

Youth voice(s) in EU countries and social movements in southern Europe

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Summary

This article discusses social mobilization of young people in European countries over the last four years in the context of economic crisis, austerity policies and worsening conditions for young people. Two main issues are explored. First, the article examines, on the basis of the European Social Survey 2010, youth participation in protests in European countries and the factors influencing their participation: labour market conditions, education, institutional participation, and satisfaction with the functioning of democracy and the economy. Secondly, it takes a closer look at recent youth protest developments in 2011 and 2012 in southern European countries, focusing on their extent, nature and agendas.

Résumé

L'article porte sur la mobilisation sociale des jeunes dans les pays européens au cours des quatre dernières années, dans le contexte de la crise économique, des politiques d'austérité et de la dégradation des conditions des jeunes. Deux problèmes essentiels sont abordés. Tout d'abord, l'article examine, sur la base de l'enquête sociale européenne (European Social Survey) 2010, la participation des jeunes dans les manifestations menées dans les pays européens et les facteurs qui influencent leur participation: les conditions du marché de travail, le niveau d'éducation, la participation institutionnelle et le niveau de satisfaction face au fonctionnement de la démocratie et de l'économie. Ensuite, l'article se focalise sur les développements récents des manifestations de jeunes en 2011 et 2012 dans les pays d'Europe du Sud, en examinant leur ampleur, leur nature et leurs revendications.

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Beitrag beleuchtet die soziale Mobilisierung junger Menschen in Europa in den letzten vier Jahren im Kontext der Wirtschaftskrise, der Sparpolitiken und der sich verschlechternden

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Bedingungen für junge Menschen. Es werden zwei Fragen untersucht: Zum einen erörtert der Artikel anhand der Europäischen Sozialstudie (ESS) 2010, inwiefern sich junge Menschen an den Protesten in europäischen Ländern beteiligt haben und welche Faktoren ihre Teilnahme beeinflussen (Arbeitsmarktbedingungen, (Aus-)Bildung, institutionelle Teilhabe und Zufriedenheit mit dem Funktionieren von Demokratie und Wirtschaft). Zweitens betrachtet er die jüngsten Protestbewegungen junger Menschen in Südeuropa in den Jahren 2011 und 2012 eingehender und stellt die Frage nach deren Umfang, Art und Zielen.

Keywords

Young people, social movements, economic crisis, democracy, collective action, trade unions

Social mobilization represents a means of expressing conflict through protest with recourse to a specific vocabulary and forms of behaviour

(Neveau, 2002)

Introduction

Young people in Europe have resorted to a wide range of means to express their increasing dissatisfaction in the wake of the international crisis that broke out in 2008: from occasional symbolic protests to massive protests on the streets, from ad-hoc initiatives to more structured network initiatives, from boycotts to demonstrations. This article examines the ‘voice’ responses (Hirschman, 1970) of youth to the dissatisfaction which has emerged over the last couple of years, attempting to identify and explain the specific patterns of youth protest in different EU countries and in particular in southern Europe in the context of economic crisis and austerity.

The article starts by identifying possible hypotheses for interpreting social mobilization, taking into consideration contrasting theoretical approaches (Section 1). On the basis of the European Social Survey (ESS) 2010, Section 2 then examines the diversity and level of protest in European countries (voice), the degree of electoral participation and trade union affiliation (institutional participation) and the specific behaviour of young people in this respect. Again using the ESS 2010 as its basis, Section 3 looks for explanations of why citizens in Europe (17 countries)¹ and in southern European and Nordic countries participate in demonstrations, examining which variables best lend themselves to predicting their participation. Finally, the article focuses on the developments following the European sovereign debt crisis that broke out in 2010 and the concomitant austerity policies. It analyses youth protests in southern Europe in 2011 and 2012, focusing on the specific character of youth mobilization in Greece, Portugal and Spain, with the intention of promoting an understanding of why youth-based social movements have emerged and developed. It focuses on the actions, agendas and scope of such movements, as well as on their links with other protests organized by such traditional channels as trade unions.

1 The 17 European countries comprised by the ESS are the following: Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, United Kingdom, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, and Sweden.

Theoretical approaches on social mobilization: traditional and new social movements

Theories on crisis and traditional social movements often see the emergence of collective action and social movements as related to economic crisis and changes. In the structural-functionalist approach (Smelser, 1962), collective protests and social movements are understood as dysfunctions resulting from economic change and the subsequent institutional imbalances unable to maintain social control and social cohesion. The Marxist approach with its focus on the labour movement identifies the relation between changing economic conditions and the resulting mobilization of social groups hit by these changes, viewing social mobilization as an expression of class conflict (Thompson, 1963). In line with the structural approach based on economic circumstances, youth protests during the present economic crisis are to be seen as a reaction of those most affected by the crisis, expressing their discontent with worsening material conditions on account of escalating unemployment and precarious work. Following this hypothesis we would expect there to be some correlation between the patterns and extent of youth protest in the different EU countries in terms of the economic and social toll the crisis is taking on young people's lives (Chung et al., 2012; Dietrich, 2012).

However, in line with the debate on new social movements (Della Porta and Diani, 2011), youth protest might also be understood not just as an expression of worsening economic and social conditions but first and foremost as an expression of meta-political motivation, reflecting the degree of dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy and the responses of the political system to the economic and social problems. Although it might seem improbable that young workers in precarious jobs or without a job would engage in collective mobilization and social movements due to the scarce resources available to this cohort and their weak collective identity, studies focusing on new social movements have pointed to the probability of them engaging in social mobilization, making the most of their institutional (degree of access to the political system) and discursive opportunities (visibility, resonance and legitimacy of identities and demands in the public domain) (Giugni, 2006; Della Porta, 2011; Baglioni et al., 2011). In addition, other groups such as students and graduates with more dense social networks (García and Martín, 2011; Jiménez, 2011) seem all the more likely to engage in social mobilization as austerity and neoliberal policies increasingly pose a threat to their educational prospects and their future chances on the labour market.

This approach sheds light on the political dimension of the youth agendas and protest, on the alternative modes of organization and action to which young people have resorted, in some cases quite divorced from traditional political participation and trade unions, and on the emergence and development of youth-based social movements (Bordogna and Cella, 2002; Yates, 2011; Della Porta and Diani, 2011). Indeed it has been observed that the recent social movements are not to be seen as a mere reaction to the inequality experienced but that they entail a genuinely political critique of the present social and democratic order, at the same time challenging the political order and calling for a new and radical form of democracy. The movement launched by the discontented youth thus embodies a genuine opportunity for change (Benford and Snow, 2000). The roots of this explosion of social movements go back, it is claimed, to the mid-1990s, in reaction to the new neoliberal economic policies (Toissant, 2012; Lucía and Roda, 2012). It is also probable that a specific understanding of democracy as being based on the concept of 'egalitarian compromise' (Schwartz, 2007) and expressing such normative values as equality, social justice, the well-being of others and tolerance played a role in youth discontent over the neoliberal policies launched during the crisis and seen to undermine such compromise. But these movements also reflect discontent with the bureaucratization of political participation and the erosion of all possibilities for any true expression of the majority popular will (Crouch, 2012; Pizzorno, 2012).

Youth traditions in terms of political and social participation can be put forward as an explanation for some of the striking differences in expressions of protest in EU countries, in particular with regard to their relationship to such conventional channels as political parties and trade unions. While young people may, in some countries, express their dissatisfaction primarily through these conventional channels, in others they are equally likely to express discontent through various forms of autonomous action and engagement in social movements. Indeed, most of the recent social movements involving young people operate very much on the periphery of traditional political and trade union organizations, and there is empirical evidence that the generally falling trend in trade union and political party membership is a feature observable across quite a large number of countries (Garcia and Martin, 2011: 226; Jiménez, 2011: 13; Crouch, 2012). Although young people are less likely to know about unions or to have the opportunity to belong to one, due to precarious work in weakly unionized industries (Peetz, 2010), differences between EU countries in relation to industrial relations configurations and traditions, and in particular to trade unions' organizational and institutional power and their power of mobilization could also influence the patterns of youth protest (Visser, 1995, 1996; Ortiz and Cebolla, 2010).

Youth voice(s) in European countries: patterns of protest and institutional participation

The comparative analysis of youth protests in Europe in this section is based on data selected from the European Social Survey (ESS) 2010, published in 2012. The ESS (2010) sample saw 34 671 persons interviewed, or more than 1 500 per country.² The target groups were young people in the 18–24 and 25–34 age ranges, though data on older age groups were also examined with the aim of identifying specific features of young people's behaviour.

Participation in demonstrations

It is important to mention that the ESS data contain no information about the focus and agenda of demonstrations and about who took the initiative to organize them (trade unions, students' movements, social movements, etc.). The countries with the highest participation rates in demonstrations across all age groups in the 2002–2010 period were Spain, France and Greece, i.e. all countries in southern Europe.³ However, the social mobilization of young people in Greece, Portugal and Spain developed after 2010, i.e. after the ESS data had been collected. Generally speaking, it can be observed that the increased tendency in southern European countries to participate in demonstrations began during the years of economic crisis between 2008 and 2010 (Figure 1).

Looking at the 2010 figures for the group of countries studied, participation in demonstrations was greater in the younger age cohorts and showed a tendency to decrease with increasing age (Table 1). In general, the highest level of mobilization was found among the youngest group, 18–24 year-olds, followed by 25–34 year-olds. The highest levels of youth participation in demonstrations were observed in France, Spain, Greece and Denmark.

2 ESS fieldwork was to have been carried out between 1 September and 31 December 2010, although in some countries it started later and continued on into the first half of 2011 (see <http://ess.nsd.uib.no/ess/round5/deviations.html>).

3 In Spain, the extremely high participation in mobilization in 2004 has been associated with the protests against the terrorist events in Madrid.

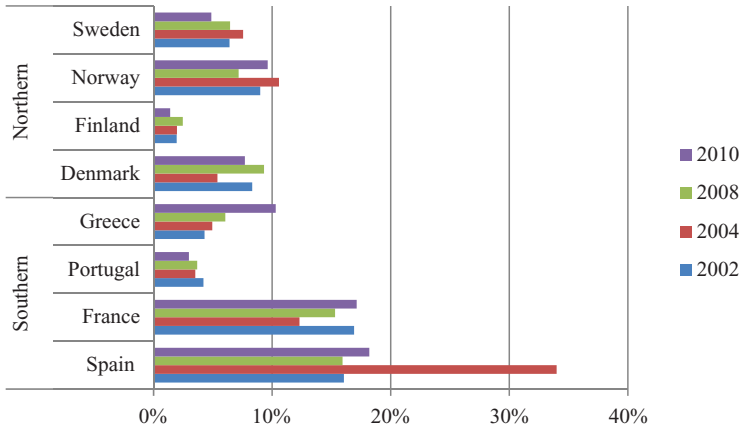


Figure I. Participation in demonstrations in southern and northern European countries (all age groups). Source: Own compilation based on ESS data.

Table I. Participation in demonstrations.

	18–24 years	25–34 years	35–44 years	45–54 years	>65 years
BE	5.0	6.9	9.1	8.5	2.1
BU	3.5	4.9	3.6	2.9	0.8
CZ	4.8	3.8	5.7	4.6	3.2
DE	13.7	8.1	6.8	9.6	4.6
DK	18.5	6.7	7.5	8.3	2.7
ES	19.2	21.9	18.3	19.8	9.1
FI	2.8	4.8	1.2	0.4	0.0
FR	25.1	18.4	18.8	20.0	6.6
UK	1.6	2.3	2.2	2.8	6.6
GR	17.3	13.6	11.9	11.4	2.0
HU	3.1	3.5	1.8	1.9	2.1
IR	8.8	5.5	6.2	7.8	4.8
NL	4.8	3.8	1.7	4.4	0.3
NO	12.5	10.0	11.2	10.0	4.7
PL	3.3	1.9	1.2	1.5	1.5
PT	3.5	6.8	3.5	3.3	1.2
SE	9.5	9.0	3.4	2.5	3.3
Average (17 countries)	9.5	7.8	7.0	7.3	2.7
V Cramer	.227	.206	.207	.213	.133

Source: Own compilation based on ESS data, 2010.

Participation in boycott action

Participation in boycott action might focus on very diverse issues such as human and labour rights, trading issues, environmental/habitat issues, targeting specific companies or industries as a whole, as well as political issues targeting companies, political parties or institutions of governance (Yates, 2011). In this study we examine only ‘product boycotts’ by considering the wording of the ESS

Table 2. Participation in boycott action.

	18-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	>65 years
BE	5.4	9.3	11.2	10.0	6.3
BU	3.5	3.4	5.7	5.4	1.3
CZ	9.7	9.7	10.5	9.0	10.0
DE	17.5	31.0	36.9	33.7	19.3
DK	15.0	25.8	24.9	22.7	15.0
ES	7.3	14.6	12.4	14.6	4.5
FI	31.6	47.3	39.4	36.2	20.9
FR	19.6	24.1	31.5	29.6	22.3
UK	7.5	16.4	19.1	22.6	20.0
GR	12.2	13.3	16.3	13.3	4.1
HU	5.2	5.9	6.9	6.7	2.1
IR	7.6	8.1	10.9	12.9	6.7
NL	11.7	11.3	12.2	13.9	4.2
NO	14.2	21.3	24.8	22.6	15.2
PL	5.4	8.3	6.5	3.8	0.4
PT	1.5	3.4	3.5	2.6	1.1
SE	33.6	41.0	35.0	36.6	28.7
Average (17 countries)	12.2	16.4	17.7	17.8	10.4
V Cramer	.257	.318	.287	.286	.287

Source: Own compilation based on ESS data, 2010.

Table 3. Electoral participation in national elections (voted).

	18-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	>65 years
BE	57.3	85.5	84.5	88.5	84.0
BU	38.8	65.8	76.7	78.3	83.6
CZ	28.8	54.5	60.8	65.3	66.8
DE	38.9	68.9	73.8	80.2	87.9
DK	30.6	82.8	89.7	92.8	94.3
ES	30.9	65.5	76.5	83.4	85.3
FI	15.1	72.0	76.5	82.0	87.3
FR	19.2	47.1	59.5	68.7	81.6
UK	30.2	53.5	67.1	72.4	85.0
GR	44.7	71.0	71.1	80.9	81.3
HU	52.3	66.0	73.4	81.0	69.6
IR	31.4	47.9	71.4	73.4	87.6
NL	49.7	80.3	78.3	81.4	86.2
NO	39.7	71.3	82.8	83.3	86.2
PL	26.5	62.1	73.8	75.7	77.8
PT	28.6	59.4	69.0	70.5	82.1
SE	55.4	88.0	88.2	93.1	95.8
Average (17 countries)	36.0	65.4	74.0	78.9	84.0
V Cramer	.272	.223	.174	.159	.140

Source: Own compilation based on ESS data, 2010.

question: 'There are different ways of trying to improve things in [country] or help prevent things from going wrong. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following? Boycotted certain products.'

Table 4. Trade union membership.

	18–24 years	25–34 years	35–44 years	45–54 years	>65 years
BE	15.4	47.6	46.6	42.7	8.3
BU	0.5	3.7	7.6	12.5	0.2
CZ	1.3	5.9	8.4	9.5	2.9
DE	4.6	7.8	11.5	16.2	8.4
DK	25.4	74.8	80.8	81.9	17.4
ES	2.2	9.1	14.5	16.6	1.0
FI	24.7	63.6	70.2	71.3	22.9
FR	0.0	4.4	7.7	11.1	1.1
UK	5.6	17.0	17.5	22.8	4.7
GR	0.6	4.2	5.6	8.7	1.3
HU	1.0	6.7	12.5	9.9	9.8
IR	5.9	17.3	15.9	21.3	3.7
NL	6.8	14.3	18.7	24.4	12.3
NO	12.1	41.9	50.2	58.6	33.9
PL	0.6	4.8	9.8	9.2	1.9
PT	1.5	8.5	8.3	6.9	1.7
SE	15.0	58.5	71.3	70.1	25.0
Average (17 countries)	6.9	19.2	23.4	26.5	7.9
V Cramer	.238	.407	.412	.404	.426

Source: Own compilation based on ESS data, 2010.

Products boycott as a form of protest action is clearly less widespread among the youngest group and increases with age. It is less frequent in the countries of southern Europe where there is much less of a tradition of consumer associations, with environmental organizations only just beginning to be set up. By contrast, boycotts constitute an important form of protest in the Nordic countries, including Finland, Sweden and Denmark, as well as in Germany and France.

Electoral participation

Electoral participation shows a tendency to increase with age. The lowest levels of electoral participation were recorded among 18–24 year-olds. Electoral participation displays no clear pattern in terms of country classification, no doubt attributable to the fact that voting relates to the specific circumstances of each country. Young people aged between 18 and 24 participate more in elections in Belgium⁴ and Sweden, countries where confidence in the party and parliamentary system and in democracy in general tends to be higher. Below-average countries in this respect are France, Finland, Spain, Portugal, the Czech Republic and Poland.




Trade union membership

Trade union membership similarly shows a tendency to increase with age. In general, 18–24 year-olds have much lower membership levels than other groups, even compared with 25–34 year-olds. Nevertheless, trade union membership among young people aged between 18 and 24 is significantly

4 In Belgium voting is compulsory for every citizen from the age of 18; legal sanctions still exist, but they have not been enforced by prosecutors since 2003.

Table 5. Patterns of mobilization and institutional participation. Young people in the 18–24 age range.

	Demos	Boycotts	Elections	Trade unions
BE	5.0	5.4	57.3	15.4
BU	3.5	3.5	38.8	0.5
CZ	4.8	9.7	28.8	1.3
DE	13.7	17.5	38.9	4.6
DK	18.5	15.0	30.6	25.4
ES	19.2	7.3	30.9	2.2
FI	2.8	31.6	15.1	24.7
FR	25.1	19.6	19.2	0
UK	1.6	7.5	30.2	5.6
GR	17.3	12.2	44.7	0.6
HU	3.1	5.2	52.3	1.0
IR	8.8	7.6	31.4	5.9
NL	4.8	11.7	49.7	6.8
NO	12.5	14.2	39.7	12.1
PL	3.3	5.4	26.5	0.6
PT	3.5	1.5	28.6	1.5
SE	9.5	33.6	55.4	15
Average (17 Countries)	9.5	12.2	36	6.9

Above-average level of participation: 
 Below-average level of participation: 
 Average (or below-average but close to it) level of participation 

higher in those countries with traditionally high overall levels of trade union membership (Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland and Belgium).

Patterns of protest and institutional participation of young people aged between 18 and 24

A comparison of European countries in relation to average youth (18–24) participation in demonstrations and boycotts (protest) and their level of participation in elections and trade unions (institutional) shows different patterns (Table 5).

It is first important to mention that a group of countries has above-average levels of participation both in demonstrations and boycotts: Denmark, France, Germany and Norway. In Norway this is combined with above-average participation in elections and trade unions; in Germany, with above-average participation in elections but a low level of participation in trade unions; in Denmark, with a high level of participation in trade unions but a low level (although close to average) of electoral participation; and in France, with low levels of electoral and trade union participation.

Two countries show an above-average level of participation in demonstrations but a low level in boycotts: Greece and Spain. In the case of Greece this is combined with an above-average level of

electoral participation and a low level of trade union participation, while in the case of Spain this is combined with low levels of participation in both trade unions and elections. By contrast, two other countries show a low level of participation in demonstrations but a high level of participation in boycotts: Sweden and Finland. In the case of Sweden this is combined with high levels of participation in trade unions and elections; while in the case of Finland it is combined with a very low level of participation in elections and an above-average level of participation in trade unions.

Finally, there is a large group of countries with low participation levels both in demonstrations and boycotts, but which differ in terms of participation in elections and in trade unions: with low levels of participation in elections and in trade unions – Czech Republic, Poland and Portugal; with above-average participation levels in elections and trade union membership – Belgium; and with a high participation level in elections but very low level of trade union membership – Bulgaria and Hungary.

Explaining participation in demonstrations: the relative influence of socio-economic and political factors

This section looks for an explanation of why people participate (or do not participate) in demonstrations, considering the total population interviewed within the ESS 2010, and not just young people. Multivariate analysis (logistic regression) is used as a means of identifying the influence of different independent variables in the propensity to participate in demonstrations (dependent variable – whether or not respondents participate in demonstrations). The independent variables considered are of different categories: individual (including age group) and socio-economic variables; satisfaction with employment, the economy and democracy; loyalty and trust and institutional participation; and an understanding of egalitarian commitment (see Table 6 in the Appendix).

The analysis considers Europe (17 countries) as a whole (model 3); southern countries (models 1 and 2); and Nordic countries (model 4). The reason why there are two models for southern Europe is because the first one explores only the particular influence of individual and socio-economic variables on participation in demonstrations while the second one compares the influence of satisfaction and loyalty variables on that participation. In the models 3 (Europe) and 4 (Nordic countries) all the range of variables are included to evaluate their correlation with participation (or not) in demonstrations.

Individual and socio-economic conditions and participation in demonstrations

A possible gender difference emerges in relation to participation in mobilization, with women participating less than men, though this difference is not statistically significant. Students, most of whom are included in the 18–24 age cohort, followed by the 25–34 age cohort, display a greater likelihood to take part in demonstrations. Academic background is a significant factor, with university graduates more likely to mobilize (53 per cent) than people with only primary education, this being expressed by a linear correlation.

Looking at all countries, we find little correlation between labour market variables – precarious jobs, fixed-term contracts, unemployment, low wages and low skill levels – and participation in protest demonstrations. The type of employment contract is not particularly significant in Europe (17 countries) or in the Mediterranean countries. In some countries, however, participation in demonstrations among persons employed on fixed-term contracts is above average. This is the case, for example, in France, Spain, Denmark, Germany and Norway. On the other hand, the participation of the

unemployed in demonstrations is low, despite the fact that mobilization among the unemployed is relatively high in such countries as France, Spain, Denmark and Greece. What is noteworthy is that, proportionally, people currently in work tend to participate more in demonstrations than the unemployed. Participation of those in work is indeed significantly above average in Spain, France and Greece. In other words, unemployment is not a circumstance necessarily translating into a higher likelihood of taking part in demonstrations. The wage level is similarly not a significant factor in determining mobilization in the 17 European countries, though it does play a certain role in the southern European countries.

The data suggest that socio-economic variables bear less weight than might be expected in explaining mobilization, perhaps explaining why mobilization among workers is less than among students. One indication in this respect is that socio-demographic variables such as age and academic background bear greater weight in determining mobilization.

Satisfaction with the economy and democracy

In Model 2 (see Table 6 in the Appendix) we develop other groups of explanatory variables associated with the ideas of 'trust and loyalty' (Hirschman, 1970). While the degree of satisfaction with one's job is not significant, dissatisfaction with the economy and democracy is. Discontent with the performance of the economy and the working of democracy is a contributory factor accounting for mobilization in Europe as a whole (17 countries), and in the Mediterranean and Nordic countries. This discontent is greater among young people and those with a university education. Moreover, a high degree of dissatisfaction with democracy is expressed in eastern European countries, while satisfaction with democracy is, by contrast, high in the Nordic countries.

It is worth mentioning that there is a negative correlation between dissatisfaction with democracy and the unemployment rate (Pearson correlation $r = -.572$) and risk of poverty ($r = -.614$). Similarly, there is a significant positive correlation between satisfaction with democracy and welfare state variables, such as social protection for long-term employment ($r = .684$), and with levels of wealth measured by GDP ($r = .736$).

Loyalty: voting and trust in political institutions

First of all, persons not voting in elections in the Mediterranean countries are 45 per cent more likely to be involved in mobilization than those who do, a finding that appears clearly related to dissatisfaction with democracy. This behaviour is significant in the southern European countries but insignificant in the Nordic countries and the EU as a whole. Secondly, a lack of trust in political parties, whether with regard to the national parliament or the European Parliament, has a slight influence on participation in mobilization, though the weight of these coefficients is lower and insignificant in the model taken as a whole.

Ideology and political orientation

Something that has turned out to be very important is the weight of ideology as a determinant of mobilization, whether in southern Europe, Europe as a whole (17 countries) or the Nordic countries. There is, indeed, a linear correlation between people's position on the right/left political spectrum and their participation in mobilization, with people on the left more likely to take part in mobilization than those on the right.

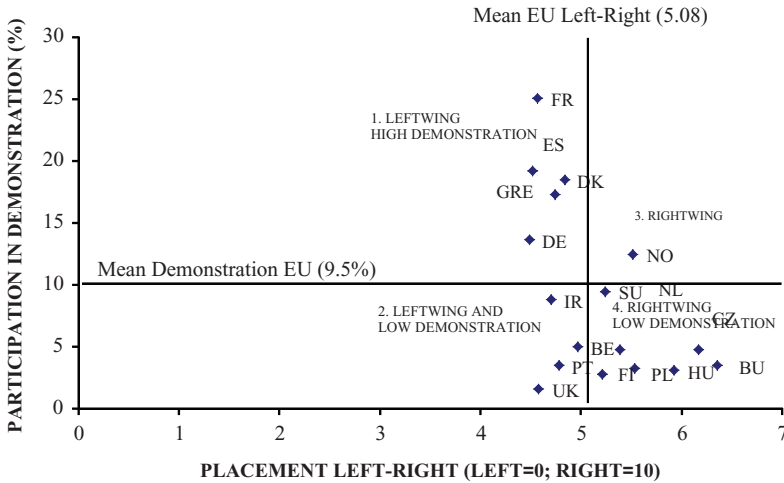


Figure 2. Mean placement Left-Right in ideology and % participation in demonstration: Youth 18–24 years old. Source: Own compilation based on ESS data, 2010.

Looking at the youngest group (18–24), correlations are visible between participation in demonstrations and political orientation (see Figure 2). Young people on the political left (measured in relation to the European mean of 5.08) are more likely to take part in demonstrations. In this first quadrant, the young persons located on the left are French, Spanish, Greek, Danish and German. Also located to the left of the axis are young Irish, Portuguese, Belgians and Britons, though this second group has a below-average participation level in demonstrations (average = 9.5 per cent). Young Bulgarians, Hungarians, Czechs, Poles and Finns are to be found further to the right in the political spectrum, in addition to which they participate much less in demonstrations.

On the other hand, young persons on the political right and with low participation levels in demonstrations are Norwegians, Swedes and Dutch. These nationalities express a higher degree of satisfaction with the performance of the economy and trust in democracy.

Trade union membership

Those having belonged to trade unions in the past and those not belonging to trade unions are more likely to take part in demonstrations than those currently belonging to trade unions, with this a particularly noteworthy tendency in southern Europe. This may perhaps be explained by the high degree of job rotation and low trade union density in these countries.

To this finding must be added other factors linked to the social partners' institutional participation: trade unions in the southern European countries have less power and presence in public institutions compared to other countries. This contributes to explaining the lesser degree of conflict institutionalization in southern Europe and, consequently, recourse to mobilization as a means of exerting pressure on the public authorities. In addition, other factors of an organizational nature contribute to explaining the causes of mobilization in southern Europe. One important factor is the fragmentation of trade union representation associated with the social stratification and segmentation of the labour market. This impedes dialogue and the articulation of interests between representatives and persons represented. One indication of this is the fact that young people have little proximity to trade unions due to their frequent job rotation entailed by fixed-term contracts, as this stands in the

way of building stable relations with trade unions. A further aspect is that young people have constructed work-related identity narratives quite different from the attitudes determined by the Fordist-type standardized labour systems experienced by earlier generations (Crouch, 2012; Bordogna and Cella, 2002). Consequently, the ‘voice’ of youth tends to become channelled through social movements and not through ‘institutionalized’ parties and trade unions.

Egalitarian compromise

The idea that government should reduce poverty and express solidarity in the face of inequality only moderately determines mobilization. The other variable, the idea that government should reduce income inequalities, also carries some, albeit only minor, weight.

Collective values are, however, extremely important in determining *dissatisfaction* with democracy. For those who are *dissatisfied with democracy*, the factors determining their dissatisfaction are, by order of weight, collective values – such as the idea that the government should take steps to prevent poverty and reduce income inequalities – membership of the political left, university level of studies, and trade union membership, as found in an earlier regression analysis, not included here. What is also striking is that young people attach less importance than their elders to the aforementioned values of solidarity. For example, the idea that the government should take steps to prevent poverty is supported by only 43 per cent of young persons aged between 19 and 29. By contrast, more than half of those aged over 30 adhere to these values. The average over all ages is 48 per cent.

New trends in southern Europe towards youth-based social movements: activism and beyond

Although the ESS 2010 did show that the level of youth participation in demonstrations had increased in some EU countries, it did not predict the mass protests that catapulted young southern Europeans onto the front pages of the national and international press in 2011 and 2012. As already indicated in the previous section, the driving factor for participating in demonstrations in southern Europe was dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy, in turn related to economic contextual variables such as wealth, welfare and unemployment. It is therefore credible to assume that the fast and dramatic changes observed in Greece, Portugal and Spain after 2010, with escalating unemployment and the accompanying social backlash, amplified the probability of protests in general and youth protests in particular. In this section we look at these developments on the basis of different sources (press and other media), taking into account issues not considered by the ESS relating to the extent, nature and agendas of youth protests and how these fitted in with conventional channels such as trade unions.

The spring of 2011 saw the sudden and forceful emergence of the ‘Indignados’ in Spain, the ‘15-M’ or ‘15 October movement’ in Portugal and the protest movement known as the ‘Aganaktismeni’ in Greece. These expressions of discontent in the different countries were subsequently grouped together under the label ‘Movement of the Indignados’.

This wave of protests can best be described as a wide-reaching informal network set up as an indictment of indifference and in support of peaceful insurrection and which took as its symbolic reference the leaflet entitled ‘Time for Outrage: Indignez-vous!’ issued in 2010 by Stephane Hessel. The movement burgeoned and rapidly displayed an internationalist impetus, notably with the ‘Occupy Wall Street’ protest in the United States and students’ protests in Chile and Quebec. The movement as a whole also drew its inspiration from the wave of revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt,

the ‘Arab Spring’, with which the European protests shared numerous features including civil resistance, sustained campaigns, demonstrations, marches and rallies, as well as the effective use of social media.

The emergence and development of youth protests in Greece, Portugal and Spain took place in the context of the implementation of tough austerity policies adopted in the wake of the European sovereign debt crisis of 2010. In addition, under the bailout programmes set out in the Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with the so-called troika, i.e. the IMF, the European Commission and the European Central Bank (ECB), Greece (since May 2010) and Portugal (since May 2011) were under increasing external pressure from the troika to comply with the austerity and neoliberal measures laid down in the MoUs. In Spain, meanwhile, albeit without the troika, a very similar trend was observed. The combination of the ongoing crisis with austerity measures triggered a rapid downturn in working and living conditions, with youth unemployment rising to unprecedented levels: in the third quarter of 2012, 56.9 per cent in Greece, 54.2 per cent in Spain and 39.1 per cent in Portugal.

The mass youth protests against austerity in Portugal began on 12 March 2011. The protests, sometimes referred to as the ‘Geração à Rasca’ (‘Precarious generation’) protests, were staged in over 10 Portuguese cities as an expression of opposition to austerity, the economic crisis and deteriorating labour rights. In Lisbon and Oporto some 300 000 people took to the streets. The result was the largest protest in Portugal since the 1974 ‘Revolution of the Carnations’ and it was organized without any form of direct support from political parties or trade unions. The organizers of the Geração à Rasca protests created the Movimento 12 de Março as ‘an active voice promoting democracy in all areas of our lives’. This movement organized a demonstration on 15 October 2011 under the motto ‘for participative democracy, for transparency in political decisions, against precariousness’ which once again mobilized many thousands of participants and represented a further step in expanding the network through the creation of the Plataforma 15 de Outubro which has now become a grouping of 41 independent organizations rejecting the subordination of politics to economic interests (Kaos en la red, 2012). While the movement’s initial focus on the ‘precarious generation’ suggested a very specific concern for youth, its impact unleashed a momentum embracing other generations and concerns, thus representing a move from ‘precarious generation’ in the singular to ‘precarious generations’ in the plural.

In Spain, the massive youth protests against austerity began on 15 May 2011. The Spanish protests, also referred to as the Movimiento 15-M (15-M Movement) and the Indignados movement, involved a series of demonstrations in different parts of the country. As in Portugal, organization of the protests had actually started earlier, in January 2011. Using the digital platform Democracia Real YA, Twitter and Facebook, a call was issued to ‘the unemployed and poorly paid, the subcontracted and precarious workers, young people...’ to take to the streets on 15 May. Social networks such as Democracia Real YA and ‘Juventud Sin Futuro’ (‘Youth without a future’) played a major role. In the Spanish case, the Indignados constitute a youth movement in the broad sense: there are non-organized collectives such as the ‘Mileuristas’ (those earning €1 000 a month), the ‘Nimileuristas’ (those earning ‘not even’ €1 000 a month) and the ‘Nini’ (those neither working nor studying).

In Greece the 2011 mass youth protests had as a precedent the 2008 youth riots that had broken out on 6 December, when Alexandros Grigoropoulos, a 15-year-old student, was killed by two policemen. The mass anti-austerity protests by youth began on 25 May 2011, organized by the Direct Democracy movement ‘Now!’ and with demonstrations in major cities across Greece as part of the ‘Indignant Citizens’ Movement’ (Κίνημα Αγανακτισμένων Πολιτών, Κίνημα Aganaktisménon Politón). Similar to the situations in Portugal and Spain, the Indignant Citizens Movement in Greece functions as a platform consisting of several different but interacting groups and movements.

Last but not least, political changes in the three countries played a major role in the developments in late 2011 and 2012. While the spring 2011 youth movements were directed at the first wave of austerity policies launched by the Socialist parties in power in the three countries, the following period saw protests aimed at the new centre-right governments in Portugal and Spain and the centre-right coalition in Greece, all of which were tightening austerity measures. The combination of dramatic austerity measures and the arrogance of many of the centre-right parties and politicians represented a new challenge in these countries, explaining the escalating indignation and protests. An eloquent example of such arrogance was the advice offered by Portuguese prime minister Passos Coelho in July 2012 to the thousands of young jobless in his country when youth unemployment hit 36.6 per cent: these people should, said the prime minister, ‘show more effort’ and ‘leave their comfort zone’ by looking for work abroad. The response was increased protests. In Greece the demonstrations held on 26 September 2012 in conjunction with a general strike were the largest since the protest action in May 2011. In Portugal on 15 September 2012 the remarkable level of participation in the demonstration called by the *Plataforma 15 de Outubro* and other social movements such as the ‘*Associação de Combate à Precariedade*’, ‘*Precários Inflexíveis*’ and the ‘*Movimento Sem Emprego*’ was comparable to that of 12 March 2011.

The extraordinary mobilization that youth movements were able to drum up in 2011 and 2012 in Greece, Portugal and Spain was the result not only of networking, activism and international impulses, but also characterized the way in which youth movements responded to and were able to articulate the escalating discontent resulting from the dramatic economic and social situation and the absence or failure of appropriate political responses in their countries. Although these youth movements could be interpreted as a reaction by a particular social group hit by labour market segmentation, precarious employment and high levels of unemployment, their action articulates both youth-specific problems and broader societal and political concerns: labour and social rights, equality and justice as well as greater democracy and new forms of democracy. Combined with their anti-austerity demands, these are key issues for understanding their impact and capacity to mobilize young people as well as larger groups of the population.

This multiple approach also translated into their capacity flexibly to organize some of the categories less likely to be organized by trade unions, i.e. the unemployed and precarious workers. In Portugal, for example, various movements emerged such as the *Precários Inflexíveis* (Precarious Inflexible Workers), *Movimento sem Emprego* (Movement of the unemployed), *Associação de Combate à Precariedade* (Association to Combat Precariousness), which participated in the general protests but also in specific protests and other forms of action.

Accordingly, many elements of the youth movements’ agendas in these countries overlapped with both trade unions’ demands and the concerns of left-wing political parties. Even so, the youth social movements claimed their autonomy in relation to political parties and trade unions, some of them being more critical of these ‘traditional’ organizations than others yet all sharing a common view of flexible organization and direct democratic participation. Nevertheless, under specific circumstances, the youth movements showed themselves willing and able to link up with or take part in the trade union protests and demonstrations which also escalated in 2011 and 2012. Furthermore, in their capacity as autonomous movements, they were often the first to take the initiative to call for general strikes and/or openly support the general strikes which took place in the three countries.

While tensions and divisions emerged in the process, it is impossible to divorce the youth social movements and their massive demonstrations in spring 2011 in Greece, Portugal and Spain – and repeated later in 2011 and again in 2012 – from the general strikes and massive demonstrations organized by the trade unions (Kelly and Hamann, 2010; Campos Lima and Martin Artiles, 2011). To

whatever extent the respective protest movements joined or failed to join forces, there can be no doubt that they incited and influenced each other. The wave of youth mobilization and growing public awareness influenced the breadth of trade union mobilization, in turn certainly influencing the ongoing youth protest movement. The extraordinary social mobilization and general strikes in southern Europe on 14 November 2012, in the context of the ETUC European protest against austerity policies, were an expression of this process.

Conclusions

In line with the analysis of the ESS 2010 data we find in this study that the influence of the structural line of argument based on an individual's situation in the labour market (being unemployed or having a precarious job) bears less weight than expected when attempting to explain social mobilization. The influence of socio-economic conditions cannot however be dismissed, as discontent with the performance of the economy is a contributory factor accounting for mobilization in the Mediterranean and Nordic countries and in Europe as a whole (17 countries). Moreover, dissatisfaction with democracy, with its greater weight in explaining citizens' social mobilization in all these countries, in particular in southern Europe, is related to contextual economic variables, such as levels of wealth and welfare, and unemployment rates.

Secondly, the theoretical assumptions drawn from the focus on the new social movements emphasize the importance of other values, such as the generational aspect, ideological considerations and institutional participation (electoral participation and trade union membership). Indeed, the whole set of variables examined stresses the influence of a specific profile of demonstrators by means of the weight carried by the regression coefficients. The predictors indicative of the greatest influence are the following categories: young people aged between 18 and 34; with intermediate and university level studies and politically on the left, having belonged to a trade union in the past or never having been a trade union member. In addition not to have voted in political elections is of relevance when looking at participation in demonstrations, though this correlation, expressing dissatisfaction with democracy, is only significant in the southern European countries. We find that young people in Europe have higher levels of participation in demonstrations than older people and that this is particularly evident for the 18–24 age cohort. This is also the group with the lowest level of participation in political elections and trade union membership (which increases with age). This is particularly striking in relation to southern European countries. Finally, the interplay between socio-economic factors and institutional/political factors explains why, in the southern European countries and in contrast to most other European countries, young people were more likely to engage in social protests.

While the analysis based on the ESS 2010 indicates that youth not belonging to a trade union are more likely to participate in protests, it does not reveal whether these protests were autonomous or whether they were orchestrated or actually organized by traditional channels such as trade unions. Therefore the analysis based on the ESS 2010 is inconclusive with regard to whether youth protests and trade union mobilization are divorced from each other in Europe. As trade unions in southern Europe have demonstrated over the years their capacity to mobilize large groups of people over and above their actual members, it may be assumed that at least some of the youth protests were part of such mobilization. The analysis is similarly inconclusive on youth agendas and demands – labour market specific demands and/or more broad political demands regarding democracy and economy – as the ESS 2010 did not look into this aspect.

The analysis of youth protests in southern Europe in 2011 and 2012, though based on sources (press and other media) not comparable with the ESS 2010, highlights the fact that youth

mobilization in this period was specific in its extent and nature. Youth protests escalated, turning into mass protests and autonomous social movements (non-institutionalized forms of expression). Youth demands expressed a combination of dissatisfaction with the economy and with the functioning of democracy, confirming the findings on their motivation based on the ESS 2010. However they also voiced concrete demands related to working and living conditions, reflecting the dramatic changes and the failure of policies to address them observed in southern Europe in this period. In Greece, Portugal and Spain, the demands articulated in youth protests related to their specific labour market situation but also to broader societal and political concerns for social rights and democracy and against austerity policies. Furthermore, on some occasions, youth protests and trade unions protests overlapped, with both playing a role in increasing public awareness, in turn contributing to the massive mobilization in southern Europe in 2011 and 2012. Nevertheless, the youth social movements mobilized under their own motto, with their own demands and subject to their own preferred and quite different organizing styles based on autonomy and flexibility.

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Appendix

Table 6. Participation in demonstrations.

	Southern countries: FR, ES, PT and GR		Europe 17 countries		Nordic countries: SE, NO, DK and FI	
	MODEL 1 Individual and socio-economic		MODEL 2 Satisfaction and loyalty		MODEL 3 MODEL 4	
	B coefficients	B coefficients	B coefficients	B coefficients	B coefficients	B coefficients
INDIVIDUAL VARIABLES						
Gender Male = Ref	-0.204 (ns)		.347*	-0.098(ns)	.181 (ns)	
18-24 years old, = Ref						
25-34 years	-.528**		-.251 (ns)	-.580	-1.818(ns)	
35-44 years	-.336(ns)		.048(ns)	-1.379**	-2.004(ns)	
45-65 years	-.041 (ns)		-.081 (ns)	-0.785*	-1.875 (ns)	
> 65 years	-0.243		-.455(ns)	-.814(ns)	-1.862(ns)	
First level study, = Ref						
Second level study	1.170***		1.113*	.345*	.339(ns)	
Intermediate level study	.633***		.526**	.435**	.519(ns)	
Tertiary level	.426**		.350(ns)	.194*	-.195(ns)	
Permanent employment, = Ref						
Temporary employment	-0.505(ns)		-.179(ns)	-0.268(ns)	.152(ns)	
No contract	-0.554(ns)		-.108(ns)	-0.306(ns)	.424(ns)	
Unemployed	0.148(ns)		.287 (ns)	1.017 (ns)	-1.347 (ns)	
Student: Ref						
No Student	.541 *		.553 (ns)	0.11 (ns)	.674(ns)	
First quintile, low wages, = Ref						
Second quintile	.585**		1.157**	0.15(ns)	-.833(ns)	
Third quintile	0.111 (ns)		.42 (ns)	-0.214(ns)	-.558	
Fourth quintile	0.271 (ns)		.478 (ns)	0.175 (ns)	-.275 (ns)	
Fifth quintile	-0.11		-.015(ns)	-0.201 (ns)	-.297 (ns)	
SOCIO-ECONOMIC VARIABLES						

(continued)

Table 6. (continued)

	Southern countries: FR, ES, PT and GR			Europe		Nordic countries:	
	MODEL 1		MODEL 2	MODEL 3		MODEL 4	
	Individual and socio-economic	Satisfaction and loyalty	All variables	17 countries		SE, NO, DK and FI	
	B coefficients	B coefficients	B coefficients	B coefficients	B coefficients	B coefficients	B coefficients
SATISFACTION							
Satisfaction with employment		-.01 (ns)	.013 (ns)	-.036 (ns)	.076		
Satisfaction with the economy		.094**	.048 (ns)	.064**	-.141**		
Satisfaction with democracy		.091**	.072 (ns)	.072**	.130 (ns)		
Vote, = Ref (no voted)		-.585*	.035 (ns)	0.285 (ns)	.508 (ns)		
Trust in parliament		-.024 (ns)	-.028 (ns)	-.043 (ns)	-.028 (ns)		
Trust in political parties		-.049 (ns)	-.094 (ns)	.068**	-.047 (ns)		
Trust in European Parliament		-.036 (ns)	.320 (ns)	-.027 (ns)	.092 (ns)		
Ideology: Left-wing/right-wing		.893***	.320***	.251***	.242***		
Member of political party		-.873**	-.1409***	1.130***	-.1339***		
EGALITARIAN							
COMPROMISE							
Member of a trade union, = Ref							
Ex-member of a trade union		-.1076***	-.1409***	-.348**	-.304 (ns)		
Not a member of a trade union		-.700***	-.1082***	-.090***	-.436 (ns)		
Government must prevent poverty		.132***	.003 (ns)	.148**	.196 (ns)		
Government must reduce income inequality		.116*	.056 (ns)	0.014 (ns)	-.071 (ns)		
N	3613	3613	3613	34671	5002		
Pseudo R square	0.129	0.070	0.256	0.136	0.202		
- 2LL	1673.888	1445.8	1775	3714.453	505.8		

Logistic regression. Participation=0; No participation=1
 Level of significance: *p=0.05, **p=0.01, ***p=0.001. (ns): no significance at all.
 Source: Own compilation based on ESS data, 2010.