities. For Putnam the relation between social capital and political participation is clearly defined as much as the first is a precondition of the second: the association practices are related with the trust among citizens and in institutions and with the levels of information and interest for politics. A problematic aspect of this relation is given by the conception of social capital as a property of the collective and as such capable of promoting attitudes and behaviours in individuals: we are dealing with a logical circle that does not allow to distinguish in an adequate way the collective level from the individual one. Thus, as correctly has been pointed out, "social capital is simultaneously cause and effect: it generates positive effects, such as economic development, the safety of the social environment and political participation, and is generated by the same effects that it produces" (Portes, 1988: 19).

But this causal logic is only one of the possible directions of the relation between social capital and participation. For example, Ronald Inglehart (1990) conjectured a different configuration. The social participation is not conceived as a pre-requisite for political participation, but as a parallel dimension to political participation conceived traditionally. The possibility to think political participation as not derived or caused by social participation is related to recognising the importance of knowledge mobilization, that is, the always greater expansion of education and information that during the last decades has taken place in western societies, and of which the young generations have benefited in first place. Among the most relevant consequences of knowledge mobilization we can point out an important change in the channels of political socialization and in particular in the acquisition of political competence. The availability of cultural resources and of a wide range of information sources favours an individualized acquisition of the different qualifications needed to be able to orient oneself in the complexities of politics, makes the function of socialization or political "literacy" traditionally developed by political parties obsolete and at the same time creates the conditions for non-conventional forms of political mobilization, that is, in which the media and characteristic meanings of the politico-institutional system is not essential anymore.

From this perspective of recognising the relevance of cognitive mobilization for the political participation of the young, Jan van Deth

(2000) has offered an exciting contribution to the debate, that constitute also a revision of Inglehart's thesis. According to Van Deth, an increase in interest for politics does not necessarily mean an increase of the "relevance of politics" The concept of "relevance of politics pretends to close-up on to a dimension until today forgotten of the debate about the relation between social capital and political participation: we are referring to the subjective importance of politics, that is, of the social construction of the meanings that constitute it as are of political action and putting it in the horizon of values and meanings that the individual shares with the members of his own group. The variation of the relevance of politics is strongly linked to the intensity of cognitive mobilization: instead of a plurality of sources, channels and knowledge forms, information or social action, the area of politics is -above all for the young generations- in a minor position of relevance compared to the past, even when the individual shows a high level of political interest. This happens because the increase of resources heightens the level of individual autonomy as much as the probability to undertake alternative actions to politics.

In this context political action can be considered to be important, but at the same time it appears as subjectively uninteresting: for individual provided by high social and knowledge resources a low level of implication in political action is not necessarily accompanied by a low level of inter-subjective confidence, neither of a reduced association participation (Alteri - Raffini, 2007). In other words, the loss of political relevance can be an indicator not only of a crisis, but also the complete affirmation of democracy as institutional space of social action of the individual. In this sense some research (Bettin Lattes, 2001; Buzzi-Cavalli-de Lillo, 2002) have pointed out the tendency on behalf of the young in Italy to consider democracy as something "that is taken for granted". To take for granted democracy means that one does not consider it necessary to renounce to one's own positions and particular interests to procure to reconcile them with a collective value system colonized by the semantics and the actors of the traditional political system, but without meaning that the importance of the political order and its functioning is reduced. This type of change of the political culture manifests -in this specific sector of social life- the changes of roles, of meanings and of identities that go through all the social body. An important aspect of the logic of contemporary social change consists precisely in that: inside of every social system (economic, political, scientific and cultural) possibilities and developments are produced whose management cannot be controlled only by the system inside of which the innovation has been produced. For example, genetics is born as a development of the scientific and technological system, but is extended through the functions of the market (economic system), solicits moral positioning (cultural system) and requires forms of political and normative regulation (political system).

An important consequence of this logic of change is the crisis created in the function of the axis of it that the political system plays (representative institutions, parties, political class) throughout all of the 20th century. In these circumstances it is important to consider the loss of "relevance of politics" is not only consequence of frustration, but a deeper effect of change, in front of which the semantic horizon of politics does not find in traditional political institutions the centre of production of meanings for the social action and the lever for the transformation of society. That happens

because socio-political change can develop besides change processes activated in other areas of social life (Beck – Giddens – Lash, 1988) and only in a second moment affect the political-institutional system.

These changes accentuate the management dimension in the political work as a consequence of the greater complexity of society. Said in other words, the area of politics loses relevance in the horizon of meanings and as “lever of social change”, but at the same time it manifests itself as an unavoidable element of social life. This is why the democratic political institutions are not being questioned and, above all among the young people, acquire the meaning of a reality whose existence is not seen as something to be defended or for which to fight, but that can be taken for granted, in the same way and institutional function present in society (Bontempi – Pocaterra, 2007).

The political participation of young Italians in some recent research

From the data of the survey *Euyoupart* (1) one sees an interest of the young Italians for politics that is higher than the one manifested by their contemporaries of other European countries: 43%, while the European average is around 37%. The same happens with the confidence in European institutions: 29% of young Italians trust the European Commission, compared to an average of 22,5%. However the interest in politics is not incompatible with a very critical judgment in relation to the practices often associated to behaviours of some members of the political elite: in effect, close to 49% of young Italians consider that politics means empty promises and 27% associate the meaning of corruption to political practice. Attitude towards politics is an interesting indicator of the redefining process of its meaning for young people. The data of the *VI Rapporto sulla condizione giovanile in Italia* (Buzzi – Cavalli – De Lillo 2007) show a fracture among the young Italians in their attitude towards politics.: 42% declares to be interested and involved, while 57% express their rejection to politics.

As can be seen in frame 1 –that compares the recent survey based on representative samples at national level– the group of involved young in an active way is very reduced and represents approximately the tenth of those that inform themselves about political issues but without participating actively. The other group (majority) is composed of those that keep their distance in relation to politics. In the internal articulation of this group exists a meaningful difference that is due to the inclusion, in one of the two surveys, of the *item* “politics does not interest me”. The effects of this possibility to answer, deserves special attention. The judgement of rejection linked to discontent with politics is strongly re-dimensioned, at the same time that the group of those not considered to be capacitated to follow politics is reduced significantly. It is known that in social research the way of formulating the items may influence even relevantly in the articulation of the data, however the comparison shows that the proposition of one’s own disinterest in politics is not related with a feeling of lack of political competence, and even much less with net rejection forms, but it is due to the little importance that politics has for the horizon of meanings themselves; in other words, to its low relevance.

(1)
This is a research promoted by the European Commission, specifically dedicated to the study of political participation of young people in eight European countries: Italy, France, Germany, Austria, United Kingdom, Finland, Slovakia and Estonia. The fieldwork was undertaken in 2004. For a general analysis of the data see Bontempi – Pocaterra (2007).

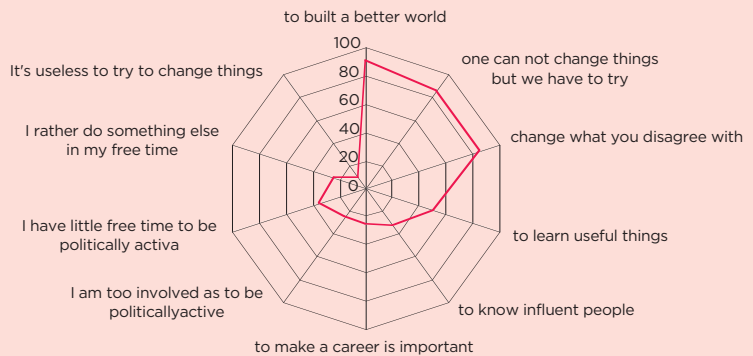
Frame 1. **Attitude towards politics (%)**

	2004*	2003**
I consider myself politically involved	3,8	3,5
I am up-to-date in politics, but I am not actively involved	38,3	35,9
I think politics is for those better qualified than me	34,5	16,1
I dislike politics	23,1	5,2
I am not interested in politics	-	39,3

Source: *De Luca (2007: 291); ** Loera - Ferrero Camoletto (2004: 46).

Regarding the critical attitude towards politicians, young Italians hold what could be considered a high conception of politics, i.e. made up of a field of meanings that, as can be observed in figure 1, condense importantly over the ideal dimensions that characterize political engagement. If we analyse the data, the highest-ranking responses show differing tendencies: in fact, if building a better world implies a strongly idealized conception of political engagement, precisely because the ideas themselves are identified with their supposed universal validity, the other two *items* refer to a different perception of the personal position with respect to the others whilst expressing the idea of a personal commitment as a qualifying element of political activity. The instrumental dimension of political engagement appears to also have a more formative content (learning useful things) than opportunistic (meeting important people and being successful).

Figure 1. **Being politically active means...**



Source: Colloca (2007: 47), data only for Italians.

The dynamics of changing the meanings that structure the field of political action are even more apparent if we analyze the forms of political participation of Italian youth. The data in Chart 2 are undeniably proof that those who have absolutely no political involvement make up a minority of young people. There is also a clear tendency to combine forms of

conventional participation (casting a vote) with non-conventional forms, including radical forms: almost 45% of the youth surveyed. In other words, contrary to what is often superficially portrayed by the media, Italian young people are not only willing to participate, but they also question the traditional limit between the different types of political participation. We must point out that the logic that associates various types of participation does not exclude classical voting, rather it could be said that when electoral participation takes on a meaning other than the traditional one, it also becomes another instrument for expressing one's personal position. The interpretations of this redefinition can be diverse: on one hand, some claim that by associating vote casting with non-conventional practices Italian youth are indicating that the traditional political system is still relevant (Ferrero Camoletto - Loera, 2006); on the other hand, if we put this data into the wider European context, it is possible to deduct that the tendency to combine typologically different practices is a common practise shared by the majority of European youth and that such a combination is strongly related to a change in what it means to be politically active. Change towards a participation that is "more defined by the act of taking part, through specific forms of action that are granted a certain self-expressive value, than by the act of belonging to and, therefore, identifying with a group and feeling solidarity with the other participants. A motivation for acting that apparently depends on a 'contextual knowledge that depends on the issues' that has as its correlate a strong pragmatism and a deep sense of immediate value (Habermas, 2006: 85-92), for which one intervenes on the political stage, almost exclusively, to state specific concerns, essentially those that best express one's own subjectivity [...] The border between conventional participation and non-conventional participation is extremely weak, and is more and more often crossed by transformational processes, producing forms of unorthodox participation that are, nevertheless, considered legitimate and socially accepted. Especially amongst the younger generations familiarity with some forms of participation, and their recurrence, can make them as institutional as party affiliation or casting a vote" (Colloca, 2007:46).

Table 2. **Types of political youth participation (%) (2)**

No participation	15,5
Only non conventional participation	18,8
Only vote	20,8
Vote and moderate non conventional participation	20,8
Vote and non conventional radical participation	23,1

Source: Ferrero Camoletto - Loera (2006: 168)

(2)
The derived typology of the crossing of the three dichotomies: a) in case we had elections today, availability towards valid vote in contrast with abstention or invalid vote; b) availability in contrast with no availability towards non conventional moderated forms of political participation; c) availability in contrast to availability towards forms of non conventional radical political participation (not authorized and/or violent), Ferrero Camoletto - Loera (2006: 167)

As we know, a relevant factor in developing forms of political participation is the family's political socialization. It is interesting to observe that whilst almost all of Italy's youth (94%) see themselves reflected in the values transmitted by their parents and 70% share the social opinions they received from their parents, 48% of them differ from their parents' political positions. The relevant aspect with respect to one's family is not so much their political identity as the level of interest in politics and the political conversations

between parents and offspring. When both parents are either interested or not interested, the transmission is much stronger than when one is interested and the other is not. This means that both interest and lack of interest can be transmitted (Ferrero Camoletto - Loera, 2006: 178-179) (3). In other words, more than identity, what seems to be at stake here is the relevance of politics in the horizon of one's values and familiar notions. Undoubtedly, politicized parents are more likely to orient their children towards community related values and issues as well as towards the affirmative Yes; however, another important aspect is the dialogue between parents and children and the chance to talk about topics of political interest. In this respect, we must underline the high level of political communication that Italian youth have with their families. Almost two out of three Italians (64%) claim that they talk about politics more than just occasionally with at least one of their parents. According to the data of the *Euyoupart* survey, Italians are the most likely to speak with their about politics; followed closely by the Germans (60%) and the Austrians (54%). A little under half of French youth (46%) (4). These four countries show a greater politicization in their family relations than the others. Moreover, according to other data the young people of these countries also show higher levels of political awareness and political engagement. Even in a context of different family models, and therefore of different forms of father-son relationships, the traditional culture of participative democratic politics may be responsible for maintaining high levels of intrafamilial political communication. In an era when traditional forms of political identity are losing their efficiency, family relationships, due to the specific makeup, represent a chance to elaborate points of view or opinions about politics and about politicians or even rejection of the logic and practices of the political system, such as the ideological position or participation in demonstrations.

We must put the case of Italy into context by taking into consideration at least two factors that affect the socialization towards the family's political notions. The first factor refers to the deep fracture that was opened in the forms of transmitting political culture during the nineties, with the consequences of the scandal known as *Mani pulite*. The "explosion" of the political system and of the links between values, identities and political membership has configured a situation in which the young people do not find the relation between the political notions and values of their parents and the actors and dynamics of the politico-institutional system. The research of that period has brought to light that television has played a much greater role in the political socialization than in the recent past. The second factor precisely refers to the role of television in political information. From the survey *Euyoupart* we deduce that it is the Italian youth who are the greatest "consumers" of televised political information. Under the light of these two elements we can understand why the particularly heightened intensity of the family conversations about politics is not necessarily associated with the confidence towards politics and the politicians. These changes mark certain dimensions whose relevance has been proven more than once in the research on political socialization.

The growing importance of individual independence as a key-value of the family relations reinforces the role of family political socialization, changing it. In different forms, the family seems to supply the young Italians above all, more than with value and political identities, with knowledge schemes and communicative competence conditions from which the young manifest their

(3)
Among children of both parents not interested 86% is not interested and 14% is interested; among children of both parents interested 61% are interested and 39% are not interested; among the children of parents were one parent is interested and the other is not 38% is interested and 62% are not.

(4)
The data in relation to the other countries of the survey are: Slovakia 44%; Finland 41%, United Kingdom 40%, Estonia 37%.

own forms of interest for politics and of political participation, even through an articulation and complexity proportional to the variety of the extra-family relations and experiences. In this sense it seems sociologically more pertinent to consider the so-called “crisis of values” not as an external phenomenon that is being imposed on the individual, but as a relational and communicative condition that individuals rely upon to express the perceived unrest when contrasting criteria to judge social reality. It is a discontent that can be observed as an argument at the micro level of the interpersonal relations as at the macro level of institutional contexts. At the level of interpersonal relations the “crisis of values” is manifested through the difficulty of having to consider that with those with whom you maintain permanent relations –in family or among friends– do not share our judgement and opinions and that that hiatus requires a continuous work of argumentation and justification of the formulated judgments and of the undertaken actions. What people experience under these circumstances is not an individual unrest of loss of values, but the decline of the form of sharing certain values or set of values. In a sense only apparently paradoxical we can say that the “crisis of values” is the consequence not of the aim, but of the multiplication of values. Moreover it is the plurality of values what obliges to use rational reasoning to obtain the consensus for one’s own justifications.

The loss of weight of the institutionalized reasons and therefore recognised as valid by all, pushes on to the shoulders of the individual the need of a certain search of consensus through rational reasons, there is the unrest. Therefore, the experience and communication point of view shows us how, beyond the “crisis of values”, we can observe a double process of rationalization of the forms of sharing the values and the individualization of its making. In this slide there is a displacement from the content to the cognitive form of the value that is of great importance to understand the political culture of the Italian youth. The knowledge assumes the cognitive competence features and the stress is displaced from the identity content to the political relevance and the possibilities of choosing and combining forms of political participation.

If we observe this phenomenon from the point of view of the macro-sociological level of the political institutions, what appears is a double tendency: on one hand an accentuation of the procedural logic of institutionalized decision making in relation with the reference to the criteria of values. The legitimization forms of the institutionalized decisions are references to rationalized versions of the values, such as tolerance to differences, more than to traditional forms of affirmation of an identity through the values. On the other hand in a more and more relevant way a tendency is promoted of youth political participation through the open form that sets in the first level experience, more than the elaboration of political identities. It is this new modality that it is convenient to deal with now.

Promotion of political participation of young people and intergenerational relations

As a considerable amount of theoretical and empirical literature pointed out already, in the present phase of modernity the belonging and collective identities are structured through a multiplicity of links, every one of which is often more subtle than those in the past. But plurality of links means

multiplicity of identities and also multiplicity of separations, of the forms of not being involved, but that does not mean that a lack of engagement is the only thing that defines the identity. What is the most specific collective identity feature in the present and its making through participation is neither the engagement nor the lack of engagement: it is the possibility to choose between both. As has been pointed out in the new active practices of participation by the “individualized individual”, “the non-membership (*désaffiliation*), the non-belonging (*désappartenance*) should always be possible [...] the modern subject searches for the balance between engagement and lack of engagement (F. de Singly, 2003: 69).

The engagement and the participation that are characterized by the fact of being elected mobilize a type of open and procedural identity that is being built in social relations in reflexive communication forms, that is to say whose contents also include the way in which these same relations and communications are being developed. From that point of view participation is first of all social, that is oriented towards quality of the relations and the possibilities of expressing individual peculiarities that do not find space in the classic forms of political participation. Understood thus participation looks a lot like socialization, that is as a process that constitutes social links and is developed by individuals in a way that they are not aware of because of the simple fact of being part of networks of social relations. But what distinguishes the new forms of participation and engagement with social issues is that they are being promoted by the institutions and as such are intervention policies that are specifically oriented towards the youth.

We are talking of participation that pretends to modify the social construction processes of meanings and of youth identities. Young people are being invited to develop a role of action and proposals in decision-making processes and of shared development with the government entities of the territory. It is a shift in perspective –that however not always means a real change– in which the inequalities in the social construction of the collective identities are conceived as a social and relational process whose change implies a direct implication of the roles, adult as well as of the young, and a reflexive attitude of the actors in the development of the actions (decisions to be taken, projects to undertake). As a difference of traditional ways of participation –oriented towards change in the distribution of power and therefore centred on the asymmetric relation between those in authority and the young people as “externals” of the decision-making roles– the construction process of social meanings is continuous and without a decisive end and participation in that process is necessarily personal and limited to defined interventions/projects and times. These new forms of participation bring with them a concept of citizenship and its exercises that is characterized by its shifting of perspective in which the pre-eminence of political institutions over society ceases its way to the community and to social dynamics that develop in every day life and that also are publicly relevant as a possibility to express individual particularities. Without taking away none of the traditional laws and norms this shifting brings us, on one hand, to redefine citizenship from the experience that one can have of it; and on the other, as an activity promoted by the local governmental institutions in a frame of youth politics in the territory, becomes an instrument of re-legitimization of political institutions and its relation with civil society. As a reference criterion for the processes of transmitting values and knowledge, the attention given to experimentation makes it possible to go beyond the

asymmetry of roles and the corresponding reduction of citizens to the form of the principles and norms, for example, of traditional civic instruction.

The second aspect of this concept of citizenship refers to the role played –at various levels– by local political institutions in Italy that are promoting social participation as a part of youth politics. The fragmented and plural character of these initiatives allows us to observe various forms of participation and youth commitment, which cover a range of at least three different conceptions of participation: from interventions explicitly aimed at “getting youth involved in politics again” and at underlining the importance of institutions as a community meeting place, even the most de-institutionalized forms of co-operation between adults and youth and of discussions between institutions and society, including the form of “tutored promotion” of young people’s autonomy.

In Italy the participation of the young in the decision taking processes is essentially promoted through the Youth Councils (*Consigli dei Giovani*) and the *Forum*. The first are organized on a municipal level and constitute forms of relations for the young with the institutions that govern the city, particularly with the municipal Corporation (*Consiglio comunale*). The second, addressing especially young associations or those that care for young people, are organized with different organizational criteria and may be articulated at various territorial levels: municipal, provincial and regional. Moreover in 2004 the *Forum Nazionale Giovani* was created.

As happens also in other countries the organizational forms of the youth councils may be different. In Italy the councils have developed according to two different concepts of youth participation that corresponds with the two reference models mentioned, one by the “Associazione “Democrazia in Erba” (C. Pagliarini, 1996; V. Baruzzi and A. Baldoni, 2003), the other in a context of reflections initiated in Italy by the urban-designer Francesco Tonucci (1996) and later developed independently by the “Centro psicopedagogico per la Pace” of Piacenza (Coslo Marangon, 2000).

The first model is characterized by the importance that the representative political institutions are given in the promotion of participation. The youth councils are organized in close relation with the municipal council for adults, which is its promoter and direct reference. The councils existing under this model in all over Italy are close to 500, most of them in cities with less than 25.000 inhabitants (5). To those we also have to add some “Parlamenti regionali dei giovani”, for example in the Toscana and Piemonte, are constituted through an election system of young representatives of all superior schools of the region (6). The municipal councils of the youth care of the young people until 16-18 years of age (in some cases up to 25 years) and are instituted in the Town Halls: 60% of the councils are organized according to the same rules than the adult’s council: election of its members and organization through working commissions that include internal duties and a formal hierarchy among the members. In some cases the Council is presided by a young *Sindaco*, in others by an adult that can be the mayor of the city, the young affairs councillor or anyone responsible for the sector. The work issues are selected in 50% of the cases by the adults only by adults and young people in 20% of the cases and the other 30% of the cases are exclusively decided by young people. The working method reproduces those of the political institutions, with sessions organized around an order of the day, structured interventions on the base of turns and reports of the

(5)
There are no official data on these forms of participation, however we could say that apart from the 500 active councils in 2001, another 250 have previously been started and dissolved, what proves the difficulties they have to face. Only in the Lazio region between 2006 and 2007 38 new youth council have been constituted in as many cities.

(6)
At national level it was in May 2006 for the first time that in Italy the *Ministero per le Politiche Giovanili e delle Attività Sportive* was created, that counts among its objectives the constitution of the *Consiglio Nazionale dei Giovani* and the promotion of the *Consigli dei Giovani* at a local level with the same structure. Moreover, with the law of February 2007, the *Agenzia nazionale per i giovani* has been created. On 28th of April in 2007 the first *Incontro Nazionale dei Consigli dei Giovani* took place. These are initiatives whose impact cannot be established yet as they have hardly started to function.

meetings. There are joint meetings between the Youth Council and the Municipal Corporation during which the young people make proposals and formulate demands to the adults on youth policies. The regional Parliaments are structured similarly, having as their reference point the regional Council. Thus, this model is based on the concept of participation that is defined above all as a learning process of the procedures and of the dynamics of politico-institutional confrontations. The young people are given the possibility of having a “political experience as an educational condition” (Baruzzi, 2003, 60): participation is not an aim in itself, but is understood as a medium to educate the young people in the exercise of politics. In this attempt to “make young people live” the experience of municipal Corporations some identity meanings of, still rooted, traditional character are being reaffirmed: the young people are being invited by the adults to participate in the institutional dynamics as not competent and therefore as external to it. The educational expectations linked to this model of the councils manifest the importance that is conferred on to the cognitive dimension of the acquisition of political competence as a means to express one’s own ideas and as a formative process that should favour a renewed interest for politics.

Even if this orientation is based on the fact that the young people involved are between 8 and 16 years of age the concept of participation as education is still a fundamental element of this model. However in this attitude there is a great risk of producing an education for the citizenship as imitation of the adults by the young people. In effect, the social construction of the meanings is a complex game of relations between the roles and between the persons and the asymmetric form of the relation between adults and young people that is typical of this model can relevantly condition the way the meanings of the participation experience; it thus happens because, as rightly has been pointed out before, “in most of the projects developed in that way it is the young people themselves who, adapting to the expectations of the agents, orient spontaneously the communication to this technical and impersonal form. Therefore, the objectives of communication and semantics are defined substantially in a unilateral way by the adult world” (Dreossi, 2003: 290) and the participation of the young is substantiated by confirming the meanings developed by the adults.

In the second mode of youth councils they are conceived as possible porters of a different point of view from that of the adults. This difference is assumed as a basis of participation that one wants to promote. In Italy the youth councils inspired in this second model are clearly a minority in relation with those that follow the first. There are no data available for it, but to have an idea one can say they are only a few dozens in all over Italy. The organizational features are oriented to promote the possibility of personal expression of the young that are part of it. Habitually the councils are constituted by projects developed by associations and shared with schools and local institutions. There are no elections and participation is free. In this case the aim is not to reproduce the dynamics of institutional places of political confrontation, but to constitute “an organism in which the young may make their voice heard in relation with territorial problems, in particular in relation with the problems that affect them (Cosolo Marangon, 2000: 33). This model requires that the adults that have set in place the Council get involved in it as promoters, with the double objective of forming groups of young people that know how to work on issues selected autonomously and

that they are capable of presenting proposals and projects to the institutional speaker (often the municipal Corporation). As the Council internally is not organized hierarchically in the initial phase the promoter has the function of favouring the mutual knowledge of the young that participate in the council and to create a relational context of confidence and collaboration.

Later comes the phase of defining the issues that is developed by walks through the neighbourhood so as to collect observations and elements for reflection over the state of the territory and the conditions of life. From the analysis of these observations and the common debate the issue or the issues are selected around which the work is going to be organized by the Council, creating if need be commissions. After that the common work has to get them to formulate some proposals and projects (for example the recovery of degraded urban areas through the creation of meeting spaces or for playing for the young and children) that at the end are going to be presented formally in a meeting with the local administrators and/or the municipal Corporation. In some cases the development of the projects have required some changes of certain aspects through a work of revision in which have participated the young with the administrators.

In difference to the first model, in which the participation is conceived as a learning of the political institutions procedures, in the second model the emphasis is put on the community, and the participation of the young is developed as a praxis of the citizen of the community itself through initiatives that include entering in relations with the institutions of local government and associations that are part of civil society. The relation between adults and the young are also seen in the frame of cooperation, even if respecting the differences of the respective roles. In this sense the local institutions are considered the partners of the youth councils not because they constitute the centre of the collective life, but as a part, important one, of the community. The political experience that the young acquire through the councils inspired in this model is undoubtedly less procedural and is more oriented to the development of social relations of cooperation between individuals that share the belonging to the same community and an interest for the quality of interior life.

A different form of promoting young people's participation is the young *Forum*. Addressed at young people between 18 to 30 years and articulated at different territorial and institutional levels (municipal, provincial and regional), the forums develop two basic functions: representation of the young associations or that take care of young people and organization of initiatives and projects. Many regional laws include the constitution of forums as partners at the different levels of government of the territory and in the last years in Italy a greater promotion of these forms of participation is taking place. Habitually the forums are financed by the Town Hall, that allows for the organization of events, meetings and demonstrations; in its relation with the institutions the forums develop the function of speaking partner for the definition of policies for the young people. This function is developed through organizing periodical meetings –even if only once a year– with a consulting character in which above all members of the associations world participate to debate, discuss and approve guideline documents and to debate with the administrators responsible for the youth policies in the institutions.

In a similar way, but at a little higher level the Forum Nazionale Giovani, founded in 2004 by 40 associations, including many youth movements of the political parties, has as its aim to represent Italy at international meetings of the participation organisms and the role of speaker partner of Parliament and of the Government for the issues related with youth politics. To sum it up in a few words, one may say that the young people that participate in these initiatives are a very reduced segment of the young world and above all at the higher levels of representation, constitute a strata “in learning” of the future directive class, may it be in the associational or at political level.

Thus in general terms we may observe that in the participation practices to which we have referred participation may be promoted asymmetrically or well in a shared way between adults and young people. This is particularly evident as in reference to the communicational modalities as well as in the social construction of the roles and the meanings. The asymmetrical communicative form that is most easily accepted in the promotion of participation is the one of education. In those cases the participation is an instrument of learning that has as its aim, in a more or less conscientious way, the transfer of competences that are considered may “complement” the young’s identity. On the contrary, the participation according to the shared communicative form has two important innovative features. The first being the reflective character of communication: the participation is already mobilized in the communication, “through the reflection about the concept itself of participation, through its explicit problematization in the area of the project” (Cuconato 2004: 110). In this way the conditions of participation are not taken for granted, allowing the expression of individual and subjective peculiarities in the context of the participation. The second innovative feature, strongly related to the first, refers to the consideration of the young people as competent individuals that may contribute in an original way to the development of social processes of collective interest. This second aspect implies that the adults have to be capable of listening to what the young mean to say and also to take the participation of the young people seriously for the communicative definition of the role of the adults.

In the social construction of the roles and the meanings, in the relation between the adults as politico-institutional actors and the young as actors of civil society, the asymmetric character of the relation gives a fundamental role to the politico-representative institutions. From this perspective it is the institutional “centre” who “opens up” to the young to eliminate the distance that separates them from the social practice and their lifestyle, and that develops youth policies as an instrument of consensus production and forms of legitimization on behalf of sectors of society less and less interested in the logic of institutional politics. The asymmetry of the roles adult/young people is thus structuring the relations between institutions and civil society, linking political competence to institutional logic and, through these, to the roles of adults. This is how one can understand the constitution of the fora as speaker partners of the local institutions responsible of the youth policies. The young are included, as young people, through an institutionalized form of representation of the young world. In other words the institutions appear as open to recognise the specificity of the young but only under the condition of being able to define “young people” in terms of speaker partners of the adult roles, that is, one more time as “different” of the adults and their roles and in consequence as “incomplete”, “incompetent” and “needing education”.

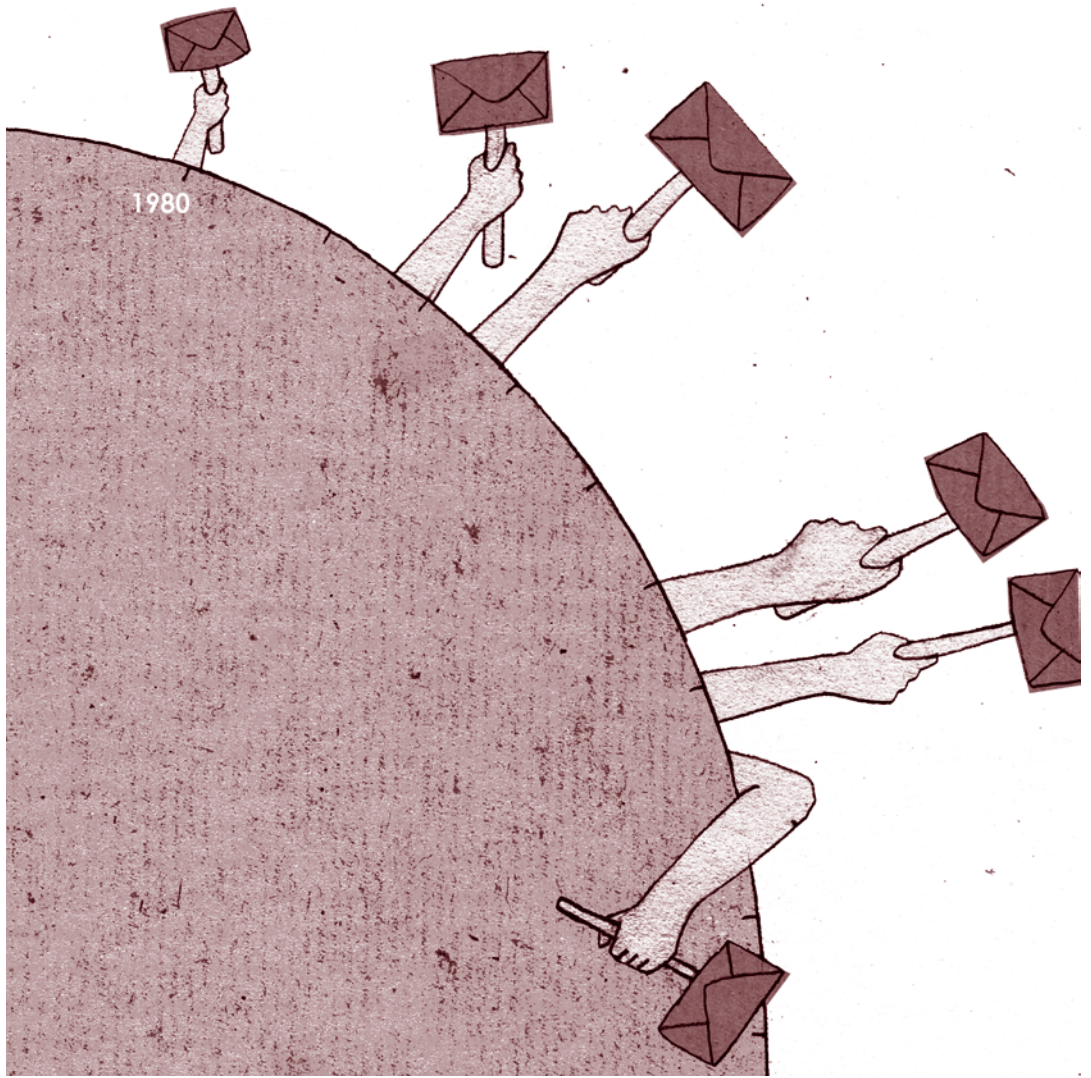
If we consider the other model, in a similar way to what has already been said in relation to the communication, also in the construction of the roles and the institutional meanings the shared relation becomes that possibility that opens up at the moment the asymmetry between the roles does not make the recognition of the values of participation impossible in those that are by definition external to the institutions. This requires a change in the logic, in which the politico-institutional actor does not play the role of decider in a direct way, but succeeds in transforming the decision into a process in which the addressees of the decisions participate, becoming a promoter, guarantee and defender of the process (Bobbio, 2002). That means that the design of youth policies together with the young people themselves cannot be undertaken by requesting the young to attend an institutional meeting, but changes becoming an activity that is developed inside a system of peer relations between the different actors. Therefore we see a perspective develop in the youth policies in a frame of a decentralized system that is lacking a traditional political-institutional centre and made possible by the participation of the young themselves. This is a radical change that makes possible an institutional configuration where the institutions co-operate with the young people as to identify and confront their problems together with them. One has to underline that this change does not dissolve the specificity of the institutions, but it redirects them to a later level of intervention and more abstract one. As a fact, in the co-operation work to produce and realize the youth policies the local institutions continue to share the “support, service and promotion of who contributes to generate public well being; maintaining the subsidiary principle with the civil society; guarantee the quality of the services and universal access to them” (Prandini, 2004:50).

In conclusion, considered from a general perspective, the conditions and forms of youth political participation in Italy show the signs of an intense transformation process, as much as referred to the logic and pre-existing modalities as well as to — more deeply — as far as the semantic structure of the policies and meanings of the political categories. To summarize, to a structural change it seems is associated a change more specifically cultural that requires a critical rethinking equipped with the interpretational keys usually used. In a sociological key the problem of the distance of the young people and data that show how that question may be understood in its complexity only through a research work, that making the centre of the analysis of the political meanings and of the forms of political participation, allows to displace the attention from the politico-institutional dimension of politics to the area of the youth political behaviours and to the relations of that behaviour with the institutional roles (Muxel; Benedicto2007)

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Political apathy? The evolution of political engagement of the Spanish youth since the 1980's ⁽¹⁾

It is usual to hear comments about the “political apathy” of the Spanish youth, but several researches have shown that, in comparison to the rest of the population, young Spanish people are not as different. This article complements previous studies, as it includes a double comparative perspective: we analyze political engagement of young Spanish people compared to adults and throughout time. The results show the need of clarifying the characterization of political engagement of the Spanish youth. On the one side, it is true that they vote less and move away from political parties. But on the other side, several indicators like interest in politics and frequency of discussion about political issues deny the thesis of “political apathy”, or at least they show that young people are not more apathetic than the rest of the population. We will also show evidences of the limitations of considering young people as a homogeneous group, as attitudes and forms of participation are quite different when we consider different age groups of young people.

Key words: political engagement, youth and politics, political attitudes, political participation, life cycle.

(1)
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(2)
Among others, we can highlight the activities promoted by the Council of Europe since 1997 that culminated with the declaration of the year 2005 as the “European Year for Citizenship through Education” by the European Council of Ministers. Said declaration, as well as reports regarding activities carried out by the European Commission during 2005 can be found in: <http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural/Co-operation/education/E.D.C/>. The European Union also considered the need of promoting active citizenship among young Europeans (European Commission, 2003).

Introduction

The concerns regarding young people moving away from politics, which several institutions and the media have highlighted, has resulted in numerous national and international initiatives (2). They confirmed the decrease of interest in politics of the citizens in general, and the young citizens in particular, their disaffection towards different democratic institutions and their apathy regarding traditional forms of participation. At the same time, we underlined the need of clarifying these results and illustrating them with regard to the general cultural change that affects the whole society. In the Spanish context, the introduction of a new subject in schools, “Education in Citizenship and Human Rights” also insists on the promotion of democratic knowledge and abilities among the youngest citizens and encourages the debate around the need of promoting values and democratic participation of young people.

As we will see, and in spite of the relevance of the relation between the citizens and the younger citizens, existing researches are very fragmented in terms of their approaches and even reach very different conclusions. In this work we will try to contribute to fill the gap with regard to the identification of the strengths and weaknesses of political engagement of the Spanish youth. In order to do so, we analyzed political attitudes and behaviours of young Spanish people using the data provided by different surveys and comparing commonly used indicators. We will use a double comparative

perspective: throughout time and in comparison to adults at different moments in time.

The framework of this work is as follows: In the first place, we will present a summary of the researches that have been carried out about political attitudes and behaviours of young citizens, in Spain as well as in other countries. Then we will reflect on the methodology of youth studies used in Spain, emphasizing samples and available data, and on the suitability of these data for the needs of age studies. Lastly, we will present and discuss the results of the analysis carried out about attitudes and political participation of the Spanish youth.

What do we know about the relation between young people and politics?

In the following paragraphs we will try to present a brief summary of the main researches carried out (3). In the first place, we will focus on the data regarding attitudes and forms of political participation of young people in other Western democracies. Then we will present a summary of the researches that have studied this relation in Spain. We will present information about political attitudes and forms of participation of young Spanish people, several interpretations found in the literature, and the contribution this article wants to make to this issue.

There are empirical evidences of the decrease of voter participation of young people in numerous Western democracies (Blais, Gidengil, & Nevitte, 2004; Ellis, Gratschew, Pammett, & Thiessen, 2006; IDEA, 1999; Saha, Print, & Edwards, 2005). Regarding the attitudes towards politics, and in comparison to previous generations, young people show higher levels of distrust in the government and their co-citizens, are less interested in politics and public issues, their knowledge of political institutions and the democratic process is deficient, they are less interested in political information and less willing to participate in elections and other activities (Bennett, 1997; Delli Carpini, 2000; Pirie & Worcester, 1998, 2000). At the same time, younger generations have been identified as the main actors of the decrease of civic engagement, one of the key elements of the performance of democratic governments (Putnam, 2000).

(3)

This bibliographic summary does not try to be a comprehensive analysis of the published literature; on the contrary, it tries to provide information about studies carried out in other countries. We mean to confirm or identify certain hypothesis that will allow us to interpret the results of this work. A thorough revision can be found in Martin & Garcia, 2006.

(4)

These countries are: Austria, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Slovakia and United Kingdom. Information about this research project and a final report can be found in: <http://www.sora.at/de/start.asp?b=236>

These results correspond to studies carried out in the United States, Great Britain and Canada. In the European context, the EUYOUNG project has studied the attitudes of young people towards politics in eight European countries (4). The conclusions of this study show a great diversity –in terms of the levels of psychological engagement, as well as in the forms and levels of participation– depending on the analyzed country. In general, young people in Europe share distrust in political parties and politicians, although a high percentage of young people say they feel close to one or another political party. Regarding participation, they consider the act of voting as the most efficient way to influence on the decisions of society, followed by contacting the media and the collaboration with NGO's (EUYOUNG, 2005).

The context of these studies offers a similar profile of the new generations: they are not interested in politics, distrust traditional political institutions –specially the political parties– and are less willing to make use of conventional participation, above all, of voting. The conclusion of all these

studies could be summed up by the increase of political apathy among young people. This apathy affects the two dimensions of the analysis in this paper: attitudes and behaviour.

Which is the reason for these changes? Different –even conflicting– interpretations have been provided. There are those that say that there is not a crisis of political citizen engagement among the new generations (Gauthier, 2003; Henn, Weinstein, y Forrest, 2005; Kovacheva, 2005; O’Toole, Lister, Marsh, Jones, y McDonagh, 2003), and those who think these transformations have to be analyzed in terms of the effect of social change of values and culture of the citizenship in post-industrial countries (Bennet, 1998; Inglehart, 1990) and the appearance of new forms of political participation and engagement (Michele Micheletti, Follesdal, y Stolle, 2004; M. Micheletti y Stolle, 2005). We also cannot forget the classical interpretation of political participation: the participation of young people is different due to the life-cycle effect. As they become adults, their levels of political participation and engagement will increase. However, several studies already showed that young people’s participation is different from adults’ participation (Barnes y Kaase, 1979; Jennings y van Deth, 1989; Kaase, 1986; Milbrath, 1965).

Lastly, some authors have pointed out specific reasons. Among them, distrust in political parties is mentioned numerous times. The role of the “agency” in political mobilization has been studied in detail. People participate in politics not only for who they are, but also as a result of political options and offered incentives (Verba, Scholzman & Brady, 1995). Political parties play a fundamental role as instruments of political participation, mediation and mobilization. We know that the decrease of affiliation and identification with a political party is general in all democratic societies, particularly among young people (Dalton, 2000: 31). Some authors think that political parties have failed to promote incentives directed to young people (Henn et al., 2005). The professionalization of political parties and the importance of the media are the main causes. Political campaigns and marketing specifically directed to key voter groups have left young voters outside. Therefore, politicians and the media have promoted young people’s perception of political parties and democratic institutions as being irrelevant for their personal life.

And Spain?

There are many studies that state that a majority of the young Spanish population is not interested in politics and that their level of civic engagement is very low (INJUVE, 2003, 2005a, 2005b; Valls, 2006). During the last 20 years feelings of distrust, indifference and annoyance towards politics and especially towards politicians have increased (INJUVE, 2005b). Some studies provide a more complex view of the relation between young people and politics (Megías, Rodríguez & Navarro, 2005). These types of study are very useful in order to understand the relation between young Spanish people and politics, but they need to be more exhaustive if we want to reach relevant conclusions. With the high levels of political disaffection and the low levels of citizen participation of Spanish people, we could think that youth is not too engaged with politics in general terms, but let us compare young people’s engagement to the rest of the Spanish population before we make any assumptions.

The indicators of legitimacy of the democratic system in Spain show great stability in spite of the extraordinary social, economic and, above all, political changes, but they also show high levels of political disaffection (5) (Bonet, Martín, y Montero, 2004; Montero et al., 1998).

Several studies show that there are no evidences of the fact that new generations that where socialized –or even born– in democracy are more committed to politics than previous generations. According to Martín (2004), the analysis of the interest in politics and the patterns of participation of younger cohorts and the comparison to older cohorts of the same age show a clear pattern: interest in politics is lower among today's young generations than among young generations in the past (6).

Feelings of disaffection towards politics, or cynicism, have frequently been interpreted as a possible reason for the decrease of political activism (Norris, 2002). Truth is that levels of participation in Spain are lower than in other European countries. However, non-conventional participation is not as low as the levels of disaffection might make us think. Levels of non-conventional participation, particularly participation in demonstrations, are higher than expected, and show potential for political mobilization (Ferrer, 2005; Ferrer, Medina, y Torcal, 2007; Fraile, Ferrer, y Martín, 2007). Although a detailed analysis of the participation in demonstrations shows us that it is mostly the students, that is, a specific group of the population, who go to demonstrations (Cainzos, 2006).

On the other side, Morales (2005) concludes that available data do not prove this lower participation of today's young generation in comparison to previous generations, rather the opposite, although their participation is focused on the collaboration with organizations that have less political objectives. In general, we cannot say that youth is so different in comparison to the rest of the population regarding patterns of political participation (Ferrer, 2006).

With this brief summary of the different studies we wanted to show the fragmentation and the contradictions in this field of research. In this article, we aim to include a different comparative perspective of the relation between youth and politics. If we want to understand to what extent political engagement of today's generations of young people is different, we have to compare them to previous generations of the same age.

Some methodological considerations about studies of age

When studying the relation between age and political culture and behaviour we have to take into account several methodological problems. Among the empirical analysis of surveys, the greatest challenge is to distinguish and identify three effects: the life-cycle effect, the cohort effect and the period effect (7). Ideally, the identification of these three effects requires panel data of different moments in time of the same individuals and during long periods of time. In this sense, the discontinuity of the surveys greatly limits the possibilities of carrying out comparisons and studying the evolution of political attitudes and behaviours. Lastly, representative youth studies rarely include indicators that allow studying levels of political participation beyond voting. This implies working with representative samples of the population, which usually do not include a

(5) These authors understand political disaffection as the following group of attitudes: lack of interest, inefficiency, cynicism, distrust, disconnection, frustration, rejection, hostility and alienation towards politics and political institutions (Montero, Gunther & Torcal, 1998: 25)

(6) Moral (2003) reaches the same conclusion regarding young people's interest in politics.

(7) The first effect refers to the differences related to the stage of life in which the individual is, as interests and attitudes are not always the same during youth, adulthood or after retirement. The cohort effect refers to the existence of age groups, or generations, with differentiated attitudes due to different political socialization contexts. Lastly, the period effect is related to the influence of certain historical events on individual attitudes that have different consequences for each group or age cohort or even within the same group.

sufficient number of cases to establish distinctions between age groups. Therefore, we tried to combine several representative surveys of the Spanish population with specific youth surveys.

At the same time, there are also a series of conceptual limitations: the delimitation of youth as a stage of the life cycle. Frequently, the definition of young people in studies about political participation is pretty arbitrary; sometimes, young people are defined as people between 18 and 29 years of age, or between 18 and 25, or even between 15 and 24. The definition is usually limited by the size of the sample. In this article, we have tried to avoid the definition of young people as a homogeneous group, for several reasons. In the first place, we know that political participation is related to the life cycle of the individual and therefore, defining young people as people between 18 and 29 years of age could hide some important differences. We cannot assume that young people who are still in the education system will have the same attitudes and disposition towards participation as those who have been working for years now. But we can assume that the engagement of young people who only recently acquired civic rights like voting will be different than the engagement of those who already had the opportunity of participating in several elections.

The second reason is related to the dynamism of the concept itself. Does it mean the same to be young today than 20 years ago? Well, it is acceptable to say no. The changes in this stage of life have been significant: longer periods in the education system, delay of the access to the labour market, the flexibilization of the labour market, etc. Also the conditions of socialization have changed. In the case of Spain, previous generations acquired their rights a lot later than today. Another relevant difference in the field of studies about political participation is the level of education, that is, the percentage of young people with higher education levels is a lot higher than among previous generations.

On the other side, although we do not try –in the framework of this article– to carry out a generational study, the data presented in the following paragraphs could be used to find a possible definition of new generations for future researches. Studies carried out in Spain using a generational approach (8) usually only include young people who were already socialized in democracy. This is a consequence of the limitations and the range of the available data. As years pass, we will have to face the challenge of identifying new generations, as already happened in other countries (Pirie, 1998) (9). For example, if we consider those young people between 18 and 29 years of age today, all of them were born in democracy, but their political socialization took place during a period of 10 years, therefore we cannot assume that the events during their socialization were the same or that they were affected by them in the same way (10).

Another weakness of some studies about young people and politics is the fact that they focus whether on attitudes or behaviour, but many times they directly link these concepts to “political apathy”. Although the relation between attitudes and political participation can be ambiguous, making it difficult to distinguish between cause and effect –or precisely for that reason– we can assume that there are differences between young people and adults. Therefore, and again highlighting the descriptive character of this work, we have decided to analyze attitudes as well as forms of participation.

(8) Among them, we should highlight: Martín (2004), Morales (2005) and Montero, Gunther & Torcal (1998).

(9) In this sense, after the generation X, researchers identified a “millennium” generation in Great Britain.

(10) In Spain, a recent study has identified and conceptualized two generations of young people socialized in democracy: generation X (those born between 1972 and 1980) and generation Y (born between 1981 and 1988) (Fraile et al., 2007).

Considerations about the data and the design of the study

After a comprehensive study of numerous available surveys we found that there was certain diversity in the formulation of questions and the categories of answers. In spite of it we have made an effort to develop temporal series of several indicators (11).

With regard to the selection of indicators we tried to include the highest possible number of political attitudes and behaviours, which also was limited by the data available. In any case, we developed indicators for most of the dimensions that interested us, with one important exception: feeling of internal and external efficiency of citizens. Regarding the attitudes towards democratic institutions, only two of the studies included questions about this issue and the formulation of the questions did not coincide, which made us leave this dimension out of the analysis.

The independent variable of this study is obviously age. To select the categories of age we took into account the already mentioned methodological considerations, as well as some limitations imposed by the selected datasets (12). A way to overcome these limitations and avoid treating youth as a homogeneous group was to divide young people into four groups (15 to 17, 18 to 21, 22 to 25 and 26 to 29 years of age). That way, although not having data for all groups throughout time, the meaning of the indicators is not distorted. With regard to adults, they were divided into two groups, those between 30 and 64 years of age, and those over 65. This last differentiation aims to control the relation between the life-cycle effect and political participation that, as we know, usually shows an inverted curved relation.

Political culture of young people in Spain: Persistence or change?

We underlined the importance of political attitudes to explain citizen engagement. Almond and Verba (1970) defined “civic culture” as the group of political orientations that contribute more to the support and development of the democratic system. In the following sections we will analyze three types of attitudes: legitimacy of the democratic regime, interest in politics and attitudes towards political parties.

Attitudes towards democracy: legitimacy

An important indicator for every study about political culture is the legitimacy of the political system. As proven by previous studies, support of democracy is very high among the Spanish population and presents high levels of stability throughout time (Montero et al., 1998). Are there differences regarding the opinion about democracy between young people and adults? Chart 1 shows that support of democracy in Spain has increased during the last two decades among all age groups, but there are also differences between the young people and the rest of the population. The support of democracy increases among older people. Especially significant is the difference between young people under 18 and the rest, as many of them are in accordance with the statement “to people like me it does not matter”. This difference can be found in the data available for the years 1994, 2000 and 2003.

If we focus on the evolution of the feeling of legitimacy towards the political system we can see how support of democracy is no longer inversely related

(11)

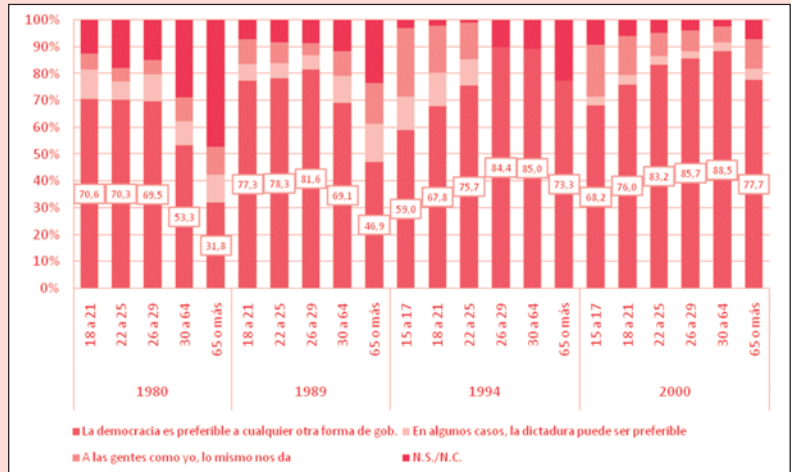
Due to different formulations of the questions, the temporal evolution of some indicators has to be interpreted with caution. In these cases, we have highlighted and presented each of the different results. In any case, comparison between different age groups at different moments in time was not affected by this problem.

(12)

Specifically, while youth surveys and studies include young people between 15 and 29 years of age, studies by the CIS only include people over 18. Furthermore, the only study with a representative sample of young people and a survey for the whole Spanish population is divided in two datasets, and the one referring to young people only includes interviewees between 15 and 24 years of age (CIS n. 2105).

to age, as in 1980, but shows a curved relation. This change is not the consequence of less support by young people, but more support by adults and, above all, the decrease of the percentage of those who answer: “Do not know” or “Do not answer”.

Chart 1. Attitudes towards democracy. Evolution 1980-2003



Source: CIS (several surveys; 1980 (CIS1788/CIS1813), 1994 (CIS 2105/CIS2107) y 2000(CIS2370/CIS2387)

Therefore, we can conclude that young people support democracy the same way as adults do, although this feeling develops with age. We have also seen that there are significant differences between young people, especially among people under 18: around 20% of them state that “it does not matter for someone like me”.

Attitudes towards politics: interest

Interest in politics is the most used indicator of psychological engagement in studies about political culture. In this case, we analyze subjective political interest (Van Deth, 1989). As shown in previous studies, interest in politics in Spain is low (Martín, 2004; Montero et al., 1998). Available data show that the percentages of interviewees that are very or pretty interested in politics never exceed 35% (see Table 1). Young people are also less interested in politics than adults, but here we also have to add some riders. The evolution of this indicator shows that the interest in politics of young people was much higher during the first years of democracy, in the 1990's it decreased, but recently (2000 and 2005) data show certain increase among all age groups, also among young people (13). Besides, we can see interesting differences between groups of young people. Young people between 18 and 21 are less interested in politics and speak less about politics with family and friends, but as age increases their psychological engagement seems to increase. The interest in politics of young people between 22 and 29 is then similar to the interest of the rest of the population.

(13) The interest in politics in 2000 could be overrepresented, as the question was about “interest in national politics”. In any case, results are very similar in 2000 and 2005.

Table 1. **Interest in politics sorted by age groups (1980 to 2005)**

	1980	1989	2000	2005
18-21	39.45	17.09	21.43	22.16
<i>res*</i>	4.83	-2.22	-2.66	-2.30
22-25	37.62	24.70	27.23	26.34
<i>res</i>	4.21	1.25	-0.77	-1.08
26-29	37.86	27.92	31.53	27.66
<i>res</i>	3.82	2.43	0.69	-0.67
30-64	25.68	24.09	33.11	34.32
<i>res</i>	-2.72	3.33	4.40	5.69
65 +	12.66	12.83	22.77	21.77
<i>res</i>	-6.99	-5.56	-3.57	-4.38
Total	27.35	22.00	29.42	29.81
N	(3,438)	(3,345)	(2,484)	(2,479)

Source: CIS (several surveys)

Data refer to the percentage of interviewees that declare to be "very interested" or "pretty interested" in politics. In 1980, the question referred to the feelings towards politics: "enthusiastic" or "interested". Bold percentages indicate the subtract is >1.96 or <-1.96, thus, it is a significant deviation.

*res: corrected subtracts

The temporal evolution shows that young people were less interested in politics at the end of the 1980s, but interest increased during the last years. We could provide several interpretations. On the one side, it could be an effect of the life cycle: after youth, people integrate completely into society, and become aware of the social and political context they live in. Besides, they acquire all political rights, for example voting, and they are more aware of how politics affect their life. In any case, this hypothesis will only be validated through a later cohort analysis. Currently, these results only spread doubts about the hypothesis of the increase of apathy among the new generations of Spanish citizens.

Attitudes towards institutions: political parties

Our analysis confirms that the feeling of distrust towards political parties in Spain is a lot higher than during the 1980s among all age groups, and this trend is especially noticeable among young people. In this case, the relation with age is not curved, but lineal.

Regarding the differences among the young people themselves, there is not a clear relation to age, as it is the case with other indicators. In any case, young people between 18 and 21 years of age are the ones that feel more distrust towards political parties. But the relation is more complex among other age groups: young people between 26 and 29 do not seem to feel especially closer to political parties than young people between 22 and 25, it rather is the opposite. In this case, and given the differences, we have to rule out the hypothesis of the life-cycle effect, as well as of the period effect, as indicators of all groups do not increase or decrease in the same direction. It could be the cohort effect, but that will be the task of future analyses to examine if there are lasting generational differences regarding this issue.

Table 2. **Identification with political parties**

	1980	1989	2000	2005
18-21	68.56	49.21	29.38	23.86
<i>res</i>	4.08	-2.97	-2.20	-3.35
22-25	66.13	62.39	34.94	33.51
<i>res</i>	3.25	2.08	-0.49	-0.59
26-29	71.49	62.55	31.96	26.60
<i>res</i>	4.66	1.89	-1.33	-2.65
30-64	56.57	58.26	39.10	37.57
<i>res</i>	-1.29	1.61	3.14	2.50
65 +	40.40	51.32	34.05	37.77
<i>res</i>	-7.87	-2.91	-1.15	1.19
Total	57.43	57.06	36.36	35.50
N	3,441	3,349	2,489	2,479

Source: CIS (several surveys)

Data refer to the percentage of interviewees that identify with political parties. In 1997 and 2005 there is a direct question: Do you identify with a political party? In 1980 the question referred to how close interviewees felt to certain political parties. The percentages reflect those how said they felt close to a certain political party. In 1989, the same question was used, but distinguishing five categories (including "neither close nor distant").

Bold percentages indicate the subtract is >1.96 or <-1.96, thus, it is a significant deviation.

*res: corrected subtracts

For now, we can take a closer look at other attitudes towards political parties that may help us interpreting said differences (14). First, there are two positive indicators of the role played by political parties: political parties as the key element for democracy and their role as agents to facilitate participation of citizens. And second, two clearly negative attitudes: "political parties only divide people" and "political parties criticize each other, but they are all the same".

Most interviewees consider that, since the first years of democracy, political parties have been fundamental for democracy (see Table 3). This attitude is stable throughout time and there are no significant differences between age groups.

The assessment of the role of political parties as instruments of political participation shows different opinions. Although most interviewees since the 1980s assess them positively, they do it less today than in the past and there are differences depending on the age group. Young people are now very critical. There are significant differences among all groups of young people in 1997 and 2005 that point into that direction. Data corresponding to 2005 indicate that this is not necessarily a consequence of the life-cycle effect, as young people between 18 and 21 years of age and those between 26 and 29 are clearly pessimistic in this sense, while young people between 22 and 25 are not. This is the same pattern as when we analyzed feelings towards and identification with political parties. Disillusionment with the role of political parties as instruments for participation could be the reason of the distrust by young people.

On the other side, the percentage of people that agree with the statements "political parties only divide people" and "political parties only criticize each

(14)

Previous researches focused on biased feelings against political parties in southern Europe, showing that we can distinguish two attitudinal dimensions: biased cultural feelings and reactive biased feelings, both with different impact on participation (Torcal, Montero & Gunter, 2003). Unfortunately, the variability of the used questions does not allow us to use these two dimensions. However, we analyze each of the indicators separately.

Table 3. **Attitudes towards political parties: without them democracy is not possible**

		<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Don't answer</i>
1980	18-21	72.82	9.06	18.12
	<i>res.</i>	3.81	3.32	-5.49
	22-25	80.58	4.21	15.21
	<i>res.</i>	6.84	-0.70	-6.75
	26-29	79.44	5.24	15.32
	<i>res.</i>	5.68	0.15	-5.95
	30-64	61.31	4.84	33.85
	<i>res.</i>	-2.03	-0.66	2.41
	65+	40.62	3.75	55.63
	<i>res.</i>	-10.39	-1.34	11.37
	N	2,151	173	1,111
1989	18-21	66.14	15.82	18.04
	<i>res.</i>	1.26	1.93	-2.89
	22-25	65.57	16.77	17.66
	<i>res.</i>	1.07	2.55	-3.14
	26-29	73.21	14.34	12.45
	<i>res.</i>	3.62	0.99	-4.82
	30-64	66.19	11.55	22.26
	<i>res.</i>	4.51	-1.72	-3.74
	65+	42.21	9.70	48.10
	<i>res.</i>	-10.70	-2.06	13.56
	N	2,093	413	822
1997	18-21	67.30	23.22	9.48
	<i>res.</i>	-0.76	3.23	-2.30
	22-25	70.68	19.28	10.04
	<i>res.</i>	0.39	1.73	-2.26
	26-29	73.71	14.43	11.86
	<i>res.</i>	1.30	-0.44	-1.23
	30-64	71.31	15.40	13.28
	<i>res.</i>	2.06	-0.18	-2.47
	65+	63.28	10.80	25.92
	<i>res.</i>	-3.28	-3.11	7.40
	N	1731	386	370
2005	18-21	67.05	19.89	13.07
	<i>res.</i>	-1.80	-0.51	0.36
	22-25	71.28	19.15	9.57
	<i>res.</i>	-0.51	1.92	-1.15
	26-29	72.87	19.15	7.98
	<i>res.</i>	0.01	1.69	-1.85
	30-64	75.91	15.31	8.78
	<i>res.</i>	3.98	0.62	-6.08
	65+	66.80	8.95	24.25
	<i>res.</i>	-3.42	-4.22	9.23
	N	1,806	370	303

Source: CIS (several surveys)

Data refer to the percentages of the answers of the interviewees. The formulation of questions differs between different studies. In 1989, 1997 and 2005: "Without political parties democracy is not possible". In 1980: "Political parties are needed for democracy". Both were considered as functional equivalents.

Bold percentages indicate the subtract is >1.96 or <-1.96, thus, it is a significant deviation.

*res: corrected subtracts

Table 4. **Attitudes towards democracy: Thanks to political parties people can participate in the political life of the country**

		<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Don't answer</i>
1980	18-21	63.98	14.67	21.35
	<i>res.</i>	4.25	2.41	-5.94
	22-25	64.96	13.81	21.23
	<i>res.</i>	4.71	1.80	-6.02
	26-29	63.38	14.92	21.70
	<i>res.</i>	3.64	2.24	-5.19
	30-64	51.45	10.41	38.14
	<i>res.</i>	-1.13	-0.68	1.60
	65+	33.09	4.91	62.00
	<i>res.</i>	-8.69	-4.27	11.72
	N	1,794	366	1,275
1989	18-21	61.32	20.74	17.93
	<i>res.</i>	-0.18	2.22	-1.78
	22-25	67.61	20.78	11.61
	<i>res.</i>	2.29	2.26	-4.72
	26-29	61.74	24.01	14.25
	<i>res.</i>	0.00	3.50	-3.14
	30-64	65.37	15.27	19.37
	<i>res.</i>	4.86	-1.98	-3.95
	65+	45.58	11.14	43.28
	<i>res.</i>	-8.33	-3.55	12.98
	N	2,068	550	731
1997	18-21	57.35	33.18	9.48
	<i>res.</i>	-3.29	4.24	-0.67
	22-25	65.86	29.72	4.42
	<i>res.</i>	-0.58	3.25	-3.44
	26-29	62.89	29.38	7.73
	<i>res.</i>	-1.42	2.72	-1.46
	30-64	71.24	19.42	9.34
	<i>res.</i>	4.43	-3.01	-2.68
	65+	63.79	15.52	20.69
	<i>res.</i>	-1.88	-3.56	7.55
	N	1,679	539	270
2005	18-21	60.23	27.84	11.93
	<i>res.</i>	-2.90	2.05	1.76
	22-25	69.68	25.53	4.79
	<i>res.</i>	-0.07	1.33	-1.85
	26-29	62.77	31.38	5.85
	<i>res.</i>	-2.22	3.35	-1.31
	30-64	72.05	22.33	5.62
	<i>res.</i>	2.70	0.88	-5.78
	65+	69.98	12.72	17.30
	<i>res.</i>	0.04	-5.47	8.07
	N	1,733	538	208

Sources: CIS (several surveys)

Data refer to the level of agreement or disagreement with the statement: "thanks to political parties people can participate in the political life of the country."

Bold percentages indicate the subtract is >1,96 or <-1.96, thus, it is a significant deviation.

*res: corrected subtracts

Table 5. Attitudes towards political parties: “political parties only divide”

		<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Don't answer</i>
1980	18-21	28.50	47.88	23.62
	<i>res.</i>	1.86	3.09	-4.81
	22-25	22.53	57.52	19.95
	<i>res.</i>	-0.73	6.72	-6.18
	26-29	26.28	55.75	17.97
	<i>res.</i>	0.84	5.42	-6.27
	30-64	24.04	38.31	37.65
	<i>res.</i>	-0.13	-1.98	2.13
	65+	21.49	19.12	59.39
	<i>res.</i>	-1.39	-9.57	10.97
	N	831	1,361	1,247
1989	18-21	35.26	48.61	16.13
	<i>res.</i>	1.16	0.54	-2.02
	22-25	25.87	59.71	14.42
	<i>res.</i>	-2.72	4.87	-2.87
	26-29	30.21	56.46	13.33
	<i>res.</i>	-0.81	3.22	-3.04
	30-64	33.87	48.34	17.79
	<i>res.</i>	2.02	1.64	-4.37
	65+	30.89	29.17	39.93
	<i>res.</i>	-0.83	-9.03	12.14
	N	1,089	1,576	684
1997	18-21	37.44	55.45	7.11
	<i>res.</i>	0.42	0.91	-2.06
	22-25	30.52	61.45	8.03
	<i>res.</i>	-1.93	2.99	-1.77
	26-29	38.66	54.12	7.22
	<i>res.</i>	0.77	0.48	-1.92
	30-64	33.60	56.46	9.93
	<i>res.</i>	-2.88	4.41	-2.58
	65+	44.83	33.84	21.34
	<i>res.</i>	4.34	-8.91	7.45
	N	898	1,305	284
2005	18-21	40.91	47.73	11.36
	<i>res.</i>	0.22	-0.99	1.38
	22-25	42.02	53.19	4.79
	<i>res.</i>	0.55	0.54	-1.92
	26-29	45.21	50.53	4.26
	<i>res.</i>	1.48	-0.22	-2.19
	30-64	37.22	56.95	5.83
	<i>res.</i>	-3.44	6.53	-5.63
	65+	45.53	36.18	18.29
	<i>res.</i>	2.76	-7.60	8.75
	N	995	1,272	212

Source: CIS (several surveys)

Data refer to the level of agreement or disagreement with the statement: “political parties only divide”.

Bold percentages indicate the subtract is >1.96 or <-1.96, thus, it is a significant deviation.

*res: corrected subtracts

Table 6. **Attitudes towards political parties: “political parties criticize each other, but they are all the same”**

		<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Don't answer</i>
1980	18-21	9.51	72.08	18.52
	<i>res.</i>	-2.27	7.09	-5.83
	22-25	11.84	67.88	20.39
	<i>res.</i>	-0.95	5.61	-5.23
	26-29	17.37	66.78	16.05
	<i>res.</i>	1.66	4.61	-6.07
	30-64	14.13	50.98	34.88
	<i>res.</i>	0.80	-2.14	1.68
	65+	14.14	28.25	57.65
	<i>res.</i>	0.29	-11.08	11.49
	N	471	1,795	1,155
1989	18-21	47.61	35.32	17.03
	<i>res.</i>	0.16	0.75	-1.10
	22-25	46.27	42.80	10.84
	<i>res.</i>	-0.31	3.80	-4.14
	26-29	47.02	39.45	13.48
	<i>res.</i>	0.00	2.12	-2.53
	30-64	48.53	34.18	17.28
	<i>res.</i>	1.75	1.05	-3.48
	65+	42.72	20.84	36.48
	<i>res.</i>	-2.25	-6.72	10.87
	N	1,582	1,121	648
1997	18-21	61.61	32.23	6.16
	<i>res.</i>	0.21	0.66	-1.43
	22-25	57.03	38.55	4.42
	<i>res.</i>	-1.33	3.02	-2.59
	26-29	64.43	30.41	5.15
	<i>res.</i>	1.04	0.06	-1.88
	30-64	60.88	31.09	8.03
	<i>res.</i>	-0.06	1.05	-1.58
	65+	61.42	22.20	16.38
	<i>res.</i>	0.24	-4.17	6.34
	N	1,516	752	220
2005	18-21	63.07	30.11	6.82
	<i>res.</i>	-0.02	-0.34	0.72
	22-25	70.21	27.13	2.66
	<i>res.</i>	2.09	-1.27	-1.83
	26-29	65.96	29.26	4.79
	<i>res.</i>	0.84	-0.62	-0.51
	30-64	62.01	34.13	3.86
	<i>res.</i>	-1.35	3.58	-4.39
	65+	62.62	25.84	11.53
	<i>res.</i>	-0.26	-2.94	6.47
	N	1,565	775	139

Source: CIS (several surveys)

Data refer to the level of agreement or disagreement with the statement: “political parties criticize each other, but they are all the same”. The formulation was different in 1980: “All political parties are the same”.

Bold percentages indicate the subtract is >1,96 or <-1,96, thus, it is a significant deviation.

*res: corrected subtracts

other, but they are all the same” have increased dramatically during these years, and nearly uniformly among all groups (see Table 5 and Table 6). And differences between adults and young people and between the young people themselves are not significant.

To conclude we can highlight that attitudes towards political parties in Spain show a process of convergence between different age groups. In general terms, data support the hypothesis that young people generally reject political parties. It is important to underline that they agree even less with the role of political parties as instruments for political participation. Of all the attitudes analyzed so far, this aspect could be the main reason for the rejection of political parties by young people, and the fact that most of them do not identify with political parties. In this sense, it would be interesting for future researches to focus on the failure of political parties as mobilization agents among young people.

Political participation of young Spanish people ⁽¹⁵⁾

Political discussions

One of the indicators of political engagement is also frequency of political discussion. This indicator is not always considered as adequate to analyze political participation (Parry, Moiser & Day, 1992), but we think that it is a good indicator to measure the presence of politics in everyday life of citizens. Besides, the lack of other data to analyze the evolution of other “conventional” political activities forces us to complement the information about this type of behaviour beyond voting.

In opposition to what happens with voting, young people are the ones who discuss more with family and friends about political issues (see Table 7). The

(15)

Considerations about the selection of indicators: the discontinuity of the studies has forced certain limitations on our analysis. On the one side, the formulation of questions has different temporal limits. The most common question refers to the participation in political activities throughout time, but some studies limit this question to the last 5 years or the 12 months. The first case is directly related to age, as older people will have had more opportunities to participate than young people. With regard to our results, this is the case for all studies, with the exception of the data corresponding to 2005. This implies that we will have to be cautious when it comes to analyze the temporal evolution of different indicators, but at the same time we will be able to trust the representativeness of the differences between young people and adults for this last year. Besides, available data does not include indicators of the so-called “new forms of political participation”, with the exception of the 2005 survey.

Table 7. Frequency of political discusión sorted by age

Age	1980	1989	2000
18-21	36.50	23.80	58.00
<i>res</i>	6.4	-1.4	-0.2
22-25	34.00	37.20	68.80
<i>res</i>	5.4	4.3	3.2
26-29	34.10	39.90	64.60
<i>res</i>	4.9	4.9	1.7
30-64	19.10	28.10	62.00
<i>res</i>	-4.8	1.5	3.6
65 +	8.40	12.70	40.30
<i>res</i>	-7.1	-8.1	-8.3
Total	21.70	27.10	58.70
N	3,340	3,321	2,285

Source: CIS (several surveys)

Data refer to the percentage of people who discuss about politics “frequently” or “very frequently”. The 2000 study included three questions: frequency of political discussion with friends, family and co-workers.

Bold percentages indicate the subtract is >1.96 or <-1.96, thus, it is a significant deviation.

*res: corrected subtracts

type of indicator we use does not allow us to compare levels of participation of the year 2000 to previous years, and we will have to limit our analysis to the interpretation of the evolution of differences between different moments in time. (16)

In this sense, it is interesting to highlight the change among young people: in the first 1980s, young people between 18 and 21 years of age were the ones that discussed more about politics, in 1989 and 2000 it were the young people between 22 and 29 who discussed more about politics.

We also have to underline that the increase of the frequency of political discussion among adults between 30 and 64 years of age is quite remarkable. This evolution is probably the consequence of the higher education levels of the population in general, which is one of the proven reasons of the increase (Topf, 1995a: 66). These results corroborate the results on the European level: age is not an indicator for the frequency of discussion, but in some countries like Spain and Portugal young people carry out this activity more frequently than adults (Topf, 1995a).

Voter participation (17)

As is well known, voting is the most important form of political participation in democracy. For two fundamental reasons: on the one side, it is the political activity that most citizens carry out, and on the other side it is a needed element to elect governments. Therefore, it is a necessity for the correct development of democratic regimes (Anduiza, 1999). Furthermore, it legitimates the political system and the rest of the democratic process. According to Dalton “voting is the activity that links individuals to the political system and legitimates the rest of the democratic process” (cited by Topf, 1995b: 26, translation by the author).

The relation between age and voter participation is well known. Besides education, age is probably the most common factor to explain political participation in general and voter participation in particular. Several studies have shown that voter participation increases with age, to again decrease among people over 60 or 65. This relation is usually interpreted in terms of the life cycle. As they mature, citizens acquire important resources regarding participation, status, political information, social position, and development of ideological identifications. Voter participation is, as already mentioned, especially important. Plutzer (2002) has proven that voting is a habit that can be learned (or not) during the education of the citizens, that is, during their youth, and has found out that people who have voted once will probably vote again.

In countries like Canada and the United States the explanation for not voting is beyond the life-cycle effect. It is probably related to generational differences (Blais et al., 2004; Schlozman, Verba, Brady, & Erkulwater, 1999). Other studies have been carried out in several countries (IDEA, 1999) and different initiatives have been developed to promote voting among young people: campaigns in the media, conferences, events, and the use of new technologies to reach the young people, etc (Ellis et al., 2006). (18)

How is voter participation of young Spanish people? The relation between electoral participation and age in Spain changed from a curved relation to a lineal relation (see Table 8). That means that while in the first elections participation increased with age until the 65 year olds, since 1993

(16)

We have to be cautious when analyzing this increase in the frequency of political discussion in the year 2000, as it could be overrepresented due to the type of indicator used. In 1980 and 1989 the question referred to the frequency of discussion with other people, while in 2000 the same question was asked, but distinguishing between friends, family and co-workers. To create an equivalent indicator we developed an index combining these three distinctions. Therefore, the presented information should be equivalent, but the increase could also be a consequence of the more specifically asked question. This phenomenon is common among other indicators, such as interest in politics.

(17)

In order to analyze voter participation in all general elections since 1982 we used post-electoral studies carried out by the Centre for Sociological Researches.

(18)

Several campaigns have been carried out in North-American universities, like “The National Campaign for Political and Civic Engagement”. Other initiatives used new technologies, such as blogs and free-to-download videos like “Rock the vote (www.rockthevote.com, or www.rockthevote.ca).

participation of older people is very similar to participation of people between 30 and 65 years of age. In all analyzed general elections participation of adults is higher than participation of young people. Among young people the same happens: more age equals higher participation. These differences are statistically relevant for all groups, but as we can see, they vary from one election to the next. This is of course a consequence of the period effect and reflects variations of real participation in each of the elections.

Table 8. **Voter participation sorted by age groups**

<i>Participation in general elections</i>	<i>RV 1982</i>	<i>RV 1986</i>	<i>RV 1989</i>	<i>RV 1993</i>	<i>RV 1996</i>	<i>RV 2000</i>	<i>RV 2004</i>
18-21	78.20	76.90	70.27	79.35	77.65	68.10	77.20
<i>res</i>	-4.89	-7.25	-5.83	-4.30	-7.03	-8.95	-6.69
22-25	82.16	77.85	76.80	81.02	82.02	72.54	81.61
<i>res</i>	-3.02	-6.13	-3.17	-3.17	-4.07	-6.81	-4.66
26-29	84.88	82.87	77.35	81.77	81.36	77.97	82.37
<i>res</i>	-1.53	-1.78	-2.50	-2.46	-4.15	-3.47	-3.52
30-64	92.22	88.83	87.27	88.16	90.22	86.64	90.01
<i>res</i>	7.01	10.38	7.05	5.15	5.45	5.77	4.77
65 +	84.96	83.61	82.19	86.81	92.04	89.46	91.30
<i>res</i>	-2.19	-1.91	-0.65	0.76	4.09	5.64	3.74
Total	83.21	85.33	83.21	85.95	88.01	83.98	88.14
N	(2,349)	(8,215)	(3,050)	(4,934)	(4,953)	(5,231)	(5,363)
Voter participation (a)	79.97	70.49	69.74	76.44	77.88	68.71	75.66

Data refer to the percentage of interviewees that declare to have voted in the corresponding general elections.

Bold percentages indicate the subtract is >1.96 or <-1.96 , thus, it is a significant deviation.

*res: corrected subtracts

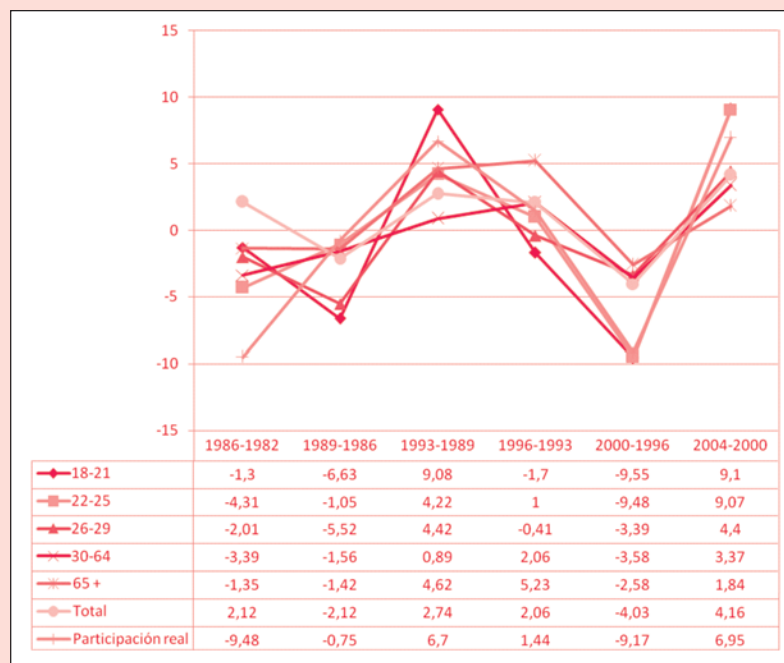
Source: Post-electoral studies by the CIS: CIS#2559, CIS#2384, CIS#2210, CIS#2061, CIS#1842, CIS#1542 y CIS#1387.

(a) Official voter participation: Source: Central Electoral Commission. Ministry of Interior.

The following chart clearly shows the differences between voter participation from one election to the next, which allows us to compare the deviation of the level of participation of each group regarding the variation of real participation.

Differences of the level of declared participation between elections are higher among young people than among adults. This pattern could indicate, as highlighted by different authors (Mateos & Moral, 2006; Martin & Garcia, 2006) that participation of young people depends on the political context of the elections. It is also interesting to underline the difference between the significant mobilization of young people in 1993 and the corresponding mobilization in 1996, in spite of the character of "change" of the last ones: young people voted more in 1993, when the result was not clear and the socialist party needed high levels of participation to win. In 2004 the participation rate was also very high. Several authors have analyzed and explained the results of these elections and all of them highlighted the high levels of participation of the groups that usually do not vote, among them the young people (Sanz & Sanchez Sierra, 2005).

Figure 2. Differences in voter participation in every election with regard to previous elections. (1982 to 2004). Age groups



Own elaboration. Sources: Post-electoral Studies by the CIS: CIS#2559, CIS#2384, CIS#2210, CIS#2061, CIS#1842, CIS#1542 y CIS#1387
 (a) "Real voter participation" shows the difference in participation according to the official data provided by the Ministry of Interior.

The exceptionality of the events around these elections does not allow us to reach conclusions about whether this mobilization can happen again in a context of "political normality". Lastly, we cannot rule out that there are generational effects that point towards a generational replacement and, therefore, a decrease of the total voter participation.

Participation in demonstration

The participation in demonstrations is the most common form of political participation after voter participation regarding the percentage of people in Spain that participate in such activities. Besides, we know that young people participate more in protest actions than adults (Barnes, Kaase, y al, 1979; Ferrer, 2005; Kaase, 1986; Milbrath, 1965; Norris, 2003; Parry et al., 1992). Spanish youth is not an exception in this sense (see Table 9). But, as in other countries, demonstrations are no longer an exclusive redoubt of youth. In the case of Spain, we should emphasize the important role of political parties for the mobilization of citizens in the context of this type of actions.

Table 9. **Participation in demonstrations sorted by age groups (1980 to 2005)**

Age	1980	1989	1994*	2000	2005
15-17			24.30		
res			n.a		
18-21	42.61	43.51	35.70	42.58	35.80
res	8.38	6.93	n.a	1.58	2.03
22-25	45.00	38.91	38.00	40.69	43.09
res	9.32	5.2	n.a	1.05	4.39
26-29	36.12	39.46	35.30	46.04	38.50
res	4.99	4.79	n.a	2.61	2.94
30-64	18.27	24.72	29.50	42.16	31.62
res	-7.56	-3.13	n.a	5.22	3.2
65 +	4.76	9.84	11.00	17.02	10.93
res	-8.63	-9.33	n.a	-10.28	-10.05
Total	22.76	26.87		37.51	29.10
N	3,033	3,212	(2,146 a 2,198)	2,458	2,470

Source: CIS (several surveys)

Data refer to the percentage of interviewees that declare to have participated in a demonstration.

Los datos de 2005 reflejan, sin embargo, el porcentaje de entrevistados que ha participado en este tipo de acción en los últimos doce meses.

*los datos correspondientes a 1994 están contruidos a partir de dos encuestas diferentes, una representativa de los jóvenes (entre 15 y 25 años) y otra representativa de la población (a partir de 25 años) por lo tanto no es posible comparar los estadísticos.

Bold percentages indicate the subtract is >1.96 or <-1.96, thus, it is a significant deviation.

*res: corrected subtracts

Although differences between young people and adults regarding this type of participation have decreased in the last years, a survey carried out in 2005 –which limits the question to participation during the last 12 months – shows that differences are still very important among all groups of young people, but especially among young people between 22 and 29 years of age. Lastly, we would like to mention that participation of young people under 18 is quite lower.

Signing petitions

Signing petitions, as well as other forms of political protest activities, is more common among young people than among adults. Young people between 22 and 29 are the ones that sign more petitions, while young people between 15 and 21 participate less than adults regarding the data of 1994 and 2000.

As well as in the previous case, the differences with the group of adults, although significant, seem to have decreased, which would again point towards a wider repertoire of political actions of the citizens.

Table 10. **Signing petitions sorted by age groups (1980 to 2000)**

Age	1980	1989	1994***	2005
15-17			20.00	
res			-7.3	
18-21	37.46	35.83	34.70	22.99
res	4.05	2.8	3.4	0.73
22-25	46.93	40.37	36.40	28.49
res	7.71	4.81	3.6	2.68
26-29	45.61	41.31	36.70	25.67
res	6.47	4.58	2	1.7
30-64	23.37	28.52	32.80	23.90
res	-6.18	-0.59	3.5	4.38
65 +	12.68	12.25	18.20	6.76
res	-6.57	-8.94	-5.7	-8.71
Total	27.26	28.93		20.82
N				

Source: CIS (several surveys)

Data refer to the percentage of interviewees that declare to have participated in a strike.

Los datos de 2005 reflejan, sin embargo, el porcentaje de entrevistados que ha participado en este tipo de acción en los últimos doce meses.

Bold percentages indicate the subtract is >1.96 or <-1.96, thus, it is a significant deviation.

*res: corrected subtracts

***Los datos referentes al año 1994 están contruidos a partir de dos encuestas diferentes, por los tanto, los estadísticos utilizados solo pueden compararse entre 15 años y 25 para los jóvenes y de 26 en adelante para los adultos.

Other protest activities

Other series of protest activities have usually been associated to young people. Due to the difficulties to find equivalent indicators, the following table shows the percentage of individuals in every age group that have participated in some of the following activities: graffiti paintings, occupation of buildings or factories, damaging public goods, blocking the traffic or carrying out violent actions (19).

Due to the diversity of questions included in the different studies we cannot reach relevant conclusions about the evolution of participation in this type of activities –for example, the survey carried out in 1994 includes more questions, and therefore participation is higher– but we can see that the young people are the ones that participate more in this type of actions. Besides, in 2005, we get a more real view of participation in this type of actions depending on age, as the question is limited to the last twelve months. In fact, participation of young people is a lot higher than adults' participation, at least regarding the indicators included in said survey: occupation of buildings, blocking the traffic, graffiti painting and damaging public goods. Besides, participation in this type of action is no longer as significant among people over 25 years of age. We can also say that only a minority uses this type of participation, as the participation rate is only 1.4%.

(19)

The questions and the number of questions are different in every study. In 1980: graffiti paintings, occupation of factories or buildings, blocking the traffic, damaging public goods. 1989: occupation of factories and violent actions. The 1994 study included the questions of the 1980 and 1989 studies. 2005: two indicators, 1 occupation of buildings, blocking the traffic 2 graffiti paintings and damaging public goods.

Table 11. **Other protest activities (graffiti painting, blocking the traffic, damaging public goods, violent actions)**

Age	1980	1989	1994***	2005
15-17			15.10	
res			-3	
18-21	13.30	4.70	19.20	2.80
res	5	0.4	0.2	1.7
22-25	16.60	6.70	22.50	4.30
res	7.3	2.4	2.7	3.5
26-29	12.50	6.20	12.50	1.10
res	3.9	1.7	1.9	-0.4
30-64	4.20	4.00	10.10	1.30
res	-6.4	-0.5	3	-0.7
65 +	0.80	1.80	2.60	0.40
res	-4.5	-2.9	-4.9	-2.2
Total	6.40	4.20		1.40
N	3,900	3,187	(2,146 a 2,198)	2,462

Source: CIS (several surveys)

**Data refer to the percentage of interviewees that declares to have participated in this type of action throughout their life. Las acciones son distintas para cada estudio: 1980: pintadas, ocupar fábricas o edificios, bloquear tráfico, causar daños. 1989: ocupar fábricas o acciones violentas. 1994: 1980+1989. 2005: dos indicadores: 1 ocupar edificios, encierros, cortar tráfico y 2 hacer pintadas o causar daños. Los datos de 2005 reflejan, sin embargo, el porcentaje de entrevistados que ha participado en este tipo de acción en los últimos doce meses.

Bold percentages indicate the subtract is >1.96 or <-1.96, thus, it is a significant deviation.

*res: corrected subtracts.

***Data referring to 1994 were provided by two different surveys, therefore not all age groups are comparable (only the 15 to 25 year olds for young people and the people over 26 years of age for adults).

New forms of political participation?

In order to complete the analysis of the forms of political participation, and to empirically prove the hypothesis of the higher levels of participation of young people in new forms of participation, we have analyzed three types of action, but, sadly, only one of the studies, the one carried out in 2005, includes this type of actions.

The results show that participation in the three so-called “new forms of participation” (20) is uneven depending on the age group: while young people wear insignias and stickers more often than adults, the results are different when we analyze the consumption or boycott of certain products due to political reasons, or the use of the media to report on a problem. In the case of consumption or boycott for political reasons, adults and young people over 26 are the ones that participate more, when it comes to use the media to report on problems participation is marginal (2.6%) and higher among adults.

(20)

In a certain way, these actions cannot be considered “new”, but several studies have included them defining them as new (Micheletti et al., 2004). In any case, participation of young people is higher regarding this type of action.

Table 12. **New forms of political participation sorted by age groups (2005)**

	18-21	22-25	26-29	30-64	65 +	Total	N
Boycott of products due to political, ethnic and environmental reasons	17.0	19.4	23.5	21.4	5.2	17.8	2,468
<i>res*</i>	-0.3	0.6	2.1	5.4	-8.3		
Wear insignias or stickers to support certain campaigns	27.3	27.8	19.8	16.9	7.0	16.7	2,470
<i>res*</i>	3.9	4.2	1.2	0.4	-6.6		
Contact the media to report on problems	1.8	2.1	3.7	3.6	1.2	2.9	2,471
<i>res*</i>	-1.0	-0.6	0.7	2.5	-2.5		

Source: CIS (several studies)

Data refer to the percentage of interviewees that declare to have participated in this type of actions. Bold percentages indicate the subtract is >1.96 or <-1.96, thus, it is a significant deviation.

*res: corrected subtracts

Conclusions

With this brief analysis we wanted to study the relation of young Spanish people to politics, in comparison to same groups of young people since the 1980s. The comparison between young people and adults throughout time was very effective to prove that the link between young citizens and the field of politics is more complex and full of shades than sometimes thought.

In general, we can say that, although young people are less interested in politics and participate less than adults, the rest of indicators do not confirm that young people are especially apathetic towards public issues or, at least, not as much when compared to adults. Specifically, the evolution of the interest in politics and the frequency of discussion about political issues question the thesis that states that young Spanish people are gradually becoming more and more politically apathetic. On the other side, we found evidences of a growing feeling of distrust towards political parties, particularly among young people. There is no direct rejection of this institution, but a critical assessment of their role as agents that should promote the participation of citizens.

On the other side, the comparison between groups of young people of different ages has shown us that we cannot analyze attitudes and behaviours of youth as a homogeneous group. There is a pattern that systematically repeats itself: young people under 18 are less interested in politics and feel they have less to do with it. However, the rest of the groups do not show a clear pattern. It may be a sign of the existence of cohort, period or life cycle effects. Their identification and measurement requires a more sophisticated study. However, we can identify the life cycle effect in attitudes like interest in politics and support of democracy, and in forms of participation like voting, demonstrations and other types of protest actions. However, regarding these and the rest of the indicators we cannot rule the existence of generational differences out.

How do these results affect democracy in Spain? We can provide two interpretations: on the one side, it seems that young Spanish people today

are not significantly different from previous young generations regarding their relation to politics. On the other side, and due to the low levels of political engagement in Spain, it is really surprising that young people with higher levels of education, with more resources for participation and whose political socialization was carried out during democracy, do not show more political engagement than previous generations. Maybe the democratic experience does not promote engagement of citizens by itself, and the institutions will have to find instruments to promote active citizenship.

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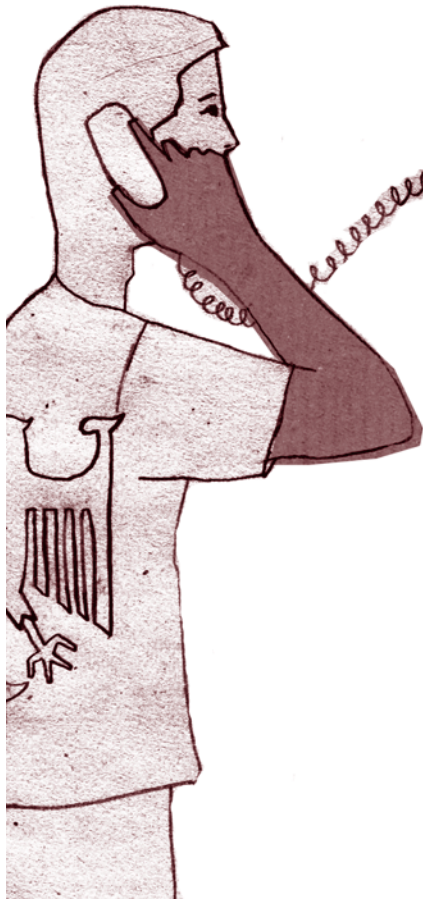
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Who counts on Europe? – An empirical analysis of the younger generation's attitudes in Germany ⁽¹⁾

This article analyses the status and perspectives of political and social unification in Europe focusing on the younger generation in Germany. Do young people feel they understand how politics work or do they consider political structures and processes too obscure? How have young people's attitudes towards Europe and European institutions changed? How do feelings of attachment to Europe develop? Does commitment towards Europe conflict with national identifications? What factors determine attitudes towards Europe? These questions will be examined using the Youth Survey conducted by the German Youth Institute (DJI). Data from the three waves of the 'DJI Youth Survey', carried out in 1992, 1997 and 2003 will be analysed. Each wave is based on personal interviews with approximately 7,000 16-to 29-year olds. The analysis shows links between young people's attitudes towards Europe and sociodemographic characteristics as well as other personal variables.

The results reveal considerable differences: part of the younger generation in Germany definitely sees Europe as a realistic prospect, whereas others, i.e. those who are at risk of being the losers of the modernisation process, tend to be more reserved about Europe.

Introduction

The «Project Europe» not only targets economic harmonisation and political unification but also social integration. The focus is thus not only on harmonising living conditions and political structures but also on mutual relations and bonds. Within this context, «the subjective identification of individual citizens and their sense of belonging and solidarity with Europe may be regarded, on an individual level, as a benchmark of European integration» (Noll & Scheuer, 2006, p. 1). Although there are some indications that the general public's identification with Europe has not grown in spite of increasing economic and political integration, the younger generations, for whom the EU has been a natural part of the political setting in which they grew up, tend to have a more positive attitude towards Europe.

Some of the results are contradictory: when the referenda on the EU constitution were rejected in the Netherlands and in France in early 2005, for example, young people were accused of Euroscepticism. A closer look at the results, however, reveals that this critical view of young people must be put into perspective: although a majority of 55 % of voters in France and 62 % in the Netherlands rejected the EU constitution in the referenda held there in 2005 -to the dismay of EU supporters in all countries- the proportion of

(1)
This article is in part based on:
Gaiser et al., 2006.

young people in France who rejected the constitution was not overly large, with middle-aged groups tending more towards rejection and approval being strongest among the over 54-year olds. In the Netherlands, by contrast, the proportion of young people, who rejected the referendum was larger, even in comparison to the middle-aged groups, and the rate of rejection again lowest among the over 54-year olds. Proof that a sceptical attitude is *generally* more pronounced in young people thus cannot be supported.

The Eurobarometer survey carried out in the 25 EU member states in summer 2005 also underlined the fact that young people form the optimistic segment of the European population. This assessment was confirmed by the fact that 63 per cent of Europeans aged 15 to 24 years rate their country's membership in the European Union as positive. Considering that the EU average concerning this question was approximately 54 per cent, the age group of 15-to-24-year olds thus has a more positive attitude towards the EU than older age groups (European Commission, 2005, p. 96). This trend, i.e. that younger generations have a more positive attitude towards the future of Europe or EU enlargement than older generations was also confirmed by the two Eurobarometer surveys of early 2006 (European Commission, May 2006, European Commission, July 2006). One problem cited in this context is the fact that this trend is mainly that of young people with university-entry qualifications (Abitur) and young people with a university degree.

Now, what are young people's attitudes towards Europe in detail? Has the EU become a fact of life for them, whose importance, functioning and future significance are not questioned and go without saying or do ignorance and scepticism prevail in many instances? And: can the younger generation be divided into two groups, one of which is familiar with and optimistic about the EU, while the other displays a more negative attitude towards this project? What are the reasons for the differences in attitudes towards Europe? As such detailed analyses in terms of nation and youth are almost impossible in Europe-wide surveys, given the sample size, suitable questions were included in the DJI Youth Survey. Young people's attitudes towards and feeling of solidarity with Europe and their trust in European institutions will be examined below on the basis of the data collected in the DJI Youth Survey and correlations with socio-demographic and attitude variables analysed. (2)

The variations in the attitudes of Europeans towards the political community of Europe have evolved within the context of long-term processes of European unification and also issues that are of a more national nature. Young people's feeling of solidarity with the EU and Germany has developed in a similar way: in his theoretical reflections and trend assumptions about the processes leading to a European identity, Lepsius, for example, arrived at the diagnosis that national and European criteria influencing identity formation are becoming increasingly intertwined, even if identification with Europe is far less pronounced than identification with national institutions (Lepsius, 2004, p. 4). Until recently, according to Lepsius, many citizens had regarded Europe as a mere additional operating level of the nation state(s) very much in line with the EU-type institutionalisation. The growing competencies of the European institutions were now activating the need for solidarity on a European level and more pronounced European identification. Nation states as centralised objects of political identification, were not losing significance, as the integrative strength of a society could not be replaced by the new

(2)

The DJI Youth Survey of the German Youth Institute (DJI) in Munich is one of the large replicative research projects carried out in the context of the Youth Institute's social reporting (project homepage: www.dji.de/jugendsurvey). The Federal Ministry for Families, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth supports this research in the context of DJI funding. So far, three waves of the survey have been conducted: 1992, 1997 and 2003. In each of the first two waves, about 7,000 16- to 29-year-old Germans were interviewed (West: about 4,500, East: about 2,500), and in the third wave 9,100 12- to 29-year-olds with German and non-German citizenship were interviewed (West: about 6,300, East: about 2,800; see Gille et al., 2006). *In this article we will refer to the 16- to 29-year-old Germans.* The first two waves were based on a random selection of several layers (Random-Route), the third wave on a sample survey of the citizens' registration office. For the 16- to 29-year-olds, the samples of 1997 and 2003 showed relatively strong differences regarding age in comparison with the total population. For attitudes depending to a large extent on the age of interviewees, reports on findings always had to be controlled according to age. The results for the 16- to 29-year-olds are presented with the help of a redressment evaluation that corrects the deviations of the sample for the 16- to 29-year-olds with regard to the distribution of age groups and aligns it to the distributions of the total population.

European organisations. At the same time, he said, the nation states were becoming Europeanised and multilingual functional elites were coming into being. From other quarters, however, cautions have also been voiced against assuming an automatic reduction of regional and national identifications in favour of growing European identification (Westle, 2003).

Habermas in particular emphasised the significance of subjective elements, including attitude-related elements, for the further development and integration of Europe. Apart from politico-structural processes and institutions in Europe, for which a European constitution would also be important, he lists a European civil society, a Europe-wide political public and a political culture accessible to all EU citizens as criteria for supra-national forms of identity (Habermas, 2001). According to Habermas, the development of such a general public is not restricted to conventional forms of political participation, such as voting in the European Parliament elections (whose limited significance compared to national elections is reflected in voter turnout) but also includes parallel supra-national forms of unconventional political participation, which he believes could be seen in the major demonstrations against the impending war in Iraq in a number of European cities in February 2003. Habermas points out that it is not so much a question of the development of a strong European identity that will ultimately replace value attitudes oriented to one's own national political community but rather of open-mindedness towards supranational political opinion and political will formation concerning European issues. In somewhat emphatic terms: It is a question of conditions that must be fulfilled for citizens to be able to extend their civil solidarity beyond the borders of their nation states and thus achieve mutual inclusion (Habermas, 2004, p. 76).

What empirical evidence can be found as an answer to these theses and questions regarding the development of Europe-oriented awareness? Attitudinal elements, such as feeling a sense of belonging to Europe, being Europe-oriented and trust in European institutions play a role within this context. Generally speaking, within the scope of pan-European surveys, such analyses relating to adolescents and young adults are only possible to a limited extent on the national level, given the sample size. The three waves of the DJI youth survey (1992/1997/2003) allow empirical analysis of a number of questions targeting Europe and young people's understanding of Europe within Germany and over time. (3) Analyses based on German data are meaningful not only because the subject of Europe has moved to the centre of public debate in this EU member state with the highest population, which has taken over the EU Council Presidency in 2007 (cf., for example, Gaiser et al., 2006), but also because possible differences in attitudes towards Europe in the two German 'Länder' might illuminate differences in proximity to 'core Europe' (Hübner-Funk & Du Bois-Reymond, 1999).

Van Deth (2004, p. 10 et seq.) also argues in favour of differentiating between East and West Germany in politico-cultural analysis, because this approach allows examination of the extent to which certain political attitudes in West Germany tend to correspond to those found in Western European countries and which attitudes in East Germany are more like those found in Eastern European countries. What are the attitudes of young East and West Germans towards Europe? Has the EU become a fact of life for them, whose importance, functioning, significance for the future and institutions are not questioned and go without saying or do ignorance and scepticism prevail in

(3)

Although the interviews were carried out prior to the EU's enlargement to the East in May 2004, considerable changes in fundamental links between attitudes towards Europe and sociodemographic and attitude characteristics cannot be assumed; cf. results regarding the development of attitudes towards Europe until 2006 quoted above.

many instances? Are there any differences associated with educational qualifications? What is the connection between national and supranational solidarity? Is it possible to discern constellations of conditions relevant for certain attitudes towards Europe?

The 2003 DJI Youth Survey investigated young people's attitudes towards Europe and European institutions from three different perspectives. First, their familiarity with Europe was surveyed, i.e. their general understanding of how the European Union functions, the extent to which they are personally affected by decisions made by the EU government and the importance of Europe for their personal future. Second, the survey inquired about young people's solidarity and identification with Europe as compared with their own country. The young people interviewed were also asked how much trust they placed in European institutions.

The empirical results concerning these three aspects of attitude and their key objective influencing factors (such as educational qualifications, regional differentiation by West and East Germany) and selected subjective influencing factors (such as interest in politics and the feeling of being socially disadvantaged) will be described below.

Finally, the article will examine the connections between these different attitudes towards Europe. The young people interviewed were between 16 and 29 years old, i.e. a broad age range covering many situations in life, and no differences were made between phases of life such as «youth», «emerging adulthood» or «young adulthood», which, from the point of view of certain aspects, would most probably provide interesting differences (Arnett, 2006). Instead, our analysis focuses on the above objective and subjective characteristics of differentiation which we will scrutinise from the perspective of attitudes towards Europe.

Attitudes towards Europe

Young people's attitudes towards Europe are anything but uniform (cf. Table 1). The statement (item A) «Europe is becoming increasingly important for my future» receives the highest score (72 % in Germany as a whole), followed by item B, which concerns the extent to which young people feel personally affected by decisions made by the EU government (67 %). As many as half of the young people interviewed (50 %) consider themselves to have a certain level of political expertise, i.e. to understand how the European Union works. The fact that only 5 % of the young people interviewed awarded the highest answer category (6 points on the scale), 18 % the second highest answer category (5 points) and 27 % the third highest answer category (4 points) should be borne in mind, however.

Seeing Europe as a significant political community is a matter of course for the vast majority of young people. However, when asked whether they consider themselves personally affected by decisions made by the EU government, 10 % of the young people interviewed replied «Don't know» (wording of item see item B in Table 1). This answer was also given by approx. 5 % of the young people interviewed when asked whether Europe was becoming increasingly important for their future and whether they understood how the European Union works (see items A and C, Table 1). Interviewees with lower educational qualifications, in particular, more often do not have any opinions on these items. (4)

(4)

In the DJI Youth Survey, the level of general education of interviewees who have already left the general education system is determined by the highest qualifications achieved; those who are still going to a school of general education are recorded with the qualifications they want to achieve. Therefore, it is possible that the level of education suggested by highschool students is higher than the one they will actually achieve. Calculations done with and without these students show that this has no effects on the findings related to political attitudes. The higher level of education refers to the school leaving certificate 'Abitur/Fachhochschulreife', the medium level to 'Mittlere Reife/Realschulabschluss', and the lowest level to 'Hauptschulabschluss' or less education.

Table 1. **Attitudes of young people 16 to 29 years to Europe, according to gender and region, 2003 (in percentages)***

	West			East			Germany
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Total
A. I understand how the European Union	45	58	52	42	49	45	50
B. The decisions taken by the European Commission in Brussels affect me	65	74	70	57	60	59	67
C. Europe is increasingly important for my future	72	76	74	63	64	64	72

Source: 2003 Survey of Youth DJI

* "Please tell how far you can apply to each of the following statements."

The scale of responses ranging from 1 "does not apply to anything" to 6 "will be fully implemented"; points 4 to 6 of the scale are identified as "applies". "I do not know" is not included in the calculations.

The percentage of interviewees who think that they understand how the European Union works (item A) and feel affected by decisions made by the European Commission increases with age, with the percentage of affirmative answers being lower among girls and young women throughout all age groups. These gender-specific differences confirm the findings that women are generally less interested in politics and consider themselves to have less political expertise than men (cf. Gille, 2004, Gaiser & Gille & de Rijke, 2006). When it comes to influencing factors, political interest, educational qualifications and knowledge of foreign languages are more important than gender (see below: «Factors that foster orientations towards Europe?») (5).

The fact that adolescents and young adults in East Germany have a more reserved attitude about Europe, as already evident in their attitudes towards Europe, is also reflected in their affective ties. Since the early 1990s, the DJI Youth Survey has been collecting data on young people's subjective identification with their geographically or politically defined territory by questioning them about their feelings of belonging and solidarity (cf. Table 2), which point to growing solidarity with both

Table 2. **Degree of identification with the reunified Germany and with the European Union among young people 16 to 29 years in 1992, 1997 and 2003 in West Germany and East Germany (in percentages)***

Sense of solidarity with	West			East		
	1992	1997	2003	1992	1997	2003
Germany's part of	58	49	50	68	69	69
The other part of Germany**	-	17	25	-	23	34
The reunified Germany	53	52	71	54	55	64
The European Union	37	26	40	21	19	31

Source: Survey of Youth DJI 1992, 1997 and 2003

* "Below you will be questioned about your feeling of attachment to your community or city, the old and new German Länder, Germany as a whole and the European Union. How strong are your ties with Germany as a whole and its citizens? How strong are your ties with the old German Länder and their inhabitants? How strong are your ties with the new German Länder and their inhabitants? How strong are your ties with the European Union and its citizens?" Answer options included: "I feel: rather strong ties, somewhat strong ties, slight ties, no ties at all".

** In 1992 this question was not asked.

(5)

The correlations between the three attitudes towards Europe and interest in politics range from -.30 to .40 (Spearman), between attitudes towards Europe and knowledge of foreign languages from .10 to .20 (Cramers V).

Germany as a whole and the European Union since 1997 in the old and new German *Länder*. Solidarity with Europe, however, ranks much lower than solidarity with other territories.

Noteworthy with respect to both aspects of territorial solidarity, i.e. solidarity with Germany as a whole and with the European Union, is the fact that they are less pronounced in East than in West Germany. Young people in the East German *Länder* feel that they have more bonds with their part of Germany, i.e. East Germany, than with Germany as a whole, which is in stark contrast to the West German *Länder*, where young people clearly identify more with Germany as a whole than their own part of Germany, i.e. West Germany. This may be due to the differences in the historical experiences of the people in the two parts of Germany. Until re-unification in 1990, «Germany» meant the old Federal Republic of Germany. After re-unification, the institutional, economical and political system of the old German *Länder* was transferred to the new German *Länder*. For people in the new German *Länder*, who account for about one-fifth of the German population, the political and economic situation in life changed drastically: positively, in terms of more democratic rights and possibilities of participation and negatively, in terms of the difficult economic situation, which has led to a high unemployment rate.

The affective ties with the two parts of the country as well as Germany as a whole and Europe are relatively closely and positively interlinked, thus confirming the thesis of multiple identities (6). This means that the various commitments strengthen one another and by no means conflict with one another. Among East German adolescents and young adults identification with East Germany, which is particularly significant for historical reasons, is also associated with affective ties with Germany as a whole. In general, there can thus be no talk of a sense of separate identity among young East Germans (Cf. Sardei-Biermann et al., 2005, Noll & Scheurer, 2006).

National and European solidarity is expressed more commonly by young people interested in politics. A feeling of social disadvantage is also very important for both types of affective bonding, viz, with Germany as a whole and Europe. For young East Germans, the extent to which they feel relatively disadvantaged plays an especially important role. In the new German *Länder*, the percentage of young people interviewed who feel strong or rather strong ties with Germany as a whole and Europe is far lower among young people who consider that they receive far less than «their fair share» of social wealth as compared with others living in Germany than it is among young people who think they receive their fair share or more (cf. Table 3). Among young West Germans, this connection is also noticeable but far less pronounced. The percentage of young East Germans who feel disadvantaged in this respect is also far higher (52 % of young East Germans versus 32 % of young West Germans consider that they receive much less or somewhat less than their «fair share»). Thus feelings of relative deprivation seem to encourage a reserved attitude towards political communities.

(6)
The correlation coefficient
(Pearson's r) is .37. cf. B. Westle
2003 (Note. 3).

Table 3. **Degree of identification with Germany and the European Union in 2003 according to different factors influence the differentiation and East/West (in percentages)***

	<i>Strengths rather strong ties with...</i>			
	<i>Germany West</i>	<i>European Union</i>	<i>Germany East</i>	<i>European Union</i>
Interest in politics**				
<i>Strong</i>	74	52	70	42
<i>Average</i>	75	41	67	32
<i>Low</i>	65	31	58	24
Fair in life***				
<i>What is fair or more</i>	75	44	69	38
<i>Slightly less than what is fair</i>	66	32	61	27
<i>Much less than what is fair</i>	64	30	50	13

Source: Youth Surveys 2003 DJI

* Cf. note in table 2.

** The question was: "How strong is your interest in politics?" Of the answer options "Very strong", "strong", "average", "very slight" and "not at all", "very strong" and "strong" are compiled in this table.

*** The question was: "In comparison to others who live in Germany; do you believe that you receive your fair share, more than your fair share, somewhat less or much less?" The results for the categories "fair share" and "more than your fair share" are compiled in this table.

Trust in European institutions

Many adolescents and young adults –also many adults– still feel far removed from Europe as a political region, as illustrated by the fact that over one third (37 %) of the interviewees, were unable to supply an answer when questioned about their trust in European institutions such as the European Commission or the European Parliament. (7) Admittedly, almost one in five (16 %) of the young people were also unable to say how much trust they placed in national institutions such as the Federal Constitutional Court or citizens' action groups. (8) As far as Germany's Parliament was concerned, 9 % of interviewees were unable to provide an assessment, whereas this applied to only 3 % of the young people, when asked how much trust they placed in the German government. The lower house of Germany's parliament (Bundestag) and the German government are the political institutions that play a central role in media reporting on politics and are strongly exposed to public criticism.

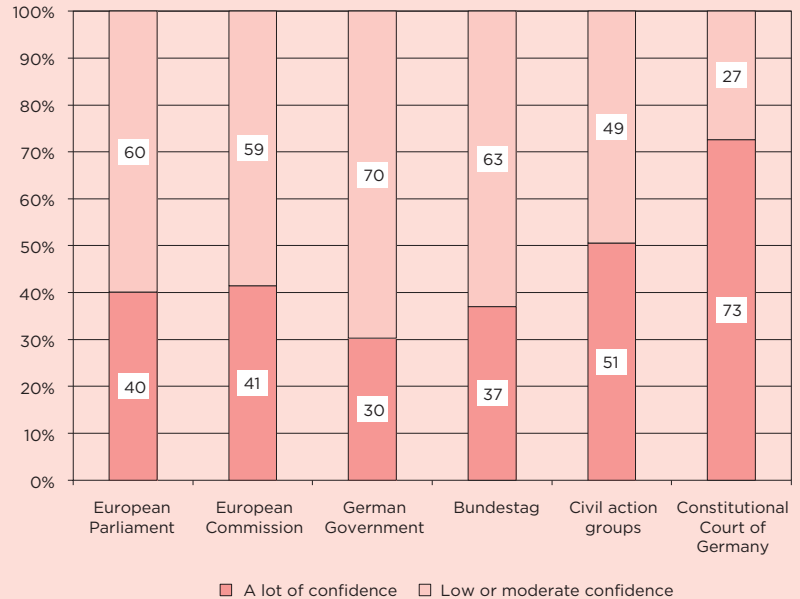
In the following we will take a closer look at the trust in various institutions by those interviewees, who had a decided opinion on the subject –whether positive or negative (very large amount of trust or no trust at all). Interviewee groups that did not supply a rating were here excluded. About 40 % of the young interviewees express a large amount of trust in European institutions such as the European Commission and the European Parliament (cf. Figure 1), while they place less trust in German political institutions such as the German government or the lower house of the Parliament in Germany (Bundestag); only approximately one-third of the young people place a large amount of trust in the latter, with the percentage of young people able to give an assessment being much larger, however. Young people in other European countries also place a larger amount of trust in European institutions than in national institutions, e.g. 15-to-25-year olds in Austria, France, Italy, Estonia and Slovakia, but not in the United Kingdom (EUYOUPART, 2005, p. 130). The trust placed in public institutions can be shown to increase, the more remote these institutions are from everyday

(7)
The exact wording of the question is quoted in the Note to Figure 1.

(8)
The majority of young people who do not provide an assessment reply «Can't say» and only a minority reply «Don't know»; according to their own statements, European institutions are not known to 6 % of the young people interviewed.

political activities (Gaiser et al., 2005). The only institution that succeeds in winning the trust of a majority of young people is the judiciary, e.g. Germany's Constitutional Court, which plays the role of mediator between politics and the law, a domain that is relatively remote from politics. Young people thus place a relatively large amount of trust in European organisations as compared with German institutions, although considerable differences in the ability to provide an assessment can be seen.

Chart 1. **Confidence in German and European institutions 2003* (in percentages)**



Source: 2003 Survey of Youth DJI: Base: Respondents Germans. N = 6326

* The question was: Now I will read a list of public institutions and organizations, please tell me how confident you are in every organization or institution. They had to use a scale of 1 to answer "no confidence at all" to 7 "a lot of confidence."

The interviewees also could respond "I do not know judge" or "I'm not familiar with this institution." The responses of 5 to 7 are designated as "very trustworthy" and from 1 to 4 as "low or moderate confidence", the two categories "I do not know prosecute" and "I'm not familiar with this institution" are not included in the calculations.

	A lot of confidence	Low or moderate confidence
European Parliament	40,1154548	59,8845452
European Commission	41,4650471	58,5349529
German Government	30,341219	69,658781
Bundestag	37,0324597	62,9675403
Civil action groups	50,5902488	49,4097512
Constitutional Court of Germany	72,6231033	27,3768967

In line with the clear, age-dependent increase in subjective political expertise among young people (de Rijke et al., 2006), their ability to judge also rises considerably, as witnessed by their assessment of European institutions: among the 16-to-17-year olds, 45 % see themselves as unable to provide an assessment, although even among the 27-to-29-year olds this applies to as many as 30 %. The age-related rise in ability to judge, however, does not result in a higher percentage of young people placing a large amount of trust in European institutions. Quite the contrary: this percentage decreases slightly with age. The same age-related differences are also noticeable when it comes to judging German political institutions. Regarding gender: the percentage of young men and young women who place a large amount of trust in European institutions is roughly the same. Gender-specific differences become evident, however, in the subjective ability to judge. Here young women are more reserved than young men, which is in line with the gender-specific differences noticed in young people's self-assessment of their subjective political expertise (cf. de Rijke et al., 2006).

As with political attitudes in general, pronounced educational-level-dependent differences are also noticeable in the assessment of European institutions. The trust that young people place in political institutions and their ability to judge increase considerably along with their level of education; while approx. one-third of young people with university-entry qualifications place a large amount of trust in political institutions, the same can be said only of one-fifth of young people with basic school leaving qualifications (Hauptschulabschluss). As with pro-European attitudes, a better knowledge of foreign languages and more interest in politics, which all depend on the level of education, are accompanied by a larger amount of trust in European institutions.

Trust in European institutions is strongly linked with a feeling of disadvantage concerning one's own situation in life; this link is also evident in both European and national ties. While less than one in five of the young people who think they receive somewhat or much less than their fair share compared to others in Germany, place trust in political institutions, the same can be said of approx. one in three of the young people who do not feel disadvantaged. Feeling disadvantaged apparently encourages reserve towards Europe.

Although the percentage of East Germans expressing solidarity with Europe was considerably lower than that of West Germans even in 2003 (cf. Table 2), there are only minor East-West differences when it comes to the trust young people place in European institutions. The percentage of young people, who say they place a large amount of trust in European institutions is only 4 % lower in East Germany than in West Germany, with the differences in the subjective ability to judge being equally small.

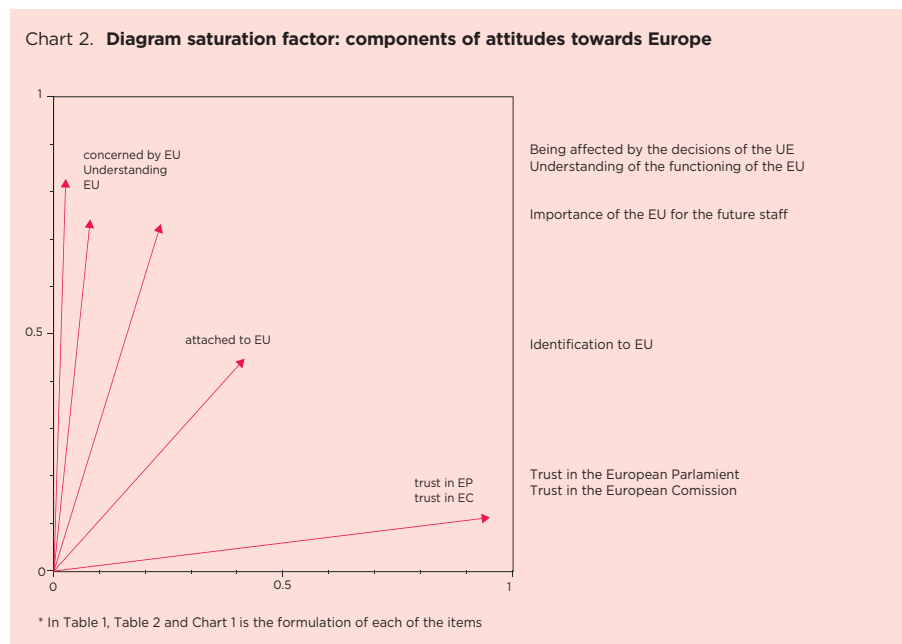
The DJI Youth Survey data allow changes in the amount of trust placed in European institutions to be analysed with the help of a comparison between 1997 and 2003. Analysis reveals that both trust and subjective assessment have increased slightly over this period of time, in particular in East Germany.

Links between attitudes towards Europe, feeling of attachment to Europe and trust in European institutions

The three aspects of young people's attitudes towards Europe addressed in the DJI Youth Survey (cf. Table 1) together, constitute a single attitudinal

dimension. (9) They include awareness of the significance of Europe, and thus of the processes of European unification, accompanied by awareness of the political significance of and understanding for Europe as a political entity. To be sure, only one element of possible attitudes towards Europe that might be important for a sustainable Europe, for example, as a political self-image as Europeans and a certain feeling of civic solidarity, is covered in this way (cf. Habermas, 2004, p. 57). Among adolescents and young adults, these attitudinal aspects may be regarded as favourable prerequisites for their coming to grips with Europe as a political community in the future.

Can the other two aspects of attitudes, e.g. ties with the European Union and trust in the political institutions of the EU be combined with these attitudes towards Europe? Whether a single dimension can be formed from the above characteristics or whether they are better described by two or several separate dimensions was investigated in a principal components analysis.



(9) An empirical analysis of one-dimensionality reveals a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.69 for the three attitudes towards Europe.

(10) Together, the two dimensions explain 67 % of overall variance; the loadings of the aspects on these two dimensions according to varimax rotation (forming the coordinates in Figure 2) are as follows: Trust in the European Parliament .95/.11, Trust in the European Commission .95/.11, Feeling affected by EU decisions .03/.82, Understanding how EU works .08/.74, Europe important for future .23/.73, Feeling solidarity with the European Union .41/.45.

The principal components analysis (PCA) in fact produces a two-dimensional relational structure between the characteristics. (10) Figure 2 shows a loading plot of the variables on the two dimensions. The proximity of the two vectors to one another (more precisely: the angle between them) corresponds to mutual relationships or distances (for loading plot interpretation, cf. Schnell 1994, p. 168, Tabachnick/Fidell 1996, p. 675 et seq.). The three items of attitude towards Europe are closely related, forming a single dimension. A high level of trust in European institutions, by contrast, constitutes an independent dimension. This level of trust probably reflects how young people perceive and evaluate the narrower political sector, which is structured by these institutions and activates, as policy of «remote» Brussels or Strasbourg, other attitude segments than those that concern the significance of Europe for their own lives, which is of a more diffuse nature.

A feeling of solidarity, in turn, seems to include sub-aspects of this link with the EU, as indicated by moderate empirical relations with the two distinguishable areas of attitude. In line with the above, this position is situated between the two other bundles of variables in the figure.

It is thus impossible to speak of a homogeneous complex of «attitudes towards the EU», instead various aspects thus have to be considered. (11) The dimension of attitudes towards Europe consisting of the following elements will be examined more closely below: the extent to which young people feel affected by the EU, their understanding of how the EU works and their assessment of the importance of Europe for their future.

Factors that foster orientations towards Europe?

What factors foster a pro-EU position? A number of features that may be regarded as skills for coping with an increasingly complex modern society characterised by economic globalisation and the factual relevance of European unification processes are addressed below. In this context, the aspects that proved to be closely interrelated in the above section, will be taken as attitudes towards the EU (see Table 1).

Which attitudes and skills can influence such EU orientations? Four characteristics will be examined in more detail below: the first is interest in politics. Europe is a political entity involving complicated functional mechanisms and repeated presence in the political media. For young people who are more interested in politics in general –without necessarily focusing on European or global politics– Europe will thus be more important than for young people who are not very interested in politics. Greater interest in Europe can also be assumed in young people with higher educational qualifications, who have spent many years in general educational institutions such as high schools (Gymnasium) or technical colleges (Fachoberschule). These institutions focus more on European perspectives in their curricula and are also more likely to offer possibilities of direct exchange, such as school exchanges or trips to other European countries. The fact that languages are more intensively and comprehensively taught at these schools, for example, contributes to a broadening of the horizon through European perspectives. Knowledge of several languages, should be seen as an additional characteristic, even if it is strongly associated with the length of school education (cf. Fuss et al., 2004).

Last but not least, confidence in one's own scope of action should also be included among those characteristics that may have a positive effect on EU attitudes. Such confidence was conceived as a person's «internal locus of control» and confidence that own actions and endeavours play a central role in influencing the sense of their lives, i.e. their belief, that goals and objectives can be achieved through their own abilities and efforts, irrespective of fate, chance or luck (Jacoby & Jacob, 1999). Such confidence concerning the reliability of one's own scope of action might also promote a broader horizon that includes the EU as a relevant field for one's interests and activities –this, at least, is the assumption made in this article.

Two further characteristics that can be assumed to influence young people's attitudes towards Europe also will be examined. First, on a personal level, the feeling of general uncertainty or disorientation, which tends to have an inhibiting effect, of course. This is a feeling of living in a world with an

(11)

Our data do not empirically support the theory of a conflict between EU orientations and national feelings or attitudes, also discussed by Westle, 2003. To be proud of being German has hardly any association with any of the three aspects of EU orientation (all correlations being under .05). National pride is thus independent from attitudes towards Europe.

«uncertain» future and, was treated as a consequence of processes of disintegration, i.e. the disadvantages of individualisation, by Heitmeyer, above all (Heitmeyer et al., 1995, Heitmeyer, 1997). As a subjective reaction to societal changes associated with uncertainty and disorientation concerning the ability to plan and pessimistic views of the future, this feeling may also stand in the way of openness towards Europe and European development processes. The second aspect, assessment of democracy, is more on the evaluative level.

Finally, Westle provided empirical proof that democratic action and satisfaction with democratic processes strengthen a sense of solidarity with the European community. She concluded that citizens' satisfaction with democracy in the EU and in their own country is an important requirement for identification with these two political structures (Westle, 2003). This being the case, this article examines the extent to which satisfaction with the democracy of one's own country strengthens a pro-European position.

The question of how the above characteristics influence attitudes towards Europe is investigated below. In this context, interactions, rather than clear causal relationships, must probably be expected. A better knowledge of foreign languages, for example, should not be interpreted as a clear «cause» of a more pro-EU position because it can also be assumed, on the other hand, that awareness of the significance of the EU motivates people to learn foreign languages.

(12)

Variables were constructed as follows: Strong EU orientations: percentage of young people interviewed who gave 4-6 points on the scale for all three items (cf. Table 1). Political interest: question "How strong is your interest in politics?": "strong", when answer options "very strong" or "strong" were selected, "moderate/low", when answer options "average", "very little" or "not at all" were selected. Educational qualifications: "Abitur" means university or university of applied sciences qualification, "MR/HS" means intermediate or basic school leaving qualifications. Trust in ability to determine the course of one's own life: Mean sum score of 3 items ("I like to take responsibility", "It has turned out to be better for me to make decisions myself than to depend on fate", "When I am faced with problems or obstacles, I usually find ways and means to be successful"; Answer scale from 1 "does not apply at all" to 6 "completely applies"); "high": values exceeding 5, "moderate/low": values up to 5 (these dichotomisation was chosen since values 1 to 3 only received a small number of answers). Language skills: question: "Which languages (besides German) do you know so well that you can converse with others? 10 possible languages,

Table 4. **Determinants of attitudes towards Europe (OLS regression)**

Predictors	Beta (standardized coefficient)
<i>Gender (male)</i>	.09
<i>Age</i>	.04
<i>West-East (West)</i>	.06
<i>Member clubs or organizations</i>	.05
<i>Educational qualifications</i>	.15
<i>Knowledge of languages</i>	.09
<i>Interest in politics</i>	.24
<i>Confidence in the ability to defirmir the course of one's life</i>	.13
<i>Disorientation</i>	-.08
<i>Satisfaction with democracy</i>	.11
Explained variance (R²)	.25

Source: Youth Surveys 2003 DJI
Definition of factors and level of pronouncement, see Note 12

First of all, clear associations with orientations towards the EU can be ascertained for all characteristics: a pronounced interest in politics, higher educational qualifications, a large amount of trust in one's ability to influence the course of one's life, satisfaction with democracy and knowledge of several foreign languages have a positive influence on EU attitudes. Table 4 shows the standardised regression coefficients for European orientations in relation to the above characteristics. Other control variables include gender, age, regional living situation in the old and new German *Länder* and membership in clubs and associations.

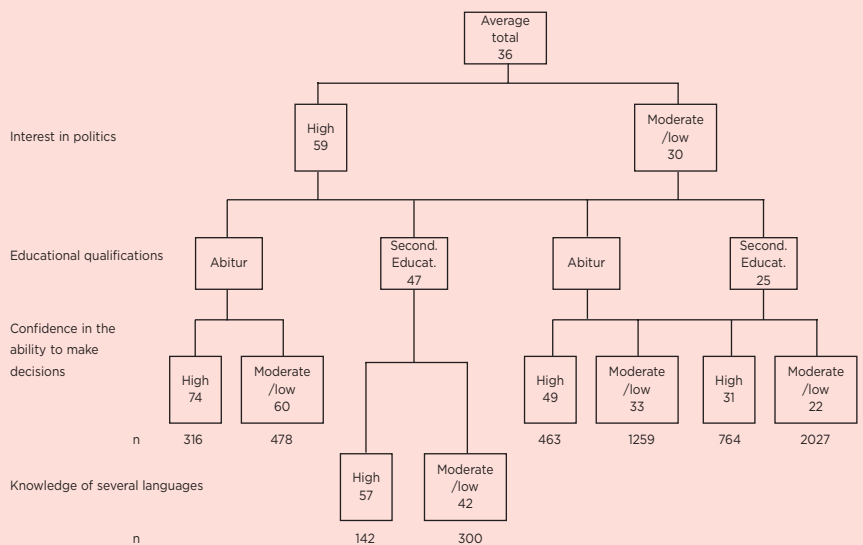
It can be seen that the competence characteristics addressed have a pronounced influence. Satisfaction with democracy also exerts a considerable influence, which may be considered as a confirmation of Westle's hypothesis.

Below, the article will focus above all on those characteristics that can be seen as competencies that foster pro-European attitudes, i.e. educational qualifications, interest in politics, internal locus of control (i.e. trust in one's ability to influence the course of one's life) and knowledge of foreign languages. Contrast groups were compared to obtain a simplified picture of the joint effects of these variables. In Figure 3, these characteristics were dichotomised; the percentage of young people with a highly positive attitude towards the EU is indicated in each sub-group defined by these characteristics or combinations thereof. (12) The sample is hereby broken down according to the extent of the above characteristics, and the percentage of young people with a highly positive attitude towards the EU is identified in each resultant group. Each of the groups formed at the lowest level of the breakdown is thus characterised by different combinations of the variables examined here. (13)

“high”: more than one other language, “moderate/low”: at most one additional language. – (For the purpose of regression, variables were not used in dichotomized form).
 Uncertainty or disorientation: Sum index of one of the following three items: A. Nowadays everything has become so uncertain, that one has to be prepared for anything. B. Today everything changes so fast that one doesn't know what to rely to C. People were better off before, because everyone knew what he or she had to do. Answer options are: 1=not true at all, 2=somewhat untrue, 3=somewhat true, 4=completely true. Satisfaction with democracy. Question: «All in all, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the democracy found in the Federal Republic?» – Answer options: Very satisfied - Quite satisfied - Somewhat satisfied - Somewhat dissatisfied - Quite dissatisfied - Very dissatisfied - Don't know.

(13)
 Breakdown was effected with the «SPSS Answer Tree» software. The CHAID algorithm was used as criterion for successive breakdown, starting from the «Overall average» cell, which, on the basis of chi-square statistics, selects the most discriminating characteristics at every further level.

Chart 3. Attitudes towards the EU, as interest in politics, educational qualifications, confidence in the ability to make decisions and knowledge of languages (The percentages quoted refer to positive attitudes towards the EU)



Source: Youth Surveys 2003 DJI
 Definition of factors and level of pronouncement, see Note 12

Interest in politics is clearly one of the most differentiating characteristics. 59 % of people with a pronounced interest in politics have a positive attitude towards the EU, while the same can be said of only 30 % of people with a moderate or small interest in politics, a difference of 29 %. The level of education comes into play at the next level. As many as 66 % of people with a pronounced interest in politics and university-entry qualifications (Abitur) have

a positive attitude towards the EU, in contrast to 47 % among young people with intermediate leaving qualifications at the most. The corresponding values for people who are less interested in politics are clearly lower, whereby an education-related effect can still be seen (38 % versus 25 %).

Finally, as the third most important characteristic, trust in one's internal locus of control, is also included. In people with a pronounced interest in politics and high educational qualifications, this aspect further strengthens a pro-EU position. 74 % of those who, in addition to the above combination of characteristics, also have a large amount of trust in their own abilities to determine the course of their lives have a very pro-EU position, while the same can be said for only 60 % of young people with a small amount of trust. Approval of the EU is lowest, i.e. only 22 %, in the group of young people with a low level of interest in politics, a low level of educational qualifications and a low level of trust in their abilities to determine the course of their own lives. Noteworthy is the fact that 49 % of the group with a low level of interest in politics but a high level of education and high internal locus of control have a pro-EU position, considerably more than the overall average (36 %, top cell). High educational qualifications and a high level of self-confidence may lead to recognition of the importance of the EU, even in young people with a low level of political interest. The figure also shows that low educational qualifications in people with a pronounced political interest may be compensated by a high level of language skills. 57% of those in this group have a positive attitude towards the EU. In other groups, knowledge of several languages, which represents the next level, does not have any additional effects; i.e. the groups are not further subdivided in Figure 3.

Overall, multivariate analysis confirms the effects of the examined characteristics on positive perception of EU significance, with interest in politics producing the most pronounced differences, followed by level of education which results in the second most pronounced differences and trust in one's ability to determine the course of one's life ranking third on the list. As already mentioned, these aspect should be seen more as characteristics, factors acting in a mutually reinforcing, dynamic manner and not so much as clearly directed causal relationships. Within this context, the combinations at the two opposing ends of the scale are 74 % (high interest in politics, educational qualifications, internal locus of control) and 22 % (moderate to low levels in each case). It must be noted, however, that case numbers in the «high level» groups were generally smaller than in the «low-end» groups.

Summary and outlook

Attitudes towards Europe have many aspects and cannot be covered by a single dimension. Within this context, a distinction must be made between sceptical attitudes towards the political sphere in the narrow sense of the word and a tendency towards pro European attitudes as far as one's own plans for life are concerned. The attitudes towards Europe of adolescents and young adults show that the majority of the upcoming generation in Germany is indeed aware of the significance of Europe and the processes of European unification and recognises the importance of Europe as a political entity. A positive attitude towards Europe, however, is clearly more pronounced in West than in East Germany, but has been on the rise since 1997.

When it came to evaluating European institutions, however, a considerable percentage of the young interviewees lacked the confidence to do so, thus confirming the frequent complaints about a deficit in information about the institutional procedures and the possibilities of participation within the European context. Those, however, who had the confidence to do so, considered the Brussels and Strasbourg-based European institutions even more credible than the corresponding German institutions, namely the German government and the lower house of the German parliament (Bundestag).

A high level of interest in politics, a higher educational level, trust in one's ability to determine one's course of life and language skills are associated with pro-EU positions. Even in those who are not very interested in politics, a higher level of education and awareness of the efficacy of their own actions may result in a high level of recognition of the importance of Europe. A lower level of education, however, is not necessarily associated with a reserved attitude towards Europe, as it may be compensated by interest in politics and language skills.

The results presented here thus indeed provide evidence confirming the assumption of the development of multilingual European functional elites, which was formulated by Lepsius. Since this assumption only applies to a certain percentage of the younger generation, however, the following question arises: what about the others, who run the risk of being among the losers of modernisation processes. In this connection, people excluded from inclusion processes on both the political and economic level may face a further serious problem (Blossfeld et al., 2005).

European unification is a lengthy process. Whereas older people have accompanied every step of this unification process, young people growing up in Europe today experience Europe as a complex and dynamic scope for political processes and individual action. Competences and the ability to seize opportunities during adolescence help them to make the most of this scope for action and the possibility of developing European awareness. A feeling of disadvantage and lack of access to the more far-reaching possibilities of supra-regional and supra-national integration, however, have a limiting effect on a positive European image. For this reason too, a higher level of education, in particular political education, and the fostering of individual competencies are important for the sustainability of future generations.

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Voter participation of young Europeans. The case of the 2004 European Parliament elections

In this article we carry out a comparative analysis of the voter participation of young Spanish people in comparison to other young Europeans in the context of a common electoral process for them all: the European Parliament elections. Therefore we have used data provided by the *European Electoral Studies 2004*, and as independent explicative variables for different behaviours we use attitudes of young Europeans towards the European Union. The analysis allows us to highlight the relevance of the feeling of belonging and the pride of being a European citizen as the most important variables that explain participation in European elections.

Analysis of youth's political behaviour

Political participation constitutes one of the priorities of this analysis, as it is one of the central elements of democracy. Therefore, changes in the patterns of participation are very interesting, and sometimes can become a concern for researchers and political decision-makers due to the repercussions for the legitimacy of the democratic political system. Transformations in the practice of rights and obligations in general, or among a certain group in particular, awakens the curiosity of researchers for knowing and explaining the reasons behind it. Some of the reasons are related to the change of attitudes towards politics, and some to social and cultural changes derived from the modernization processes of societies.

Among the different analyses about political participation many are focused on voter participation exclusively. Some have proven the decrease of voter participation (Blais et al., 2004; Dalton, 2007) mainly among young people, in comparison to previous generations and in comparison to the rest of the population. In many occasions, young people are described as apathetic, indifferent, uninterested or disconnected with regard to politics. On the contrary, other analyses have come to the conclusion that young people are in fact interested in politics, but they use different forms of political participation (O'Toole et al., 2003; Cunningham and Lavallette, 2004; Weinstein, 2004; Stolle y Hooghe 2005). What seems to be changing is the type of participation, which changes from conventional forms to non-conventional forms. Some authors have called these new forms of participation "cause-oriented styles" (Norris, 2003), "one-off issue politics" (Hoskins, 2003), or "extra-representative expression instruments" (Torcal, Montero & Teorell, 2003), trying to highlight that the characteristics of this

type of activities or instruments through which this group of the population tries to influence on politics. (1)

The decline of the interest in (and the use of) traditional instruments of participation does not mean that young people are not linked to politics, but just that we need to widen the definition of participation to include new forms of political engagement. Hoskins (2003:3) insists on pointing out that the private and personal sphere of the young people provide indicators to measure their own political engagement. For example, the expression of said engagement could happen through the clothes they wear, the music they listen to or the food they buy. So, if they change their forms of political participation and engagement, we will need to find new indicators in order for us to be able to measure the changes.

The appearance of new technologies of information and communication, and the new demands of young people, added to the decrease of the use of traditional or conventional political participation divides analyses of this group of the population into three big groups. The first group includes researches that, following the most classical analyses about political participation (such as Milbrath and Goel, 1977), mainly try to explain differences regarding the patterns of behaviour of young people by referring to a specific age group in front of the rest of the population (Quintelier, 2007, Goerres, 2007). A second group includes those studies that focus on the interior of the group of young people and try to find differences between age cohorts and between adolescence and youth (Krampen, 2000; Smith, 1999), and lastly there are studies that try to find explanations of the differences and similarities in the patterns of political behaviour of young people by studying and identifying differentiated contexts, that is, comparative studies (Anduiza, 2001, Cainzos, 2006, Westphal, 2006).

These analyses made use of different factors to explain the differences in behaviour, such as the appearance and development of post-materialistic values derived from the process of modernization following Inglehart's theories, the increase of individualism (Bennet, 1998), the loss of importance of traditional cleavages of the social class, religion or rural-urban areas to determine the levels of political and voter participation, and the importance of mass media regarding the increase of the level of cynicism and apathy (Pinkleton & Weintraub, 2001). Among them, two types of effect were also taken into account to explain the change of the patterns of behaviour: the generational effect (or cohort effect) and the life-cycle effect (2). The generational effect has two connotations. The first one refers to the fact that people of the same age and faced with the same event can react differently depending on the situation and context they live in. In this sense, the objective is to look for those variables that make young people of the same age act differently in different periods of time. The life-cycle effect is related to the process of growth and, therefore, it explains that young people, as they gradually become adults, also acquire more experience in terms of the political and electoral processes, and at the same time, they access higher levels of education and a more stable economic and labour situation.

(1)
For a comprehensive and comparative analysis about participation of young Spanish people in demonstrations, see the article by Miguel Cainzos, number 75 of the *Revista de Estudios de Juventud*

(2)
These two effects were analyzed for the Spanish case in a work by Moral and Mateos (2002) regarding electoral participation and the change of young people's attitudes.

In this article we will carry out a comparative analysis of voter participation of young Spanish people and young Europeans in a common electoral process such as the elections for the European parliament. Therefore, this is a partial analysis of political participation focusing on the forms of voter participation with regard to a certain event where the increase of abstention

is remarkable in comparison to other elections. Although this approach is partial, it complements the group of comparative analyses previously presented. In this case, the main interest is not identifying new forms of political participation, but understanding and explaining why there is such low conventional political participation. Due to the quantity of considered countries, we limited our comparative analysis to young people only, that is, the comparison between young people from different EU-member countries, and not between young people and adults in each country. As will be explained later in the section about objectives and data, explicative variables for voter participation in this kind of elections are: political attitudes of young people towards what it means to be a European citizen and towards European institutions, as well as other introduced socio-demographic control variables.

This article is structured in four sections. The first section highlights the characteristics that make elections for the European Parliament different in comparison to the rest of elections, and we will present some of the factors that can explain different levels of participation between countries. The second section focuses on the characteristics and the justification of the data and the cases used to carry out the analyses in sections three and four. The section entitled “Youth and European Union” aims to descriptively present differences between young people regarding affective orientations of young people as European citizens and their assessment of European institutions. The last section uses these political orientations towards the European Union and other specific factors of the elections as possible explicative variables for participation in this type of events.

European elections: are they second or third-rate elections?

The European Parliament is the only supranational assembly directly elected by the citizens of the member states. Therefore, elections for the European Parliament constitute the main instrument of participation and direct influence of citizens on issues of the European Union. However, low levels of participation characterize these elections. They have been identified as second-rate elections, as citizens give little political importance to what is to be decided through them and voters feel their votes are not important (Font, 1995: 15).

This type election also presents a different type of characteristics, which highlight its peculiarities in front of other electoral processes. In the first place, it is a process that leads to a single organ of representation, but the selection of representatives does not take place through a common electoral system. There is no electoral regulation applicable for all states; each country chooses its own representatives through different norms (3). The type and size of the circumscription, the obligation to vote or not, the compatibility or not with national mandates, the day of the elections, the electoral formula to distribute the seats, the electoral threshold, closed or open lists; these are some of the main variables that vary from country to country. So, for example, Spain has one single circumscription and a proportional electoral system, while in countries such as Belgium vote is preferential and circumscriptions regional (4).

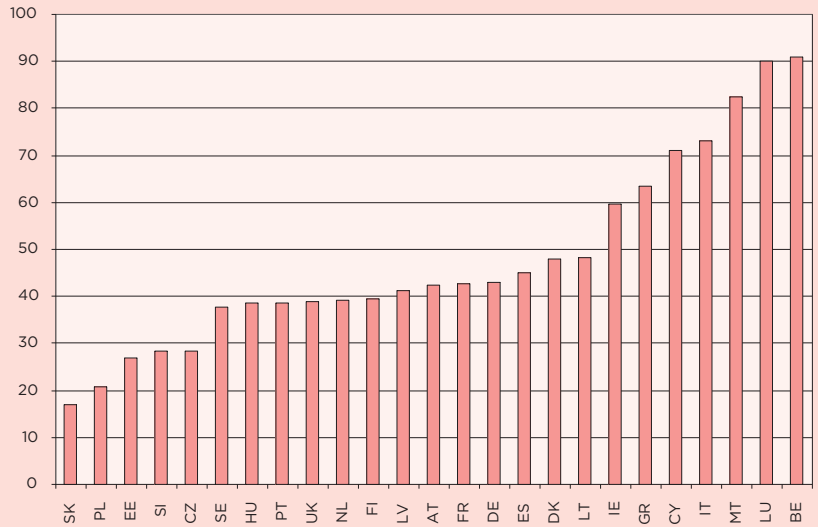
A second relevant characteristic for the different importance of these elections is that although the election of representatives is carried out

(3)
Besides, these norms can at the same time differ from the norms used for national electoral processes.

(4)
For a detailed description of institutional peculiarities in each country see:
<http://www.europarl.es/>

through different processes, elected members of the parliament are not distributed depending on nationality, but on political groups. In this case, their political affinity determines their capacity and power in the Chamber (5).

Chart 1. Total real participation in the European Parliament elections, 2004



Source: European Parliament.

As shown in Chart 1, total real participation in the European Parliament elections in 2004 was very different depending on the country, and the total average participation was 47.8%. This could lead us to even refer of third-rate elections. Participation in Belgium and Luxembourg was very high (90%, obligation to vote), in front of Sweden and Hungary, with a participation rate of 40%, and much more than in other countries that only recently entered the European Union such as Poland and Slovakia, where the participation rate was under 20%. However, these striking differences seem to only be the consequence of the European electoral context, as there are not as many notable differences between countries when we compare other types of election. Rico and Font (2000: 215) show how average participation in national elections does not differ as much between countries as in European elections. Therefore, the mentioned institutional factors could explain the variation of the percentages of participation, but they are not the only factors that contribute to these differences.

In 2004, and for the Spanish case, national and European elections coincided, only separated by two months (in March the national general elections and in May the European elections). This short time between elections and the results regarding participation justify Rico's and Font's theory to explain low participation in European elections in comparison to national elections: "*if not much time has passed since the general elections, that what might happen in European elections is not interesting and participation suffers*". However, the political situation around the general elections did not transfer to the European context; there were much lower

(5)

Currently, there are seven political groups: European People's Party (EPP), the European Democrats, the Party of European Socialists, The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), the Green / European Free Alliance, the Independence and Democracy Group, and the Union for Europe of the Nations.

levels of voter mobilization for the European elections. All of this makes us think that it is a necessity to take other individual variables into account in order to explain said behaviour. The individual variables considered in this paper are related to the attitudes of citizens towards the European Union and its institutions. As you will see later on, differences between countries and specifically between young people are notable.

Orientations towards the European Union have been used as variables to explain low participation rates in elections for the European Parliament. The lack of favourable attitudes (or feelings of belonging) towards the European Union and its institutions could justify abstention in this kind of elections. But regarding the issue of the importance of euro-sceptic attitudes for participation rates, there are different approaches (Van Ewijk & Van Egmond, 2007: 563). With regard to the total population, there are studies that state that there are not enough evidences to reach conclusive conclusions. According to other author like Blondel, Sinnott and Svensson, attitudes towards European integration, the European Parliament, political parties and candidates presented in the elections of the year 1994 in fact do show a positive relation to participation in this type of elections.

The following sections try to contribute to this debate by proving the relevance of these attitudinal variables among young Europeans for the case of the elections in the year 2004. We expect that young people with pro-European attitudes, with high levels of identification as European citizens, and more trust in European institutions will be the ones who will show higher levels of participation than others that do not present these attitudes.

Objectives and data

Specific objectives of this article are to initially describe the conflict between participation versus abstention among young Spanish people in comparison to young Europeans in the elections for the European Parliament, and then analyze the differences of these patterns of behaviour. Independent variables through which we to explain the behaviour are individual and related to the political attitudes of youth towards the European Union.

The attitudinal indicators considered for this article take into account situational elements, such as interest in the electoral campaign for the 2004 elections, as well as attitudes that are related to specific support, and feelings of belonging, towards the European Union. Combining more situational aspects with other aspects referred to the European Union itself could establish some differences in terms of the level of voter participation.

The difficulty of surveys with large and representative samples on a European level and focused on young people constitutes a major problem to reach reliable conclusions about the attitudes and behaviours. Being aware of this limitation, but also knowing of the interest of such an approach to comparative studies, we used the data of the European Electoral Studies corresponding to the year 2004. This is a study carried out in all EU-member states before May 2004 with equivalent questions for all countries, therefore allowing comparisons. Lithuania and Luxembourg were removed from the matrix, as the samples for these countries did not include the population under 30. Therefore, the total number of cases in this study is 22, and the analyzed group of the population are people between 18 and 30 years of age. Specific information regarding each country can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. **Characteristics of the study**

Country	Abbreviation	Sample	% Sample Young people	% Sample Rest of the population
Austria	AT	1,010	15.2	84.8
Belgium	BE	889	16.6	83.4
United Kingdom	UK	1,500	14.8	85.2
Cyprus	CY	500	25.2	74.8
Czech Republic	CZ	889	16.8	83.2
Denmark	DK	1,317	16.6	83.4
Estonia	EE	1,606	17.9	82.1
Finland	FI	900	15.9	84.1
France	FR	1,406	19.1	80.9
Germany	DE	596	17.4	82.6
Greece	GR	500	19.4	80.6
Hungary	HU	1,200	13.5	86.5
Ireland	IE	1,154	15.5	84.5
Italia	IT	1,553	10.3	89.7
Latvia	LV	1,000	23.8	76.2
Netherlands	NL	1,586	7.4	92.6
Poland	PL	960	22.5	77.5
Portugal	PT	1,000	21.3	78.7
Slovakia	SK	1,063	25.9	74.1
Slovenia	SI	1,002	19.2	80.8
Spain	ES	1,208	22.8	77.2
Sweden	SE	2,100	18.5	81.5
Total		24,939	15.9	84.1

Malta, Rumania and Bulgaria are not included in the study, as it was carried out in 2004. The samples of Lithuania and Luxembourg did not include people over 30 years of age.

Youth and the European Union

This section aims to describe the similarities or differences regarding attitudes of young people towards the European Union. Therefore, we have selected four indicators, two of them referring to the European citizenship: considering oneself a European citizen and, at the same time, a citizen of his/her country, and the level of pro-European feelings measured through the personal pride of being a European citizen. The other two indicators reflect affective orientations and assessment of the European Union: trust in European institutions and level of satisfaction with how democracy works in the European Union.

European citizenship

The Maastricht Treaty in 1992 institutionalized European citizenship for all those persons with the nationality of a member state. This citizenship complements the national citizenship. However, not all Europeans feel as European citizens. Sharing both citizenships, obtaining a series of rights and obligations is not always a guarantee that people will feel or see themselves as such.

In the case of young Europeans, and in general terms, it is not very frequent among European people to see themselves as both European citizens and citizens of their own country. In fact, there is a high percentage of people who never think of themselves as having two citizenships: 57% of the young people in Great Britain, 43% of the young interviewees in Germany, 53% in the Netherlands, or 68% in Hungary. In this sense,

young Spanish people follow the general trend and 57% of them only sometimes think of themselves as having two citizenships. On the contrary, young people from Greece (39%), France (30%), followed by Cyprus, Ireland, Austria, Italy and Portugal (around 20%) see themselves more often as citizens of both their country and the European Union (See Table 2).

Table 2. **European Citizenship (in %)**

	Feel both a European citizen and a citizen of the own country			Feeling proud of being a European citizen	
	Often	Sometimes	Never	Very much Pretty much	Little Nothing
Austria	24.7	36.4	38.3	46.7	50.6
Belgium	19.6	50.7	29.7	72.6	27.4
United Kingdom	14.5	28.6	56.8	51.4	41
Cyprus	27.8	57.9	14.3	69.8	27.7
Czech Republic	8.1	36.9	38.3	34.9	43.6
Denmark	15.1	43.1	38.5	58.3	22.9
Estonia	9.4	48.3	40.6	35.8	57.3
Finland	18.9	50.3	30.8	46.2	51.8
France	29.7	37.9	32.3	81.4	17.4
Germany	21.8	34.7	43.6	54	40.2
Greece	39.2	34.0	25.8	62.9	34
Hungary	6.8	24.7	68.5	59.9	31.5
Ireland	22.9	42.5	34.6	78.2	20.6
Italia	23.7	49.4	24.4	66.6	17.9
Latvia	10.1	47.5	39.9	32.8	57.6
Netherlands	5.9	33.9	53.4	31.3	49.1
Poland	17.6	47.2	32.4	58.3	25.9
Portugal	23.0	64.8	12.2	88.3	11.7
Slovakia	14.2	43.3	39.6	45.4	37.1
Slovenia	18.8	43.2	34.4	38.5	55.2
Spain	6.2	57.1	33.7	74.3	19.8
Sweden	*	*	*	24.9	32.1
Total	17.1	44.2	36.5	53.9	34.6

Question: Do you think of yourself not only as a Spanish citizen, but also as a citizen of the European Union sometimes?

* No data available

Being aware of this double citizenship more often seems to be related in some countries to feel proud of being a citizen of the European Union. In Greece (32%), France (28%), Ireland (23%), Italy (24%) and Portugal (23%) young people are prouder of being European citizens. The Spanish case surprises, as nearly three out of four young people feel very proud of being European citizens, however, only 6% of them think of themselves as Spanish and European citizens. All in all, young people who think of themselves as European citizens and citizens of their country are also the ones who feel very proud of being Europeans.

The time those countries have already been members of the European Union establishes a difference with regard to the internalization of the condition of citizen and the pride of this situation. In this sense, six out of ten young people in Estonia, Latvia and Slovakia are little or not at all proud of being European citizens.

Trust in European institutions and satisfaction with democracy in the EU

A characteristic element of many democratic countries is the increase of political attitudes of distancing and disconnection regarding politics. This decrease of engagement is usually a consequence of the loss of trust of citizens in political institutions, political parties and politicians. Previously, we have mentioned that some of the descriptions of young people's behaviour are related to the presence of this type of attitudes, such as apathy, cynicism or disaffection. Torcal (2005) identifies two dimensions in the concept of political disaffection: political disconnection and institutional disaffection. The first dimension is formed by the perception of a lack of responsibility of political authorities and institutions, and the second one is related to the absence of trust of citizens in institutions and politicians. Institutional disaffection is independent from the support of the political regime by individuals and therefore does not imply a crisis of democratic legitimacy. If that would be so, young Europeans would distrust institutions very much and would be more or less satisfied with the political system.

In this case, there are several indicators regarding institutional trust: specifically, trust in the European Parliament, the European Commission and the European Council. The best way to describe levels of trust in these institutions (Table 3) is: limited differences of trust in these three institutions and a general medium level of trust. Only in some cases distrust is higher than trust, for example, among British and Swedish people.

Table 3. **Average trust in European institutions (typical deviation) (from 1 to 10)**

	European Parliament	European Commission	Council of Europe	Average institutional trust
Austria	4.84 (2.23)	5.00 (2.07)	4.57 (1.95)	4.8
Belgium	5.19 (1.99)	5.07 (2.03)	4.88 (2.02)	5.8
United Kingdom	4.65 (2.17)	4.44 (2.02)	4.27 (1.89)	4.4
Cyprus	5.95 (1.83)	5.78 (1.68)	5.78 (1.84)	5.8
Czech Republic	5.18 (2.55)	5.05 (1.51)	4.69 (2.49)	4.9
Denmark	5.78 (2.11)	5.49 (2.04)	5.79 (2.05)	5.7
Estonia	5.40 (2.26)	5.40 (2.38)	5.32 (2.39)	5.4
Finland	5.22 (1.82)	5.28 (1.94)	5.04 (2.08)	5.1
France	5.19 (2.19)	5.27 (2.05)	4.65 (2.22)	5.0
Germany	5.40 (2.05)	4.85 (1.98)	4.75 (1.88)	5.0
Greece	5.83 (2.57)	5.89 (2.44)	5.75 (2.28)	5.7
Hungary	5.90 (2.12)	5.82 (2.26)	5.35 (2.18)	5.7
Ireland	5.09 (2.34)	4.89 (2.24)	4.14 (2.32)	4.6
Italia	5.49 (1.85)	5.43 (1.89)	*	5.4
Latvia	5.17 (2.34)	5.12 (2.40)	4.93 (2.32)	4.9
Netherlands	4.97 (1.75)	4.92 (1.77)	5.05 (1.67)	5.0
Poland	5.11 (2.38)	4.94 (2.23)	4.76 (2.30)	4.9
Portugal	6.49 (2.05)	6.23 (2.07)	6.16 (2.02)	6.2
Slovakia	3.57 (2.21)	5.24 (2.73)	5.07 (2.44)	4.6
Slovenia	5.61 (2.39)	5.78 (2.33)	5.59 (2.37)	5.7
Spain	5.34 (1.73)	5.35 (1.71)	5.31 (1.66)	5.3
Sweden	3.64 (2.21)	3.62 (2.15)	3.57 (2.18)	3.6
Total	5.15 (2.27)	5.21 (2.20)	5.00 (2.23)	5.1

Question: Regarding the following institutions, can you tell me if you know them and if yes could you express your opinion about them where 1 is the worst and 10 the best assessment.

For the cases of Spain and Sweden the minimum value was 0 and not 1.

No data available for Italy regarding the Council

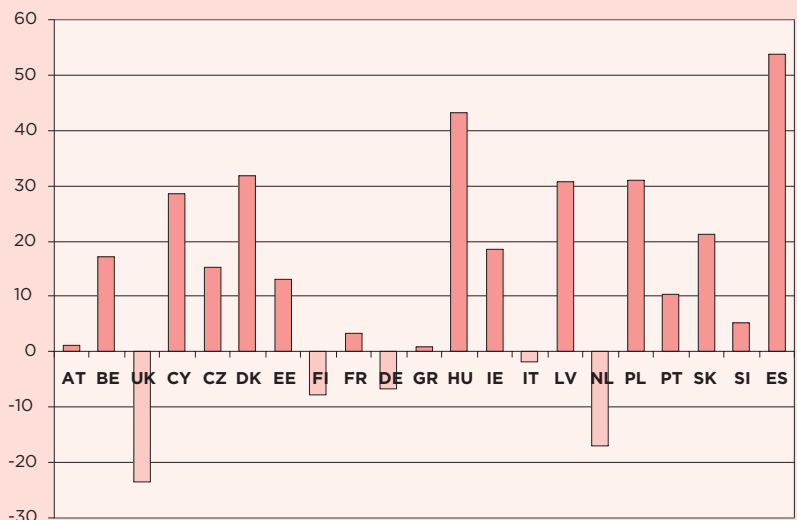
On the opposite side, trust is very high among young people from Cyprus, Hungary, Denmark, Portugal and Greece. Within these countries, there are no big differences of trust between these institutions, which means their reputation is very similar.

Another indicator that allows us to measure the level of legitimacy and acceptance of the political system is the level of satisfaction with how democracy works. Satisfaction of each individual is usually the result of combining perceived quality and awaited quality. In this sense, and regarding the context of the European Union, satisfaction is higher than dissatisfaction. We could say that perceived quality is higher than awaited regarding the political democratic system in the European Union, although there is a group of countries where young people are clearly dissatisfied: Great Britain and the Netherlands, followed by Finland and Germany. But the most important thing is that these attitudinal characteristics are constant throughout time. The data coincides with information provided by Anduiza (2001) with regard to previous years.

Young people from France, Italy and Austria are completely divided when it comes to assess how democracy works in the European Union. Spanish people are characterized by being the most satisfied; more than seven out of ten young Spanish people are very or pretty satisfied.

These two indicators: institutional trust and level of satisfaction with how democracy works present high levels of correlation between them, which allows us to define a profile of young people with high levels of institutional trust who positively assess how democracy works in the European Union; but this should not lead us to think that there is institutional disaffection among young Europeans, as levels of trust in European institutions are not strikingly low.

Chart 2. **Satisfaction with how democracy Works in the EU**



Difference between those that are very or pretty satisfied and those that are little or not satisfied at all. Question: In general, would you say you are very satisfied, pretty satisfied, little satisfied or not satisfied at all with how democracy works in the European Union?

Youth and the European Parliament elections

The elections for the European Parliament, as already said, could be identified as second (or even third) rate elections, due to the participation rate and the importance given to them by the population. In this section we will try to analyze the interest in and the specific monitoring of the 2004 elections and provide a model to explain different levels of participation among young Europeans.

Interest in and monitoring of the electoral campaign

The 2004 elections for the European Parliament did not wake notable interest among young people in Spain or in Europe, rather the opposite. More than seven out of ten young Europeans were not interested in this electoral process. Those who were more interested were young people from Ireland and Portugal, with similar levels of interest and lack of interest. This lack of interest reflects one of the characteristics that identify second-rate elections. And add to that the limited monitoring of political information regarding this electoral process by young people. In this sense, young Spanish people stand out, as they barely used the most common resources to stay informed about politics and about this electoral process, such as television or newspapers. Furthermore, this is one of the groups that talk less about this issue with family and friends.

In this context of limited interest in the electoral campaign, young people from Germany, Ireland and Austria do stand out, as they show a slightly more encouraging pattern in terms of the monitoring.

Table 4. Interest and monitoring of European Parliament elections (in %)

Country	Interest		Frequently		
	Very/ Pretty	Little/ Not at all	Television	Newspaper	Discuss with family
Austria	40.3	59.7	10.4	31.2	26.6
Belgium	25.7	74.3	15.5	11.9	15.5
United Kingdom	29.7	69.8	17.6	23.1	20.3
Cyprus	15.1	84.9	11.1	9.5	11.1
Czech Republic	12.8	86.6	6.9	11.6	4.1
Denmark	33.5	66.5	6.1	10.6	21.2
Estonia	25.3	74.0	4.9	7.7	9.6
Finland	31.5	68.5	0.7	9.1	16.1
France	26.0	74.0	11.2	13.4	23.0
Germany	26.0	74.0	32.7	27.8	17.3
Greece	15.5	84.5	17.5	11.3	20.6
Hungary	25.9	74.1	11.3	10.6	17.4
Ireland	50.8	49.2	20.1	24.7	35.4
Italia	25.8	60.4	11.0	9.3	29.2
Latvia	22.7	76.5	7.3	6.0	19.6
Netherlands	15.3	83.1	6.0	13.6	11.0
Poland	38.4	61.6	7.9	7.5	14.0
Portugal	48.4	51.6	11.3	13.6	25.8
Slovakia	7.6	90.9	1.5	3.3	5.5
Slovenia	34.4	65.6	2.1	9.4	10.4
Spain	23.4	75.8	6.9	9.1	6.5
Sweden	40.3	59.7	*	*	*
Total	25.7	74.3	9.5	12.2	16.8

* No data available

Questions:

a) To what extent were you interested in the campaign for European Parliament elections? Were you very interested, pretty interested, little interested or not interested at all?

b) How frequently did you carry out one of these activities during the four or three weeks before the election:

- Watch a TV programme about the European election
- Read an article in the newspaper about the European elections
- Speak with friends of family about the European elections?

Participation and abstention in European elections

Average electoral participation in the elections for the European Parliament was 47.8% for all countries. In the case of Spain, participation was 45.1%, lower than any previous elections since democracy. According to the data of the survey used for this article, 50.6% of young Spanish people say to have voted. This does not mean that participation was higher among young people than adults, especially when we know that participation of young people was lower than adults' participation in all previous elections. This shows that the survey has a sample with overrepresentation of young Spanish people that voted. However, it is a known fact that in electoral surveys in Spain the proportion of interviewees that say they will vote or say they have voted is significantly higher than the real participation rate finally registered.

Data about participation and abstention shows young Europeans with much differentiated patterns of electoral behaviour in front of the same electoral

process. In Slovenia, Slovakia and Poland participation exceeded 75%, while in Italy, Ireland and the Netherlands abstention was around 75% in the 2004 elections.

In order to try to explain these different patterns of participation among young Europeans as whole, we carried out a logistic regression where the dependent variable is participation, with the following values: abstention (value 0) and participation (value 1). As independent variables we include attitudinal characteristics and some socio-demographic variables, specifically labour situation (with three values: occupied, unemployed, student), age (codified in three interval: 18-21, 22-25 and 16-29) and a dummy variable that reflects if young people are able to place themselves ideologically or not, independently of the fact if they tend to the right or the left (6). Including these socio-demographic variables allows us to control and widen the analysis of other individual characteristics of the young people. Age has been re-codified in three intervals in order to check differences as age increases. In the case of the labour situation, we try to identify up to which point young people with different labour situations can show more or less participation or abstention in second-rate elections.

Table 5 shows the results of the regression analysis. Of all variables included in the model, five of them allow us to explain why some young Europeans decide to vote and some decide not to. Thus, we can say that those young Europeans that are interested in issues related to the elections, feel proud to be European citizens, place themselves ideologically, are interested in political information and talk about politics with family and friends have more probabilities of voting than those without that profile. Age groups have not been in the centre of the analysis, as that would lead us to a different type of analysis, although we can say that age is important in order to explain their electoral behaviour. This variable was relevant when it came to understand participation of the population in general terms, as well as to understand young people's participation in particular.

This information helps us to understand the importance of attitudinal variables related to the European Union for electoral behaviour. Young Europeans show attitudinal differences regarding the European Union and its institutions, and some of those orientations are the ones that will affect participation in the elections for the European Parliament. The feelings of belonging and European citizenship are two of the most relevant elements to answer the question behind this text. As pro-European feelings of young people increase (measured as pride of being European), participation in elections for the European Parliament also increases. This feeling is linked to the interest in issues related to the European Union and, specifically, to the monitoring of political news and information regarding this electoral process. There is a combination between more situational attitudes, such as interest in issues related to the electoral campaign, and internalized attitudes such as being proud of being a European citizen.

Not all attitudes towards the European Union included in this model had positive effects on electoral participation. Specifically the level of institutional trust, or even trust in the European Parliament, an institution that is the result of the electoral process, is a variable that hardly differs from country to country and is not useful to explain voter participation in European elections. And neither is the assessment of how democracy works by young people.

(6)
We decided to include this variable because in divariant analyses this variable did not discriminate in terms of more or less participation.

Table 5. **Explicative variables for participation in European election (logistic regression)**

	Participation (1) vs Abstention (0)		
	β	E.T.	Sig
Interest in the campaign	.637	.067	.000
Pride of being a EU citizen	.267	.066	.000
Satisfaction with democracy	-.008	.074	.912
Place ideologically	.520	.189	.006
Occupation			.478
(1)	-.059	.114	.606
(2)	.158	.194	.417
Age			.008
(1)	.059	.121	.625
(2)	.360	.127	.005
Monitoring of the campaign	.792	.111	.000
Institutional trust	.009	.027	.731
Double citizenship	.048	.076	.527
Constant	-3.798	.303	.000
Cases included in the analysis	2,224		
% cases correctly predicted	66.9		
R ² /Cox y Snell	.16		
R ² /Nagelkerke	.22		

* Interest in campaign: Not at all (1), little (2), pretty much (3), very much (4). Proud to be an EU-citizen: Not at all (1), little (2), pretty much (3), very much (4). Satisfaction with democracy: Not at all (1), little (2), pretty much (3), very much (4). Place ideologically: No (0), Yes (1). Occupation: Occupied (1), unemployed (2), student (3). Age: 18-21 years of age (1), 22-25 years (2) and 16-29 years of age (3). Monitoring of the campaign: from 1 to 3. Institutional trust index: from 0 to 10. Feeling as both European and from the own country: 1 (never), 2 (sometimes) 3 (often).

¹ Se ha decidido dejar en el modelo dos indicadores sobre ciudadanía para comprobar cuál de los dos tiene un efecto mayor sobre la participación pese a que entre ellos hay una importante correlación.

Conclusions

The comparative analysis of the attitudes towards elements related to the European Union and the elections for the European Parliament, and the electoral behaviour of young people in said process, allows us to reach some interesting conclusions.

In the first place, young people do not show a homogeneous profile in terms of attitudes and behaviours when it comes to elections. The electoral process to choose representatives for the European Parliament wakes no special interest among the European youth, as it neither does among the adult population. However, the situational interest in issues related to the European elections, the monitoring through the media and political discussions within the family or with friends have significant and positive effects for voter participation. This highlights the need of better coverage of the campaign and more information regarding the function of the elected representatives by the media.

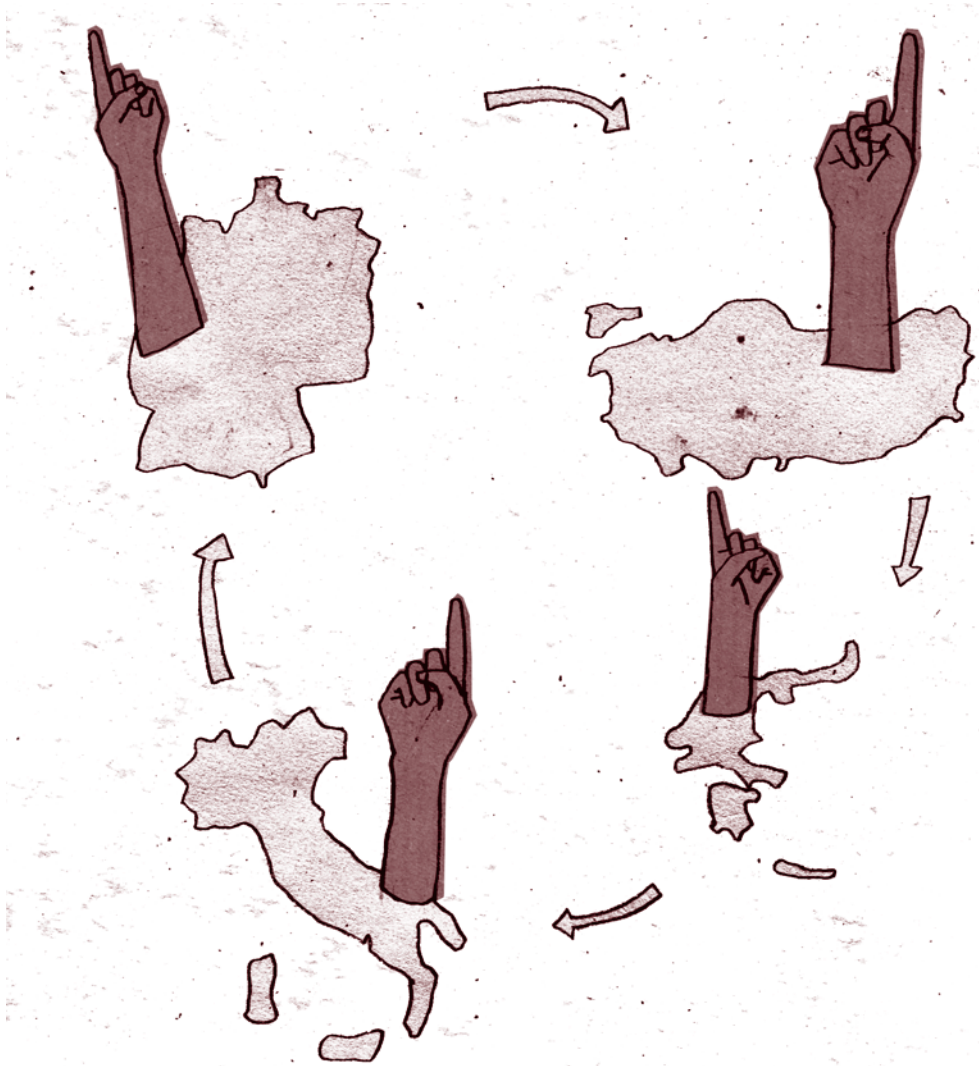
Also, young Europeans do not show a pattern of institutional disaffection. The levels of trust in the main European institutions and the level of satisfaction with how democracy works in the European Union do not allow concluding that this is a characteristic trait of their political orientations.

Lastly, young Europeans often do not think of themselves as citizens of the European Union and citizens of their own country. The identification as European citizens takes a second level. This aspect constitutes one of the main reasons for low participation of young Europeans in the elections for the European Parliament. The analysis shows that the variable of feeling proud of being a European citizen is the one that best explains participation in European elections. Identification, feeling of belonging and pride of being a European citizen increase the probability of participation in European elections. Therefore, one of the challenges when faced with the decrease of conventional participation of young people is the promotion of European citizenship among them.

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Young people of immigrant origin and their attitudes towards political participation. A comparative study with Greeks, Italians, Turks and Germans ⁽¹⁾

Countries with important numbers of foreign workers as, for example, Germany usually create a fiction that says that these workers will return to their country of origin after a certain period of time. But the truth is very different: immigrants and their children intend to stay. This “negation of reality” could explain why, after more than 30 years of massive immigration, the first research on political orientations of young immigrants in Germany was carried out in 1997.

The research compares political orientations of young immigrants and young Germans, as well as their readiness to participate in political processes. The comparison takes into account specific living conditions of immigrants, and also existing political orientations in the host country. The groups of young people with “immigrant background” that participate in the research (Greeks, Italians and Turks) show little differences in terms of migration profiles: Around 40% of the young adults between 18 and 25 with Greek, Italian and Turkish backgrounds were born in Germany and have always lived there; 30% of them arrived in Germany before schooling age and the rest entered the country after the age of six.

Their opinions about democratic principles, the level of acceptance of social organizations and institutions, and different forms of political participation clearly differ depending on gender, level of education and employment.

Key words: immigration, political orientation, political participation, comparative research.

Introduction

During the 1950’s, the Federal Republic of Germany needed workers and started a process to recruit foreign workers in their countries of origin, signing bilateral agreements ⁽²⁾ with the respective governments and sending out “Recruitment Commissions” with the objectives of recruiting workers and carrying out medical examinations. These examinations were to be carried out by German doctors that were brought to the countries that had signed the agreements. Immigration policies were based on the idea that recruiting foreign workers was a temporary solution and that immigrants would return to their countries of origin after a certain period of time; therefore, the Federal Republic of Germany was not a country of immigration.

The repeated statement regarding the provisional character of the permanence of foreign workers (that is why they first were called “Gastarbeiter”, which means host-workers, someone that after a certain time

(1)
Weidacher, A.(ed.) (2000) *In Deutschland zu Hause. Politische Orientierungen griechischer, italienischer, türkischer junger Erwachsenen im Vergleich* (At home in Germany. Political orientations of young Greek, Italian, Turkish and German adults from a comparative perspective). Opladen, Leske + Budrich

(2)
These agreements were signed with Italy in 1955, with Spain and Greece in 1960, with Turkey in 1961, with Morocco in 1963, with Portugal in 1964, with Tunisia in 1965, and with Yugoslavia in 1968.

returns home) and the idea of Germany not being a country of immigration determined all official answers to the lack of policies and measures related to immigrant workers. This official attitude had as a consequence that during the first years no one would even mention the word integration, why would they? Why integrate the family or the foreign workers if they were returning to their countries of origin some day?

During the first years, the only existent political decision was that, after the pressure of and the agreement with a German union, foreign workers had to accept the same salary agreements as German workers.

But since the late sixties, reality proved that the need for working force was not temporary, and that foreigners also have a family (sometimes even created in the Federal Republic of Germany or as a consequence of family regrouping) with children that start to need services and the problems related to the massification of the living-space in certain neighbourhoods where mostly foreign families live. The crisis of 1973/74 that also affects foreigners and starts to make conflicts with the native population visible obliges the political parties to debate about new measures and decisions regarding the immigrant population (3).

From the beginning, political reactions to new situations that arise with the presence of foreign families are reactive: as the problems are surfacing. Political reactions always were based on the assumption that, sooner or later, immigrants would return to their countries of origin.

This hypothesis has been the cause for the failure of most theories (integration, acculturation, cultural interaction, identity, etc.) or policies directed to social integration, which as a consequence has originated a heavy social burden: economic investments in socio-educational policies for immigrants and their children that don't show the expected results because objectives are not clear and the resulting increase of social tension which endangers social cohesion.

Social, educational, and political measures, as well as several research projects have been carried out as a reaction to the difficulties and the problems that were surfacing (4).

As time passed, foreigners that arrived as a consequence of bilateral Agreements were getting old and definitely didn't return to their countries of origin, their children have grown up in Germany and many of them have acquired the German nationality. Some of them now have more civil rights as a consequence of the expansion of the European Union. Citizens of countries of the European Union now can vote and be elected in local elections since 1994; the reform of the right of nationality in 1999 has opened the possibility to enlarge political participation for an important number of foreigners.

The research we will now comment, the first study on this issue, comes up after many years of immigration and when it becomes visible that political participation of young foreigners is possible. The content of this research focuses on two topics:

- The comparison of political orientations and the availability to act of young people from immigrant families with Germans.
- The examination of possible correlations between specific living conditions of immigrants and political orientations in the country of reception.

(3)
Weidacher, A. López
Blasco, A. (1982) *Ausländerpolitik und Integrationsforschung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Policies for foreigners and research on integration in the Federal Republic of Germany). Eine Darstellung wichtigster Ergebnisse mit Auswahlbibliographie. München DJJ Verlag. ISBN 3-87966-160-X

(4)
López Blasco, A. (1983) *Sozialisationsprozesse und Identitätskrise spanischer Jugendlichen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. DJJ Verlag. ISBN 3-87966-178-2

Multiple or transnational citizenship

In many occasions, tolerating foreigners is limited to refer to the utility of their presence. The assessment of immigrants by the native population classifies them in different categories: depending on cultural proximity of the language, colour of the skin and religion, geographic proximity and the political system of their country of origin, etc. Also depending on quality of political and economic cooperation with these countries of origin.

Currently, the relation of Germans with foreigners belonging to EU-member states develops without cultural or political problems. This is also the case for EU-countries such as Greece, Italy, Spain or Portugal, from where 30 or 40 years ago a great number of workers arrived. Immigrants from these countries, but also from countries that (still) don't belong to the EU, such as Turkey or the countries from former Yugoslavia, have a common immigration background. As members of the EU, Greeks and Italians not only hold a different legal status, but they also enjoy a higher level of acceptance, as shown by different surveys among the German population.

EU-member countries are linked by common objectives in the social, political and economic field. In spite of the fact that foreigners coming from the EU do not enjoy full access to public institutions or the right to vote, the political union requires a feeling of belonging and, at the same time, acknowledgement of the cultural equality of the different vital settings between different groups of the population.

From a scientific point of view, as well as by pressure groups, demands of political and cultural equality are based, mostly, on the fundamental rights established by the Constitution. This way, and with references to ethnic and political links in the life of current society, the origin, marriage, and change of country of residence question the traditional idea of nationality and promote the concept of multiple or transnational citizenship. In this context, we can't overlook that the conditions to set up life in the fields of information, mobility, human biology or economy all national borders are trespassed and the development towards global society is promoted.

From this point of view, the thesis that states that for a democratic society loyalty of citizens is not enough seems to lose strength, while the idea that a status of national citizenship, although multiple and transnational, needs to promote political and social solidarity for all members of the society they are living in gains ground. Also in modern democracies a great part of the population lives as if politics was only a matter of representatives paid by the people and by the institutions. Responsibility towards shared problems, political participation, is very important in modern societies for the personal development, probably as important as couple relationships and paternity/maternity (Flanagan/Sherrod). Politicians and researchers underline that democracy is only viable through concrete solidarity, "a parliamentary constitution and the democratic institutions are not enough," democracy has to prove its capacity in institutions that are supported and trusted by the citizens.

First research on political orientations of young immigrants and Germans in Germany

The German Youth Institute in Munich carried out a study in 1997 that for the first time analyzes political orientations of young adults of immigrant

families (when this research was carried out there were 7.32 million foreigners in Germany).

Questions about political opinions and active participation of young people of immigrant origin were asked for the first time in researches about youth in Germany in the "Foreigners Survey" carried out in 1997. This survey was created as an independent appendix of the investigation about political orientations of young Germans. From then on, young immigrants were included in representative researches about political orientations (5). And no longer only "foreigners" are defined as a reference group, but all young people with immigrant backgrounds (for example, also young people with German nationality and parents that are also integrated).

In the past, as well as currently, there exists the problem that not every migration context or every ethnic or political foreign group can be represented in a sufficiently representative way in a research as to establish valid comparisons from a statistical point of view between the different groups. All groups chosen for the "Foreigners survey" belonged to the countries that in the past provided "Gastarbeiter", and represented three differentiated cultural models. Furthermore, they differed in terms of the legal-political position as a consequence of their countries of origin belonging or not to the European Union. This different legal-political position (combined with other numerous cultural factors) had great influence on the possibilities of identification of young people. And also another known fact has to be added, that is, the belonging to the European Union plays an important role regarding the behaviour of the native population in terms of the level of acceptance of immigrants. In comparison with these significant differences, starting positions for political orientations of young people are placed in a stage of longer duration of socio-cultural communication of young people with the society in the country of reception. Everyone but a small minority longs or plans to stay in Germany. In spite of this common existential interest, we need to analyze the possibilities and developments of political orientation and participation in a context of varied and different conditions:

- Different levels of connection with the country of origin, from an economic, as well as a political point of view.
- In the short term, favourable conditions for intra-ethnic organization and protection of their own traditions.
- Preservation of specific cultural traditions (interpretation of right, family relations with structures that differ from the ones of the host-country, behaviours based on structures of authority, gender-specific roles.
- Links of cultural traditions with religious characteristics of the country of origin.
- Low levels of education and problems to learn the language spoken in the host country; the parents are not able to support their children in terms of demands of the education system.
- Lack of acceptance or very selective acceptance by the native population (General negative assessment of a minority group by the population).
- Different legal-political positions of immigrants, positions that make social and political identification with the society of reception more difficult and prevent active participation.

(5)
Gille, M., et .a., 2006:
Jugendliche und junge
Erwachsene in Deutschland.
Wiesbaden, VS Verlag für
Sozialwissenschaften.

The surveyed people, all of them Greeks, Italians, Turks between 18 and 25 years old mean approximately 1 million of young adults in this age group.

Greeks, Italians and Turks differ very little in their migration profiles:

- Process of socialization in Germany with similar duration
- The level of education show little differences
- Their level of German language is good or very good in the same proportion
- Most of them want to stay in Germany
- They are interested in acquiring the German nationality in similar proportions.

Around 40% of young adults between 18 and 25 of Greek, Italian or Turkish origin were born in Germany and have always lived there, around 30 % of them arrived before schooling age and the remaining 30 % arrived after the age of 6.

Only 13 % of the Turks (15 % of the Italians, 17 % of the Greeks) show some interest in returning to their country of origin, while 60% of the young adults of all three groups wish to stay in Germany.

Young adults of the three groups are similarly interested in acquiring the German nationality (around 1/3 of them wants the German nationality, 1/3 says it is possible they will want it, and 1/3 says they will possibly not want it), and this in spite of the differences regarding geographic, cultural or political proximity with regard to Germany.

Young adults of foreign origin specially differ from German in terms of level of training and social origin. 93% of parents of immigrants have not finished compulsory education or have a certificate that is equivalent to compulsory education. This is the case for only 36% of German parents.

The research focused on the following question:

In Germany, what is the level of political integration of young adults (from 18 to 25 year olds) of immigrant origin (countries of the EU such as Greece and Italy), compared to young Turks (not EU-member country) and, at the same time, in comparison to Germans of the same age? How do these young people live politics?

The information corresponds to a group of 2,500 young Italian, Greeks and Turks sorted by age, gender, nationality and the region where they live in and to another representative group of 3,500 young people from West and East Germany.

The sample of young foreigners is characterized by common characteristics (countries that in the past provided workers, a similar proportion of young people that were born and raised in Germany, similarities in terms of plans of staying in Germany and qualifications, similar legal-political situation of Greeks and Italians, who belong to EU-member countries, unlike the Turks, who are not a part of the EU) and by differences regarding cultural traditions and legal-political situation. With a set of identical questions about political orientation, the "Youth Survey" added additional questions on specific life situations of immigrants and on socio-cultural orientation. Young people could answer these questions in their mother tongue. In order to identify similarities in the characteristics (such as training, labour situation, family

structure, etc.) and behaviours (such as opinion about democracy, gender-specific roles, trust in political institutions, etc.) not only bi-variable comparisons of characteristics were carried out through cross-tables. Also multi-variant methods were used, such as no-lineal correlation analyses (OVERALS), analytical factor calculations and explorative procedures (CHAID), with the aim of analyzing interactions of numerous factors on the features that are to be explained.

Most important results

The research we are commenting gives information about political orientations, comparing young foreigners to themselves and to young Germans. All of this in three different levels:

- What is their opinion about the basic rules of democracy (freedom of speech, control of powers, separation of Church and State, etc.) and equality of gender?
- How is their acceptance of political, cultural government institutions?
- How did they participate until now in the field of politics?

On the following, I would like to, firstly, review the more general actions and forms of political participation, such as the assessment of democratic principles, the acceptance of social organizations and entities and participation in political actions (points 1, 2 and 3).

After that, and secondly, I will present the results of the research in relation with fundamental conditions that also have an influence, although independently of migration circumstances, over the development and perception of political interests, opinions, hopes and the disposition to participate. Among these conditions, the following are to be taken into account:

- The role of training as the base to acquire communicative competences and possibilities of interaction, as well as value orientations and the perception of gender-specific roles.
- The labour situation and the form of life influence how political interests are perceived.
- Age and circumstances of the parent's and their children's migration process.

Political opinions and democratic principles

In general and referring to the young interviewees, their opinions on democratic principles show clear differences between males' and females' positions, as well as between young people that have finished secondary education and those who have abandoned school too early.

However, young adults of immigrant origin share in similar high proportions as Germans the objectives of a democratic society and the principles of gender equality. There is a convergence with the thesis that states that there is a trend towards homogeneity of objectives of social welfare based on democratic principles. These similar opinions are explained because young adults share the same sources of information that are specific of young people and the same conceptual world, in spite of the fact that Germans and

foreigners do not have the same opportunities of political participation and identification.

Similar level of acceptance of social organizations and institutions

Regarding questions about trust in social institutions, two different streams can be identified:

- Trust in political institutions, for example, the German parliament, the government, the Justice, police.
- Trust in “solidarity organizations with democratic base”, such as Greenpeace, citizen initiative, unions.

The level of training, satisfaction with the possibilities of political participation, gender, the region where they live in, religious trends, values regarding social security or the level of realization play a central role in the levels of trust (abstention or assessment) and the two differentiated streams previously mentioned.

For example, young adults with medium or low levels of education and for whom religion is very important in their lives identify with values of social security (in lower levels with personal realization) and show great trust in institutions managed or dependent of political decisions. This orientation (as with the group that does not answer to this question) gets stronger among young adults that are already married, that take care of domestic tasks and, above all, among young people with children.

Young German adults and young people of foreign origin behave similarly regarding their acceptance of political institutions, and also with regard to their preferences for certain institutions they trust: Solidarity organizations with democratic base such as Greenpeace or citizen initiatives are valued as very positive, better than other institutions. Among these other institutions, police and courts are more trusted than the government or political parties.

By breaking down the structure of preferences it is possible to identify specific arguments of each nationality that seem plausible: Courts and police are assessed more positive among Germans than among foreigners, especially among Turks. Italians and Turks value German television (probably as organ for intellectual interests) very positively. Greek and Turkish people, with higher proportions of salary men, show more trust in unions. On the other side, Italians, who mostly belong to the Roman-Catholic religion, have a better opinion of Christian churches than Greeks, who are Orthodoxes, or Turks, usually Muslims.

Similar forms of political participation

The answers to the question of young adults' participation in political actions show a similar structure of preferences: The most common form of action among Germans is also the most common action among young foreign adults. But there are also specific differences between each nationality, and there is also a plausible reason: linguistic advantages of Germans and their higher level of education –therefore, also longer duration of the training period– favour competences regarding forms of actions such as collecting signatures, working for unions, public debates, writing to the media and politicians...

This way, all fundamental conditions for the actions and the participation have already been mentioned; conditions that also influence, independently of migration circumstances, the development and perception of political interests, opinions, hopes and the disposition to participate: Finishing training as base to acquire communicative competences and improve the possibilities of interaction, to develop value orientations and the perception of gender-specific roles. Another factor that affects political interests is the labour situation and the life-style. This highlights another important result of the study.

Special consequences of the labour situation and education

The situation of young immigrants can lead to higher levels of disadvantage when they show low levels of education and a labour situation that is not favourable, a situation that is also happening among young adults affected by labour and education disadvantages. Both groups –young people with immigrant background and young Germans with low levels of education– are not interested in politics, state opinions that are less oriented towards democracy, show lower levels of acceptance of political institutions, as well as less contact with political participation.

Early school leaving and low levels of knowledge of the German language are to a great extent problems linked to young adults that arrived in Germany after the age of six. Qualifications not only decide labour opportunities, but also communicative competences, the ability to develop contacts and the possibility of communication.

Together with late immigration and/or low levels of education or knowledge of the language, another factor stand out: the traditional gender role model, family hierarchy and obligations, as well as religious bonds. Young adults who have immigrated at later ages do work, are unemployed or take care of domestic tasks in higher proportions. They have tighter bonds with their families, marry earlier and, in many cases, they already have a family of their own. These young people are clearly less active politically.

On the other side, young people of foreign origin with medium levels of education or those who still remain in the education system actively participate in politics, although in lower proportions than young Germans with equivalent levels of education.

Additional influences of the situation of immigrants that originate differences

The legal status of immigrants and their level of acceptance in the society of reception have great influence on the feelings of political belonging. The unfavourable legal situation of Turks, compared to the situation of Italians and Greeks, and the lower level of acceptance of the Turkish population give the impression that there are difficulties for integration.

The results of the research confirm that part of the young Turkish people are in social organizations that are strongly ruled by tradition. This affects the gender-specific roles, the configuration of family, religious bonds, the possibility of taking individual decisions with regard to the own life, etc.

The research also studied a series of factors that strongly influence how and to what extent young people feel they are part of the host society, feel accepted, respect the social institutions or participate in political actions.

Among these factors we can highlight the following:

- If the bonds with the family and the peer-groups of the same origin are stronger or weaker
- Which is the role of the traditions of their country of origin in their behaviour?
- As foreigners, what experiences of discrimination have they gone through?
- How do they live their discontent regarding their legal status?
- How do they live the unfavourable situation in education, the difficulties of the language and the labour situation?
- For example, young adults of Turkish origin usually limit their contacts to people of the same origin, marriages with Germans are very rare and they demand their own facilities for their spare-time and training.

But, are these orientations the expression of a voluntary separation/segregation, or is it rather their own cultural organization? Are they, on the contrary, the consequence of their labour situation? Or are they only a reaction to legal and social discrimination shown by a majority of the population?

“Integration” goes beyond mere acquisition of the nationality of the host country

The results of the study show that the level of acceptance of political institutions and the political participation of young adults is, in general, also among Germans, pretty low. This conclusion should help to be cautious when it comes to statements about ways of behaving of young people with foreign background.

Low participation of Greeks and Italians, in comparison to Germans, seems to be conditioned by the fact they define themselves in the political framework of the EU, as well as in their own ethnic-cultural belonging. While for young Turks not only problems of legal equality have to be taken into account, but also the interaction and adaptation to the new situation of their cultural traditions, which in many cases is a first rank problem. Difficulties of young Turkish people to adapt the new situation to their cultural traditions increase depending on the level of education: When they have higher levels of education they are more dissatisfied with the rights and liberties offered by the host country, in opposition to the situation Italians and Greeks live.

Although the context of migration is quite similar, young Turks suffer an unfavourable legal status and enjoy lower social acknowledgement. The comparison with young Germans shows that deficits in training not only lower labour possibilities, but also affect political behaviours in the long term. Heitmeyer, W. et al. (1997) argues, and he is right, that legal discrimination, as well as the exclusion in training, education, employment or housing, leads to fundamentalist reactions. However, the results of this study can't lead to the conclusion that young Turks mostly develop fundamentalist thoughts and that this is as a consequence of social exclusion.

The research in which Weidacher (2000) bases his publication consciously moves away from the concept of young immigrants as a problematic book.

The results clearly show that the development of the ability of articulation, of the competences of orientation and self-awareness depend to high degree of the level of education and the linguistic knowledge. The results also prove that differences in political orientations between young people are not so much a matter of origin, but rather are explained by different levels of education and political knowledge.

As a consequence of a legislative change of the laws to acquire the nationality and the new conditions this implies, politics need to create opportunities for public acknowledgment of cultural traditions (specially in the field of religion). In opposition of Italians and Greeks, Turks also face great problems in terms of adapting their cultural traditions (specially regarding the religious dimension in family political life).

With regard to the legislative change, political institutions underline the requisite of knowledge of the German language. In the study, 75% of the Italian, 68 % of the Greeks and 65% of the Turks say they speak German good or very good, which means, they understand, read, speak and write in German and in their mother tongue. Their own assessment of this knowledge of the German language coincides in most cases with the knowledge ascertained by the interviewees.

The rest, around 25%-35% of the young people, said they only speak their mother tongue good or very good and nearly always belong to the group of people who arrived in Germany after the age of six, who never went to a pre-school or only went to school in their country of origin, or who do not possess any certificate of medium or higher levels, and most of the time left school early. Results do not say anything about competences regarding vocabulary or grammar, or about the role of this knowledge when it comes to decide about continuing education. Currently there is a series of initiatives developed by Turkish mothers and supported by "municipal foreigners councils" and "Popular Universities" to create working groups to improve the knowledge of German and offer information about training opportunities (and/or problems) for their children.

Can this kind of activities do more for "integration" than the German exam required to obtain the German nationality? Besides direct confrontation against xenophobic behaviour, shouldn't we focus more on positive contributions that improve mutual understanding?

Trends of segregation in the host society and between the own groups of immigrants can be counteracted in the media and in politics through dynamic understanding of culture: Culture doesn't develop as an independent form in front of other cultural forms and traditions, but it develops through the capacity of interaction, and it doesn't demand from immigrants to abandon their previous identity, but to expand their competences. The development of a conscience of political belonging and political participation implies that immigrants are not only Italians or Turks allowed to live in Germany, after they acquire the German nationality they should also assume the responsibility of a social and political union in order to be accepted as Germans.

The central question for political belonging and political participation is not nationality. In our opinion, the most important questions are related to:

- What forms are there of understanding national identity?

- How do we treat expectations of minorities? Which possibilities do we offer for them to organize their social life, in order for them to have the same rights as the majority and be able to satisfy their social needs as a population group?

In order to give adequate answers to the still unanswered questions, we believe that it is necessary to continue carrying out new sociologic researches that analyze different forms of understanding the development of a social identity. It will also be necessary to make more efforts to study the expectations and the problems among the established society –the host society– and the different population groups of immigrants and between the different groups of immigrants themselves.

Perspectives and unanswered questions

The coordinator of the publication (Alois Weidacher) concludes asking the following questions: What are the thoughts of young adults of the second and third generation of immigrants about their political belonging in Germany? What do political institutions and democratic institutions that represent their interests mean for them? Which is their attitude towards the central principles of the democratic system? When do they make use of political co-management/participation?

As reviewed in the previous section, the answers to these questions are determined, for the most parts, not so much by the nationality of the interviewees, but by variables directly related with the processes of socialization, that means as it also happens among native young people, and with processes related with the phenomenon of migration: When the process of immigration was started, if they belong to an EU-member country or not, the social status of the parents, level of knowledge of the language of the host country, level of education, the results of their transition to the labour market, etc. If these variables are taken into account the answers of children of immigrants are very close, very similar, to the answers given by young Germans with similar experiences in their processes of socialization (6).

That their political orientations are similar to the ones of young native people, and that the situation of problematic groups is not the centre of this research, does not mean the concept of “processes of socialization” makes us lose sight of the fact that children of immigrants have to make more efforts to achieve medium or higher levels of education, that they belong in higher proportions to working-class families, that many times their parents haven’t exceeded primary education, and hold lower labour positions (when and with what age do they arrive at the host country, influence of their parents’ traditions and weight of their orientation towards the ethnic group).

The study also states that the knowledge of the language of the host country is not only important to obtain good results in school or profession, but above all it is important to be able to communicate with the native population, to acquire the subjective impression of belonging and specially to allow political participation.

The new possibilities that open up in a host country, such as for example Germany, facilitating legal belonging as a first step to obtain the German nationality, can activate the political belonging.

(6)
The focus of the research was intentionally not set on problematic groups, such as unemployed young people, drug-users or people belonging to disadvantaged groups, as it usually is done when talking about young foreigners.

However, the possibility of obtaining the nationality of the host country is not enough, if, at the same time, there are no measures to cope with some aspects that may increase the disadvantages:

- Disadvantages already existent in the field of training.
- Social segregation in big cities that has their origin in the ethnic group they belong to.
- Difficulties to plan the future due to the postponement of decisions with regard to staying in the host country or returning to the country of origin.
- Promote “acculturation” as a way acquiring more capacity of actuation, more abilities in different socio-cultural fields. This should not be seen as assimilation or betrayal to their origins. In this sense, we assume that culture, from the perspective of immigrants, and, above all, from the perspective of the society of reception, should not be seen as a sum of elements identifiable as different, but as the development of a social structure, as a dynamic process that includes the availability to carry out social communication.
- Activate a new orientation that leads towards the development of a new social identity (national identity) that contributes to eliminate barriers, stereotypes of immigrants among the native population.

Finally, if we ask about the meaning of the commented results, we have to accept that this information obtained through the analysis of researched correlations has, in reality, given us little new knowledge. The data is important because recent researches carried out during the last years confirm the high level of the information obtained 9 years ago in the research commented in this article. The situation of the level of education and training of young foreigners has scarcely changed.

Among policy-makers in the field of education, and even among teachers, the idea is wide spread that children of workers, generally, will have more difficulties if they want to prepare to access medium or higher levels of the education system, and children of immigrants will have much more difficulties to cope with the demands to access higher levels of education.

I think it is sure to say that countries that traditionally had to face massive immigration, after many years, still have not a clear concept about education and support measures for the children of immigrants, so that they may be able to achieve a higher standard in their training qualifications.

In order to achieve that public opinion and politics are willing to offer economic means needed to allow young people to acquire the qualifications that will enable social and labour participation in present societies, it will be necessary to first convince the society as a whole, and specially the political and economic powers, of the fact that there are disadvantages, social burdens, that are a consequence of educational deficits:

- The non-existence of professional qualifications originates great costs for taxpayers and the social security system.
- The economy needs less non-qualified workers.

Pupils, foreigners as well as natives that do not achieve at least qualification levels of compulsory education are branded for the rest of their lives. People

(3)

The focus of the investigation have not wanted to put on problem groups such as youth unemployment, drug addicts or belonging to marginalized groups, as they do when talking about foreigners.

that during their first steps in school feel they don't belong to the group of "winners", that they can't follow the lessons, achieve the objectives other achieve are marked in their self-esteem and in their disposition to achieve social integration.

We have to highlight the fact that "being left behind" in school is not only a problem of the pupil, but also a consequence for the society. At least for this reason we have to demand more commitment and better funding to invest into better training for the children of immigrants.

It is not possible to understand that in the society of knowledge it is still accepted that a certain number of "failures" is inevitable and that in certain sectors of production and services non-qualified workers are needed. From the point of view of the person, school failure is something terrible, but from the point of view of economy it is something useful and advantageous for those that are more qualified.

The demand of working force, with no or low qualifications are regressive and income obtained through these activities is insufficient to cope with the costs of life. The costs created by these situations transform into vital experiences of social impotence and has repercussions for the social relations; and may well be leading young people of the so-called "second and third generation" of immigrants to aggressive responses due to the impossibility of integrating into the society they have been living in for a long time.

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Three DJI Youth Surveys (1): a replication study

The DJI Youth Survey is one of the studies carried out in the context of the DJI Social Reports, a research program aimed at obtaining reliable information about the personal and social situation of children, young people and families in Germany, based on empirical data from repeated surveys. The DJI Youth Survey focuses on life situations, values, political and social orientations, as well as young people's and young adults' activities.

Regular and transversal replication surveys allow analyzing resources, orientations and behaviours of young people in the context of social change. The size of the sample, the age groups, the thematic definition of key elements, the possibility of carrying out comparisons with other general social studies, as well as the use of replication studies define and distinguish the DJI Youth Survey from other youth studies in Germany.

Up until now there have been three surveys in the series, in 1992, 1997 and 2003. The surveys, broad and representative, carried out by the DJI included approximately 7,000 young Germans between 16 and 29 years of age in 1992 and 1997. In 2003, the limits for the sample were increased: also immigrants were interviewed, as long as the questions could be asked and answered in German. Furthermore, age limits were lowered, and young people between 12 and 15 years of age were also included in the sample (2) (approximately 2,000 interviewees). In total, 9,000 people were interviewed for this third survey (also see Chart 3).

(1)
German abbreviation for German Youth Institute, *Deutsches Jugendinstitut*, Munich (DJI)

(2)
After including the group of 12 to 15 year olds in the third survey, it was decided to use a shorter and partially simplified questionnaire for this age group. Several questions, above all those referring to political orientations, were not used; some other questions were simplified. But at the same time the researchers tried to keep as much comparable elements as possible, in order to carry out comparisons with the answers of young people between 16 and 29 years of age (questionnaires can be downloaded from: www.dji.de/jugendsurvey). However, in this methodological note we will focus on the group of young people between 16 and 29, as comparisons of time with previous Youth Surveys are prioritized.

Carrying out replication studies, the DJI Youth Survey is, on the one hand, trying to analyze constant issues, for example life situation, values, political opinions and orientations and, on the other hand, it complements these topics by including specific key issues in each survey.

The first Youth Survey (1992) took advantage of the fact that Germany was in the middle of a political "transition" and reunification process, and focused on the assessment of processes of social and political change. One other key aspect of this first survey was political orientations and behaviours of young people and young adults. The Youth Survey tried to fill a gap in the field of sociological youth research in Germany, with the relation of young people to politics playing a central role. Until then, representative and cross-sectional youth studies had not dealt systematically with this topic.

The second Youth Survey (1997) kept focusing on the relation to and the attitude towards politics of young people. Several thematic fields were added, like social justice, relative deprivation, attitudes toward immigrants, tolerance towards violence and environmental awareness. While carrying out the Youth Survey, the DJI worked on another survey exclusively directed to

young foreigners (DJI Foreigners Survey, see Weidacher, 2000 (3)). Thus, it was possible to compare central aspects of the life situation (for example, housing, family, school, training, and employment), as well as the readiness to participate, values or political orientations of young German people and young immigrants of three different countries of origin.

The third DJI Youth Survey (2003) continued with the analysis of life conditions, values, positions and behaviours of young people and young adults, and focused on the description of stability and change during the process of becoming an adult among young “reunited” people in the Federal Republic, based on a solid empirical basis. That way it is possible to empirically prove statements about trends that were based on comparisons of only two surveys, and therefore could only be interpreted as “social change” with reservation. By incorporating 12 to 15 years-olds, as well as young immigrants, it was possible to carry out differentiated analyses of thematic fields like family of origin, school and the meaning of experiencing immigration. The third DJI Youth Survey allows us to analyze life situation, opinions and orientations of children and young people from German reunification up to the present day, as well as identifying the factors that explain trends of change.

- *The following thematic fields were included in all three surveys:*

- Life situation and assessment (school, training, employment, economic situation, family of origin, life forms and housing, assessment of the life situation, relative deprivation, satisfaction)
- Values and social orientation
- Action orientation, orientation towards the future, anomie
- Political orientation, attitudes towards democracy and Europe
- Attitudes toward immigrants
- Social and political participation

- *Thematic fields that were enhanced or complemented depending on the survey:*

- First survey 1992: German reunification, political transition.
- Second survey 1997: Environmental awareness, conceptions on social justice, tolerance towards violence, xenophobic orientations.
- Third survey: Family of origin, school, friends, immigration background, knowledge regarding institutional services for young people and young adults, adequate use of resources.

(3)

See the article by Andreu López Blasco in this monographic issue, where he comments on the results of this research.

A summary view of the surveys

The DJI Youth Survey is conceived as a “replication study” (analysis of trends, repeated survey), similar to the ALLBUS Project. The main characteristic of a survey of this type is: “same questions, different samples” (Firebaugh, 1997, p.1). This way, transformations can be analyzed on a “net change” level: changes in the distribution of the characteristics of the sample. Only panel studies can include gross changes, which allow identifying individual changes. Strictly speaking, replication has to take into account the context of the survey and its multiple facets (see Allerbeck/Hoag, 1984). With this we are referring to the different possibilities when the survey institute starts planning a survey (choosing a sample, selection process, survey techniques). Also in this respect Allerbeck and Hoag’s most important recommendation is: “Take replication seriously”. The three Youth Surveys were carried out differently, with several modifications with regard to how the survey was developed (as with the ALLBUS studies, see charts added to the methodological reports, for example, Haarman et al., 2006: 8).

Chart 1 (4) contains the main characteristics of the three surveys carried out in the context of the DJI Youth Surveys. The survey institute changed after the first survey (*GFM/GETAS* carried out the first survey and *infas Sozialforschung* the second and third one). A change of the survey institute is usually linked to considerable changes in terms of how the interviews are carried out, and to partially different rules when it comes to designing questionnaires (also, for example, as to how blank answers are treated, which is extensively explained in the methodological reports). The selection process changed between the second and third survey: From an ADM design (with specific variants depending on the institute, also described in the methodological reports) to a sample provided by the census office. However, none of the three surveys changed the surveying method: standardized personal oral interviews – still did not use CAPI (computer assisted personal interviews, method also used in ALLBUS).

In spite of the changes, special attention was given to the replication in order to stay true to the statement: “Take replication seriously” (with support and help of an advisory council). That way, DJI Youth Surveys were able to contribute for a time to the “culture of replication” with its three surveys (5) (Diekmann, 2006: 27) in the field of empirical youth studies.

(4)

Detailed description of the surveys: GFM/GETAS - *Gesellschaft für Marketing-, Kommunikations- u. Sozialforschung* - 1992, infas - *Institut für angewandte Sozialforschung*- Social investigations 1998, infas 2004

(5)

The project of the DJI Youth Surveys is no longer carried out by the DJI.

Chart 1. **DJI Youth Surveys**

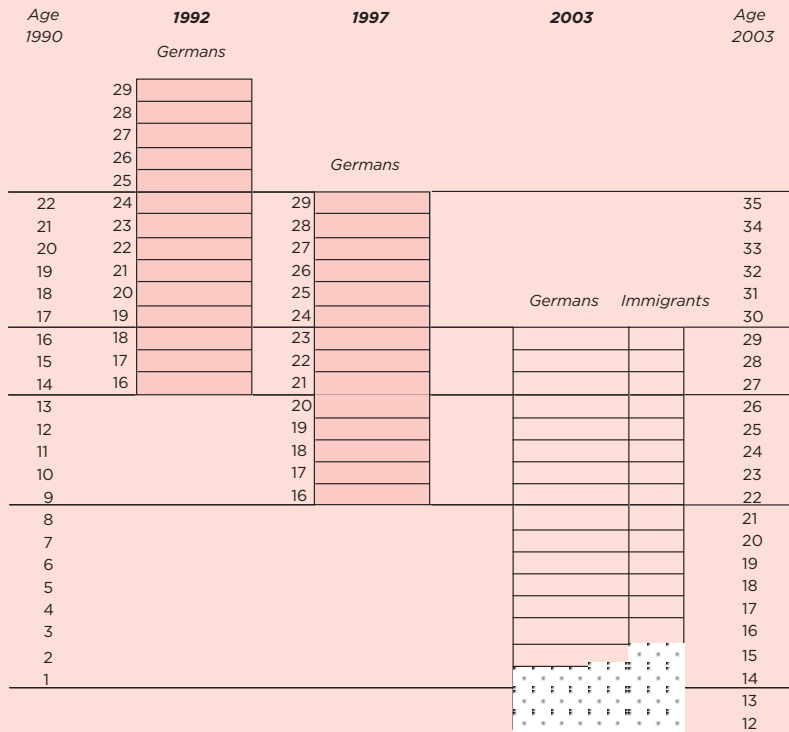
	DJI Youth Survey 1992	DJI Youth Survey 1997	DJI Youth Survey 2003
<i>Population:</i>	Young German people/young adults between 16 and 29 years of age	Young German people/young adults between 16 and 29 years of age	Young people between 12 and 15 years of age/young adults between 16 and 29 years of age.
<i>Selection process:</i>	Random selection on different levels (ADM sample); Germans between 16 and 29 years of age living in the Federal Republic of Germany; 1470 sample points (945 West/ 525 East); non proportional distribution of the sample between new and old states; random route for the selection of reference homes; selection of the reference persons through selection key of random numbers.	Random selection on different levels (ADM sample); Germans between 16 and 29 years of age living in the Federal Republic of Germany; 1050 sample points (630 West/ 420 East); non proportional distribution of the sample between new and old states; random route for the selection of reference homes; selection of the reference persons through selection key of random numbers.	Sample selection through census register, 245 city- and town-councils, non-proportional distribution of the sample between new and old states.
<i>Survey method:</i>	Standardized oral interviews, three open questions	Standardized oral interviews, two open questions	Standardized oral interviews
<i>Survey institute:</i>	Gfm / GETAS (Hamburg)	infas Sozialforschung (Bonn)	Infas, Institut für angewandte Sozialforschung GmbH, Bonn
<i>Pre-testing:</i>	February/March 1992 n=159, and June/July 1992 n=54	February 1997, n=156, and June 1997, n=65	March 2003, n=142; June 2003, n=74
<i>Field stage:</i>	September / October 1992 (8 weeks); 720 interviewees (454 West / 266 East); average interviews/interviewees approx. 10; average duration of interviews approx. 63 minutes.	From September to the end of November 1997 (10 weeks); 640 interviewees (403 West / 237 East); average interviews/interviewees approx. 11; average duration of interviews approx. 55 minutes.	August 2003 - January 2004 519 interviewees; average interviews/interviewees approx. 18; average duration of interviews approx 48 minutes for young people between 12 and 15; 65 minutes for young people between 16 and 29.
<i>Sample:</i>	7,090 (West: 4,526, East: 2,564)	6,919 (West: 4,426, East: 2,493)	12 to 15 years of age: 2,154 (West: 1,507, East: 647); - 16 to 29 years of age: 6,956 (West: 4,800, East: 2,156); total: 9,110.
<i>Return rate:</i>	65.5% West, 66.2% East	56.5% West, 65.1% East	12 to 15 years of age: 53.5% West, 58.7% East; 16 to 29 years of age: 46.3% West, 54.9% East.

Distribution of age groups

Chart 2 provides a summary of the main elements of the population of the three surveys carried out by the DJI. In 1992 and 1997 the surveys included young German people between 16 and 29 year of age. In 2003, the survey also included young people between 12 and 15 years of age, as well as young adults of foreign origin (as long as they could answer the questions in German).

All three surveys were strictly cross-sectional, that is, no panel design. Therefore, we can compare age groups in different moments of time, for example, young people between 16 and 18 in 1992, 1997 and 2003.

Chart 2. Correspondence between age groups in all three DJI Youth Surveys



(6) Datasets of the Youth Surveys are available in the Central Archive for Empirical Social Studies at the University of Köln (ZA). They are archived individually and are available as a whole on CD-ROM: The CD-ROM "Youth Survey 1992/1997/2000" contains the Youth Survey 1992, the Youth Survey 1997, the joint Youth survey (cumulation) 1992 and 1997, as well as the additional survey of the Family Survey 2000. For the Foreigners Survey, an individual CD-ROM is also available: "Foreigners Survey 1997". The dataset of the 2003 survey is also available at the ZA since fall 2008. Data and information about Family surveys until 2000 can be found on CD-ROM, "DJI Family Surveys 1988-2000", at the Central Archive for Empirical Social Studies at the University of Köln (ZA). All datasets and informations (questionnaires, documentation, methodological reports) of the DJI Youth Surveys can also be downloaded from: www.dji.de.

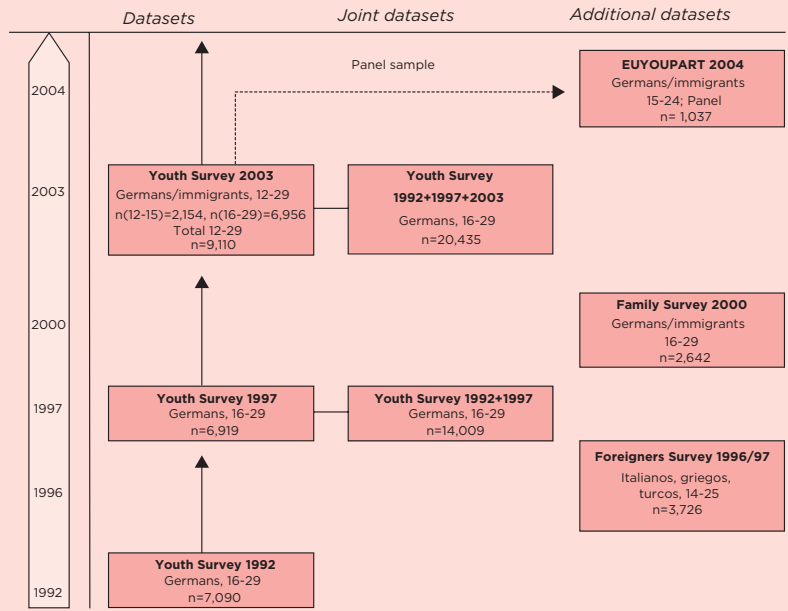
The chart also allows us to see to what extent age groups can be treated as cohorts. For example, young people between 16 and 18 years of age in 1992 correspond to young people between 21 and 23 in 1997, and to 27 to 29 year-olds, limited to young Germans, in 2003. In any case, these are the only groups that can be found in all three surveys. In other cases, we can compare other groups as cohorts in two surveys that are close to each other. Finally, the left column allows identification of cohorts that have reached a certain age in the year of German reunification. That way, it is possible to identify age groups whose growth has taken place after the reunification, in contrast to young people that have, for the most part of their lives, lived in the former Democratic Republic of Germany.

Datasets

Three basic datasets of the DJI Youth Surveys are available, apart from the complementary survey with immigrants (survey with young Italians, Greeks and Turks between 18 and 25 years of age) and some questions related to the replication of the Youth Survey included in the Family Survey of the year 2000.

After the second survey, a joint dataset of the two surveys was created. This dataset contains the variables of identical questions. After the third survey, a second joint dataset was created, with variables of all three surveys. Joint datasets are valid for young German interviewees between 16 and 29. (6)

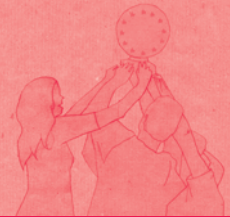
Chart 3. **Datasets of the DJI Youth Surveys**



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**SELECTION
OF DOCUMENT
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**The Young and Participation in Politics: European
Research**

The Young and Participation in Politics: European Research

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E-mail: biblioteca-injuve@migualdad.es

You may likewise refer to this or earlier issues of *Revistas de Estudios de Juventud*, as well as the New Books and Material at the Library at the *Instituto's* website:

<http://www.injuve.migualdad>

Associationism: Young People and Political Involvement

Young people's presence. — n. 21 (1/2003)

On the one hand it presents the passive attitude of many politicians when it comes to promoting options that genuinely include young people, that is to say, promoting actual employment, cheaper housing, etc., and on the other hand it refers to the resurgence of associations of all kinds, which might play an active role in society and also proposes that this activism makes itself felt at the ballot box and takes part in street politics.

Funes Rivas, María Jesús

On what is visible, invisible, stigmatisation and prohibited / María Jesús

Funes Rivas

Young People's Studies Magazine. — n. 75 (December 2006); Page 11-27.

Reflections on the «political creativity» of young people and the theory of rejection and apathy that the young feel towards participating in politics and society. Certain projects are analysed that, although they are found to be particularly invigorating for the youth sector, are defined as insignificant and irrelevant by the adult world where their content or forms are concerned.

<http://www.injuve.mtas.es/injuve/contenidos.downloadatt.action?id=1939308982>

Bermejo Acosta, Fernando

Electronic Democracy, citizen and youth participation / Fernando Bermejo Acosta

Young People's Studies Magazine. — n. 61 (June 2003); Page 51-57.

This work focuses on the concept of electronic democracy, analysing how it manifests itself in terms of citizen involvement and examines how young people in Spain face up to the challenges posed by the new ways of participating. The capacity that the new technologies have to transform is expressed in four areas of democratic participation: electronic voting, access to information, debate and political activism.

http://www.mtas.es/injuve/biblio/revistas/Pdfs/numero61/NUM61_4art.pdf

Calle Collado, Ángel

Radical Democracy: the construction of a global mobilisation cycle / Ángel Calle;

Young People's Studies Magazine. — n. 76 (March 2007); Page 55-69.

The latest cycle of demonstrations and protests against globalization forms the most visible part of the new phenomena that express a silent revolution in the ways of comprehending political activism. There are three principles from which to represent the world and play a role in (Radical Democracy): the search for «otherness», the reconstruction of the proximate for a better future and the lowest common and individual denominators from which to rethink the global village.

<http://www.injuve.mtas.es/injuve/contenidos.downloadatt.action?id=1728161189>

From the Corner of Europe: Comparative Analysis of Social Capital in Andalusia, Spain and Europe / Jaime Andreu Abela (Coord.); Andalusian Studies Centre (Centro de Estudios Andaluces). — Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2005. 287 p.: tab., Graf. ISBN 84-9742-498-0

The aim of the Andalusian Social Survey, which is partially based upon the European Social Survey, is to analyse the changes in and perpetuation of political attitudes, attributes and behaviour. This study is fruit of using and this information and analysing the results obtained, in order to check and compare how the mass media and social and political trust affect Andalusian society, attitudes towards emigrants, associationism and its implications, participation at work or attitudes to religion, basic elements in the construction of the concept of citizenship.

Thematic Axis 2: Young People's Public Policies: Dialogue 2.3. Participation: Participation Models? New Trends and Forms / Director: David Ortiz Martín. — [Madrid: Injuve, 2004]. 1 v. (Page. var.). Bibliography

A series of documents are presented on social participation in general and young people in particular, as the basis for democratic citizenship. Different experiences that have been carried out are also explained.

Mateos, Araceli

Electoral Behaviour of Young Spanish People / Araceli Mateos, Félix Moral. — Madrid: Instituto de la Juventud, 2006. 188 p.: Table, Graph. — (Studies). ISBN 84-96028-34-8

The change in the political cycle that occurred after the General Elections of 2004, and the possibility that the young people's vote might have had a major effect on this change, led to the preparation of new research work that was to complete the findings of the previous study conducted in 2001. On this occasion, the research includes the electoral behaviour of young people in the 2004 General Elections and the other two elections to be held on a national level since then: the European Parliament elections of 2004, and the referendum for the European Constitution in 2005. Together with the type of

participation and way of voting, the research also goes into detail about young people's attitudes and opinions.

<http://www.injuve.mtas.es/injuve/contenidos.item.action?id=1175153700&menuId=2104203924>

Megías Valenzuela, Eusebio

Young People's Discourse about Politics / Eusebio Megías Valenzuela

Subjects for Debate. — n. 138 (May 2006); Page 29-32. ISSN 1134-6574

Young people mistrust politicians and show an interest in finding new ways of participating directly where they can have a greater control over their contribution and require responsibilities for their contributions.

Jiménez Sánchez, Manuel

The Global Justice Movement: Research into the New Generation of Protesters / Manuel Jiménez Sánchez

Young People's Studies Magazine. — n. 75 (December 2006); Page 29-41.

A general process of change is taking place in the political involvement guidelines in post-industrial societies, and young people are playing a high-profile role, which is particularly clear in the mobilisations for global justice and the anti-globalisation demonstrations.

<http://www.injuve.mtas.es/injuve/contenidos.downloadatt.action?id=1431423975>

Scenarios for Political Creativity: Young People's Projects in the San Francisco District of (Bilbao) / Beatriz Cavia... [et al.]

Young People's Studies Magazine. — n. 75 (December 2006); Page 99-119.

A specific and limited scenario, an evolving neighbourhood affected by major processes of urban transformation is used to put forward the hypothesis that young people in these circumstances make it possible for political and social projects to emerge with new ways of constructing one's identity and meaning.

<http://www.injuve.mtas.es/injuve/contenidos.downloadatt.action?id=57486540>

Spain, Today: The Political Structuring of Coexistence / José Sánchez Jiménez... [et al.]

Society and Utopia. — n. 21 (May 2003); Page 125-281. Monographic Work Content: Democracy and political involvement in Spain (25 years of history) / José Sánchez Jiménez; On certain causes of participatory democracy / Blanca Muñoz; Six theses on Democracy and the State. The Europe Union, for example / Pedro Chaves Giraldo...

This work studies the political evolution over the last 25 years in Spain. Some articles deal with the causes of participatory democracy and develop a thesis about such concepts as Democracy and State. Other subjects that are dealt with include solidarity in national politics and local politics. It ends with a reflection on political culture and democracy in Spain.

Cerezo, José Joaquín

Young People and Politics / José Joaquín Cerezo

Young People's Pastoral Magazine.— n. 434 (May 2007); Page 25-32.

ISSN 1577-273-X

Society's general lack of interest in politics is fraught with risks, such as young people distancing themselves from matters of public interest and that the vacuum that is created becomes filled with groups with selfish motives.

Young People and Politics: Commitment to the Collective / Eusebio Megías Valenzuela (Coordinator). — Madrid: Instituto de la Juventud; Fundación de Ayuda contra la Drogadicción (Drug Addiction Aid Trust), 2005. 445 p.: tab., Graph. Bibliography: Page 313-316. Appendix; Annexes. ISBN 84-95248-68-9
Research conducted through a survey and discussion groups that, through interpreting quantitative indicators and analysing young people's discourse, endeavours to reveal many basic questions about comprehending social requirements, participation, citizenship commitment, the way politics and politicians are viewed, and the generational identity factor in relation to all that.
<http://www.injuve.mtas.es/injuve/contenidos.item.action?id=1712744787&menuId=2036431983>

Pajín, Leire

Young People and Politics: New Ways of Participating / Leire Pajín
Subjects for debate. — n. 138 (May 2006); Page 21-22. ISSN 1134-6574
Young people are marking the direction that new social policies must take, and they do not hesitate in putting into practice the initiatives that they believe in.

Young People, Constitution and Democratic Culture / M^a Luz Morán and Jorge Benedicto

Young People's Studies Magazine. — Edition especial (2003); Page 11-217.
Monographic Work

Contents: Young people in the Spanish Constitution of 1978 / M^a Isabel Álvarez Vélez and Juan Ignacio Grande Aranda; Travellers without a map. Construction of young people and an overview of young people's autonomy in the European Union / Marco Bontempi; Young People as a metaphor for the transition / Carles Feixa...

The 12 articles that make up this special monographic issue to commemorate 25 years since the Constitution came into effect attempts to show the changes that have taken place since the 40 years of dictatorship. On the basis of the text in the Constitution, the democratic changes have been imbuing society with new values that have marked a Before and an After for the generations of young people.

<http://www.injuve.mtas.es/injuve/contenidos.item.action?id=204160988&menuId=1515512885>

Ferrer Fons, Mariona

Young People, Participation and Political Attitudes in Spain... Are they really that different? / Mariona Ferrer Fons

Young People's Studies Magazine. — n. 75 (December 2006); Page 195-206.
Young people and Spanish society as a whole have certain characteristics in common where political attitudes and behaviour are concerned: a critical view of the politicians and political institutions, a low level of interest, low levels of monitoring political information and high levels of dissatisfaction with politics. The differences lie on the fact that young people are more likely to make some kind of a protest or to take political action.

<http://www.injuve.mtas.es/injuve/contenidos.downloadatt.action?id=1570800277>

Young People, Politics and Representations / Graciela Castro... [et al.]

Last Decade. — n. 26 (July 2007); Page 11-177. ISSN 0717-4691. Monographic Work

Contents: Young people: social identity and the construction of memory / Graciela Castro. Youth Groups: Political immaturity or affirmation of other possible policies? / Katia Valenzuela Fuentes. The social representations of politics and democracy / Manuel Cárdenas... [et al.]...

A description of different perceptions that young people have about a variety of subjects that are associated with national identity, historic memory and opinions and relating to politics and democracy in some Latin American countries.

Campos Arteseros, Herick

The Criminalization of Young People and their Estrangement from Politics /

Herick Campos Arteseros, Oscar Blanco Hortet

Subjects for debate. — n. 138 (May 2006); Page 45-48. ISSN 1134-6574

Young people are in a process of searching for a major role to play in the social framework that goes above party politics and the classic institutions for citizen involvement.

Mathieu Breglia, Gladys

Research into the Relationship between Young People and Politics in Young People Studies in Spain (1990-2004) / Gladys Mathieu Breglia; directed by

Francisco Bernete García. — Madrid: Universidad Complutense, Sociology Department, 2007. VIII, 443 h.: Graph, tab. ; 30 cm. + Database on CD ROM
Doctoral Thesis, Univ. Complutense

Research work that analyses the questionnaires applied to the Young People Studies conducted and reports issued between 1990 and 2004, which examines the repertoire of behaviours, attitudes and opinions of young people to a variety of political questions.

Robles, Laura

European Young People and Convention: for a Federal and Constitutional Europe / Laura Robles, Domenec Ruiz

Subjects for debate. — n. 103 (June 2003); Page 16-18. ISSN 1134-6574

A political document that contains the proposals for the young people of Europe, and that sets out the main courses of action at the European Convention of young people. It opts for a Constitution of a federal nature for Europe that recognises and protects human rights, which establishes the division of powers, which accepts the Social State in its most modern form as well as the innovative principles of participatory democracy.

Vallory, Eduard

Participation in Associations Leads to Political Involvement / Eduard Vallory,

David Pérez. — Barcelona: Fundació Escolta Josep Carol, 2003. 82 Page — (Reflexions en veu alta; 4). ISBN 84-607-7862-2

The social concerns of the people who form part of pressure groups making demands usually lead to the formation of groups with a political content that are the genuine creators of real democracy.

Moran, María Luz

The Political Participation of Young People / María Luz Morán

Subjects for debate. — n. 152 (July 2007) P. 54-57. ISSN 1134-6574

Very few young people are politically active where membership of political parties is concerned, but they show a willingness to collaborate with other types of organisations that are involved in relevant social matters.

Luque Delgado, Silvia

Young Members of Parliament and Councillors in Spain 2007 / Silvia Luque...

[et al.]. — Madrid: Injuve, 2008. 103 Page; 24 cm. ISBN 978-84-96028-56-2

The relevant influence of young Members of Parliament when compared to The Houses of Parliament as a whole (Congress and Senate) and Autonomous Regional Parliaments (except for Ceuta and Melilla) and the 25 Spanish cities with the largest number of inhabitants, is analysed through an age and sex study of the elected members. Finally, an analysis is made of the gender differences in the distribution of the elected members.

Gómez, Javier

Young People and the European Constitution / Javier Gómez

Subjects for debate. — n. 120 (November 2004); Page 9-10. ISSN 1134-6574

The young people of Europe rate their Constitution as a compendium of a series of social demands that allow for the integration of the different constituent cultures and facilitate greater tolerance and solidarity.

Díaz Moreno, Verónica

Young People and their New Ways of Participating: Beyond Political Parties

/ Verónica Díaz Moreno

Subjects for debate. — n. 138 (May 2006); Page 49-52. ISSN 1134-6574

The young people from the countries in our area seek new channels for social participation and do not hesitate to support causes that they believe to be just, and do so unreservedly.

World Youth Congress (3rd. 2005. Scotland)

Nothing for us... without us: a youth-led development starter kit / prepared by the 540 delegates who attended the World Youth Congress in Stirling, Scotland, from 29th July to 8th August 2005. — Edinburgh: The Scottish Executive, 2005. 68 p., 2 Compact Discs (CD-ROM).

Young people wish to take part in the projects that are being prepared, by the different administrations, to solve the problems as they arise. But young people do not want to be mere passive recipients. They want to collaborate in drawing up the programmes for young people.

<http://www.scotland2005.org/wyc/files/Actiontoolkit.pdf>

Young Parliament: a Space for Young People to Participate in the Local

Councils / Argos Proyectos Educativos S.L. [team of editors: Josechu

Ferreras Tomé...[et al.]]

Young People's Studies Magazine. — n. 74 (Sept. 2006); Page 185-202.

The aim of the Young Parliament programme is to create a stable structure for participation in Local Councils in the Province of Seville, which makes it possible to incorporate the youth perspective into local policies, and a space where young people can bring together the vision that they have of their town or their city, airing the problems that affect them and the suggestions for improvement that help to overcome them.

<http://www.injuve.mtas.es/injuve/contenidos.downloadatt.action?id=1717338040>

Participation, Politics and Young People: an Approach to Political Practice, Social Participation and the Political Effects on Catalan Youth???

/ Isaac González i Balletbó (liaison officer) . — Barcelona: Regional

Government of Catalonia, Secretary for Youth, 2007. 369 p.: tab., Graph ; 30 cm. — (Estudis; 22). ISBN 978-84-393-7464-0

An analysis of the young people of Catalonia within the context of motivations to take part in political life, on the one hand, and on the other hand, to take part in associations, together with the opportunities that they are offered by the institutions closest to them.

http://www20.gencat.cat/docs/Joventut/Documents/Arxiu/Publicacions/Col_Estudis/estudis22.pdf

Cainzos, Miguel A.

Young Spanish People's Participation in demonstrations: a comparison with the young people of Europe and an analysis of the determinants / Miguel A. Cainzos

Young People's Studies Magazine. — Num. 75 (December 2006); Page 121-153.

An analysis of the patterns and determinants with regard to the participation of young Spanish people in demonstrations from different perspectives: the differences between age groups, comparison with the participation of young people from other European countries, the difference between students and workers, ideological tendencies and finally, what differences are there between the young people who participate and those who do not.

<http://www.injuve.mtas.es/injuve/contenidos.downloadatt.action?id=1996048967>

Merino, Rafael

Participation and Associationism of young people in Europe: social trends and socio-political challenges / Rafael Merino Pareja

International Sociology Journal. — n. 43 (January to April 2006); Page 193-215. ISSN 0034-9712

The practice of associationism in Europe is more widespread in the northern countries than it is in the southern countries and the associations that began as a forum for theoretical and political discussion tend to become service managers.

Aguilera Ruiz, Óscar

A Transoceanic Model to be Constructed: Some Hypotheses about the Link between Young people and Politics / Óscar Aguilera Ruiz

Young people: young people studies journal. — n. 19 (July to December 2003); Page 64-81. ISSN 1405-406X.

The indicators that are generally used to examine the relationship between young people and politics are: the degree of trust in public institutions, registering on the electoral rolls, abstention in elections and perception of the usefulness of one's vote. When analysing young people's association movements, it is first necessary to study the specificities of the group, the contexts and the ways they are organised, that is to say, youth culture.

Young Europeans: Survey among young people aged between 15-30 in the European Union / by Gallup Organization. — [Luxembourg]: [Office for Official Publications of the European Communities], [2007]. 26 p.: tab., graph. ; 30 cm.

The research work, carried out in January and February 2007, involved 19,000 Europeans ranging from 15 to 30 years of age; this Euro barometer is the first survey to include young people from the 27 European Union Member States. The following aspects of their lives are studied: the meaning and the future of the European Union; leisure and associationism activities; Citizenship in the European Union; Political participation in society; Employment and unemployment; Autonomy and financial resources.

http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_202_en.pdf

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Young People and Political Participation:
European Research

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Vol. 6, No. 3, Sept. 2003, p. 295-317. (2006): *Culture politique des jeunes Allemands*. AGORA débats/jeunesses, no 40 – 2e trimestre 2006, p. 90-106 (2006): *Jugendliche und junge Erwachsene in Deutschland*. Lebensverhältnisse, Werte und gesellschaftliche Beteiligung 12- bis 29-Jähriger. Schriften des Deutschen Jugendinstituts: Jugendsurvey 3, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften. (2007): *Changes in the political culture of young Eastern and Western Germans between 1992 and 2003. Results of the DJI Youth Survey*. Journal of Contemporary European Studies, Vol. 15, No 3, p. 287-302. (2007): *Political Participation of Youth – Young Germans in the European Context*. Asia Europa Journal, special Edition: Youth in Asia and Europe, Vol. 5, No 4, pp. 541-555 (online: <http://www.springerlink.com/content/h2035p7710844670/>)

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She also worked as a researcher in two international projects: “Religiosidad, Ideología y Voto” (funded by the Spanish Ministry of Education) and “Orientations of Young Men and Women to Citizenship and European Identity” funded by the European Commission. She also stayed as a researcher at the London School of Economics and the Central European University in Hungary. She completed her training in several social research methods at the University of Essex and the University of Köln.

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“juventud inmigrante”? *Apuntes para la investigación y la política*, in: López Sala, A. & Cachón, L. *Juventud e Inmigración*. Gobierno de Canarias; (2007) coordination of the monographic issue “Jóvenes y constelaciones de desventaja en Europa”-*Revista de Estudios de Juventud* nº 77; (2006) *“La familia como respuesta a las demandas de individualización: ambivalencia y contradicciones”*, *Papers Revista de Sociología* nº 79; (2006) *“Transitar hacia la edad adulta: constelaciones de desventaja de los jóvenes españoles en perspectiva comparada. Una Proyección hacia el futuro”*, *Panorama Social*: nº 3.; (2005) *Informe Juventud en España 2004* (with other authors); (2003) *Contradictions of Inclusion: towards Integrated Transition Policies in Europe*. (with McNeish, W. and Walther, A. (eds.) Bristol: Policy Press.

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She has published numerous articles and books. Her publications include *Individu et mémoire familiale* (1996) published in Nathan, *Les jeunes et la politique* (1996) in Hachette, *L'expérience politique des jeunes* (2001) in Presses de Sciences Po, *Les jeunes d'Europe du sud et la politique. Une enquête comparative France, Italie, Espagne* (with M.Cacouault, 2001) in the Editions L'Harmattan, y *Les étudiants de Sciences Po. Leurs idées, leurs valeurs, leurs cultures politiques* (dir.) (2004) in Presses de Sciences Po.

Reingard SPANNRING

Sociologist, has worked as researcher at the Institute for Advanced Studies, Vienna, and as scientific manager of and researcher at the Austrian Institute for Youth Research, Vienna. Since 2006 she is lecturer and researcher at the Institute for Educational Sciences, Leopold Franzens University of Innsbruck, Austria. She has been involved in various international research projects including “Youth – actor of social change” (2006-2008), “Disadvantaged Youth and Political Strategies. A European Comparison” (2005), “Youth and Political Participation – EUYOUNG” (2002-2005) and “Youth and European Identity” (2001-2004). Her main areas of research relate to political participation, transitions of young people from school to work as well as non-formal and informal learning.

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The participation of young people in politics, which is the subject that this issue of the Magazine is devoted to, is one of those topics that, at a first glance, seems to have been fully dealt with in the past, so much so that nothing new can be added, apart from mentioning once again, the pessimistic predictions that can be gleaned from public opinion. However, if one goes more deeply into its characteristics and the way it has evolved, paying particular attention to the different contexts in which this participation takes place, one finds it surprising just how complex the matter is, how difficult it is to reach final conclusions one way or another and, above all, how little we know about why and how young people participate in politics in this globalised society.